



ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL

Fiftieth Session

OFFICIAL RECORDS

Tuesday, 27 April 1971,
at 3.20 p.m.

NEW YORK

President: Mr. Rachid DRISS (Tunisia).

AGENDA ITEM 7

**Report of the Statistical Commission (*continued*)
(E/4938, E/4989, chap. VI, sect. A; E/L.1372)**

1. The PRESIDENT suggested that the Council should take note of the report of the Statistical Commission (E/4938) and adopt the draft resolution contained in chapter XV.

2. Mr. DE AZEVEDO BRITO (Brazil) pointed out, with regard to the draft resolution, that in the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination (CPC) the developing countries had suggested that assistance in the field of statistics should be given in particular to the developing countries. Consideration of the draft resolution should therefore be postponed until delegations were ready to submit specific amendments to that effect.

3. Mr. LISOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that his delegation was engaged in consultations with a view to submitting a draft resolution designed to increase the co-ordinating role of the Statistical Commission.

4. Mr. ORČIĆ (Yugoslavia) pointed out that the draft resolution referred only to the First United Nations Development Decade. His delegation would be prepared to vote for the draft resolution if a reference to General Assembly resolution 2626 (XXV), relating to the Second Development Decade, were inserted in the second preambular paragraph.

5. Mr. CARANICAS (Greece) said that the Council might take note of the report with satisfaction as it was excellent and illuminating. Consideration of the draft resolution should be deferred to a later stage.

6. Mr. LOFTUS (Director, Statistical Office) said that he had noted the comments made on the draft resolution in the Council and in CPC. For the most part they were in line with the views of the Statistical Commission. He therefore suggested that the second preambular paragraph should be deleted in its entirety as it was not up to date; the word "further" would then be deleted from the third preambular paragraph. In order better to reflect the intentions of the Statistical Commission, operative paragraph 2 might be amended to read in part "... to give assistance to developing countries in the implementation ...".

7. Mr. ORČIĆ (Yugoslavia) said that he welcomed the report of the Statistical Commission which contained a concise and factual account of the problems in the field of

statistics. In addition, it put forward specific proposals which deserved full consideration by the Council.

8. Since, in the context of the Second United Nations Development Decade, the United Nations was called upon to solve the question of the establishment of machinery for the review and appraisal of the goals of the Second Development Decade, high priority should be accorded to the recommendations contained in chapter IV of the report. The adoption of an integrated statistical system was a prerequisite for a successful and effective review and appraisal of the goals of the Second Decade. The urgency of such a co-ordinated approach became even more apparent from the observations contained in paragraph 58 of the report. The report aptly elaborated the need to adopt major statistical policies on economic growth, full employment, income distribution, educational opportunities, social and economic disparities, and so forth. In that connexion, his delegation was in full agreement with the ideas expressed by the Statistical Commission in paragraph 70 of the report.

9. In conclusion, subject to the insertion of a reference to General Assembly resolution 2626 (XXV), his delegation would support the draft resolution contained in chapter XV since its adoption would pave the way for a successful co-operative approach in the highly important area of vital statistics.

10. Mr. FAROOQ (Pakistan) said that the report of the Statistical Commission was most commendable. His delegation had no hesitation in approving the work programme, together with the modest financial implications of the decisions taken by the Commission during its sixteenth session (E/4938, annex II), since that would help to bring about better co-ordination at the international level and improved methodology at the national level.

11. With regard to the date and place of the Commission's seventeenth session, if the Commission's request to meet in New York in February 1972 were granted, exceptional treatment in the arrangement of sessions might become the rule. His delegation would therefore prefer that the matter should be settled in accordance with the general principles of General Assembly resolution 2609 (XXIV) on the pattern of conferences.

12. His delegation would vote in favour of the draft resolution on the principles and recommendations for a vital statistics system (E/4938, chapter XV). In that connexion, he drew attention to paragraph 102 of the report, and stressed that developing countries endeavouring to establish a system of vital statistics should be warned beforehand of the problems that might arise.

13. The Council's work had been greatly facilitated by the fact that the Statistical Commission had avoided a rigid

application of rule 39 of the rules of procedure of the functional commissions and had referred only one of the sixteen resolutions which it had adopted to the Council. The Council was clearly required to approve the draft resolution in chapter XV since it superseded Council resolution 1307 (XLIV) of 31 May 1968.

14. Turning to the work programme, he said that his delegation welcomed the emphasis to be given in the international statistical programmes for 1971-1975 to the particular needs of the developing countries, including the furnishing of technical assistance in the development of national statistical services. His delegation also supported the initiative to update the *Handbook of Statistical Organization*¹ and the proposal to hold an international seminar on statistical organization.

15. His delegation had noted with interest the view expressed in paragraph 76 of the report that the new International Computing Centre (ICC) should examine ways of providing special facilities for the developing countries in relation to the supply of data, access to its data bank, computer work and training. It also looked forward to seeing the flow of data between international organizations and Member States facilitated and increased.

16. In conclusion, he paid tribute to the realistic and expert work of the Statistical Commission as well as the excellent services rendered by the Statistical Office.

17. Mr. GATES (New Zealand) said that his delegation could have accepted the original draft resolution submitted by the Commission, but would like to have time to consider the revised version suggested by the Director of the Statistical Office.

18. In view of the vital importance of accurate national statistics to the success of the Second United Nations Development Decade, particularly in the areas of population and demography, housing and building, the production of and trade in key commodities, the Council should ensure that sufficient stress was placed on the need for data availability and the improvement of statistical services. That being so, his delegation fully endorsed the request for the publication of the "Principles and recommendations for a vital statistics system", as called for in operative paragraph 1 of the draft resolution submitted for the Council's consideration. To his knowledge, the work of demographic experts in the developing countries in Asia were seriously hampered by the lack of an adequate system for recording births, deaths and marriages. It would therefore be most apposite, as recommended by the Commission, to prepare simplified versions of statistical systems for use in situations where a full system would be too costly.

19. The PRESIDENT said that, if there was no objection, he would assume that the Council was in favour of adopting the following decision:

"The Economic and Social Council,

"(a) Takes note with satisfaction of the report of the Statistical Commission on its sixteenth session (E/4938);

"(b) Endorses the work programme contained therein."

It was so decided.

20. He said that the draft resolution, with the amendments suggested by the Director of the Statistical Office, together with any other draft resolutions submitted by delegations, would be considered in detail by the Council at a later stage.

AGENDA ITEM 9

Transport development:

(a) Establishment of a United Nations transport centre (E/4964 and Add.1 and 2, E/4989, chap. VIII; E/L.1381)

21. Mr. DE AZEVEDO BRITO (Brazil) urged that, before it took any decision on the matter, the Council should have at its disposal a revised version of the proposed terms of reference of a United Nations transport economics and technology documentation centre together with the related financial implications, as was suggested in the report of CPC on its eighth session (see E/4989, para. 87).

22. Mr. GUPTA (Observer for India), speaking at the invitation of the President, said that his delegation could not endorse the Secretary-General's report (E/4964), since little account had been taken of the views expressed at the Council's forty-eighth session or of the discussion in the eighth session of CPC. It would be recalled that opinions in CPC had been divided; while many members had felt that the proposed centre was unnecessary, others had given their support to the idea, on condition that the proposed terms of reference were revised to confine the centre's work to land and intermodal transport, so as to avoid duplication with other activities within the United Nations system. His delegation took particular exception, in the light of paragraphs 83 and 88 of CPC's report (E/4989), to the excessively general way in which the functions and terms of reference of the proposed centre were still described by the Secretary-General. Such phrases as "transportation in its entirety", "transport technology", "over-all transport policy", "over-all transport planning" and "an integrated development of transport in its entirety" in paragraphs 9, 10, 11 and 12, respectively, of his report were strangely at odds with the consensus of opinion of delegations.

23. Mr. TARDOS (Hungary) said that his delegation was opposed to the establishment of a United Nations transport economics and technology documentation centre on the grounds that it would lead to considerable overlapping or that the centre would take over functions of documentation that other bodies, such as the International Union of Railways, had been discharging with success for a long time. As the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) stated in paragraph 5 of document E/4964/Add.1, the problem as regards air transport was not a shortage of documentation but one of selection. His delegation fully concurred in the opinion of ICAO that the centre, if established, could add little if anything to the information available and, indeed, would give rise to duplication and confusion.

¹ United Nations publication, Sales No.: 54.XVII.7.

24. Another cogent argument against the establishment of the centre was the financial situation of the United Nations. There could be no doubt that the Organization could expend the sum proposed for the centre on more worthy projects. The figure of \$660,400 which had been quoted in the statement on the administrative and financial implications of the centre (see E/4964/Add.2) was, in any case, a modest underestimate because it did not include the cost of microfilming and the use of computer services. Moreover, the return—fifty pages of newsletter four times a year—would hardly be worth the expense involved.

25. His delegation regarded the United Nations/IMCO Conference on International Container Traffic, to be held at Geneva in 1972, as both timely and useful. A comprehensive convention regulating the questions of safety requirements and customs formalities in respect of container traffic could only promote the development of international transport.

26. It should be stressed, however, that the Conference would be able to perform effectively only if it had a universal character; an invitation should therefore be sent to the German Democratic Republic. It was deplorable to have to raise, time and time again, the question that had been definitively decided by history. His delegation had pointed out for years in various United Nations forums that the situation was untenable. The obstruction of the participation of the German Democratic Republic was contrary to the principles of international law and alien to the objectives of the United Nations. At the same time, by debarring that country from membership and from the Conference in question, the Council was depriving itself of the co-operation of a country which, by reason of its central geographical location, its industrial potential and its technological and scientific prowess, was an indispensable partner in international transport.

27. Mr. LENNON (United States of America) said that his delegation doubted the wisdom of establishing a United Nations transport economics and technology documentation centre, especially since, according to the report of CPC (E/4989), even those delegations which favoured the establishment of the centre could not support the proposal before the Council in its present form (E/4964).

28. The Centre would undoubtedly duplicate the work of other bodies. According to its proposed terms of reference, the centre would organize on an *ad hoc* basis, teams and task forces of experts to carry out surveys and studies (see E/4964, para. 16), but that was a function of other United Nations bodies. According to paragraph 14(c), it would also analyse and evaluate the information it received on transport matters in order to extract from it information helpful in solving transport development problems, particularly for developing countries and regions, and in accordance with paragraph 14(g), it would arrange advanced training for personnel from developing countries designated to serve in high-level transport planning, administration or management posts; but those were functions that could be carried out within the existing structure of the United Nations. Since the proposal did not seem to be based on a careful analysis of all aspects of the situation, his delegation doubted whether, even if the criticisms made by

the Indian representative were met, the text could be improved sufficiently to make it acceptable.

29. He therefore suggested that the Council should take note of the views expressed by CPC and let the matter rest at that point for the time being.

30. Mr. CARANICAS (Greece) welcomed the fact that observers were taking part in the present meeting in view of the comments made in connexion with a previous item about the participation of more Member States in the work of the Economic and Social Council.

31. His delegation supported the valid procedural objections raised by the delegations of Brazil and India. The Council must give due weight to the views and suggestions of CPC. Accordingly, his delegation agreed that the Secretariat should be requested to revise the draft terms of reference of the centre, but would not necessarily commit itself to supporting the revised text.

32. Mr. LISOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that his delegation found it somewhat difficult to speak on the question of the proposed United Nations transport economics and technology documentation centre without referring to the second part of the agenda item dealing with preparation for the United Nations/IMCO Conference, as it was not yet clear how container shipping would affect all kinds of transport.

33. His country attached great importance to the question of transport, which, as Mr. Brezhnev, the First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party had said, it regarded as an important field of international co-operation. All types of transport were now highly developed; transport questions transcended national boundaries and became intra-continental and inter-continental in scope; and the improvement of transport was an important and effective means of development. However, despite the importance it attached to that rapidly changing field, his delegation had serious misgivings about the establishment of the proposed centre. In the first place, many bodies were already operating in the field of transport, such as ICAO, the specialized agency which had been given responsibility for air transport; UNCTAD, which, though new, was playing an increasingly effective role in sea transport; the Inter-Governmental Maritime Consultative Organization (IMCO), which was making a significant contribution to international co-operation in the use of the oceans and the development of shipping; and such other international organizations as the International Union of Railways and the International Road Federation, which had already acquired great experience and promoted the adoption of many agreements and conventions. Secondly, the establishment in the United Nations of the proposed centre would deprive the new body of any possibility of doing effective work. It would in essence be only a small cog doing little practical work in the machinery of the United Nations, the only big thing about it being its name. All practical work in the field would continue to be done by the national, non-governmental and intergovernmental authorities.

34. The original ambitious proposal made by the Secretariat at the Council's forty-eighth session had envisaged the establishment of a body which would serve as a focal point

for the work of the different organs concerned with land transport. The present proposal for a documentation centre, which would spend some \$660,400 a year to produce a mere 200 pages of documentation, was a severe disappointment. The original idea had vision and scope and should be reconsidered by the Council at the proper time and under the proper circumstances. Meanwhile, his delegation felt that the Council should not decide to establish the centre as now proposed; that did not mean that it would not support the establishment by the Secretariat of a group to study transport trends, the activities of intergovernmental organs in the field in question, and existing conventions and agreements on transport and, on the basis of its findings, to propose an institution which would not be a mere research group but an expression of the will of the Members of the United Nations to co-ordinate all activities and harmonize international co-operation in the sphere of transport. That would be a large and important body and a true transport centre.

35. Mr. SKATARETIKO (Yugoslavia) recalled that CPC, which had been established to assist the Economic and Social Council, had stated in paragraph 87 of its report that several members had insisted that the Council should be presented with revised terms of reference for the Centre. The Council could not ignore that fact. Furthermore, the subject was by no means new and statements were being repeated from year to year. To avoid further duplication, the Council should support the recommendation of CPC so that it might consider the question of the establishment of a transport centre more meaningfully.

36. Mr. CARANICAS (Greece) considered that it was somewhat embarrassing for the Secretariat to be requested to produce new terms of reference for the centre, as it had already stated its position clearly in document E/4964.

37. Since several members were against the establishment of the centre because of its questionable usefulness, excessive cost and possible duplication, while others would support it if its sphere of competence were more modest, the Council should forthwith request the Secretariat to confirm its readiness to submit revised terms of reference. It might also submit an explanatory statement relating to the functions of the Transport Division indicating whether, with more staff and an enlarged sphere of competence, the Division could effectively discharge its functions without requiring the assistance of such a centre.

38. If the Secretariat could not produce revised terms of reference for the centre, those members of the Council who supported the centre might prepare, for consideration by the Council, a draft resolution revising the centre's terms of reference and making its sphere of competence more modest. Alternatively, the Council could take note of the report of the Secretary-General (E/4964) and defer further consideration of the question until a future session.

39. The PRESIDENT said that there appeared to be a consensus that the Council needed to have at its disposal the revised terms of reference before considering the substance of the question.

40. If there were no objections, he would take it that the Council wished to request the Secretary-General to make available revised terms of reference and related financial implications in the light of the discussions in the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination.

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 4.55 p.m.