

# 1934th meeting

Monday, 16 December 1974, at 5.30 p.m.

President: Mr. Aarno KARHILO (Finland).

E/SR.1934

## AGENDA ITEM 13

***Ad hoc authorization to the Executive Director of the World Food Programme to give food assistance to peoples in colonial Territories in Africa and their national liberation movements (E/L.1617, annex)***

1. The PRESIDENT recalled that at its preceding meeting the Council had decided to include the item in its agenda and to consider it at the following meeting. He drew attention to paragraph 10 of the note by the Secretary-General (E/L.1617) which contained the text of the proposed authorization to the Executive Director. If there was no objection, he would take it that the Council decided to approve the authorization.

*The decision was adopted [decision 62 (LVII)].*

2. Mr. ROUGET (Federal Republic of Germany) said that his delegation had joined in the consensus reached at the previous meeting because of the humanitarian purpose of the proposal. If a vote had been taken on it, his delegation would have abstained for legal reasons.

3. Mr. ROUGÉ (France) said that his delegation's position was the same as that of the Federal Republic of Germany.

4. Mr. KITCHEN (United States of America) said that his delegation maintained the reservations it had made at the sixty-fourth session of the Council of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO).

5. Mr. MACKENZIE (United Kingdom) said that his delegation had joined in the consensus, but it reaffirmed the reservations it had made at the sixty-fourth session of the FAO Council.

6. Mr. CAVAGLIERI (Italy) said that his delegation's doubts expressed at the sixty-fourth session of the FAO Council remained unchanged. It had joined in the consensus on the understanding that the World Food Programme would be used only for humanitarian purposes.

## AGENDA ITEM 6

**World Food Conference (concluded)**

(a) Report of the World Food Conference (E/5586, E/5587 and Add.1-4);

(b) Emergency measures in regard to the supply of fertilizers and pesticides (E/5596)

**NOMINATION OF MEMBERS OF THE WORLD FOOD COUNCIL (concluded)**

7. Mr. AKE (Ivory Coast), speaking on behalf of the group of African States, said that the following nine countries had been nominated for the nine seats on the World Food Council allocated to that group: Chad, Egypt, Gabon, Guinea, Kenya, Libyan Arab Republic, Mali, Togo and Zambia.

8. Mr. HASHMI (India), speaking on behalf of the group of Asian States, said that the following 11 coun-

tries had been nominated for the nine seats on the World Food Council allocated to the Asian group: Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Japan, Malaysia, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Syrian Arab Republic and Thailand.

9. Mr. CORDOVEZ (Secretary of the Council) read out the list of all the countries nominated, including those nominated at the preceding meeting.

10. The PRESIDENT, replying to a question from the representative of Canada, said that it did not seem possible for additional nominations to be made in the General Assembly.

11. Mr. JARPA (Chile) said that the Council should distinguish between those candidates nominated by the regional groups and those which had presented themselves as candidates on their own initiative. At the preceding meeting the group of Latin American States had nominated seven countries, whereas the Secretary of the Committee had read out the names of eight countries.

12. The PRESIDENT said that if there was no objection, he would take it that the Council decided to nominate the following countries for election by the General Assembly to membership to the World Food Council:

African States: Chad, Egypt, Gabon, Guinea, Kenya, Libyan Arab Republic, Mali, Togo and Zambia; Asian States: Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Japan, Malaysia, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Syrian Arab Republic and Thailand; Latin American States: Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Cuba, Guatemala, Mexico, Trinidad and Tobago, and Venezuela; Socialist States of Eastern Europe: Hungary, Romania, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, and Yugoslavia; Western European and other States: Australia, Canada, France, Germany (Federal Republic of), Italy, Sweden, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and United States of America.

*The decision was adopted [decision 63 (LVII)].*

**Tribute to the Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs**

13. The PRESIDENT paid a tribute to the Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs who was about to retire after a remarkable career of some 20 years in the service of the economic and social activities of the United Nations. The Under-Secretary-General had had the rare opportunity of following the ebbs and flows of mankind's devotion to the cause of international co-operation for development during the past two decades. The political independence which those decades had brought to the third world was gradually being complemented by economic independence. The Under-Secretary-General's career could hardly have been crowned by a more impressive development than the emergence in 1974 of a global awareness of the need for equity and justice in the economic relations between nations. That awareness had been brought about by many factors, including the

influence of the minds of the devoted men who had made it their cause to help create a better world for all mankind. The Under-Secretary-General was such a man; his intellect and humanism had had a major influence on the input of the United Nations in economic and social development, and he had been a most dedicated advocate of the new world order. He thanked the Under-Secretary-General for all his years of service in the common cause and wished him every happiness, in the knowledge that in the work upon which the United Nations system was now embarking there was a constructive continuity that bore the mark of the Under-Secretary-General.

14. Mr. AKE (Ivory Coast), Mr. DIETZE (German Democratic Republic), Mr. GONZALEZ DE COSSIO (Mexico), Mr. HASHMI (India) and Mr. CAVAGLIARI (Italy) paid tributes to the Under-Secretary-General on behalf of the regional groups.

15. Mr. AZIZ (International Labour Organisation) paid a tribute to the Under-Secretary-General on behalf of the specialized agencies and the other United Nations bodies.

16. Mr. DE SEYNES (Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs) said that it was a particularly solemn moment for him, because he had been with the United Nations long enough to have followed the history of the Economic and Social Council almost from its beginnings and to have been able to observe and analyse the vicissitudes which had marked its course. He remembered the earliest times, imbued with the mandate of the Charter of the United Nations, the major reports on full employment and development and the first programmes of co-operation, modest as they might have been, which had reflected the intention of the United Nations to assert its presence in the field, in all countries of the world. After that, everything had seemed to bog down, first in the cold war, and later in a certain resistance to change which had appeared with the emergence of a new majority towards the end of the 1950s.

17. He could not adequately express what a privilege it had been for him to serve the United Nations for so long and to be still at his post to witness developments in 1974. He believed that that was a decisive date, a new departure; he believed that it had revealed to a too often sceptical world the vitality of the United Nations system and had confirmed the prospects for genuine international co-operation, based on greater equality and capable of initiating genuine negotiation where, in the past, there had been too frequent recourse to exhortations and moral imperatives.

18. He was therefore leaving the United Nations with a good measure of confidence, but at the same time he could not ignore the fact that some doubts persisted regarding the Economic and Social Council, the organ which the Charter had placed at the centre of the economic institutions of the international community. The very aspect of the Council chamber attested to the fact that the Economic and Social Council was an imposing concept of the founders of the United Nations: Governments, in such numbers and selected in such a way as at last adequately to express the realities of the contemporary world; the representatives of specialized agencies, attesting to the worth of a system of co-operation without precedent in history; the ranks of non-governmental organizations, symbolic of one of the most interesting innovations of the Charter, the effective implementation of which could be a source of

additional strength. Because the validity of that concept was unquestionable, it was necessary constantly to seek the reasons why it was still not recognized as it should be, in all its fullness.

19. It had been customary for some years—indeed, it had become almost a stereotype—to regard the Economic and Social Council as having a triple role: to formulate national and international policies for economic and social progress; to act as a governing council for research or action programmes undertaken within the framework of the United Nations itself; and to co-ordinate the work of the specialized agencies and autonomous programmes which formed the “United Nations system”.

20. He was convinced that failures, hesitations and loss of prestige were due to the fact that the Council had not always been able, or willing, or bold enough, to play the political role conferred on it by the Charter. That had had an effect also on the Council's efficiency in performing the other two tasks for which it was responsible. During the last three or four years, the Council had begun to rise again and to regain some of the ground assigned to it by the Charter; however, much remained to be done before the Council—a constitutional instrument which now more than ever was felt to be irreplaceable—could be made to yield its full benefits in circumstances that in some respects were more propitious than they had been for international co-operation.

21. The United Nations had become an essential channel for dealing with major world problems. That applied particularly to the economic and social field, in connexion with which the United Nations had so often been regarded, at least by the mighty, as a marginal organization which could conveniently and with impunity be bypassed or confined to a minor role. That attitude was now outdated, and it became all the more urgent to define very precisely how the United Nations, constituted as it was and subjected to all kinds of constraints, but also rich in quite exceptional promise, could, in an age when nearly all problems were of world-wide dimensions, mobilize and become the living centre from which the major orientations of world policy emanated. That meant, among other things, that the Economic and Social Council must be given the singular place which belonged to it.

22. Thanks to its current President and his predecessors, the Council had begun to regain the respect that was due to it, but its authority must be more strongly asserted and consciously maintained. If the Council were to lack courage or initiative in its political role, in tackling critical world problems; if the Governments of its member States were to take refuge in considerations of financial economy or administrative difficulty so as to prevent it from operating to its full capacity; then the confidence of Governments would inevitably shift to other organs. That was what had been happening for 10 years, and was still happening. For example, a satisfactory balance had not been established between the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly. At the moment, in fact, there was to all intents and purposes a bicameral system. That was not a bad thing in itself, but there had to be a balance between the two chambers, and the balance at present was such that it did not facilitate a rational division of labour. The respective roles of the two organs should not be unduly difficult to define. The General Assembly, by reason of its very composition and its methods of

work, operated at the level of broad principles, broad orientations and broad trends. It needed an organ with a composition like that of the Economic and Social Council, more functional, more oriented towards analysis of the most complex problems and formulation of concrete measures, more concerned with recognizing in good time the often imperceptible indicators of necessary change. Its smaller membership, the participation of the specialized agencies and the fact that it could consult non-governmental organizations, which were more and more influential in economic and social affairs, should give the Council a much sharper and more recognizable profile than it now had.

23. If the Council really had the courage to tackle those major problems, to take the necessary initiatives, as it had done for example in 1974 in connexion with transnational corporations, then its other two functions—directing the programmes of part of the system and co-ordinating those of the system as a whole—would fall into place much more easily and the ways in which they were to be planned and executed would be easier to determine. In a system like that of the United Nations, such tasks could not be carried out in an authoritarian way; their success depended on the prestige of the organ responsible for them, and that prestige could be acquired only through the exercise of the Council's political function.

24. It had been an honour and a very great privilege for him to head an economic and social department of highly talented men and women, possessing total professional integrity, dedicated to the cause of international co-operation and proving their dedication every day by strenuous work. He felt obliged to inform the Council that that infrastructure—the Secretariat—was much too small and ill-equipped for the tasks which lay before it in connexion with the creation of a new economic order. It could not contribute as it should and as it would like to do, through its studies and reports, to enlightening the Economic and Social Council or the General Assembly on changes in the economic situation and on the difficulty and growing complexity of the problems confronting the world. Sooner or later, and the sooner the better, courageous action would have to be taken in the Council or elsewhere to tackle head-on the problem of how extensive

an infrastructure an organization like the United Nations needed if it was to contribute fully to the creation of a new economic order. Some recent successes, at Stockholm, Bucharest and Rome, showed how much work and how many inputs were necessary to produce a certain result—to arouse awareness, to devise concerted actions and to create outlines for some planning on a world-wide scale. Intensive activity of that kind must become so to speak the "cruising speed" of the United Nations system. The United Nations really functioned only when it departed from routine. One must in that context think of what was required from the Secretariat, or the services which it could perform for Governments and which it would like to develop to a level comparable with the aspirations of Governments.

25. He thanked the Council for the kindness with which it had received his statements over a period of 20 years. The message he would like to leave with it was the following: whatever vitality might now be visible in the United Nations, and however great the problems which it knew confronted it, an organization of that kind, even with a dynamic majority that questioned the established order, was always beset by certain dangers—a liking for stereotypes, an amateurishness in studies and debates, an undue concentration on trivial questions and a certain inertia in perceptions—all of which posed a constant threat of ossification or sclerosis. The Economic and Social Council could not perform its task unless it unceasingly renewed its thirst for discovery and knowledge and developed its search for innovation, unless it remained imbued with the sense of human suffering and nourished by the ideal of social justice and respect for human rights; those things alone could enable it to express itself in the fullness of its vocation.

*On the proposal of the representative of Argentina, the Council decided that the statement by the Under-Secretary-General should be included verbatim in the summary record of the meeting.*

#### **Closure of the session**

26. The PRESIDENT declared the fifty-seventh session of the Council closed.

*The meeting rose at 6.25 p.m.*