



SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 31st MEETING

Chairman: Mr. HARLAND (New Zealand)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 141: COUNTRIES STRICKEN BY DESERTIFICATION AND DROUGHT (continued)  
(A/C.2/39/L.16)

Draft resolution A/C.2/39/L.16

1. Mr. DIOP (Senegal) introduced draft resolution A/C.2/39/L.16, entitled "Countries stricken by desertification and drought", on behalf of the following sponsoring countries: Algeria, Argentina, Austria, Bangladesh, Belgium, Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Canada, Cape Verde, Central African Republic, Chad, China, Comoros, Denmark, Djibouti, Egypt, Finland, France, Gabon, Gambia, Germany, Federal Republic of, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Iceland, Italy, Ivory Coast, Jamaica, Japan, Kenya, Mali, Mauritania, Mexico, Morocco, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Pakistan, Peru, Portugal, Rwanda, Saint Lucia, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Sweden, Thailand, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Uganda, United Kingdom, United States of America, Venezuela, Yugoslavia, Zaire, Zambia and Zimbabwe, which had been joined by Australia, Democratic Yemen, Ethiopia, Liberia, Madagascar, Netherlands, Philippines, Somalia, Sudan and the United Republic of Tanzania.
2. The world economic crisis seemed to be worsening over time, in particular in the African countries, which had been obliged to adopt rigorous adjustment policies and intensify South-South co-operation in order to manage their resources in a rational manner. But all those efforts were seriously jeopardized by natural disasters. The inexorable spread of the desert and drought, which was taking on unprecedented proportions, had a tragic impact on economic and social systems, living conditions and the environment. Grain deficits were in millions of tons, livestock was decimated and both urban and rural areas were suffering from hunger, malnutrition and disease. As the President of Senegal, Mr. Diouf, had stressed, every day 40,000 children were dying from hunger in the third world.
3. The sponsors of the draft resolution considered that the time had come to make the international community more keenly aware of the tragedy befalling some Member States. The fight against desertification could not be won by one country or even by a region; it was the responsibility of a civilization. Draft resolution A/C.2/39/L.16 therefore expressed the concern of the developing countries at the scope and tragic consequences of drought and desertification. It took note of the efforts made at the national, regional, interregional and world levels. Recognizing at the same time the prime responsibility of the countries concerned and the interdependence of nations in combating those scourges, it emphasized the need to give special attention to those problems in national policies and in bilateral and multilateral co-operation. Efforts must be stepped up through more intensive mobilization of financial and human resources. Finally, it underscored the need to conduct more extensive studies on the causes and effects of desertification and drought and on the use of appropriate technologies. In view of the importance of the matter and the number of sponsors, it was to be hoped that the draft resolution would be adopted by consensus.

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AGENDA ITEM 80: DEVELOPMENT AND INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION (continued)

(f) FOOD PROBLEMS (A/C.2/39/L.13)

(p) DEVELOPMENT OF THE ENERGY RESOURCES OF DEVELOPING COUNTRIES: REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (A/C.2/39/L.14)

Draft resolution A/C.2/39/L.13

4. Mr. SAAD (Egypt), introducing the draft resolution entitled "Critical situation of food and agriculture in Africa" on behalf of the Group of 77, said that the Group considered that the international community should mobilize more actively to assist the developing countries in Africa which were still undergoing a serious agricultural and food crisis mainly because of the harmful effects of drought and desertification. Although the international community had responded in an encouraging manner to various appeals, it must step up its efforts to provide the necessary material and financial aid.

Draft resolution A/C.2/39/L.14

5. Mr. SAAD (Egypt), introducing the draft resolution entitled "Development of the energy resources of developing countries" on behalf of the Group of 77, said that it enumerated the principal impediments to the realization of the indigenous energy potential of the developing countries and called upon the international community to support their efforts to overcome them. The Secretary-General was requested to submit a more comprehensive report on the development of that potential, to promote consideration of new possible avenues for financing and to encourage international co-operation in that area.

STATEMENT BY THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY OF THE ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA

6. Mr. ADEDEJI (Executive Secretary, Economic Commission for Africa) said that he was gratified by the generous response of the international community to his appeal in 1983 for support to the African continent in its struggle for economic survival. The situation in the continent had attained crisis proportions and drought and desertification prevailed in all subregions. The initiative taken by the Secretary-General to sensitize world opinion and mobilize additional external resources to assist the African countries was commendable. The participants in the tenth meeting of the ECA Conference of Ministers had, in the Special Memorandum on Africa's Economic and Social Crisis (E/ECA/CM.10/37), submitted to the Economic and Social Council at its second regular session of 1984, clearly specified measures required at national, regional and international levels. That memorandum clearly underscored the very alarming deterioration in the economic and social conditions of the African countries and, in particular, the effects of the drought in a majority of them. It recognized that the primary responsibility for the development of the African economy rested with African Governments and peoples, but it also recognized the important role to be played by the international community in helping Africa to avert the crisis and in putting the continent on the path of growth and development, stability and peace.

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(Mr. Adedeji)

7. ECA had adopted policies and measures consistent with the Lagos Plan of Action and the Final Act of Lagos for the restructuring of the African economy, in order to generate self-reliant economic growth and development and promote the gradual reduction of external dependence.

8. The ECA Conference of Ministers had, at its tenth meeting, adopted 43 resolutions and decisions covering virtually all sectors of economic and social development. Those resolutions would have to be implemented in order to deal promptly and efficiently with the pressing issues of underdevelopment and poverty. He hoped that the Committee would make appropriate recommendations to the General Assembly on those 10 resolutions, which had been submitted to the Economic and Social Council for consideration at its session in July 1984.

9. Food and agriculture constituted a most important sector for action. Since 1970, food output per capita had declined, and many African countries were food-aid dependent and net importers of food. For that reason ECA was helping the African countries to improve their agricultural development policies (appropriate producer prices; credits facilities; supply and delivery of inputs; marketing, infrastructural and storage facilities; effective extension services). It was also making efforts to promote rural development, institution-building and the reduction of food losses. Moreover, it encouraged African countries to strive for self-sufficiency, in particular to make the best use of their fishery resources and to enter multinational co-operative arrangements for the development and use of their livestock resources. When the Committee considered the reports of the various competent bodies on food and agriculture, it should give due consideration to the particular situation of Africa and should support measures to help resolve Africa's problems in that area.

10. In most of Africa, industry had yet to become an engine of growth, of modernization and of structural transformation of the economy. It was still too much dependent on raw materials and imported technologies as well as on foreign capital, and was often a veritable source of foreign exchange leakages. The Joint Committee of ECA, the Organization of African Unity and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization had been vigorously pursuing the programme for the Industrial Development Decade for Africa. In its resolution 491 (XIX), the Conference of Ministers of ECA had appealed to the General Assembly to increase its allocation for assistance to African countries and intergovernmental organizations in the formulation and implementation of their programmes for the Decade. It also called for a similar arrangement to be made to enable ECA and its Multinational Programming and Operational Centres (MULPOCs) to assist States in their consultations, negotiations and investment promotion for multi-country projects. In that regard, he was pleased that the financing of the MULPOCs had been ensured on a permanent basis, through appropriations from the regular budget of the United Nations. The African countries could not implement the goals of the Decade on their own. The international community, the funding agencies and the United Nations should increase and intensify their financial and technical assistance.

11. Like industrialization, transport and communications had an important role to play in the economy. Poor transport infrastructure continued to hinder the delivery of food, medicines and aid to the drought-affected countries. With resources drawn mainly from African Governments supported with those from

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(Mr. Adedeji)

industrialized countries and institutions, the first phase of the Transport and Communications Decade for Africa (1980-1983) had been completed and plans for the second phase (1984-1988) had been drawn up. In order to implement the second phase, additional resources would be necessary. He hoped that the Committee would support fully the request articulated in Economic and Social Council resolution 1984/68 and that the industrialized countries which so far had not contributed to the Decade programme would come forth to support the second phase. In that regard, he wished to pay tribute to all donors that had given and had continued to give support to the programme.

12. He drew the attention of the Committee to Economic and Social Council resolution 1984/73 on water resources development and follow-up to the Mar del Plata Action Plan, in which the Secretary-General was requested to continue to strengthen the secretariat of ECA with respect to water resources. He also drew attention to resolution 1984/74 on strengthening of the role of ECA as an executing agency, in which the Secretary-General was requested to consider the possibility of streamlining and, if necessary, relaxing the administrative constraints being experienced by the Commission in the execution of projects so that it would be able to operate on the same basis as the other executing agencies in the United Nations system.

13. According to General Assembly resolution 32/197, the regional commissions played the role of main general economic and social development centres for their respective regions and were responsible for co-ordination and co-operation of economic and social activities at the regional level. In that regard, ECA had been working closely with African Governments to promote subregional co-operation, principally within the framework of the Lagos Plan of Action and the Final Act of Lagos. He also noted that ECA had continued to create or strengthen economic groupings (Preferential Trade Area for Eastern and Southern Africa, Economic Community of Central African States and of West African States).

14. With regard to the co-operation that should exist between different economic sectors, there had been no breakthrough, except in the area of trade and finance, where measures had been taken to create a Federation of African Chambers of Commerce and an African Monetary Fund.

15. In order to foster the economic integration of Africa and to harmonize the activities of existing institutions, ECA was also assisting African Governments to build a network of subregional, regional and intergovernmental institutions.

16. In conclusion, he stressed the need for ensuring the provision of adequate resources to ECA so that it could fulfil its mandate effectively.

17. Mr. SAVIĆ (Yugoslavia) said that the report of the Secretary-General on permanent sovereignty over national resources in the occupied Palestinian and other Arab territories (A/39/326), reaffirmed the validity of the action taken by the General Assembly to protect the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people in those territories. Israel was depriving an entire people of its right to use freely its natural riches and, in particular, one of the most important natural resources, water. Israel should reverse the changes that it made in the management

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(Mr. Savić, Yugoslavia)

and use of water in the occupied territories. The Yugoslav delegation fully supported Economic and Social Council resolution 1984/56 on assistance to the Palestinian people, particularly paragraph 4 on the need to ensure that economic and social assistance to the occupied Palestinian territories was disbursed only for the benefit of the Palestinian people and was not used in any manner to serve the interests of the Israeli occupying authorities.

18. He noted with satisfaction that the programmes for children and mothers which the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) planned to implement between 1984 and 1987 were currently fully funded. The example of UNICEF should be followed by other organizations of the United Nations system.

19. The Yugoslav delegation also welcomed the programme for the second phase of the Transport and Communications Decade in Africa launched at the Conference of African Ministers of Transport, Communications and Planning, held at Conakry in January and February 1984, and hoped that additional financial resources needed for the implementation of the activities related to the programme would be found.

20. With regard to the special measures for the social and economic development of Africa in the 1980s (A/39/289/Add.1), the African countries were making great efforts to promote their own development and required the support of the international community and, first of all, the inflow of financial resources.

21. It was necessary to implement, both at the national and international levels, the recommendation of the International Conference on Population and the Mexico City Declaration on Population and Development, which elaborated further the World Population Plan of Action, because, although there had been some improvement in the course of the last several years, the demographic situation in the world was still serious. Indeed, population problems were inseparable from the social, economic and political situation and the difficult living conditions, particularly in the developing countries.

22. In its response to the note verbale from the Secretary-General in pursuance of General Assembly resolution A/38/196 on confidence-building in international economic relations, the Government of Yugoslavia had indicated its position on that important question. Confidence-building measures should be an integral part of everyday activities in the implementation of certain principles of international economic relations. At a time when relations of interdependence were increasingly evident, confidence could be built only on the basis of the principles of equitable co-operation and sovereign equality of States. Confidence-building measures must be accompanied by efforts to solve the grave problems of the world economy and, particularly, the economies of the developing countries. Any progress in that direction could not but contribute to the creation of mutual trust.

23. Mr. KUMLIN (Sweden), speaking on behalf of the five Nordic countries, said that he regretted that the Economic and Social Council had not been able, at its previous session, to do much to advance the discussion on the subject of the draft guidelines for consumer protection, and he hoped that the General Assembly, at its current session, would be able to conclude the discussion on the basis of document A/C.2/39/L.2. It was correct to emphasize the responsibilities of the different parties operating in the market-place and the protection of the interests of

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(Mr. Kumlin, Sweden)

consumers. It was also important that consumers and businesses and their respective organizations should ensure that the market performed efficiently and should seek to improve conditions where necessary. It was right that Governments should act to ensure that consumers were protected against abusive behaviour or hazards linked to certain products and to assist them where necessary in upholding their rights.

24. The draft dealt essentially with domestic matters but could have implications for commercial practices at the international level, whether conducted by transnational corporations or by other enterprises trading internationally. The industrialized countries had a responsibility in that area towards developing countries. He recalled General Assembly resolution 37/137 on protection against products harmful to health and the environment, in which the Assembly had requested the Secretary-General to prepare and regularly update a consolidated list of products whose consumption and/or sale had been banned, withdrawn, severely restricted or, in the case of pharmaceuticals, had not been approved by Governments. The Nordic countries welcomed the appearance of the first consolidated list, but believed that practical implementation of the resolution had raised difficulties regarding the harmonization of the information provided and the usefulness of the list. It seemed preferable to give priority, at the current stage, to work on the draft guidelines for consumer protection and revert subsequently to the question of the implementation of resolution 37/137.

25. Mr. KAMALUDDIN (Afghanistan) said that against the background of growing international tension which inevitably had a negative influence on the world economic situation, the Economic and Social Council had adopted a number of constructive resolutions on important issues of international economic relations. It had made a thorough assessment of the world economic situation, underscoring the importance of the promotion of economic and social development, the establishment of a climate of stability and trust necessary for peace and disarmament and questions of international trade and commodities, transnational corporations, science and technology, the special needs of the least developed countries and the pressing critical situation of developing countries.

26. It had indicated that the world political and economic situation had steadily worsened since the previous session of the General Assembly. The world economic crisis was a structural crisis which disrupted national economies and international economic relations and whose effects were aggravated by the measures taken by the capitalist countries to solve their domestic problems without regard for other countries. Blinded by narrow-minded self-interest, they were undermining the very infrastructure of the economies of the developing countries through economic blockade, subversion and destabilization, by exporting an artificial economic crisis, by blocking the flow of financial resources towards the developing countries and by refusing to import commodities and manufactured goods from the latter. In the deliberations of the Council, concern had been expressed about the activities of imperialist circles which were aggravating international tension and accelerating the arms race. In view of the relationship between peace and development, the Council must play a co-ordinating role in the implementation of decisions of the General Assembly on curbing the arms race, reducing tension and redeploying, for the benefit of economic co-operation and the well-being of all, the enormous resources squandered on the arms race and the preparations for war.

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(Mr. Kamaluddin, Afghanistan)

27. The developing countries were very interested in the question of international co-operation, in particular the activities of transnational corporations, imperialist monopolies which misappropriated the natural and other resources of the developing countries, increased the economic dependence of those countries on monopolist capital and interfered openly in the internal affairs of newly freed States. It was therefore urgent to complete the work on the preparation of a comprehensive and integrated code of conduct for transnational corporations.

28. It was very disturbing to note that the implementation of the International Development Strategy for the Third United Nations Development Decade had made very little progress. His delegation urged the Economic and Social Council to invite all donor countries to fulfil their commitments under the International Development Strategy with respect to official development assistance and to apply the principles set forth therein, with a view to removing the inequalities in relations between developed and developing countries, to creating the foundations of a more dynamic, more stable and less vulnerable world economy and to stimulating accelerated economic growth in the developing countries, particularly the least developed countries.

29. His delegation welcomed the adoption of the resolution on assistance to the Palestinian people and on permanent sovereignty over national resources in the occupied Palestinian territories and other Arab territories.

30. The constructive and realistic resolution adopted on the revitalization of the Economic and Social Council was conducive to restoring its role as the central body for policy formulation in economic, social and humanitarian matters. Greater use should be made of the Council as currently structured in order to alleviate the burden on the Second Committee and to give the Council the means to exercise effectively the co-ordinating role assigned to it by the Charter of the United Nations.

31. Mr. ROJAS (Venezuela) said that his delegation had taken note of the first version of the consolidated list of products whose consumption and/or sale had been banned, withdrawn, severely restricted, or in the case of pharmaceuticals, not approved by Governments, published at the end of the previous year. He considered that the list should be published each year, at least in Arabic, English, French and Spanish, and that machinery should be established allowing countries which had terminals direct access to the information contained in it. The usefulness of the list depended largely on the level of detail provided regarding such matters as the regulatory measures, the regulatory context in which such measures were taken, and the health and environmental reasons motivating their adoption. Users should be aware of the jurisdictional limits of the regulatory agency concerned in order to understand the nature of a particular regulation. They should also be able to determine if the measure had been adopted for specific health or environmental reasons or for economic or other reasons. It was also useful to have access to additional technical information on the uses, indications and counter-indications and an evaluation of the potential risks associated with a particular product.

32. The quality of the consolidated list could be further improved by incorporating in it more detailed information. The Secretariat unit concerned should be strengthened accordingly, especially where the handling of scientific,

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(Mr. Rojas, Venezuela)

legal and commercial information was concerned. At the scientific level, it was necessary to make an evaluation of the context in which regulatory action was taken, with particular reference to the risk factor. At the legal level, a more careful analysis of the legal framework of the regulations, which naturally differed from one country to another, was required. As for the commercial aspect of the problem, there was room for a more careful analysis of brand names, as the Secretary-General had pointed out in his report A/39/452.

33. The Secretary-General and the various organs and agencies of the United Nations system should continue to provide any technical co-operation which developing countries might need to create or strengthen national systems for handling relevant information, and the Secretariat should maintain close contact with those systems.

34. His delegation would soon introduce a draft resolution on the question, on behalf of several delegations. The Secretary-General should continue to report every three years to the General Assembly on the implementation of resolutions 37/137 and 38/149.

35. It should be possible, during the current session of the General Assembly, to adopt the draft guidelines for consumer protection, which were directly linked to the question of products harmful to health and the environment.

36. Mr. GALKA (Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic) said that the activities of the Economic and Social Council must create the objective conditions necessary for the development of international economic relations on a just and democratic basis. The mandate conferred on it by the Charter was adequate but had not always been carried out in the best possible way. The principal cause of that phenomenon was not to be sought at the level of the organization of activities. The more than modest results obtained at the second regular session of 1984, after the introduction of the "new methods", were testimony to that. In reality, the principal obstacles remained the absence of political will on the part of certain Western countries and, quite simply, their intention to sabotage the negotiations on questions concerning the restructuring of international economic relations.

37. To revitalize the Council, it was not necessary to disrupt its present structure, to enlarge its composition or to amend the Charter. Efforts should rather be directed to exposing the political, economic and social factors which were really obstructing the establishment of the new international economic order. The Council's annual review of the world economic situation played an important role in that respect. Thus, at the latest session, delegations had stressed the selective nature of the recovery and observed that the economic problems of the South were not automatically rectified by an economic upswing in the North. In fact, the developing countries had, to a large extent, borne the cost of the recovery. That was confirmed by the communiqués recently issued by the Latin American countries at Mar del Plata (A/39/554) and by the non-aligned countries at New York (A/39/560).

38. The problem of the reverse transfer of resources, which had been raised at the United Nations on many occasions, assumed even more perturbing dimensions in the context of the extreme foreign indebtedness of developing countries. That question

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(Mr. Galka, Byelorussian SSR)

should be inscribed on the Council's agenda as a priority item. In that connection, the Byelorussian SSR welcomed the decision of the Commission on Transnational Corporations to study the role of those corporations in investment and in international commercial relations.

39. The report of the Economic and Social Council had rightly stressed the negative effect of political tension on economic relations. Among other negative effects, the acceleration of the arms race engendered by certain imperialist Powers, notably the United States of America, reduced the volume of resources which could be devoted to the development of States. To strengthen their privileged position, imperialist countries were resorting more and more to policies of coercion and diktat, including in the economic sphere, which was contrary to international law. In that context, the implementation of General Assembly resolution 38/196, concerning confidence-building in international economic relations, had received well-deserved attention at the second regular session of the Council. It was the opinion of the Byelorussian SSR that the Council could help to identify harmful economic practices which were employed to exert economic pressure on States. By condemning those practices, the United Nations would contribute to the normalization of intergovernmental economic relations and to the implementation of the provisions of the Charter of Economic Rights and Duties of States, the Declaration and Programme of Action on the Establishment of a New International Economic Order and the International Development Strategy for the Third United Nations Development Decade. It appeared, unfortunately, that certain powerful Western countries were not always disposed to enter into serious dialogue on this point. At the second regular session, the socialist countries had pointed out that confidence, détente, international security and peaceful co-operation, far from being a gift reserved for the socialist and developing countries alone, were equally necessary and advantageous for all States, including those of the West. His delegation, which completely shared that view, invited all members of the Second Committee to take stock of that reality.

40. The fact that the Economic and Social Council had not been able to reach a decision to continue work on a code of conduct on transnational corporations was extremely worrying. What was happening was that certain Western countries were trying to prevent the adoption of a code in order to protect the interests of transnational corporations and allow them to make maximum profits in the developing countries. Turning the question upside down, the representatives of Western countries had cited the "necessity" of re-establishing confidence between those corporations and the countries in which they operated. Clearly, those countries had no need to improve their credibility vis-à-vis the transnational corporations. It was the corporations which had discredited themselves by interfering in the internal affairs of States and tapping national resources. By making such a proposal, the interested parties were trying once more to sabotage work on the code of conduct. His delegation urged the continuation of that work and considered that the package proposed by the Chairman of the Special session provided a realistic basis in that respect.

41. Byelorussia supported the resolutions of the tenth regular session of the Commission on Transnational Corporations, adopted at the second regular session of the Council under the heading "Organization of public hearings on the activities of

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transnational corporations in South Africa and Namibia" (1983/75) and "Activities of transnational corporations in South Africa and Namibia and their collaboration with the racist minority régime in South Africa" (1983/74). In that context, it underlined the necessity of strictly enforcing the provision for the establishment of a committee to prepare public hearings on the activities of transnational corporations in South Africa and Namibia.

42. The Byelorussian SSR was also convinced that the Council's resolutions on the implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples by the specialized agencies and international institutions associated with the United Nations (1984/55) and on assistance to the Palestinian people (1984/56) should be implemented in full. It had already been pointed out that the report of the Secretary-General submitted in conformity with resolution 38/144 lacked sufficient data and an adequate analysis of Israel's illegal activities. More in-depth investigations should be carried out on that subject. The primary obstacle to a settlement in the Middle East remained the policy of aggression and expansion which Israel pursued against the Palestinians and the other Arab peoples, with no regard for their inalienable rights. The best way of reaching a just and comprehensive settlement in the region was to implement the constructive proposals made by the Soviet Union and, to that end, to convene an international conference on the Middle East.

43. In conclusion, he noted that the United States representatives on the Second Committee had referred to the situation of certain countries in order to justify their opposition to the establishment of a new international economic order. That other peoples should select and establish the economic and social systems of their choice was distasteful to those representatives. Their refusal to recognize the right of all peoples to do so, which had been enshrined in article 1 of the two International Covenants on Human Rights, was one of the factors that accounted for their benevolent attitude towards the Israeli expansionists, the South African racists and those who practised State terrorism. That was how the United States representatives viewed freedom, and it was that freedom which they wished to foster.

44. Mr. GOUDIMA (Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic) said that the gravity of international economic problems could not be dissociated from the poisoning of the political atmosphere by imperialist forces, a phenomenon which had caused a breakdown in international economic relations, compromised co-operation among States under mutually advantageous conditions and reinforced protectionism and other discriminatory practices.

45. At its most recent session, the Economic and Social Council had stressed the need for Member States to take concerted action in addressing the current world economic and social situation, in particular the persisting critical situation of developing countries. It had also recognized the importance for the promotion of economic and social development of the maintenance of world peace and disarmament in a stable and confident world climate.

46. In connection with the part of the Council's report dealing with the report of the Secretary-General on confidence-building in international economic relations, he commended the initiative of the Polish People's Republic, which had submitted a

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working paper on that important question (A/C.2/39/2). The paper which contained an in-depth analysis of questions relating to confidence-building in international economic relations, also touched on the main trends in the world economy. International economic co-operation could be revived only if there were peace, détente and disarmament and only if each State observed scrupulously the principles of equal rights, respect for sovereignty and non-interference in internal affairs. The current absence of those conditions was the fault of imperialist circles which did not wish to see their policies of discrimination, blackmail, threats, blockade and economic sanctions questioned. The United Nations must give urgent attention to the preparation of practical measures to revive international economic co-operation.

47. A basis for such measures could be found in the Declaration entitled "Maintenance of peace and international economic co-operation" which the member countries of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance had adopted in Moscow in June 1984. That Declaration set forth a list of measures designed, inter alia, to banish all forms of exploitation, to establish scientific and technical co-operation, to eliminate discrimination, artificial obstacles to commercial relations and unequal terms of trade, and to reorganize financial and monetary relations. If all those measures were put into effect, international economic co-operation could be revived and international peace and security strengthened.

48. As the principal United Nations organ for the co-ordination of international economic and social co-operation, the Economic and Social Council must promote recognition of the legitimate rights of all peoples to independent economic development. The resolutions on assistance to the Palestinian people (1984/56), permanent sovereignty over national resources in the occupied Palestinian and other Arab territories (1984/181) and the living conditions of the Palestinian people in the occupied Palestinian territories (1984/173) corresponded to that objective.

49. It was deeply disappointing to see that, because of the obstructionism of the major Western countries, which were unwilling to accept regulation of the activities of their monopolies, it had been impossible to complete the formulation of a code of conduct on transnational corporations. Those countries were seeking to distort the original purpose of the draft and to make the latter serve the interests of transnational corporations by demanding the establishment of a special régime under which those corporations would be outside the jurisdiction of the host countries. As a result, it had been impossible to reach agreement on the most important problems, namely, the formulation of objectives, the scope of application and the régime applicable to transnational corporations in the host countries.

50. Nevertheless, work on the code of conduct must be brought to a successful conclusion as rapidly as possible if international economic relations were to be normalized and the interests of the developing countries protected. To that end, the package proposed by the Chairman of the special session of the Commission on Transnational Corporations should be adopted.

51. His delegation supported the resolutions on the activities of transnational corporations in South Africa and Namibia (1984/53) and the organization of public hearings on the activities of transnational corporations in South Africa (1984/52).

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52. The recommendations which had emerged from the International Conference on Population and the Mexico City Declaration on Population and Development were encouraging and would help to raise living standards and promote development on a just and rational basis. The Conference had also recognized the effects of social and economic change on demographic trends and the close correlation between peace-keeping and disarmament problems and population and development issues.

53. With regard to the revitalization of the Economic and Social Council (decision 1984/L77), its role as co-ordinator of the activities of United Nations social and economic bodies should be strengthened. However, the quality of its work could be enhanced, not by modifying its structure or by increasing its membership, but rather by taking advantage of all the possibilities offered by the relevant provisions of the United Nations Charter and by inviting the Council to focus its attention on the vital problems posed by the reorganization of international economic relations.

54. Mr. DUNN (United Kingdom), recalling that the representative of Ireland had already spoken on item 12 on behalf of the members of the European Economic Community (EEC), said that he would simply make a number of comments regarding the Population Conference, which had had the merit of demonstrating what had been achieved since the adoption of the World Population Plan of Action at Bucharest, and on programme planning.

55. Population issues and economic and social progress were inextricably linked, as was recognized by an increasing number of Governments, which accordingly were making them an integral part of development planning. The world population, which currently stood at 4.76 billion, was expected to increase by 89 million annually by the end of the century. Ninety per cent of that growth occurred in the developing countries, and the most highly populated of those countries had the largest proportion of poor people. That put severe pressure on land resources, and Governments faced an increasingly heavier burden when it came to providing social services.

56. His country recognized the importance of work undertaken in support of the national plans of developing countries and, intended, subject to Parliamentary approval, substantially to increase its contributions in the coming months to specialized international organizations working in the population field.

57. Referring to the role of the United Nations system in that field, he wished to comment in particular on recommendation 83 adopted at the Mexico Conference. The recommendation requested the Secretary-General to submit a report to the General Assembly on strengthening the United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA). The Fund could play a vital role in making countries aware of the fact that population was a critical aspect of development and in translating that awareness into programmes and projects. Such a report would indeed be timely.

58. It was to be hoped that the study in question - which need not be lengthy and could be prepared within existing resources - would be undertaken without delay and that its preparation would be entrusted to a group of independent experts who would draw on the valuable experience of UNFPA, the Population Commission, the Population Division and the specialized agencies. The study should assess the performance and

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(Mr. Dunn, United Kingdom)

effectiveness of each body, in the context of its mandate, in the following areas: demographic research, policy formulation, financial support and technical assistance for population activities. It was not a matter of changing the existing system, but of making recommendations to help the system work more smoothly. The areas of work covered by the bodies concerned overlapped in some respects, but they were separate and should remain so. Furthermore, a balance should be maintained between statistical analysis and operational activities.

59. On various occasions his delegation had mentioned the importance it attached to effective planning and co-ordination of programmes; it accordingly welcomed Economic and Social Council resolution 1984/61, and particularly the recommendation contained in part A, section VI, paragraph 7. It was essential that the mandates entrusted to the United Nations system be duly discharged. That called for an adequately serviced Committee for Programme and Co-ordination whose decisions were implemented. Within the Secretariat, planning and co-ordination functions must be discharged with sufficient energy to ensure that they were respected and effective. Under General Assembly resolution 38/227, the Secretary-General was to have reported at the thirty-ninth session on measures to strengthen the Secretariat services responsible for programme planning, follow-up and evaluation. The Secretariat had not discharged its task satisfactorily. Consultations with delegations had been initiated in June 1974 on the basis of an informal document. The United Kingdom and the members of EEC had responded negatively to the proposals made, as had the Group of 77. Apparently the reaction of the Eastern European countries was positive.

60. His delegation had therefore heard with interest the statement by the Secretary-General at the 13th meeting of the Fifth Committee to the effect that consultations with all the parties concerned, in particular Member States, had shown that there was no need for structural change and that the only measures to be taken were those designed to ensure greater functional integration by strengthening and centralizing functions of evaluation and monitoring of programme delivery and by consolidating support for the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination and the role of the Programme Planning and Budgeting Board. However, it seemed that new proposals were being made and the Secretariat was apparently planning to initiate another series of consultations. The United Kingdom would participate very actively in them. In any event, it hoped that the Committee was fully aware of the implications which solidly structured reforms would have for its work. It also hoped that, before taking any decisions affecting the proposals involved or any proposal that might subsequently be made, the Secretariat would take due account of the views expressed in the Committee and during the consultations.

61. Mrs. FANG Ping (China) said she welcomed the results of the Mexico Conference and believed that the documents adopted at the Conference would have a far-reaching impact as, in the future, they would facilitate a better understanding and resolution of problems in the population field.

62. Because the close link between the population factor and other social and economic factors had been increasingly recognized since the Bucharest Conference, the population factor had become an important component of development strategies. While it went without saying that the policies adopted varied from country to

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(Mrs. Fang Ping, China)

country, depending on their population situation, for the majority of the developing countries the task of reducing the population growth rate and maintaining a balance between population growth and economic growth certainly remained a serious challenge.

63. Duly aware of the diversity of social and economic circumstances and of demographic problems, the Mexico Conference had established the principle of respect for each country's sovereign right to formulate, adopt and implement policies of its own that best met its needs and promoted the well-being of its people.

64. In a socialist country such as China, with a large population and an underdeveloped economy, in order to accelerate and sustain economic and social development population growth must be controlled and planned. Since 1979, coinciding with more rapid economic growth, solid achievements had been made to that end, and China was striving to perfect a policy with a view to keeping its population under 1.2 billion by the end of the century.

65. Africa was blessed with abundant human and natural resources and the prospects for its development were very good, but prolonged colonial rule and the current unfavourable international situation had left it with a shortage of infrastructures, technical expertise and funds. To ensure the success of measures designed to foster self-reliance, and to radically transform the prevailing economic and social conditions, political support and economic assistance from the international community were indispensable for Africa. The effort by the United Nations system apparent from the report prepared by the Secretary-General pursuant to General Assembly resolution 38/199 (A/39/289) was contributing to that development. It was therefore gratifying to note that the Conference of Ministers of the Economic Commission for Africa had approved the plan of action for the second phase of the Transport and Communications Decade in Africa, which was of the utmost importance for a continent which had land-locked countries and where communications among people and trade were severely restricted. The evaluation of the programme implemented during the first phase should make it possible to avoid certain problems in the future.

66. At its summer session, the Economic and Social Council had devoted a great deal of time to development in Africa, but the consideration of that priority issue had failed to produce positive results. The issue was justifiably the object of a separate agenda item at the thirty-ninth session of the General Assembly, and it was to be hoped that the discussion would lead to concerted action.

67. The developing countries in Asia and the Pacific had also been seriously harmed by the world economic crisis and its consequences, including the rise of protectionism, the drop in commodity prices and the worsening of conditions for the transfer of technology. Their infrastructures were vulnerable, and that explained why resolution 236 (XL) of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific declaring the years 1985-1994 to be the Transport and Communications Decade for Asia and the Pacific and Economic and Social Council resolution 1984/78 on the same subject were particularly welcome. The countries concerned now counted on the effective support of the international community and the competent agencies and organizations in the United Nations system.

(Mrs. Fang Ping, China)

68. Every year the General Assembly considered the situation of the Palestinian people and in 1983, in resolution 38/144, it had again condemned the policies and practices of the Israeli authorities in the occupied territories. It had been learned with regret that the authorities had denied access to those territories to the team of experts sent by the Secretary-General to investigate the situation directly. The resolutions of the United Nations, and hence the will of the international community, had thus been flouted.

69. The Chinese Government had consistently upheld the principle of the sovereignty of each people over its natural and other resources. By illegally exploiting those resources in the occupied territories, Israel was denying that right to the Palestinians and to the Arab population. It must therefore be stopped immediately. China also supported the struggle of peoples under colonial, racist or expansionist domination. Israel's policy of aggression, pillage, harassment and disruption of cultural life violated other fundamental rights of the Palestinians, for whom the Chinese Government and people felt profound sympathy. They supported their struggle for the restoration of their lawful national rights, including their right to return to their homeland, and were doing their utmost to render them moral support and material assistance. They believed that the United Nations should take concrete and effective steps to increase assistance to the Palestinian people and help them to recover their rights under conditions of full equality.

70. By preventing or removing the negative impact of the activities of transnational corporations, the code of conduct which was in the difficult process of elaboration would serve the world economy and contribute particularly to the economic development of the developing countries. At its most recent session, the Commission on Transnational Corporations had been unable to complete its work because of the inflexibility of a few developed countries. China maintained that the draft should be adopted by consensus on the basis of the proposals put forward in 1983 by the Chairman of the special session. Despite setbacks the area of agreement held firm. China was prepared to co-operate with the Group of 77 and all delegations of good will and also expected the recalcitrant developed countries to show better faith.

71. For various reasons, the Economic and Social Council had been unable to achieve many positive results at its second regular session in 1984. Nevertheless, the consultations held and the proposal concerning the biennial plan of work for the Second Committee had made it possible to take a step towards revitalizing the Council. That proposal, if adopted by the General Assembly, would enable the Committee to perform its task more effectively and reduce overlapping, but the Council could not really be reactivated without tangible progress in the consideration of the substantive issues on the agenda. The Committee could count on the full co-operation of her delegation.

72. Mr. AHMED (Pakistan) commented on the reasons why the second regular session of the Economic and Social Council of 1984 had been disappointing.

73. Because of excessive politicization, the Council had not managed to agree on the priority question before it, namely, the economic crisis in Africa.

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(Mr. Kolev, Bulgaria)

be achieved only by means of the mechanisms of the free-market economy, thus ignoring the role of the public sector. The motives behind such attempts were well known: to prevent, at all costs, management of the economy by the State in order to protect the interests of privately-owned foreign companies - in effect, to impede the economic decolonization of developing countries. The Economic and Social Council could and should help the latter to strengthen their public sectors, in accordance with United Nations resolutions and the programme set forth in the documents on the new international economic order. In that respect, the question of the role of qualified national personnel in social and economic development was still open and it was regrettable that the Secretariat had not yet submitted the report requested by the General Assembly in resolution 37/228.

86. Bulgaria attached particular importance to the implementation by the organs and specialized agencies of the United Nations system of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples. His delegation therefore commended the adoption by the Council of resolution 1984/55.

87. Bulgaria tirelessly supported the heroic struggle waged by the Arab people of Palestine to exercise their inalienable rights, including rights to natural resources, and rejected attempts to solve the Palestinian problem at the expense of other Arab countries. Only the convening of a special international conference on the Middle East with the participation of all parties concerned, including PLO, the sole legitimate representative of the Arab people of Palestine, could lead to a lasting settlement. His delegation considered that Economic and Social Council resolution 1984/56, on assistance to the Palestinian people, should have called for the withdrawal of foreign forces from occupied Arab territories and the exercise by Arab peoples of their rights over their own territories.

88. His delegation recognized that the restructuring of the economic and social sectors of the United Nations system and the "revitalization" of the Economic and Social Council were important. Nevertheless, it did not think that those objectives required endless reforming of existing structures; rather, attempts should be made to improve and rationalize them. The Council should seek to exploit fully the mandate conferred upon it by the Charter, while budget resources should be used in a more rational manner. Irrespective of what solutions were adopted, activities should focus on the establishment of a new international economic order and the strengthening of co-operation.

89. On the question of population, his delegation considered that the outcome of the Mexico City Conference had generally been positive. It noted with satisfaction that the Conference had adopted a global approach to population problems and that it had included a section in its final document (E/CONF.76/19) on the relationship between the questions of peace, disarmament and population problems.

The meeting rose at 6.10 p.m.

(Mr. Ahmed, Pakistan)

74. The agenda items had not been thoroughly discussed because consultations on the review and appraisal of the International Development Strategy had been held simultaneously with the session. It would have been less regrettable had the consultations achieved any positive results, but they had not.

75. In adopting routine resolutions, the Council had not made progress on any of the items considered, except for those dealing with the biennial programme of work of the Second Committee. It could only be hoped that the exercise would be concluded at the current session of the General Assembly.

76. The only glimmer of hope in the matter of international co-operation came from the Conference on Population, the holding of which had, however, been greeted by some with scepticism. It was hoped that the results achieved there would lead to a strengthening of UNFPA, which should be given organizational support and increased resources.

77. The draft guidelines on consumer protection had been the subject of much controversy, and he wondered why. One delegation was surprised that some Member States had not responded to the questionnaire sent out by the Secretariat; but how, unless it was a matter of delaying tactics, could it be argued on the one hand that consumer protection was the responsibility not of Governments but of the private sector, and on the other hand, that the Governments of many developing countries were guilty of obstructionism, as they had not submitted comments on a draft with which they were unfamiliar? Another delegation had objected, not that the draft failed to protect the consumer in a balanced way, but that it did so too well. Still another delegation took exception to enabling the international community to benefit from the experience of a country whose legislation favoured the consumer and which was therefore a leader in that area. What was there to say, except to hope that the General Assembly would reject an attitude which could be described almost as hypocritical?

78. The code of conduct on transnational corporations had been marking time for eight years. Would the outstanding problems be resolved in 1985? A reconvening of the special session would be most useful in that connection, but it must be well prepared through intensive consultations with the Bureau, which would confirm the points of agreement, and through a comprehensive study of the outstanding issues.

79. The Committee for Development Planning was doing very useful work and the General Assembly, through the Economic and Social Council, should put it to better use. In that connection the procedure initiated by the President of the Council with respect to informal exchanges of views with the Chairman of the Committee was to be welcomed, and he hoped that the practice would be incorporated in the regular programme of work of the Council. The latter might in the future submit to the General Assembly specific recommendations based on the suggestions of the Committee. The recommendation made by the President of the Council with respect to the programme of work of the Committee (resolution 1984/83) was also very useful.

80. The reports of the Secretary-General on products harmful to health and the environment (A/39/452) and on the exchange of information on banned hazardous chemicals and unsafe pharmaceutical products (A/39/290) should be carefully considered in the weeks to come and decisions which would assist Member States to

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(Mr. Ahmed, Pakistan)

develop appropriate legislation and to strengthen the activities of the United Nations system in that area should be adopted.

81. In conclusion, he expressed his Government's concern over the suffering inflicted on the Palestinian people, whose fundamental rights had been flouted by the Israeli occupation. He hoped that the United Nations would redouble its efforts to help them in every area, in accordance with the resolutions and decisions adopted.

82. Mr. KOLEV (Bulgaria) stressed the importance of the efforts made by the Economic and Social Council, as a principal organ of the United Nations in the field of economic and social activities, for the restructuring of international economic relations on a just and democratic basis.

83. He commended the resolutions adopted by the Council at its latest session on the Charter of Economic Rights and Duties of States, implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, assistance to the Palestinian people, and the activities of transnational corporations in South Africa and Namibia, and its decision on the review and analysis of agrarian reform and rural development. He noted, however, that the Council had been unable to reach agreement and adopt constructive decisions and resolutions on a number of substantive issues, including the critical economic situation in Africa, trade and external debts, and solutions to the grave economic situation of the developing countries, which were of interest to the vast majority of Member States, particularly the developing countries. The work of the Council had suffered from a resurgence of political tension, precipitated by aggressive Western circles, and the continuing economic crisis in certain countries. Urgent measures should be taken to overcome the dangerous turn of events in international relations and to create conditions conducive to solving international economic and social problems. The Economic and Social Council had a significant role to play in creating a climate of confidence in international economic relations. As indicated in the working paper submitted by Poland (A/C.2/39/2), such relations should be based on the principles of equality, non-discrimination and mutual advantage and the strengthening of peace and security in the world.

84. Bulgaria, which attached particular importance to the Council's work concerning the activities of transnational corporations, was of the opinion that the resolutions and decision adopted on that subject at the second regular session (1984/52, 1984/53 and 1984/163) could greatly assist the developing countries in their efforts to limit the negative effects of the activities of transnational corporations on their economies. The elaboration of a code of conduct was of overriding importance in that regard. The drafting of the Code could be completed on the basis of the "package" proposal made by the Chairman and the Rapporteur of the Commission on Transnational Corporations at its special session (E/1983/17/Rev.1, annex IV), which reflected the position of the majority of countries concerned.

85. His delegation had already had the opportunity to express its position regarding the attempts to assert that the advancement of developing countries could

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