



Economic and Social Council

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Provisional summary record of the 42nd meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Wednesday, 29 July 2009, at 3 p.m.

President: Mr. Hamidon (Vice-President) (Malaysia)

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In the absence of the President, Mr. Hamidon (Malaysia) took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.20 p.m.

Economic and environmental questions (agenda item 13) (continued)

General debate (continued)

Mr. Herrström (Sweden), speaking on behalf of the European Union, said in that at the current substantive session the European Union had drawn attention to one of the results of the last meeting of the Governing Council of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme, namely, the adoption after four years of work of the Guidelines on Access to Basic Services for All. In resolution 22/8, the Guidelines had been called a valuable tool for achieving the Millennium Development Goals, and the Governing Council had urged the Economic and Social Council to consider them with a view to promoting their use in the United Nations system. That instrument, intended to help national and local authorities implement reforms aimed at promoting access to basic services, was complementary to the Guidelines on Decentralization adopted two years previously. The European Union trusted that the United Nations agencies concerned would disseminate them widely.

Mr. Yuksel (Observer for Turkey) said that his country, the host of the fifth World Forum on Water, attached considerable importance to development policies in Iraq and stood ready to assist it in its activities relating to water projects. Turkey believed that the total water potential of the Euphrates and Tigris rivers was sufficient to meet the needs of all riparian countries, provided that the water was used efficiently. In that spirit, it had continued to release the maximum amount of water from both rivers even during the driest summers, thanks to the completed dams and reservoirs in south-eastern Anatolia, in the belief that water should be a source of cooperation among riparian countries.

Mr. Sammis (United States of America) paid tribute to the leadership role of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme in its normative work and the way in which the Programme had introduced results-based management. The World Urban Forum, held in Nanjing in 2008, had demonstrated the growing

recognition of the importance of urban development and Habitat's key role in dealing with that topic within the United Nations system. He welcomed the Programme's efforts to encourage cooperation, for example, on the integration of urbanization issues into the work of United Nations country teams or the partnership with the United Nations Environment Programme. The Programme had also paved the way for innovative forms of partnership with the private sector.

Cities were vulnerable to climate change, while their emissions accounted for about three quarters of total greenhouse gas emissions, and they were therefore a critical front in the battle to prevent and adapt to climate change. His delegation was pleased that the United Nations Human Settlements Programme recognized that it had a role to play in helping to address the challenges posed by climate change, in particular in its work with local officials and communities. The United States also supported the call for further consideration of urban issues by the United Nations General Assembly, and endorsed the idea of a special session devoted to urbanization and the recommendation for holding a third conference on housing and sustainable urban development in 2016. The United States was pleased to be hosting the celebration of World Habitat Day on 5 October in Washington, D.C., on the theme "Planning our urban future".

Mr. Saint-Aimée (Saint Lucia), noting that the financial crisis had repercussions on United Nations programmes and that resources were drying up, said that it was in times of crisis that it was important to promote cooperatives, credit unions and other local financial mechanisms, where the crisis could be limited to the local area and where considerable resources were needed to mitigate economic difficulties. He therefore urged United Nations agencies to promote such cooperatives and credit unions.

Mr. Kurniawan (Indonesia) recalled that the Council, in its resolution 2007/40, had called for the conclusion and adoption of a non-legally binding international instrument on all types of forests and reaffirmed four overall objectives, the last of which was to reverse the decline in ODA for the sustainable management of forests and mobilize significantly increased, new and additional resources from all sources to support the implementation of sustainable forest management.

Despite the clarity of the Council's guidelines, that mandate had not been fully realized. At the eighth session of the United Nations Forum on Forests, the members had not succeeded in taking a decision on means of implementation, a fact which Indonesia, as Chair of that session, bitterly regretted. Without sufficient financing, the overall objectives and the non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests would remain merely wishful thinking. The lack of resources would also limit the effectiveness of the United Nations Forum on Forests as an international body for the implementation of sustainable forest management. His delegation therefore felt that the issue of means of implementation should be considered as soon as possible in order to avoid losing momentum and precious time, and it was strongly in favour of holding informal consultations and a special session of the Forum on Forests; it remained determined to collaborate with Member States with a view to reaching consensus.

Ms. Gebre-Egziabher (Director of the New York Office of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme) said it was true that there was a problem with the definition of urban and rural development, and that the linkages between urban and rural areas must therefore be studied. They were not two separate worlds, for a farmer whose main activity took place in a rural area could sell the surplus of his harvest in an urban market and also buy manufactured goods there. Although economic development inevitably led to urbanization, it was possible — and even important — to plan human settlements with a view to preventing slums; that would require investments in both urban and rural infrastructure and services. Policies implemented in urban and rural areas were also mutually reinforcing.

Mr. Guillaumont (Committee for Development Policy) noted Samoa's concern about the need for a smooth transition to graduation; that was also the Committee's objective, as could be seen in the definition of the graduation criteria, which differed markedly from the criteria for inclusion in order to prevent a country from regressing to the lower category following a shock or crisis. The graduation process was thus very prudent in its application of the criteria themselves, but also in the time periods observed between the recognition of eligibility, the recommendation and, finally, the implementation of graduation. The Committee was very sensitive to those

concerns and would naturally continue its review of countries being considered for graduation.

Mr. Inomata (Joint Inspection Unit (JIU)) said that the work of JIU had been presented at the end of the session and therefore had been given little attention, but he encouraged delegations to react to the report submitted at the previous meeting. With regard to the views already expressed, he said there seemed to be agreement on recognizing the importance of an independent review and that the Unit was bringing new impetus to the study of international governance. Some States wished to go still further, saying that they should have more ownership of the issue of international governance, which was currently the exclusive province of the dialogue between the Unit and the United Nations Secretariat and the specialized agencies. The development of a single strategy paper, as proposed by the Unit, presupposed a governmental decision. Currently, the Unit's recommendations were addressed to intergovernmental bodies, executive heads and the General Assembly. They had been well received and would presumably be followed up. Efforts in that direction should continue. The Unit hoped that the Governing Council of UNEP and the General Assembly would take up its reports; the delegations seemed ready to continue examining the issue in various forums, and the debate had only begun.

Mr. Cheje (United Nations Environment Programme), recalling the Green Economy Initiative mentioned by the representative of Brazil, said that since the publication of the report of the United Nations Environment Programme in February, many consultations had been held with the various specialized agencies in preparation for the Conference on the World Economic and Financial Crisis and Its Impact on Development and that 21 agencies had signed a joint declaration on the subject.

The President announced that the general debate on agenda item 13 (a), (c), (d), (e), (f), (h), (i), (j), (k) and (m) had been completed and invited the Council to hear the introduction of a number of draft resolutions.

Economic and environmental questions: Sustainable development (agenda item 13 (a))

Introduction of draft resolution E/2009/L.35 (“Review of United Nations support for small island developing States”)

Ms. Abdul Sattar (Observer for Maldives), introducing draft resolution E/2009/L.35, entitled “Review of United Nations support for small island developing States”, thanked the 32 initial co-sponsors of the draft for their support, together with the countries that subsequently became sponsors: (Australia, Cape Verde, Cuba, Fiji, India, Japan, Mauritius, Panama, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Singapore, Spain, Sri Lanka, Switzerland, Thailand and Uruguay) and the group of delegations that took part in informal consultations. She was pleased that so many delegations from throughout the world had taken the time to focus on the concerns of small island developing States and to participate in the elaboration of a text, which she hoped would be adopted without a vote.

The purpose of the draft resolution was clear. The specific difficulties facing small island developing States, which were well-known and widely recognized by the United Nations system, had been aggravated by the current worldwide recession and by the increasingly destructive effects of climate change. In that context, the sponsors of the draft invited the Committee for Development Policy to submit its independent views and perspectives on United Nations support for small island developing States to the Council prior to the 2010 substantive session. The Council would thus make a significant contribution to the high-level meeting of the General Assembly in 2010 to be devoted to a review of the progress made in addressing the vulnerabilities of small island developing States.

The President noted that Turkey had become a co-sponsor of the draft resolution. He invited the Council to take a decision on draft resolution E/2009/L.35, pointing out that the resolution had no programme budget implications.

Mr. Ayub (Pakistan), taking the floor before the adoption of the draft resolution, noted that climate change had added a new dimension to the vulnerability of some countries, particularly those with low incomes, which should be carefully evaluated by using scientific methods; in that regard, the draft resolution, which

requested a review of United Nations support for small island developing States, was a step in the right direction.

For Pakistan, a low-income country, it was particularly difficult to ensure sustainable development while being faced with the economic recession and the impact and imperatives of climate change, which, as had been highlighted by the Group of Intergovernmental Experts on Climate Change, would affect millions of persons in South Asia. The Committee for Development Policy, in coordinating the activities of the Group and the World Meteorological Organization, should be able to play a strategic role in the assessment of country vulnerabilities. His delegation therefore fully supported the draft resolution but requested the Committee to completely review the classification of countries on the basis of an exhaustive scientific definition, bearing in mind physical, economic and climate criteria for country vulnerability.

The President said that, if he heard no objection, he would take it that the Council wished to adopt draft resolution E/2009/L.35.

Draft resolution E/2009/L.35 was adopted.

Draft decision I entitled “Dates of the meetings of the Commission on Sustainable Development during its 2010/2011 cycle”

The President invited the Council, pursuant to the recommendation of the Commission on Sustainable Development, to take a decision on draft decision I, contained in Chapter I of the report of the Commission on Sustainable Development on its seventeenth session (E/2009/29 (Suppl. No. 9)).

If he heard no objection, he would take it that the Council wished to adopt draft decision I, contained in document E/2009/29 (Suppl. No. 9).

Draft decision I, contained in document E/2009/29 (Suppl. No. 9), was adopted.

Draft decision II, entitled “Adoption of the report of the Commission on Sustainable Development on its seventeenth session and provisional agenda for the eighteenth session of the Commission”

The President invited the Council, pursuant to the recommendation of the Commission on Sustainable Development, to take a decision on draft decision II, contained in chapter I of the report of the Commission

on Sustainable Development on its seventeenth session (E/2009/29 (Suppl. No. 9)).

If he heard no objection, he would take it that the Council wished to adopt draft decision II, contained in document E/2009/29 (Suppl. No. 9).

Draft decision II, contained in document E/2009/29 (Suppl. No. 9), was adopted.

Recommendations contained in the report of the Committee for Development Policy on its eleventh session (E/2009/33 (Suppl. No. 13))

The President informed the members of the Council that a draft resolution on that topic had been elaborated following consultations and that the Council would take a decision on the draft resolution once it had been issued under an official symbol.

Economic and environmental questions: Statistics (agenda item 13 (c))

Draft decision entitled "Report of the Statistical Commission on its fortieth session and provisional agenda and dates for the forty-first session"

The President invited the Council to take a decision on the draft decision submitted to the Council for adoption and contained in chapter I of the report of the Statistical Commission on its fortieth session (E/2009/24 (Suppl. No. 4)).

If he heard no objection, he would take it that the Council wished to adopt the draft decision contained in document E/2009/24 (Suppl. No. 4).

The draft decision contained in document E/2009/24 (Suppl. No. 4) was adopted.

Economic and environmental questions: human settlements (agenda item 13 (d))

Introduction of the draft decision entitled "Human settlements" (informal document circulated in English only)

Mr. Herrström (Sweden), introducing the draft decision on behalf of the European Union, said that, in a revised form following the informal meeting held the previous day, the text annulled and replaced draft decision E/2009/L.22. When it was being drafted, the sponsors had wished to avoid any overlap between the Council's activities and those of the General Assembly, in particular its Second Committee, concerning the

definition of the role of the Governing Council of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme. The draft under consideration referred to "Guidelines on access to basic services for all". His delegation recommended that the current text, which was based on consensus, should be adopted by the Council.

The President invited the Council to take a decision on the revised version of the draft decision entitled "Human settlements". He pointed out that the draft decision had no programme budget implications.

He noted that a consensus had emerged on the proposed text. If he heard no objection, he would take it that the Council wished to adopt the draft decision under consideration.

The draft decision, as revised, was adopted.

Report of the Governing Council of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme on its twenty-second session (A/64/8 (Suppl. No. 8))

The President suggested that the Council should take note of the report of the Governing Council of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme on its twenty-second session (A/64/8 (Suppl. No. 8)).

It was so decided.

Economic and environmental questions: Environment (agenda item 13 (e))

Report of the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme on its twenty-fifth session (A/64/25 (Suppl. No. 25))

The President suggested that the Council should take note of the report of the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme on its twenty-fifth session, held in Nairobi from 16 to 20 February 2009 (A/64/25 (Suppl. No. 25)).

It was so decided.

Economic and environmental questions: Population and development (agenda item 13 (f))

Report of the Commission on Population and Development on its forty-second session and provisional agenda of the forty-third session (E/2009/25 (Suppl. No. 5))

The President invited the Council, pursuant to the recommendation of the Commission on Population

and Development, to take a decision on the draft decision contained in chapter of the report of the Commission on Population and Development on its forty-second session (E/2009/25 (Suppl. No. 5)).

If he heard no objection, he would take it that the Council wished to adopt the draft decision contained in document E/2009/25 (Suppl. No. 5).

The draft decision contained in document E/2009/25 (Suppl. No. 5) was adopted.

Economic and environmental questions: Public administration and development (agenda item 13 (g))

Draft resolution contained in the report of the Committee of Experts on Public Administration on its eighth session (E/2009/44 (Suppl. No. 24))

The President invited the Council, pursuant to the recommendation of the Committee of Experts on Public Administration, to take a decision on the draft resolution contained in chapter I of the report of the Committee on its eighth session (E/2009/44 (Suppl. No. 24)).

If he heard no objection, he would take it that the Council wished to adopt the draft resolution contained in document E/2009/44 (Suppl. No. 24).

The draft resolution contained in document E/2009/44 (Suppl. No. 24) was adopted.

Economic and environmental questions: United Nations Forum on Forests (agenda item 13 (i))

Introduction of the draft decision entitled "Continued consideration by the United Nations Forum on Forests of means of implementation (informal document circulated in English only)"

Mr. Ozols (Observer for Latvia) called on delegations to take a constructive approach to the text, which would enable the Forum to continue its work on means of implementation in 2009. The draft decision was the result of the work of member States at the eighth session of the Forum, held in May 2009. Since agreement had not been reached at that session on means of implementation, it had been decided to resume work on the topic at the ninth session of the Forum, in January 2011. Many delegations, however, had hoped that agreement would be reached as soon as possible; the Bureau of the Form had therefore appointed a facilitator to conduct informal

consultations on the topic, and delegations had recently come to an agreement, which was, in fact, the subject of the draft decision under consideration.

The President invited the Council to take a decision on the draft decision entitled "Continued consideration by the United Nations Forum on Forests of means of implementation", which would subsequently be issued under the symbol E/2009/L.40. He pointed out that the draft decision had no programme budget implications.

He noted that a consensus had emerged on the proposed text. If he heard no objection, he would take it that the Council wished to adopt the draft decision to be subsequently issued under the symbol E/2009/L.40.

The draft decision to be issued subsequently under the symbol E/2009/L.40 was adopted.

Mr. Pankin (Russian Federation) said that his delegation had voted in favour of the draft decision, but he wished to note, in terms of procedure, that in plenary meeting the Council would have to decide on a text drafted in accordance with the rules governing the translation of documents and not on the basis of a text without a symbol. The adoption modalities used should not be taken as a precedent.

The President said that the action did not constitute a precedent, and he asked the secretariat to take note of the fact.

Draft decision I, entitled "Dates and venue for the ninth session of the United Nations Forum on Forests" (E/2009/42 (Suppl. No. 22))

The President invited the Council to take a decision on draft decision I, contained in chapter I of the report of the Forum on its eighth session (E/2009/42 (Suppl. No. 22)).

If he heard no objection, he would take it that the Council wished to adopt draft decision I, contained in document E/2009/42 (Suppl. No. 22).

Draft decision I, contained in document E/2009/42 (Suppl. No. 22), was adopted.

Draft decision II, entitled "Report of the United Nations Forum on Forests on its eighth session and provisional agenda for its ninth session" (E/2009/42 (Suppl. No. 22))

The President invited the Council to adopt draft decision II, entitled “Report of the United Nations Forum on Forests on its eighth session and provisional agenda for its ninth session” (E/2009/42 (Suppl. No. 22)). He noted that there had been no objection to the draft decision.

Draft decision II contained in document E/2009/42 (Suppl. No. 42) was adopted.

Economic and environmental questions: cartography (agenda item 13 (k))

Report of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names on the work of its twenty-fifth session (E/2009/58)

The President suggested that the Council should take note of the report of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names on its twenty-fifth session, held in Nairobi from 5 to 12 May 2009 (E/2009/58).

It was so decided.

Economic and environmental questions: transport of dangerous goods (agenda item 13 (m))

Draft resolution entitled “Work of the Committee of Experts on the Transport of Dangerous Goods and on the Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals” (E/2009/55)

The President invited the Council, pursuant to the recommendation of the Committee of Experts on the Transport of Dangerous Goods and on the Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals, to comment on the draft resolution entitled “Work of the Committee of Experts on the Transport of Dangerous Goods and on the Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals” (E/2009/55).

Mr. Morrill (Canada) said that Canada did not intend to block the apparent consensus on the issue, but wished to reiterate its position on the application of the United Nations Model Regulations on the Transport of Dangerous Goods to genetically modified organisms (GMOs), provisions which were non-binding but that could be a source of valuable inspiration for States in the elaboration of their own regulations. He noted with regret that the authors of the Model Regulations seemed to have been influenced by extraneous considerations, with the problem lying less in the mode

of production of genetically modified organisms than in the risk they might actually present.

His delegation felt that GMOs were not intrinsically dangerous and that the existing chapters of the Model Regulations already contained provisions covering the transport of any materials that were determined to be dangerous (toxic or infectious materials, for example). Given that the regulatory system for class 9 was, moreover, overly burdensome and inappropriate in view of the negligible risk to transport posed by GMOs, his delegation believed that UN 3245 should be deleted from the Model Regulations.

Mr. Sammis (United States of America) said he supported the Canadian delegation’s position concerning the assignment of genetically modified organisms to the list of dangerous goods, reaffirming that GMOs were not intrinsically dangerous and should not be classified as such. However, out of respect for the work of the Committee of Experts, his delegation would join the consensus.

The President said that, if he heard no objection, he would take it that the Council wished to adopt the draft resolution contained in document E/2009/55.

The draft resolution contained in document E/2009/55 was adopted.

The President announced that the Council had completed its consideration of agenda items 13 (c), (e), (f), (g), (k) and (m).

The meeting rose at 4.20 p.m.