



ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL

Resumed Forty-eighth Session

OFFICIAL RECORDS

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at 11 a.m.

NEW YORK

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

AGENDA ITEM 12

Work programme of the United Nations in the economic, social and human rights fields (*continued*) (E/4787, E/4793 and Corr.1-4, E/4793 (annex), E/4837 and Corr.1 and Add.1, E/4846 and Add.1 and 2, Add.3/Corr.1, Add.4-15; E/L.1312, E/L.1318)

1. Mr. GUPTA (India) announced that Norway, along with Brazil and India, was sponsoring draft resolution E/L.1318 which he submitted to the Council.

2. The third preambular paragraph referred to resolutions adopted by the Council in previous years on the work programme. The fourth preambular paragraph referred to the specific instructions received by the Council and the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination with regard to programme formulation and the planning estimates to be submitted to the General Assembly. The idea behind the fifth preambular paragraph was that the work programme should take account of the aims and objectives of the Second United Nations Development Decade. The sixth preambular paragraph was an exhortation to the Secretariat to improve the processes of programme formulation and implementation, for the sponsors felt that in spite of the voluminous documentation studied each year it was impossible to see how the decisions of the Economic and Social Council were put into action. The seventh and eighth preambular paragraphs were concerned with long-term planning and an integrated approach to the work programme and budget which had been under discussion for years without any really notable progress.

3. In the operative part of the draft, paragraph 2 was based on the idea that in accordance with General Assembly resolution 2370 (XXII) the Council had to take a decision concerning the programme submitted by the Secretary-General, but it also took into account the discussions on planning estimates held the previous year in the Fifth Committee from which it appeared that the Council had to take a decision on the work programme in order not to upset the work of the Fifth Committee. Paragraph 4 concerned certain observations made by the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination, which were not covered in paragraph 2, such as that Committee's observations on UNCTAD and on housing, building and planning. Paragraph 6 was concerned with long-term planning. Although many offices had responded to the calls made to them to formulate long-term plans, some had failed to do so. The second part of that paragraph was aimed especially at the Resources and Transport Division, which had not yet formulated a long-term plan on grounds that only a very limited part of its programme lent itself to

such planning. Paragraph 7 was an attempt to help the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination to define priorities. That was a problem which arose constantly since whenever the relationship between programme and budget was discussed, priorities had to be determined; it was difficult to do that on the basis of the existing documentation. It was therefore necessary to have an explicit statement of the objectives of the programmes and projects and of the relationship between individual projects and the objectives of the over-all programmes. Paragraph 8 concerned documentation. In recent years the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination had succeeded in obtaining better documentation from the Secretariat; however, more information was needed. Paragraph 9 dealt with the translation of the work programme into budgetary terms in that process; the observations of the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination should not be overlooked or the work programme altered. Paragraph 10 was aimed at establishing an organic relationship between the programming and budgeting bodies. Paragraph 11 concerned the report on programming and budgets in the United Nations family of organizations.¹ CPC had been unable to consider it at its fifth session since it had not received the comments of the Secretary-General or of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions. If it could have those comments in the near future, it could hold a three-day session in June (see E/4846/Add.11, para. 31) or in September (*ibid.*, para. 39).

4. Mr. OLDS (United States of America) said that its consideration of the work programme gave the Council an opportunity to carry out the four basic functions ascribed to it by the Charter of the United Nations, namely, the organic function of defining the basic objectives of the Organization in the economic and social spheres; the organizational function of establishing new bodies and formulating recommendations to guide and co-ordinate the activities of all existing and newly-established bodies; the regulatory function of convening conferences and laying down standards and principles; and, finally, the supervisory function of seeing to it that the policies adopted were implemented.

5. The first of the four parts of the Secretary-General's report (E/4793 and Corr.1-4) concerned planning, which implied a general review, a sectoral review and a budgetary review.

6. The general review concerned the co-ordination of the work of legislative organs of the United Nations and the specialized agencies. Their integration had not been achieved, and he therefore saw the problem confronting the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination. The difficulty of the task of the Economic and Social Council lay in the fact that it dealt with components which, by virtue of

¹ Document A/7822, annex.

the sectoral structure of the United Nations system, were vertically oriented, while the problems facing the Council had to be viewed horizontally. The problem of the human environment belonged to no sector, and the same was true of the problem of the transfer of science and technology and the question of family planning. Virtually none of the urgent problems of the Second United Nations Development Decade was of a sectoral nature, although the over-all structure of the United Nations system was sectorally conceived. The Council therefore had to take factors which were moulded by the various sectors of the system and vertically construed, assimilate them and rephrase them so that they could be approached from the horizontal viewpoint of programme planning.

7. Where its sectoral review was concerned, the Council's functions required that it should exercise an influence over the priorities of the specialized agencies; however, no machinery was provided for that purpose. Instead of playing a role in formulating the policies of organizations in the United Nations system, to the extent that such a role was authorized, the Council merely confirmed those policies.

8. Where budgetary matters were concerned, the difficulty lay in the fact that programming was separate from budget review. The problem would remain so long as the two functions were kept separate. The questions of resources and programming must be considered simultaneously. Since the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions operated independently of the Council, discussion of the budget in the Council was meaningless. The Council should perhaps tackle the fundamental problem rather than continuing to concern itself only with the consequences of the problem.

9. The Secretary-General's report and draft resolution E/L.1318 drew attention to the fact that during the Second Development Decade the Council should be able to deal with medium- and long-term planning bearing in mind objectives rather than resources. His Government fully shared that point of view but was concerned about the manner in which the planning of the United Nations system would be geared to the Second Development Decade and about the very minor role allocated to the Economic and Social Council in that respect. It had recently been proposed in the Preparatory Committee that a new body should be set up to review and appraise the objectives and progress of the Second Development Decade. His Government considered that that was the Council's task and that it should not be assigned to a subsidiary body. Furthermore, it would like to see the Council's central role in defining, reviewing and appraising the objectives of the Second Development Decade reaffirmed and even strengthened in the report of the draft resolution.

10. He endorsed the comments made earlier on the budget period: its extension was an essential corollary to long-term planning, which was inconceivable under a system of annual or biennial budgets. Governments would have to adapt their procedures to that requirement.

11. On the question of the application of the strategy for the Second Development Decade, he drew attention to a problem relating to the possible establishment of inter-

disciplinary planning advisory teams. Unless care was taken, there would be three systems of local assistance, that of IBRD and its affiliates, that of UNDP and that of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs. While his Government should like to see the role of economic and social affairs strengthened in the co-ordinating functions, he considered that the questions relating to the function, composition and financing of the teams should be examined before a decision was taken about them.

12. There was reference to a data bank in three different parts of the Secretary-General's report. The cost, composition and functions of a data bank or information service were so interdependent that his delegation would recommend that close attention be paid to co-ordination so as to avoid finding later that there were several data banks where one would have sufficed.

13. He wished to emphasize certain elements concerning the strategy for the Second Development Decade and its application which had not been sufficiently stressed in the Secretary-General's report. There was the question of the participation of youth in clarifying and achieving goals. There was also the question of planning and evaluation processes. Social development and economic development must be integrated. The human aspect of development needed to be emphasized—not only manpower, employment and social action, but also motivation.

14. The same difficulty was encountered with the second part—Determination of priorities—of the Secretary-General's report as with the general review; the priorities were submitted piecemeal to the Council whereas their determination called for an over-all view. The situation might be improved by modifying the existing organizational arrangements. In any case, his Government considered that in determining priorities initiatives should be welcomed, whatever their source, but they must be rationalized through discussion and in accordance with a principle of co-operation. The Council should not have to examine a priority which had not been properly and concertedly considered by a competent body. Conversely, bureaucratic undergrowth must not be allowed to stifle a new idea before it could reach the Council. Examination of the internal budget review led to the conclusion that it, like the priorities, was distorted by the additions spawned by various *ad hoc* bodies. For example, the very heavy expenses incurred by certain *ad hoc* groups which outlived the crises engendering them were constantly added to the budget of the Commission on Human Rights after it had been approved. Those expenses distorted the long-term planning of the total budget. When *ad hoc* committees had to be established, the Council had the power to take rapid and decisive action; it should have the power to terminate those *ad hoc* committees once they had performed their function. It should also be able to reconsider their terms of reference in the light of concurrent priorities. Moreover, the Council did not always seriously examine the budgetary implications of the courses of action open to it, and it would be in a better position to make qualitative assessments of priorities if there was an obligation to reduce the range of the budgetary implication of resolutions at an early stage.

15. As to the third part of the report—Development of an integrated system of planning, programming and budget-

ing—there should be a definite interdependence between the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination and the Council. Since one person was rarely competent in both programming and budgeting, the two categories of experts must be associated in the task.

16. In so far as concerned the fourth part of the report, relating to work programme and budgetary requirements for 1971 and projections for 1972, programming cycles should be extended, programmes and budgetary elements should be integrated and provision should be made for a structural organization to take account of them.

17. As for the work programme of the Council itself, it seemed that in order to deal with the complex questions at issue, the functioning of the Council should be revised. The number of officers of the Council could be increased and they could work with the Secretariat in order to bring agendas into focus and refine the documents discussed by the Council so that, as a result of that prior collaboration, the work of meetings would be more coherent and efficient.

18. The Council might also make short-term use of the services of *ad hoc* committees or special expert groups to study problems between sessions. Thus, from the very start of a new session progress would have been made.

19. Finally, an effort should be made to discover how the policy-formulating deliberations of the governing bodies of the specialized agencies could be submitted to the Council so that the desired intersecretariat collaboration might be reinforced by collaboration between the governing bodies of the specialized agencies and the Economic and Social Council. That seemed to be permissible under the Charter. Co-ordination would certainly be improved if the Council participated in the preparation of an over-all policy and strategy resulting from the sectoral contribution of the specialized agencies and the general contribution which the Council could make.

20. Lastly, the United States delegation approved the spirit of draft resolution E/L.1318, but had reservations regarding operative paragraph 2 in the light of the comments he had made on the work programme and would like operative paragraph 3 to be worded in such a way that it covered all United Nations bodies, in other words, both the United Nations itself and the agencies in the United Nations system. He would like paragraph 5 to take into account the remarks he had made concerning the teams.

21. Mr. LISOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said he did not think that there was any point in commenting in detail on the remarks made by certain delegations regarding the shortcomings of the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination and the ways in which it could improve its method of work. In fact, CPC had held only two sessions since its reorganization and it was still too early to judge whether the reorganization would have the results anticipated. Furthermore, since the membership of CPC had been enlarged, all geographical groups were represented and had an opportunity to express their points of view. The Chairman of the Committee was particularly well aware of the problems facing developing countries and the USSR

delegation supported the way in which he had guided the work of CPC.

22. His delegation considered that the proposal regarding the establishment of interdisciplinary planning advisory teams was a valuable and constructive one. However, the way in which the Secretary-General viewed the functions of those teams (see E/4793, paras. 13 to 19) gave rise to many difficulties. It was in fact suggested that there would be a departure from rigid plans for specific periods, five years, for example, and that more flexible approaches would be substituted which would allow programmes to be adjusted frequently, perhaps on an annual basis in the light of changing conditions. That method would in fact involve abandoning the long-term development plans which the developing countries generally formulated in order to take into account their own particular circumstances, to make the best use of their resources and to develop their economies. The proposed teams would have the effect of stopping long-term planning which had proved extremely useful.

23. Furthermore, the Secretary-General's report stated, on the one hand, that the teams would be financed from the regular budget of the United Nations and, on the other hand, that the teams' efforts would have to be co-ordinated with those of UNDP and other agencies within the United Nations system, particularly IBRD. His delegation felt that that represented a contradiction, since in fact the staff and resources of the United Nations would be used to formulate UNDP's pre-investment projects which mainly prepared the way for private investors. His delegation was opposed to the United Nations subsidizing investments by international monopolies. That did not mean, however, that it considered private investment unacceptable in all cases; in fact, Lenin had said that private investment could be extremely useful in the economy of certain countries, provided that the State could exercise some control over it. If the Council agreed that the interdisciplinary planning advisory teams were necessary, then they should be financed by UNDP.

24. Chapter III of the report, relating to the development of an integrated system of planning, programming and budgeting, was an extremely valuable analysis of the problem and contained a number of useful recommendations. The USSR delegation could not, however, accept the idea, which recurred throughout the chapter, that programming took precedence over the budgetary possibilities of the United Nations. In his opinion, the programme and the budget constituted a single organic unit, of which the programme was the content and the budget the form. The Secretary-General's report showed that the United Nations budget was continually increasing out of all proportion, solely in order to take into account a series of decisions, wishes and recommendations of United Nations organs, bodies and departments. His delegation was not opposed to a reasonable increase in the budget which corresponded to reasonable needs. The inflation of the budget was, however, due to the increase in the number of meetings, the exaggerated growth of international bureaucracy and the flood of documentation. Such an increase was quite useless and detracted from the effectiveness of the Organization's activities. Furthermore, although the increase in the budget was felt mainly by those countries which had to provide the largest contributions, it also had a disastrous effect on the

balance of payments of the least developed countries whose quotas had tripled in fifteen years. In the interest of all States Members of the United Nations, the Economic and Social Council should ensure that that trend was stopped.

25. The USSR delegation regretted that the information provided by the Secretary-General concerning the work programme of the Division of Human Rights (E/4793/Corr.1) had been distributed too late for delegations to be able to consider it in detail. Furthermore, that chapter of the report did not deal at sufficient length with some questions, such as nazism and racial intolerance, the punishment of war crimes and crimes against humanity, and respect for human rights in occupied territories. On the other hand, the USSR Government was unwilling to approve the estimated expenditure for dealing with communications from individuals who wished to submit complaints about Governments. That was a flagrant violation of national prerogatives in which the United Nations should take no part. Furthermore, some questions, such as the status of persons born out of wedlock, did not appear to be sufficiently urgent to justify the priority accorded to them.

26. The report of the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination had many gaps and did not place sufficient emphasis on the need to increase co-ordination and to eliminate all duplication within the United Nations and the specialized agencies.

27. In principle, the USSR delegation supported draft resolution E/L.1318. Some of the proposals which it contained were, however, unacceptable, in particular, the idea of including in the work programme questions which needed to be studied in greater depth by CPC. Consideration of some proposals might therefore be deferred until the resumed forty-ninth session in December, when CPC would have had an opportunity to study the report on programming and budgets in the United Nations family of organizations² as well as certain other questions.

28. Mr. MARSH (Jamaica) said that the proposals contained in draft resolution E/L.1318 were acceptable to his delegation, which had supported the reconstitution of the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination in the General Assembly. He emphasized that CPC was absolutely indispensable, whatever doubts there might be about its working methods. For example, the rule of consensus which was applied in CPC did not necessarily prevent the Committee from preparing concise analytical reports of the work accomplished, which facilitated the work of small delegations. He added that it was equally important to ensure co-ordination at the national level, within the delegations themselves.

29. Mr. ALLEN (United Kingdom) thanked the Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs and the Chairman of CPC for their analysis of the situation in the Committee and of its working methods. If CPC was to do useful work, it was important that all countries should take into account both world needs and the possibilities of the United Nations system as a whole, and that the disagreements existing between those countries which favoured an expansion of the programme at any price and those which

adopted a more conservative approach should as far as possible be eliminated.

30. He observed that the Economic and Social Council and the deliberative bodies in general tended to be too concerned with details; they should rather direct their attention to broader problems and to questions of general policy and give the Secretary-General full latitude to organize programmes which he could then submit for their consideration.

31. He agreed with the general spirit of draft resolution E/L.1318, but had difficulty in accepting two points. In particular, he felt that the second half of the sixth preambular paragraph ("and that the implementation of this programme should not be inhibited by limitations on budgetary levels") could not accurately express the true intentions of the sponsors and he suggested that they should consider the following wording which would be acceptable to his delegation: "and that the implementation of this programme should not be impeded by unnecessary limitations on budgetary levels". With regard to operative paragraph 2, he said that although his delegation approved "the Secretary-General's work programme for 1971", it could not approve it "in the light of its budgetary implications"; that wording implied that the Council was empowered to approve the financial implications of the work programme. The Economic and Social Council and CPC could in fact only examine the work programme in the light of its budgetary implications. He therefore suggested that the words "having examined it . . ." should be inserted after the words "for 1971". With regard to operative paragraph 5, he also thought that the methods for financing the interdisciplinary planning advisory teams should be reconsidered.

32. Mr. PRAGUE (France) said that the criticisms levelled at the Committee for Programming and Co-ordination, especially during the meetings held the previous day, reflected above all the lack of preparation of delegations and that those criticisms might have been more properly directed to the Council itself, as one representative had already observed. It was not the Committee's function to take decisions or even to determine solutions. That was the Council's role and the Committee should rather sift and simplify the problems. Despite the considerable progress made by the Committee since it had been reconstituted, its work could still be improved. In particular, although the quality of the Committee's documentation had improved, it was unfortunately too often issued late. Furthermore, the Committee should not attempt to consider all the subjects within its scope every year, but should select a limited number of questions which it would study in depth. It might define its basic tasks and priorities when it carried out its annual review of the work programme of the United Nations.

33. He could not fully subscribe to the criteria selected for determining the priority of projects, namely that priority should be given to those which concerned the greatest number of Governments. It seemed to him that the principle of the greatest number could not be applied systematically and that it might perhaps be preferable to direct attention first of all to the most needy countries. He added that the Committee should continue to carry out

² Ibid.

certain tasks, and in particular he regretted that it had not really been able to begin its consideration of the report on programming and budgets in the United Nations family of organizations.²

34. Mr. SEN (Chairman of the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination) said he was pleased to note that delegations were aware of the difficulties encountered by the Committee. He pointed out that CPC could not begin its consideration of the report on programming and budgets in the United Nations family of organizations² until it had

studied the comments of the Secretariat and of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions on that report. He also pointed out that co-ordination and programming was a continuous process and therefore a slow one which could only yield results with time. He emphasized that delegations had a responsibility and that their co-operation was essential; they should participate in the preparation of documents, as did the Secretariat.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.