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Chairman: Mr. Pierre FORTHOMME
(Belgium).

AGENDA ITEM 46

Population growth and economic development: reports of the Economic and Social Council (continued)* (A/5803, A/6003, A/6101, A/6104 and Corr.1; E/3895/Rev.1 and Add.1-3; A/C.2/L.835/Rev.1, L.842, L.843)

1. Mr. GALLARDO MORENO (Mexico) said that his delegation regarded population growth not in absolute terms but in relation to available productive resources. Potential resources ought to be disregarded, since many countries with large potential resources and a small population still had a low per capita income. To achieve an acceptable increase in that income, other important factors must operate. His country's population was increasing at an annual rate of 3.4 per cent, one of the highest rates in the world. The gross national product therefore had to increase at an annual rate of 6 per cent to achieve a 2.5 per cent increase in per capita income, the minimum figure laid down in the Punta del Este Charter. In fact, over the past fifteen years, the annual increase in its gross national product had averaged slightly more than 6 per cent. Without prejudging the population policy of other countries, his delegation believed that excessive population growth was due to ignorance and poverty, which economic development tended to eliminate. The problem was an important one which deserved the special attention of the United Nations. Advisory and training services in the field of population should be made available for action programmes at the request of Governments.

2. Mr. ROOSEVELT (United States of America) said that while much information remained to be gathered, the general facts of the exploding world population were well known; the problem was of enormous magnitude and potentially disastrous consequences. In developing countries, the average annual population increase was slightly more than 2.5 per cent and in some cases had reached 3 per cent, while world per capita food output had failed to rise appreciably and

by some calculations was declining for developing countries. Hence, the threat of starvation in some countries was a very real one.

3. However, avoiding starvation was not the only or even the principal reason for concern. The problem lay in finding sufficient savings for needed capital formation, after meeting the current consumption needs of an expanding population, to ensure reasonable progress towards modernization and a higher standard of living based on sustained economic growth. The goal of a 5 per cent annual growth rate had not been reached in many developing countries. In others, the population growth diluted its impact on the individual.

4. Although the situation was most critical in the developing countries, it was not limited to them. In the United States, with a population growth rate of about 1.5 per cent a year, the population was expected to grow from its present 190 million to 300 million by the end of the century. A recent report by the National Academy of Sciences had revealed a variety of problems which that relatively modest rate was causing, especially among the poor and uneducated. Those problems were aggravated by the faster increase in the portion of the population at the lower end of the economic scale; parents in that group had nearly twice as many children as those in the most fortunate bracket. The high birth rate in poor families not only contributed to their poverty but tended to perpetuate their relative economic and cultural deprivation. Yet his country's problems, immense though they were, were small compared to those of a country with a birth rate of, say, 3 per cent and a per capita income of \$100.

5. Nevertheless, the goals of society should be not only higher standards of living for all, regardless of the number of people in the world, but also the satisfaction of man's fundamental political, cultural and spiritual needs. His Government's policies had developed in that light. First, it was concerned about the economic and social consequences of its own population trends, to which it was giving considerable attention. Secondly, it sought more information about population trends and circumstances in the developing countries, not only to guide its own policies, but to help others to know more. That was particularly important in countries where present population levels and rates of growth were major obstacles to development. Thirdly, it opposed any effort to dictate to any country the means employed or the policies devised to deal with its population problems. Fourthly, while it did not advocate specific policies for other countries, it would actively help them, at their request, to tackle their problems. The United States Agency for International Development (AID) had now extended its assistance

*Resumed from the 1014th meeting.

beyond statistical, demographic and public health fields. A recent policy message had emphasized that each AID mission assigned one officer to become familiar with the population dynamics and programme developments in the country to which he was posted. The Agency did not advocate any particular method of family regulation. Requests for assistance in that field would be considered only if they were made or approved by the appropriate authorities of the requesting Government. It would consider requests for technical, commodity and local currency assistance in support of family planning programmes, but not for contraceptive devices or equipment for the manufacture of contraceptives, since experience had shown that their cost was not normally a stumbling block. The Agency was now considering its first request for such assistance, from the Government of Turkey, for a \$3.5 million low-interest loan to buy 14,000 vehicles and educational equipment to further its family planning programme in rural areas. Fifthly, his Government believed that more knowledge was needed on population matters. It was encouraging to note that the second World Population Conference in Belgrade had shown that the amount of demographic information available and the number of experts were growing. Sixthly, it considered that the United Nations and affiliated organizations had a role to play in the population field, and that member Governments should be able to obtain from them such assistance as they needed and requested.

6. The subject had received thorough consideration at the thirty-ninth session of the Economic and Social Council, terminating in the adoption of Council resolution 1084 (XXXIX), and at the second World Population Conference. In view of the Committee's crowded schedule, therefore, he would have preferred a resolution merely noting the Council resolution and the Secretary-General's report on the Conference (A/6101). Nevertheless, he would support the draft resolution before the Committee (A/C.2/L.835/Rev.1).

7. Mr. BOIKO (Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic) said that rapid population growth was only one of the factors responsible for the inadequate pace of economic development. The draft resolution was a step in the right direction, particularly in its reference to the deliberations of the World Population Conference, the main deduction from which was that family planning programmes could not take the place of economic development. The report of the Secretary-General on the Conference (A/6101) and the replies of Governments to his inquiry on problems resulting from the interaction of economic development and population changes (E/3895/Rev.1 and Add.1-3) showed that demographic problems in individual countries and in the world as a whole had been inadequately studied. The draft resolution was therefore right to refer to the wide variety of such problems. Nevertheless, the impact of population growth was often overestimated. A rationally organized economy could provide for all its people and the United Nations should concentrate not on controlling the birth rate, but on economic development. He had doubts about operative paragraph 4, which could be interpreted to mean that the United Nations could provide technical assistance in the field of birth control, which fell within the exclusive competence of States themselves: in view of the dif-

fering views in the Committee, such technical assistance would be wrong. He was glad to see that the Netherlands amendment proposed in the 1014th meeting had been introduced into operative paragraph 2.

8. Population growth was determined by social and economic factors, and experience in the past had shown that high natural birth rates fell with industrialization, migration to urban areas and urban population growth, and the increased employment of women. The advocates of a lower birth rate failed to explain why, for example, the reduced rate in the Congo under the colonial régime had not resulted in economic development. Attention was being wrongly diverted towards purely biological factors and away from economic and social considerations. The solution was not to bring the population rate into line with the level of the economy, but to help the economy to grow faster than the birth rate. Although he was not entirely satisfied with the text, he would support the draft resolution.

9. Mr. POLIT ORTIZ (Ecuador) said that from the viewpoint of economic planning, the population problem was inescapable. Visitors travelling to developing countries could not fail to observe the great misery there, and the draft resolution simply brought to the attention of the General Assembly a situation of which all were aware but which few would face. The Population Commission had submitted a number of excellent reports, without ever suggesting that the United Nations should embark upon birth control programmes or oppose the policy of any sovereign State. The draft resolution merely showed the close connexion between population growth in the developing countries and their efforts to increase the level of living and *per capita* income. Planners were familiar with the dilemma of distributing scarce financial resources among urgent needs. Most developing countries were unable to provide the bare necessities for their population because of their high birth rates. In addition, the movement from rural areas to the cities had raised a whole series of problems, including that of food supplies, which were not keeping up with population growth. The strain on resources through the provision of additional housing, water, educational, health and other facilities emphasized the close connexion between the rate of population growth and economic development. That had been clearly shown in the Population Commission's report on its thirteenth session (E/4019). The United Nations must therefore continue its study of various aspects of population, and he was in full sympathy with the draft resolution.

10. Mr. DAIKITE (Mali) said that although he did not share the views expressed in the draft resolution, he would be prepared to abstain on it if the Irish amendments (A/C.2/L.842) were taken into account. It was important that technical assistance in the field of family planning should be specifically excluded as proposed in the fifth Irish amendment. International action on population problems and their influence on economic development required very thorough analysis; the United Nations must therefore avoid partiality. The draft resolution drew attention to the interaction of demographic and other factors in economic development, with the aim of establishing a close connexion

between the development of resources and the development of population. It was true that production, consumption and population were closely linked, but to propose that consumption should be regulated by limiting the number of consumers, on the ground that consumption would then rise less quickly than production and countries more easily achieve a national surplus, was a very subjective view.

11. The problem was in fact a structural one. Production, population growth and consumption must be combined in such a way that production was adapted to the needs of the population and not that the population was adjusted to existing means. If the population was limited, the under-developed countries would lack the means to provide food for their peoples. They were without capital and their only resources for increasing production was their working population. A country with sufficient funds to dispense with that population would not be a developing country. His own country's population was only 4.4 million in a large territory, so that it lacked both people and funds, and its problems were not covered by the draft resolution. In his view, the problem of the population explosion should not be tackled through birth control or interference with natural reproduction. Instead, what was needed was a far-reaching reform of the economic and social structure.

12. Mr. ASTROM (Sweden) said the problem facing the Committee was like a molten stream of lava about to engulf a mountain village. It would be folly not to take precautions to avoid a catastrophe. The crucial point was whether the Committee could agree that in certain circumstances active steps should be taken to stabilize the population of a country. The opponents of birth control maintained that the world's food production capacity was virtually unlimited and that the United Nations should concentrate on raising living standards throughout the world so that birth rates would decline automatically. His delegation fully agreed, but such a process might take seventy or eighty years. The problem, however, was more urgent and must be tackled immediately.

13. As had already been pointed out, the world population was expected to increase by between 3,000 and 4,000 million in the next thirty-five years. Three-quarters of that increase would occur in the developing countries where under-nourishment was already frequent. The developing countries would have to devote nearly the whole of their productive capacities merely to feeding their rapidly increasing populations. It was therefore natural that many countries wanted to slow down their reproduction rates.

14. It had been said that the United Nations should not take any action in a field which was so controversial. That view was unrealistic and indefensible. As knowledge increased, it was becoming more and more apparent that the population problem had economic, social, cultural, and political implications. The United Nations must therefore give priority to such matters. It must serve as a forum for the exchange of experience and play an active role in the search for a deeper understanding of the problem.

15. His delegation welcomed the long-range programme which had been adopted by the Population

Commission at its thirteenth session, particularly its plans to conduct research on matters on which the present state of knowledge was unsatisfactory. It also welcomed the decision reached by WHO to study the medical aspects of sterility and fertility control methods and health aspects of population dynamics. However, studies were not enough. They must be tested in practice. The United Nations must expand its advisory services in the field of population and provide technical assistance in family planning to any Government requesting it. Of course, as Mr. de Seynes had already pointed out before the Committee (955th meeting), the United Nations could not influence Governments in their decisions, but once the decision had been taken, then the United Nations must move forward. Governments had every right to formulate their policies, without outside pressure, but whenever they decided to ask for United Nations assistance, their requests must be heeded.

16. It was pointless to claim that funds contributed jointly by Member States should not be used for such a purpose. There were many activities going on within the United Nations for which common funds were allocated but in respect of which there existed a divergence of views. The United Nations should not be deterred from doing what many Member States considered to be important, urgent and entirely within its competence, merely because certain States felt that such action was inappropriate. He appealed strongly to those countries which had no population problem to allow the United Nations to help countries where the problem was acute.

17. Mr. BEJARANO (Argentina) said that the draft resolution gave his delegation serious grounds for concern. It was unfortunate that an item of such vital importance, concerning as it did the development of the whole human race, had been left for a few meetings at the end of the General Assembly. Argentina adopted a positive attitude to the problem of demographic growth and needed more inhabitants to populate its vast areas. Each nation must decide for itself what its population policy should be without any interference from the United Nations. As His Holiness Pope Paul VI had pointed out (1347th plenary meeting), the task was to ensure that there was enough bread on the tables of mankind and not to diminish the number of guests at the banquet of life. Argentina shared that view and would oppose any proposal that the United Nations should take an active part in the dissemination of population control measures.

18. Mr. M'BAYE (Guinea) said that the problem of demographic growth had political and economic implications. There was a basic link between demographic growth and the choice of economic policies made by individual countries and certain countries had been able to solve the problem without resorting to artificial methods of control. His delegation would be able to vote for the draft resolution but stressed that the real solution lay in national efforts.

19. Mr. WILMOT (Ghana) said that although his country was under-populated rather than over-populated, he had nevertheless sponsored the draft resolution in a spirit of solidarity with those developing countries faced with difficulties arising from excessive demographic growth. The draft resolution was perfectly

harmless and non-controversial. It did not impose anything on anyone. As the United Kingdom representative had pointed out, there was no question of making a new decision; what was needed were more resources to implement the decisions that had already been adopted.

20. He associated himself with the appeal that had been made to those countries which had no population problems not to impede the efforts of over-populated countries to obtain assistance from the United Nations. He hoped that the delegation of Ireland would not press its fifth amendment (A/C.2/L.842), because its effect would be to deny Member States their legitimate right to obtain assistance from the United Nations on a subject of vital importance to them. He thanked the French representative for not pressing his third and fourth amendments (A/C.2/L.843) and hoped that the draft resolution in its revised form would be unanimously adopted.

21. Mrs. MISKE (Mauritania) said that, as a woman and a mother, she wished to reply to those representatives who had opposed the draft resolution on religious and moral grounds. It had been insufficiently stressed during the debate that women must play the major role in childbirth and in the raising of children. In order to undertake that task with the proper sense of responsibility, the woman, in consultation with her husband, must have the right to choose the number of children that were to be brought into the world and the extent to which birth control should be practised. Such a freedom of choice was already enjoyed by the women of the developed countries, but in the developing countries they lacked the material means of practising birth control and were therefore condemned to the degrading task of continual reproduction. It had been calculated that in a polygamic society, a woman could be expected to face fifteen pregnancies in her lifetime, while in a monogamic society, the number would be thirty. Surely, the United Nations could not condemn the women of the developing countries to such an ordeal and must give them the free choice of deciding how many pregnancies they wanted. They must also be given the choice of birth control methods, due regard being paid to medical, moral and religious considerations. Each woman must make her own decision: the United Nations, and particularly WHO, must provide requesting countries with experts who would make it possible for them to make such a decision. For that reason, she supported the French amendments drawing attention to the decisions taken by WHO. She would also like to know the views of the Social Commission and the Commission on the Status of Women on the subject of birth control.

22. Mr. CUHRUK (Turkey) said that, since 1930, his country's population had doubled and was increasing at the rate of 3 per cent per year, one of the highest in the world. Turkey was seriously concerned with the effects of population growth on its economic development plans. Since the adoption of the five-year plan in 1963, Turkey had adopted a new policy and was now encouraging birth control. The Government was deeply interested in United Nations activities in the demographic field and was in favour of strengthening them. Of course, neither the United Nations nor the specialized agencies should impose any view on any

country or seek to influence its choice, but to those countries which requested it, they should give technical assistance in the field of population control.

23. His delegation supported the draft resolution because it was simple and in perfect accord with the general policy now being followed by the United Nations and the specialized agencies in the population field. His delegation would like to co-sponsor that text. It also welcomed the bilateral aid that was being offered in that field by the United Kingdom and the United States and expressed its appreciation of the favourable reception given to its request for assistance by the United States.

24. Mr. NEAL (Liberia) considered that the discussion had digressed from the effects of population growth on economic development to such questions as the biology of reproduction and problems of fertility and sterility. The Second Committee should take a broader view and not become bogged down in the details of birth control methods. Although Liberia was faced rather with the problem of under-population, it realized that excessive population growth had many disadvantages and for that reason it supported the revised draft resolution.

25. Mr. EL-SHEIBANI (Libya) said that his delegation had sponsored the draft resolution, not because population growth was a serious problem in Libya but because it realized that, in many developing countries, a high rate of population increase was an obstacle to the attainment of economic prosperity. Rapid population growth could nullify all the benefits derived from technical progress, foreign aid and the development of new natural resources, especially when the rate of growth outstripped the rate of expansion of employment opportunities. It should not be overlooked, however, that in more favourable circumstances, population growth, if it were a by-product of higher per capita incomes which resulted in improved nutrition, education and sanitary conditions, could promote economic welfare and enable more children to survive to a healthy and productive adult life.

26. It was paradoxical that birth control, which appeared to be the most promising solution to the problem of over-population, should, if it were to be effective, require fairly high levels of education and family income, factors rarely to be found in the countries most interested in promoting family planning programmes. The draft resolution, if adopted, would do much to help those countries and he hoped that since many of the amendments proposed had been taken into account in the revised version, it would receive the full support of the Committee.

27. Mr. TELL (Jordan) expressed his delegation's appreciation of the valuable help that was being given by the United Kingdom and the United States to countries requesting assistance for birth control programmes. His own cultural and religious background was one in which the attitude to family planning was not dissimilar to that of the Irish representative; nevertheless, his delegation believed that any request in the field of economic development should be approved and that individual beliefs should not frustrate the hopes of countries which wished the United Nations to play a more important role in family planning matters. The ideal solution to rapid population growth

was, admittedly, to increase the world's food supply, but it was unlikely, to judge from current trends, that that solution could ever be achieved. The revised draft resolution should be acceptable to all delegations and he appealed to members of the Committee who had opposed it on moral, ethical or political grounds to give it their support.

28. Mr. RAMACHANDRAN (India), speaking on behalf of the sponsors of the draft resolution, welcomed the desire shown by the delegation of Turkey to become a co-sponsor. The first and second amendments proposed by the French representative (A/C.2/L.843) had been incorporated in the revised version as the sixth preambular paragraph and operative paragraph 3, respectively; the purpose of the third French amendment had been achieved inasmuch as operative paragraph 5 (a) requested the Secretary-General to report to the Economic and Social Council on his consultations with the specialized agencies. The sponsors had decided to retain the final sub-paragraph of the draft resolution, to which the fourth of the French amendments referred, because they considered that the programme of work recommended by the Population Commission at its thirteenth session was very useful and they wished the General Assembly to recommend that action should be taken on it by the agencies concerned. The main purpose of the draft resolution was that the General Assembly should associate itself with the views of the Council and the Population Commission in order to provide guidance for such agencies as WHO and UNICEF, which were in the process of re-defining their activities in population matters. The amendment proposed orally by the representative of the Netherlands had been taken into account in operative paragraph 2.

29. A number of representatives had expressed concern about the possible diversion of the limited resources available for economic and social development programmes as a result of intensified efforts in connexion with population control. The sponsors had no desire to substitute population control activities for those programmes; the two spheres of work were, in their view, complementary.

30. The representative of Mali had expressed the conviction that each country was responsible for deciding on its own approach to population problems. The draft resolution endorsed that view by drawing attention, in operative paragraph 4, to the report of the Population Commission (E/4019), paragraph 18 of which reaffirmed that the decisions of Governments on population policy were sovereign. In his own country, the Government had long since decided to make family planning a part of national policy, and he gave an account of the vigorous and co-ordinated efforts it was making to reduce over-population through birth control and sterilization. It was true, as the representative of Italy had stated at an earlier meeting, that much research remained to be done on the medical and biological aspects of the use of contraceptives; the statement made earlier by the representative of Mauritania, however, left no room for doubt regarding the views of the women of some developing countries on the value of any method which would make responsible planned parenthood a reality. It was in accordance with the principle that

parents alone should decide how many children they wished to have that future action by the United Nations and its agencies should be planned.

31. The sponsors fully respected the ethical views on which the objections of the Irish and certain other delegations were based. They appealed to those delegations not to seek to impose their views on countries which wished to obtain technical assistance for family planning programmes, but to show the spirit of compromise which had been such a feature of the current session of the Committee. With regard to the second, third and fourth amendments proposed by the Irish delegation (A/C.2/L.842), the references in the draft resolution to the results of the World Population Conference were surely justified by the information given in the Secretary-General's report (A/6101).

32. Mr. O HEIDEAIN (Ireland) thanked those delegations which had registered objection to the principle of Government-sponsored artificial birth control or had expressed support for his delegation's position. The Irish delegation was prepared, in a spirit of conciliation, to withdraw its first, second, third and fourth amendments, on the understanding that the Committee's report would contain a suitable note on the subject.

33. As resolution WHA18.49, adopted unanimously by the World Health Assembly, was mentioned in the draft resolution revised from the French amendment (A/C.2/L.843), the text of the draft was more acceptable to his delegation. Nevertheless, the purpose of the fifth amendment, which was that certain population activities of the United Nations should be those for which operative paragraph 2 (b) of that resolution provided and should exclude operational activities in connexion with family planning, was not served by the revised draft resolution. Unless that amendment were included, he would have to press for a vote on the draft resolution (A/C.2/L.835/Rev.1) and amendment, and for a separate vote on operative paragraph 4 of the draft resolution.

34. The draft resolution drew attention to the recommendations of the Council and of the Population Commission, neither of which was representative of the entire membership of the United Nations. On the other hand, the supreme organ of the United Nations, the General Assembly, when it had adopted resolution 1838 (XVII) in its 1197th plenary meeting, had rejected provisions which were designed to permit direct United Nations involvement in birth control activities. In most countries, if a parliament or government refused to sanction a scheme, and a government department or civil servants, nevertheless, subsequently disbursed public funds for that purpose, questions would certainly be asked. His delegation's opposition to the draft resolution was on a matter of life and death, since without that amendment, the draft resolution would be equivalent to approval of and collaboration in systematic abortion campaigns by his and other countries through supplying part of the financial means. Abortion schemes in the past had involved figures from 500,000 to 1,200,000 abortions. His delegation's amendment, if accepted, would authorize the Secretary-General to undertake advisory services in the whole wide and useful field of demographic studies, research and training.

35. Mr. VALLADAO (Brazil) observed that some Governments had not completed their study of the available documentation on population control and the Committee had had little time to deal adequately with the subject. He therefore proposed that further consideration of item 46 should be adjourned to the twenty-first session.

36. Mr. FERNANDINI (Peru), supported by Mr. RAMACHANDRAN (India), suggested that the Committee's programme of work might be modified to

allow further discussion of item 46 at the following meeting.

37. The CHAIRMAN said that it would not be advisable to change the programme of work at such a late stage in the Committee's proceedings. It might, however, be possible to revert to item 46 if item 45 (Permanent sovereignty over natural resources) could be completed quickly at the next meeting.

The meeting rose at 1.20 p.m.