



ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL

Forty-eighth Session
OFFICIAL RECORDS

Friday, 27 March 1970,
at 10.55 a.m.

NEW YORK

President: Mr. J. B. P. MARAMIS (Indonesia).

In the absence of the President, Mr. Driss (Tunisia), Vice-President, took the Chair.

AGENDA ITEM 6

Mobilization of public opinion in developed and developing countries regarding the United Nations Development Decade (concluded) (E/4784 and Add.1/Rev.1; E/L.1303)

1. Mr. ZAKHAROV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) observed that in their statements made at the 1661st meeting of the Council, the Director of the Centre for Economic and Social Information and the Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs had failed to mention one very important matter. The Centre had been established in 1968 under the Office of Public Information (OPI), in pursuance of Economic and Social Council resolution 1357 (XLV). In the course of the twenty-fourth session of the General Assembly, certain delegations had held consultations with a view to securing a decision by the Assembly to transfer the Centre from OPI to the Department of Economic and Social Affairs. Although their efforts had not received the requisite support, despite pressure from certain delegations concerned with the financing of the Centre's work, the transfer had actually taken place at the beginning of 1970. His delegation considered that the transfer violated General Assembly resolution 595 (VI) on public information activities, in which the Assembly had approved the basic principles formulated by the Sub-Committee¹ responsible for preparing a report on public information. One of those principles had been that the "responsibility for the formulation and execution of information policy should be vested in the Secretary-General and under him in the Assistant Secretary-General in charge of the Department of Public Information". His delegation believed that the inadequacies in the work of the Centre, as reflected in the criticism levelled against it by a number of delegations, were due to the fact that it had been placed under the jurisdiction of the wrong department. He would like to hear the views of the representative of the Secretary-General on that matter.

2. Mr. DE SEYNES (Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs) said that the question of the organizational affiliation of the Centre had been the subject of lengthy discussions in the Secretariat. It had been the Secretary-General himself who, after consultation with the heads of departments concerned, namely, the Office of Public Information, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the Office of Legal Affairs, had finally

taken the decision to transfer the Centre to the Department of Economic and Social Affairs. It had been felt that, from the administrative point of view, the Centre would thus be in a better position to serve the various bodies in the United Nations system which were concerned with economic and social matters. It would have freedom of action in undertaking the new tasks incumbent on it, while maintaining close relations with OPI, whose assistance was essential to its activities.

3. Mr. ZAKHAROV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that the statement by the Under-Secretary-General failed to convince his delegation of the correctness of the decision to transfer the Centre. The decision was a political rather than an administrative one and violated the provisions of General Assembly resolution 595 (VI).

The meeting was suspended at 11.10 a.m. and resumed at 11.35 a.m.

4. Mr. TODOROV (Bulgaria) said that his delegation supported the view of the USSR representative concerning the decision to transfer the Centre for Economic and Social Information to the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, in violation of General Assembly resolution 595 (VI). The transfer was one of the results of the policy of the Secretariat, which tended to expand the administrative apparatus and thus increase the expenditure of the Organization. If that dangerous trend were not halted, every department might call for the establishment of an information centre.

5. Mr. AKRAM (Pakistan) said that he would like to have a clear indication from the Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs of how the administrative process would be enhanced by the separation of the Centre for Economic and Social Information from OPI.

6. Mr. AYOUB (Tunisia), as one of the sponsors of draft resolution E/L.1303, introduced an amendment to which the sponsors had agreed with a view to making the text more acceptable to delegations. In accordance with the amendment, the word "observations" in operative paragraph 1 would be replaced by the words "comments and reservations" and the words "by members of" would be replaced by the word "in". Operative paragraph 2 would remain unchanged, but the sponsors had decided to add a third operative paragraph which would read:

"3. *Requests* the Committee for the Twenty-fifth Anniversary of the United Nations to take into account in its future deliberations the decisions of the Preparatory Committee for the Second United Nations Development Decade on the procedure for the launching of the Decade."

¹ See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Sixth Session, Annexes*, agenda item 41, document A/C.5/L.172.

7. The wording of the preambular paragraph should be understood to mean not that the sponsors were in complete agreement with every paragraph of the Secretary-General's report but simply that they appreciated the efforts of the Secretariat in preparing the report.

8. Mr. BRADLEY (Argentina) said that, in view of the interpretation which the Tunisian representative had given of the words "with appreciation" in the preambular paragraph, his delegation would have no difficulty in voting for the draft resolution. Like the Tunisian delegation, it understood the preambular paragraph to mean simply that the Economic and Social Council was satisfied with the work done by the Secretariat in preparing the report, although it did not agree with every detail of the report itself.

9. Mr. ALLEN (United Kingdom) said that his delegation, too, as one of the sponsors of the draft resolution, supported the Tunisian representative's interpretation of the words "with appreciation".

10. With regard to the question of the organizational affiliation of the Centre for Economic and Social Information, his delegation regarded the decision to move the Centre from OPI to the Department of Economic and Social Affairs as one fully within the responsibility and discretion of the Secretary-General. He would, however, carefully study the resolution and report to which the USSR representative had referred.

11. Mr. HASSAN (Sudan) said that his delegation had such serious reservations on the preambular paragraph of draft resolution E/L.1303 that it would normally abstain in the vote on it; however, since the draft resolution was sponsored by many developing countries, it would, in order to indicate its appreciation of their efforts, merely refrain from taking part in the vote.

12. Mr. ABDELMOUTI (Chad) said that his delegation took the same position as the Sudanese delegation.

13. Mr. KITI (Kenya) also supported the position of the representative of Sudan, adding that, had the sponsors of the draft resolution consulted all delegations before submitting or amending their text, they might have been able to submit a satisfactory text at the outset.

14. Mr. AYOUB (Tunisia) expressed regret that his delegation, being a small one, had found it impossible to consult all delegations.

15. Mr. TODOROV (Bulgaria) said that if his delegation had not taken part in the discussion of the item before the Council, it was not because it underestimated the role which public opinion and the working masses could play in the development of a country, but because it considered the item to be of such great importance that the Council should neither discuss nor take decisions on it prematurely. In his view, public opinion could be mobilized only on clear and well-defined subjects of direct concern to the people, not on something that did not exist.

16. Although there was general agreement that public opinion could play an important role in attaining the goals

of development, confusion existed on many important points and there were contradictions in the reports before the Council. For example, there was a question as to the subject on which international public opinion was to be mobilized. Was it the strategy of the Development Decade or the Development Decade itself? Those were two quite different matters. Or was it neither the strategy nor the Development Decade but each country's economic and social development plan? Was it the commitments to be undertaken by the developed countries or was it the marshalling of the natural and human resources of the developing countries? What opinion was to be mobilized: public opinion in the developing countries or individual opinion in the capitalist countries? Were the activities envisaged to be considered a domestic affair of each sovereign State or the particular responsibility of the United Nations Centre for Economic and Social Information? According to Economic and Social Council resolution 1357 (XLV), the programme of action by which such mobilization of public opinion could be achieved should be part of the international development strategy.

17. It seemed to him that an effort to mobilize public opinion in any predetermined way would be contrary to the spirit of the United Nations and its Charter. It would be difficult to draw the line between such activity and propaganda in favour of a particular economic and social system.

18. In view of the doubts which his delegation entertained with respect to the item, it had refrained from taking part in the discussion and would abstain in the vote on the draft resolution. It would comment on the addendum to the report (E/4784/Add.1/Rev.1) in connexion with agenda item 9.

19. Mr. PRAGUE (France) said that his delegation would vote in favour of the draft resolution. It considered that the words "taking note with appreciation" meant exactly what they said and that the organizational affiliation of the Centre was a matter to be decided by the Secretary-General.

20. Mr. ZAKHAROV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) pointed out that the words "to take account" in operative paragraph 1 of the English text of draft resolution E/L.1303 were not properly translated into Russian.

21. Because of the Tunisian representative's explanation of how the sponsors interpreted the words "taking note with appreciation" in the preambular paragraph, his delegation would now be able to abstain in the vote on the draft resolution.

22. Although General Assembly resolution 595 (VI) was a very early one, it had not been superseded and was therefore binding on the Secretariat. If, under that resolution, responsibility for the formulation and implementation of information policy was to be borne by the Secretary-General and the Under-Secretary-General for Public Information, the transfer of the Centre for Economic and Social Information to the jurisdiction of the Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs was a violation of that resolution.

23. Mr. OLDS (United States of America) said that the Council should take up the jurisdictional question raised by the Soviet Union representative only after it had had an opportunity to consult its archives and obtain legal advice.

24. With regard to the draft resolution, he felt that the words "with appreciation" in the preambular paragraph meant only that the Council appreciated the efforts of the Secretariat; if the sponsors had wished to express approval of the report, they would have used the words "with approval". The fact that the report was controversial was clearly shown by operative paragraph 1.

25. With regard to the statement made by the Bulgarian representative, he thought that all Member States agreed that it was of critical importance that resources should be made available for the Second Development Decade. The campaign to mobilize public opinion in favour of the Second United Nations Development Decade was intended to draw attention to the fact that, in the final analysis, all countries depended upon the understanding and support of their citizens. The resolution was merely designed to secure public support for the efforts to be made by all Governments in connexion with the Second Development Decade.

26. Mr. BRADLEY (Argentina) said that the difficulties which some delegations had with the draft resolution seemed to arise from an apparent contradiction between the words "with appreciation" in the preambular paragraph and the word "reservations" in the amendment proposed by the sponsors to operative paragraph 1. He therefore proposed that the words "with appreciation" should be deleted from the preambular paragraph. The support expressed by some delegations for the report of the

Secretary-General (E/4784 and Add.1/Rev.1) was in any case reflected in the summary records.

27. Mr. AKWEI (Ghana) supported the amendment proposed by the representative of Argentina.

28. Mr. AYOUB (Tunisia), speaking on behalf of the sponsors, said that they accepted the Argentine amendment. The interpretation of the preamble which he had set forth in an earlier statement was still valid.

29. Mr. BRADLEY (Argentina) thanked the sponsors for accepting his amendment and expressed his desire to be included among the sponsors of the draft resolution.

30. Mr. HASSAN (Sudan) said that, as a result of the Argentine amendment, his delegation wished to withdraw the reservations which it had expressed concerning the draft resolution. It would vote in favour of the text on the understanding that the interpretation given by the Tunisian delegation still applied.

31. Mr. KITI (Kenya) and Mr. ABDELMOUTI (Chad) said that, in view of the Argentine amendment, their delegations would vote in favour of the draft resolution.

32. The PRESIDENT invited the Council to vote on draft resolution E/L.1303, as amended by the sponsors.

Draft resolution E/L.1303, as amended, was adopted by 23 votes to none, with 2 abstentions.

The meeting rose at 12.50 p.m.