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*President:* Mr. SCHEYVEN (Belgium).

## AGENDA ITEM 10

**Problems of the human environment**  
(E/4667, E/4710, E/L.1275 and Add.1)

1. Mr. CAPPELEN (Norway), introducing draft resolution E/L.1275 and Add.1, said that growing awareness of the serious character of environmental problems had been apparent from the increased attention paid to them by mass media and public opinion. The negative side effects of technological advances were frightening, but on the positive side modern science and technology could be used to improve the human environment through deliberate action.

2. On the initiative of the Swedish delegation, the Council at its forty-fifth session had adopted unanimously a resolution (1346 (XLV)) recommending the General Assembly to consider the desirability of convening a United Nations conference on the human environment. That had led to the unanimous adoption of General Assembly resolution 2398 (XXIII) of 3 December 1968, providing for the convening of such a conference in 1972. The Assembly had envisaged two stages in the preparations for the conference. For the first stage, the Secretary-General had been requested, in consultation with the Advisory Committee on the Application of Science and Technology to Development, to submit to the twenty-fourth session of the Assembly, through the Council, a report on various aspects of the conference. That report had been submitted as document E/4667.

3. In the view of the sponsors of the draft resolution for adoption by the Assembly (E/L.1275 and Add.1), the Council at its present session should prepare for appropriate action by the General Assembly for the second stage of preparation. Operative paragraph 1 of the draft endorsed in general the proposals contained in the report regarding the purposes and objectives of the conference, but not the proposals relating to its structure and the content, which were only tentative. Such practical questions should be discussed at a later stage.

4. Paragraphs 3 and 4 dealt with institutional arrangements. The composition of the preparatory committee referred to in paragraph 4 should be left for the General

Assembly to decide, but to ensure its efficiency the committee should be kept reasonably small, with a membership of about fifteen Governments which could be decided on after consultation in the General Assembly. The committee should be composed of highly qualified representatives, not necessarily the same for each country all the time; and the possibility of appointing representatives able to reflect regional or sub-regional views should also be explored. The committee's main tasks would be, in general terms, to advise the Secretary-General on a draft agenda for the conference, to make recommendations regarding the structure of the conference, and to gather and organize background documentation. In order to strengthen the influence of Governments in the preparations for the conference, paragraph 3 stated that the views expressed during the present debate and at the twenty-fourth session of the General Assembly should be borne in mind by the Secretary-General.

5. The preparatory work for the conference was at least as important as the conference itself, and paragraph 6 therefore requested the Secretary-General to consult with Governments, with other organizations in the United Nations system and with appropriate intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations. It was to be hoped that the provisions of the paragraph, together with those of paragraphs 7 and 16, would ensure the active involvement of Governments not members of the preparatory committee.

6. An important part of the preparatory work, recognized in paragraph 10, should be to focus public opinion on the importance and urgency of the problem of the human environment, which was one of the purposes of the conference according to General Assembly resolution 2398 (XXIII). Paragraph 11 provided for invitations to participate, using a formula which had many precedents in United Nations history. The Secretary-General's concern that all Member States should be adequately represented (E/4667, para. 105) was reflected in paragraph 12 of the draft resolution, which also requested the Secretary-General to consider what steps could be taken to facilitate participation. Without anticipating any decision to be taken by the General Assembly, the co-sponsors hoped that consideration would be given to the possibility of direct financial support for that purpose.

7. Paragraph 13 concerned the cost of the conference. The co-sponsors would like to suggest in that connexion that the Secretary-General should use all possibilities of drawing upon staff within the present establishment of the United Nations system, thus reducing the need for additional recruitment. The cost of experts and consultants should be kept as low as possible by using expertise within

the United Nations system and by drawing upon national contributions, especially for the background documentation. Although the conference should be carefully prepared and provided with adequate documentation, the possibility of reducing printing costs should be carefully considered, and, in view of the action-oriented nature of the conference, the volume of documentation must be kept to an absolute minimum. Further savings might be made by simplifying the organizational structure of the conference.

8. The duration of the conference should be about two weeks. A short pre-conference meeting could also be held, but that matter should be dealt with during the preparatory work. Paragraph 15 proposed that the General Assembly should accept the invitation of the Swedish Government to hold the conference in Sweden in June 1972, while paragraph 16 requested the submission of a brief progress report which would enable the Council and the General Assembly to follow the preparatory work in detail.

9. In the view of the co-sponsors, adoption of the draft resolution would mark an important step forward in preparations for the conference, and would ensure their efficiency.

10. Mr. GROS (France) said that the Secretary-General's report presented an admirable classification of the many and complex problems involved. Both it and the draft resolution, however, contained a number of errors of translation which made the task of French-speaking delegations extremely difficult. The report omitted to mention specifically the contributions made by Governments to its preparation; and his delegation wished to request that a list of those Governments and international organizations which had contributed should be made available.

11. The main drawback of the report was its perhaps deliberately pessimistic tone. There was obviously a need to stress the harmful effects of human progress on the environment, but it should not be forgotten that mankind had reached its present stage of development largely through overcoming the natural obstacles in its way, or that man's action on nature was frequently beneficial.

12. In defining the purposes of the conference, too much stress was placed on arousing public opinion; in fact, the conference would be successful if it did nothing more than achieve the objectives set out in paragraph 90 of the report. He hoped that it would lead to increased consultation on the international conventions by which action concerning the human environment was, or should be, governed. The United Nations and the specialized agencies would have a part to play in the negotiations that might be initiated for that purpose.

13. The references to the conference's agenda were deliberately vague, since it was not possible at the present stage to state them more precisely. His delegation welcomed the emphasis that would be placed on the consequences of human action on the environment, with socio-cultural environmental problems being considered

only in so far as they could be directly related to physico-biological changes of the environment (E/4667, para. 95). The classification of the main problems, however, was perhaps somewhat artificial, especially in regard to "territorial problems" (chapter IB). The problems to be considered by the conference were either local or world-wide, but between the two extremes were problems of regional concern which could be examined in the first instance by the regional economic commissions. It would be useful if the Secretariat could provide some idea of the cost of the solutions proposed for such problems.

14. The structure of the conference, as proposed in the report, was somewhat complicated, involving a general debate followed by the sessions of eight separate commissions divided into two groups of four, each of which would present its conclusions to a plenary session. Such a system raised considerable dangers of duplication, and every effort should be made to simplify it.

15. The proposals relating to participation had the disadvantage that they might systematically exclude scientific experts.

16. The documentation envisaged was complex and excessively voluminous. While perhaps ideal for the experts, the five categories proposed would be disconcerting to the general public whose interest was to be aroused. Every effort should be made to reduce the volume of documentation, and consequently the cost of the conference.

17. The machinery for the preparation of the conference described in paragraphs 132 and 133 of the report was somewhat cumbersome. The recruitment of additional staff seemed unnecessary when the four principal organizations concerned—the United Nations, UNESCO, WHO and FAO—had adequate manpower at their disposal. A large part of the report was devoted to describing what was already being done by those organizations, and it therefore seemed reasonable to expect that their experience would be drawn upon to a greater extent. The financial implications described in chapter III, H of the report should be reviewed as strictly as possible, especially those mentioned in paragraph 141, sub-paragraphs (a), (d) and (e).

18. His delegation would support draft resolution E/L.1275 and Add.1, provided some positively worded paragraphs were added to the preamble to make it clear that the Council had discussed the item in depth before taking a decision on it.

19. Miss MUTER (Indonesia) said that, as the Secretary-General's report stated (E/4667, para. 2), the world's population had increased sevenfold in a few centuries, and what had once been local problems were now global in extent, calling for concerted effort by all nations. The population growth had been accompanied by the spread of urbanization, leading to problems of air, water and land pollution and, through noise and congestion, to physical and mental distress. Her delegation agreed that the deterioration of the human environment could be related to three

basic causes—accelerated population growth, increased urbanization and expanded technology.

20. She wished to pay a tribute to the Government of Sweden for its initiative in drawing attention to the problem and for its invitation to hold the conference in Sweden in June 1972, a time which was acceptable to her delegation.

21. The basic purposes of the conference were set out in general terms in General Assembly resolution 2398 (XXIII), particularly where it stressed the desirability of focusing the attention of Governments and public opinion on the importance and urgency of the problem and of identifying those aspects of it that could only or best be resolved through international co-operation.

22. Early preparation was essential to the success of the conference, and a preparatory committee of some fifteen to eighteen members, consisting of government representatives possessing high qualifications and preferably occupying decision-making positions, should be established as soon as possible. Co-operation should also be sought from the specialized agencies and non-governmental organizations concerned.

23. Since the proposed duration of the conference was only two weeks, the programme should not be general, but should contain practical proposals to be used as guidelines for action by Governments and public authorities at the local, national, regional and international levels.

24. Her delegation agreed that every effort should be made to bring down the cost of the conference, in particular by reducing the volume of documentation.

25. As a co-sponsor of draft resolution E/L.1275 and Add.1, her delegation hoped that it would be unanimously adopted.

26. Mr. ALLEN (United Kingdom) said his delegation would leave detailed comment on the Secretary-General's report to the preparatory committee envisaged by draft resolution E/L.1275 and Add.1. In general, however, the machinery proposed by the report was complex and probably expensive; for example, paragraph 111 envisaged a study in two stages, each involving four commissions, a system which seemed unnecessarily complicated. Of the four commissions mentioned in paragraph 111 (e), that dealing with regional and international co-operation would be by far the most important.

27. As a co-sponsor of the draft resolution, his delegation wished to acknowledge the important contribution made to it by the delegation of observers from Sweden. As the representative of Norway had said, operative paragraph 1 endorsed the report's proposals regarding the purposes and objectives of the conference, but not the more detailed recommendations such as those concerning machinery, which should be left for more careful study.

28. Paragraph 2 was of vital importance, in defining the purposes of the conference and stressing the need for practical means to encourage action and provide a common direction for it. Emphasis was also placed on aspects of the environment requiring international co-operation; while national and local problems were important, they should be dealt with primarily by Governments and local authorities.

29. His delegation agreed that membership of the preparatory committee referred to in operative paragraph 4 should be decided upon by the General Assembly; the countries chosen must be able to provide the highly qualified representatives required. What was needed was representatives who could bring to bear the combined knowledge and expertise of the experts in their own countries and who could, if necessary, call upon individual experts for advice.

30. It was generally agreed that the conference should be short and to the point, and should not waste money. Many paragraphs of the draft resolution, however, described elaborate arrangements for the preparatory work which might lead to an undesirable and expensive increase in the volume of documentation. Full consultation with Governments and international organizations was admittedly essential, but the Secretariat must condense and simplify the documentation which it received. For example, the national reports called for in paragraph 123 of the report might not always be necessary, whereas the reports from international organizations called for in paragraph 125 were of vital importance.

31. As to the scope of the conference, his delegation fully agreed with the view expressed in paragraph 95 of the report, that socio-cultural environmental problems should be considered only in so far as they could be directly related to physico-biological changes of the environment.

32. Mr. OLDS (United States of America) said that man was an unruly child of nature, bent on living in a wider symbolic world, but he could never get away permanently from his anchor in nature, from its processes, powers, laws and limits. His problem, almost from the dawn of civilization, had been to hold those two worlds together—the natural world of power and the symbolic world of meaning. The creative ages in the many civilizations which had risen and fallen had been those times when a balance had been achieved, when there had been harmony between man's mastery of nature and the ordering of his life. The problem of the present was that mastery of nature and its powers came at a time when mastery of human nature continued to elude man's grasp. The power of the mathematical symbol, which imposed such order and control over nature in modern science and technology, had no comparable moral model for ordering human nature by giving meaning and direction to the whole.

33. Man had become increasingly the slave—not the master—of his own creations. Not only were the ravages of the natural environment—eroded, penetrated and polluted—to be considered: far worse was the almost total transformation of man's personal environment, in which the

cybernetic revolution had almost run away with the control of life, narrowing the range of personal freedom. The conference must somehow address itself to the deeper malaise of the times.

34. His delegation welcomed the Swedish Government's initiative, General Assembly resolution 2398 (XXIII) and the comprehensive study of environmental problems prepared by the Secretary-General. The conference should be concerned with the identification of those aspects of the human environment where action could be taken at the international level, and it should bring together all types of governmental, private and public expertise. He believed, however, that the conference should not be concerned only with problems to be overcome, but that it should also deal with the question of the qualitative enhancement of the human environment through more rational and imaginative planning.

35. The scope of the conference should not be narrowed artificially to include a manageable range of problems of the natural environment, but should be restricted to a few comprehensive problems cutting across man's total environment. Attention should be paid to the problems raised by the impact of modern technology on man's personal environment—by the advent of cybernetics, the mass media, instantaneous information and the programmed machine.

36. The Secretary-General had suggested, in paragraphs 106-121 of his report, the establishment of four substantive and four strategic commissions. Such a division of labour was not, he felt, the wisest form for the conference to take. The commissions, of which he thought there should not be more than three, should consist of representatives of all participating bodies, and they should move, in their treatment of the material, from diagnosis to prognosis, and thence from prescribing the requirements to stating what action should be taken. The first commission would be concerned with the rational use and development of natural resources, the second with the problems of pollution, protection and enhancement of the environment, and the third with humanizing science and technology in the qualitative transformation of man's personal environment.

37. The conference could provide a central focus for identifying major issues relating to the Second United Nations Development Decade. He believed that more adequate measurements of economic and social progress could be found than gross national product or annual *per capita* income. The integration of economic and social factors was required, and a more dynamic view of the human environment and its qualitative improvement could be found. Pollution of the air, water, wild life and plant life might be small compared with the pollution of the personal environment of man through the fear, envy and distrust produced by irresponsible manipulation of the mass media, and by men or nations bent on the control and not the liberation of man's energies.

38. The human environment could be enhanced by mobilizing the moral idealism of youth, transforming and

multiplying the educational process through technology, developing regional environmental research institutes and establishing, under the United Nations, a council of fellows seconded by Governments to work on environment problems.

39. The Secretary-General should be given full responsibility for organizing and preparing the conference and should draw upon the specialized agencies and international scientific and professional organizations for help.

40. He supported the proposal that national reports should not be considered as conference documents (E/4667, para. 123), and that Member States should be encouraged to provide the Secretariat with adequate copies in one or more of the official languages for distribution prior to the conference.

41. The estimate of \$1.9 million (*ibid.* para. 141) to finance the conference was very high. With decreased documentation, a reduction in the number of commissions, and a more organically integrated conference, the cost could be brought down to \$1 million.

42. As to follow-up action, certain international conventions might arise from the conference concerning worldwide pollution, the social responsibility of science, and the positive use of technology. Certain mechanisms might be developed for continuing collaboration and action within the United Nations system. United Nations multinational teams of experts might be established and sent to various countries to advise on government and international action in matters relating to the environment. New forms of international co-operation might be suggested, combining governmental and private elements, and new ways of developing a revitalized interest in the United Nations and its organizations might be generated around specific problems of environment.

43. Man was maladjusted to his environment and determined to change and enhance it. He hoped that the inner balance might be found between nature and meaning, order and freedom, thus fulfilling man's greatest need. The conference might play a great part in freeing man from the tyranny of his technology.

44. Mr. ALI (International Labour Organisation) said that the proposed conference offered an opportunity for collective action to arrest the deterioration of man's birthright. The ILO was particularly glad to note that the conference would devote attention to the problems raised by industrial production and processes. He welcomed the suggestion in paragraph 113 of the Secretary-General's report that the commission on problems of human settlements and industrial development should discuss the subject of working conditions in industry. Most of the adult population of the world spent at least half their waking hours at work, and the question of the working environment was therefore of cardinal importance. It would be of little use to deal with questions of the human environment whilst ignoring the working places in which a large part of people's lives were

spent. Moreover, it was from working places that so many of the elements which polluted the human environment originated. The smoke and dust pouring from factory chimneys, the noise created by industrial processes, the industrial waste and toxic substances that were allowed to flow into rivers and lakes—those were principal elements in the deterioration of man's environment. Increasing attention must therefore be given to them if the deterioration of man's total environment was to be arrested.

45. The ILO therefore welcomed the proposals contained in draft resolution E/L.1275 and Add.1.

46. Mr. AKSIN (Turkey) observed that to the older generation the problem of the deteriorating environment was something they remembered as afflicting particular areas. Local problems had grown in intensity, however, and had spread to such a degree that they had become alarming problems threatening the well-being of all mankind.

47. The Swedish Government's proposal at the Council's forty-fifth session which had culminated in General Assembly resolution 2398 (XXIII), had been a welcome initiative, and the Secretary-General's report prepared in compliance with that resolution emphasized the problem's complexity and urgency. But before action could be taken to deal with the matter, Governments, international organizations, and the public must be made aware of the magnitude of the task, and they must decide what international action could be taken.

48. His delegation was in general agreement with the Secretary-General's proposals in paragraphs 82 to 101 of his report concerning the purposes, objectives and scope of the conference. Those purposes and objectives should be kept in mind in preparing the provisional agenda, and any temptation to expand the scope of the conference in a manner that would defeat its primary purpose should be resisted.

49. Since the matters to be discussed at the conference were of concern to both developed and developing countries, he hoped there would be the widest possible participation by the Governments of Member States. It was also desirable that the participation should be at a level which would ensure the maximum impact on future government policies and action.

50. Efforts must be made to distribute the documentation well ahead of the conference, so that Governments would have ample time for preparation. He supported the suggestion in paragraph 135 of the report regarding the establishment of *ad hoc* national committees to facilitate preparations. It would also be useful to organize preparatory regional seminars on questions of the human environment, and UNDP technical assistance funds could be used for helping developing countries to participate in them.

51. Provision for follow-up action after the conference was also important. Whilst agreeing that costs should be kept as low as possible, he pointed out that an excessive

preoccupation with economy might jeopardize the conference's effectiveness.

52. In conclusion, he stressed the importance which his Government attached to the question of the human environment. As a developing country, Turkey shared the problems of most developing countries stemming from rapid urbanization and developing industrialization. He hoped that draft resolution E/L.1275 and Add.1 would be unanimously adopted by the Council.

53. Mr. LELEU (Observer for the Council of Europe), speaking at the invitation of the President, recalled that at the Council's forty-fifth session<sup>1</sup> the observer for the Council of Europe had described his organization's activities in the sphere of the conservation of nature and of natural resources and had indicated the importance it attached to the proposed conference on the human environment. The programmes of member States of the Council of Europe for the European Nature Conservation Year, in 1970 were at an advanced stage, and there had been a very positive response from Governments to the Council's initiative. Preparations for the European conference on the conservation of nature, which was to take place in February 1970, were also well advanced, with the full support of member Governments. Invitations to that conference had been issued to a large number of European countries which were not members of the Council as well as to other non-European countries whose experience would be invaluable. In addition, the main organizations in the United Nations system and a certain number of other governmental and non-governmental organizations had been invited to send observers. He wished to thank the United Nations bodies which were contributing to the success of the European conference by submitting reports dealing with one or other of the four themes of the conference: the influence on the natural environment of urbanization, industry, agriculture and silviculture, and leisure.

54. His organization was glad to give its modest but full support to the proposed United Nations conference on the human environment. In April 1969, it had provided an account of all its activities concerned with the matters to be discussed at the conference in 1972; in addition, the Council of Europe secretariat would be glad to take part in the ECE meeting of governmental experts on problems relating to environment, to be held in Prague in 1971.

55. It was significant that the United Nations, ECE and the Council of Europe had all decided to make an effort in the coming three years to bring to the notice of the public and responsible organizations the serious threat to the human environment posed by the inconsiderate development of technology and the new forms of organization of modern society. He hoped that the European Nature Conservation Year initiated by the Council of Europe, would be helpful to the United Nations in its preparations for the 1972 conference.

<sup>1</sup> See *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, Forty-fifth Session, 1553rd meeting.*

56. Mr. SACKS (World Health Organization) said that in past years WHO had again given particular attention to the question of the human environment, and had recently extended its programme of work over a wide range of activities directly relevant to the proposed conference.

57. The role and responsibilities of WHO with regard to the human environment were described in the Secretary-General's report (E/4667, annex E). The Director-General of WHO had called attention recently to the complex interrelated phenomena of migration, urbanization and industrialization affecting every aspect of man's physical, mental and social health. The effects of pollution of air, soil and water, and of food additives, pesticides and the ineffective disposal of radioactive wastes and other contaminants, were resulting, or would result, in serious adverse changes in human ecology, modifications in the pattern of disease, and deterioration in the mental health and welfare of individuals and of society as a whole.

58. The twenty-second World Health Assembly had considered in July 1969 a report by the Director-General on the General Assembly's decision to convene a conference on the human environment in 1972, and the Director-General had informed the WHO membership of the steps he had taken to collaborate with the United Nations Secretary-General in the preparation of the documentation concerning the conference. The World Health Assembly had noted with appreciation the General Assembly's decision to convene a conference and had expressed the hope that the Director-General would utilize the results of that conference in further developing the WHO environmental health programme in close co-operation with other organizations of the United Nations system and with national administrations.

59. With reference to operative paragraph 6 of draft resolution E/L.1275 and Add.1, he drew attention to the conference on water pollution, to be convened in 1971 by WHO through its regional office for Europe. So far as concerned paragraphs 3 and 8, WHO was ready to give every possible assistance to the Secretary-General in the preparation of the United Nations conference on the human environment as well as to collaborate in any preparatory committee which might be established.

60. Mr. BATISSE (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) referred to UNESCO's interest in the problem before the Council. The Intergovernmental Conference on the Scientific Basis for Rational Use and Conservation of the Resources of the Biosphere, held in Paris in September 1968, had been an important contribution by UNESCO in that sphere. In accordance with the recommendations of the Biosphere Conference and a resolution of the fifteenth session of its General Conference, UNESCO was actively preparing an intergovernmental long-term programme concerned with the scientific and educational aspects of problems of the environment. The fifteenth session of the General Conference had requested the UNESCO secretariat to establish "man and his environment" as a main subject in the future programmes of the

organization, not only in the scientific sector but also in the social sciences, education and information sectors.

61. With regard to preparations for the United Nations conference on the human environment, the General Conference, at its fifteenth session, had invited the Director-General to take all appropriate steps to ensure an effective contribution by UNESCO in any action which the General Assembly might decide upon in that sphere.

62. His organization was particularly pleased that the conference was to concentrate on problems of action by public authorities, and that properly prepared but limited documentation was to be distributed in advance. It fully supported the proposals relating to the preparation and organization of the conference.

63. Mr. LAZAREVIĆ (Yugoslavia) said that the problem of the human environment had been recognized nationally and internationally as one of world-wide proportions involving both developed and developing countries. Although the problem was far more critical in the industrially developed part of the world, the developing countries must be careful, at the beginning of their economic and social transformation, to avoid repeating the mistakes of the developed countries. The problem had already assumed such proportions that no Government, local or national, could afford not to pay adequate attention to such matters as air and water pollution, sanitation, landscapes and parks. Appropriate measures must be taken in many countries to ensure that future generations would not suffer from the negative consequences of modern civilization.

64. His delegation expressed its deep appreciation of the initiative taken by the Swedish Government in proposing the inclusion of the question on the agenda and suggesting the convening of an international conference on the problem.

65. Before commenting on the part of the Secretary-General's report which directly concerned the conference, he wished to refer briefly to some measures that were being taken in his own country.

66. The rapid industrialization and social transformation experienced during the past twenty years had brought into the open the manifold aspects of the environment which had been partly neglected. The problem had become acute especially in the cities, which had not been prepared to meet all the requirements of a modern society. The federal and local authorities had become aware of the problem and had recognized that the economy could not pawn the welfare of future generations. An appropriate priority would therefore be accorded to the environmental aspect in all economic policy decisions. Since that required a multidisciplinary approach, efforts were being made to bring together urban planners, engineers and public health experts. Leading experts, in co-operation with the various government bodies, had prepared for that purpose a document based on his country's own experience as well as

that of other countries. That document had been carefully discussed by the Federal Assembly.

67. Parallel with that action, appropriate measures and regulations were being prepared at all levels of government to establish an appropriate long-term plan for the sustained development of resources.

68. In discussing the problem, members should bear in mind that many environmental problems were truly international. In that respect, his delegation attached particular importance to the General Assembly's decision (resolution 2398 (XXIII)) to convene a world-wide conference. His delegation considered it essential that maximum efforts should be made by national Governments, the international organizations concerned and the United Nations, so that the results of the conference would be beneficial to all countries and to the international community at large. He agreed that the scope and content of the conference should be such as to avoid narrow technical discussions and that attention should be concentrated on broad topics of general human concern. The conference should, in his delegation's view, also identify those aspects of environmental problems which could best be resolved through international or regional co-operation.

69. His Government would do its utmost to ensure that the preparations for the conference were effective.

70. Mr. ABE (Japan) said that the urgency of environmental problems was felt most keenly in his own country. Indeed, as a result of the very rapid pace of Japan's industrial development, the problems of the human environment such as air and water pollution, the adverse effects of noise and the deleterious alteration of the natural environment had assumed disquieting proportions. It was feared that such phenomena would have an immeasurable effect on the living conditions of the inhabitants themselves, who had made such efforts to improve their standards of living through industrialization. His Government was, of course, taking various remedial or preventive measures, through legislation or administrative steps, against the expected hazards and was engaged in technical surveys and research.

71. It was now essential for the industrialized countries to take necessary action, particularly in the international field, before the situation became worse. His delegation therefore appreciated the initiative taken by the Swedish Government and hoped that the Council would unanimously accept that Government's offer to act as host country to the conference that was to be held in 1972.

72. As to the Secretary-General's report on problems of the human environment, his delegation believed that in order to make the most effective use of the rather limited time available, the topics to be discussed should be limited as far as possible to subjects of highest priority. Furthermore, priority should be given to such subjects as were amenable to international action. The conference should lead to periodic and systematic exchanges of information,

joint surveys, and the training of personnel—results which might seem modest but which his delegation believed would be essential starting points for the gigantic undertaking envisaged. As to the sessional commissions suggested by the Secretary-General, he thought they should be as few as possible.

73. His delegation was a sponsor of draft resolution E/L.1275 and Add.1, and hoped it would be adopted unanimously. It was prepared to co-operate to the full in preparations for the conference.

74. Mr. CRANE (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations) said that FAO's contribution to the Secretary-General's report showed that its concern with the problems of the human environment covered virtually the entire range of FAO activities. FAO was therefore directly interested in the proposed conference on the human environment and fully supported the initiative of the Swedish Government. It was prepared to co-operate in the effective implementation of draft resolution E/L.1275 and Add.1, and it would be glad to work closely with the United Nations and the agencies concerned, and in particular with the proposed preparatory committee.

75. Mr. KRYLOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that in recent years much useful work had been done at the international level on the various aspects of the problem of the human environment. A considerable part of such work had been carried out by international scientific organizations, which had issued useful scientific papers, and held international meetings, symposia and conferences.

76. Various activities in the field of the human environment were also carried out by such intergovernmental organizations as FAO, UNESCO, WHO and WMO. In that connexion, he referred to the results of the Intergovernmental Conference of Experts on the Scientific Basis for Rational Use and Conservation of the Resources of the Biosphere, which had met in Paris, under the auspices of UNESCO, from 4 to 13 September 1968, and to which Soviet scientists had made a contribution.

77. Despite the international action taken in that field, however, the situation so far as concerned the conservation of the resources of the biosphere was far from favourable. Even during the time since the Biosphere Conference had met, there had been cases of pollution of the sea by oil, lost atomic bombs and the holding of nuclear tests. In many countries, even now, there were no scientific and governmental bodies responsible for the study of natural conditions and the implementation of measures to conserve the resources of the biosphere.

78. While the problems of the human environment were studied more or less intensively at the international level, it must be recognized that at the regional level, and particularly at the national level, those problems were being resolved rather slowly.

79. As to the proposed conference on the human environment, all interested States should be invited to participate



in it. That was particularly important, not only because environmental pollution extended beyond national borders but also because the decisions to be adopted at that conference could be fully effective only if they were supported by all States. That would be possible only if all States took part in the discussion of the questions involved. For his delegation, the question of the universality of the conference was one of principle. The exclusion of any country from such an important scientific and technical conference would cause great damage to all States. The principle of universality was violated in operative paragraphs 6, 7 and 11 of draft resolution E/L.1275 and Add.1. His delegation therefore proposed the deletion, in paragraph 11, of the words "Members of the United Nations or of the specialized agencies and IAEA".

80. The conference's programme should include the proposals made at the Biosphere Conference, and the recommendations of the Advisory Committee on the Application of Science and Technology to Development should also be taken into account. As to preparations for the proposed conference, his delegation had considerable doubts about the proposal to establish a preparatory committee. That work could be done by the United Nations Secretariat, assisted by a group of experts. A conference secretariat should perhaps be established as early as possible in order to begin the immediate preparations. The Secretary-General should seek all possible ways of reducing the cost of holding the proposed conference to the minimum.

81. In conclusion, his delegation wished to draw the Secretary-General's attention to the need for giving wide publicity to the conference and to its objectives, so as to attract the interest of all States as well as of prominent scientists and specialists.

82. Miss JEFFREYS (International Atomic Energy Agency) said that her organization was in general agreement with the views expressed in the Secretary-General's report on problems of the human environment and, in particular, with the suggestion in paragraph 102 that the conference should be attended by governmental delegations at a policy-making level, assisted by technical advisers and opinion-formers. In reading the report, her delegation had been struck by man's ability to pollute his own environment. The report showed, however, that the picture was not altogether negative, and that much had been done to improve the situation.

83. The application of atomic energy in industry and research was perhaps unique in the development of new techniques in that from the early days the potential hazards of the indiscriminate release of radioactive waste to the environment had been recognized, and that the practice had been from the outset to contain the wastes until safe methods of waste management or disposal could be developed. Paragraph 47 of the report referred to the serious measures that had been taken and were being taken by the nuclear industry to prevent any possible radioactive pollution of the environment. As a result, waste manage-

ment and the monitoring of radioactive waste were now effective. Further, owing to new developments in waste-management techniques, the better understanding of the behaviour of radioactive materials in the environment and the availability of appropriate standards, regulations and codes of practice, the control of waste releases was expected to be even more effective in future. For example, methods were now being developed to contain krypton 85 before it became a significant environmental hazard. As a result of such responsible approach, the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation had been able to state in its 1966 report,<sup>2</sup> that low-activity wastes released from facilities using nuclear material for industrial, medical and research purposes, contributed a negligible fraction of the doses received by human populations from artificial sources such as fall-out and X-rays. IAEA would therefore venture to suggest that the Secretary-General's report would have been in better balance had it not devoted a special paragraph to radioactivity, while pollutants of comparable, if not greater, danger were merely grouped together in a list.

84. Mr. KRISHNAN (India) was in general agreement with the suggestions made in the Secretary-General's report on problems of the human environment. His position was based on three essential points. First, so far as concerned the objectives of the proposed conference, he considered that no useful purpose would be served by confining it to the identification of issues. The essential aim should be to delve further and to suggest for the international community a specific programme of action, to be implemented at both the national and the international level, bearing in mind the need to assist developing countries to combat and forestall damage to environment and to protect it.

85. Secondly, the results of the conference should be such as to benefit all countries. It was therefore essential that as many developing countries as possible should participate. The conference's agenda should be of interest to the developing countries; otherwise it would be difficult to secure their participation.

86. Thirdly, the conference must be kept within manageable limits, from the standpoint not only of the United Nations system but also of the developing countries. For example, if the conference set up too many commissions which met at the same time, it would be difficult for small countries to send large enough delegations to attend all the meetings. In addition, the agenda must be selective. He recalled in that connexion, that during the discussion at the twenty-third session of the General Assembly, his delegation had suggested three broad categories within which the work of the conference could be conducted: (1) environmental considerations, i.e. mainly technical questions; (2) dehumanization of the world as an environmental problem, i.e. consideration of the question from the sociological standpoint; and (3) planning of the environ-

<sup>2</sup> *Official Records of the General Assembly, Twenty-first Session, Supplement No. 14.*



ment for its utilization, i.e. consideration of the problem from the economic standpoint.

87. Draft resolution E/L.1275 and Add.1, of which his delegation was a sponsor, reflected the basic points he had just mentioned, especially in its paragraphs 2 and 12.

88. His delegation supported the proposal for the establishment of a preparatory committee, and considered that the first questions to be decided by that committee should be the agenda and the structure of the proposed conference. The composition of the committee should of course, be established with due regard for an equitable geographical distribution and a careful balance between developed and developing countries.

89. Mr. AHMED (Pakistan) said that the problems of the human environment were so complex and numerous that their solution called for concerted action not only at the national, but also at the international level. He was in general agreement with the views set out in the Secretary-General's report.

90. As to the purpose of the proposed conference, he endorsed the statement in paragraph 85 of the report that the conference should be conceived as an important means of stimulating and providing guidelines for action by national Governments and international organizations. He also believed that the conference should not be involved in narrow technical discussions, but should address itself to broad topics of general human concern (*ibid.* para. 96). The importance and urgency of the problem should be brought to the attention of the public before, during and after the conference.

91. In conclusion, he commended draft resolution E/L.1275 and Add.1 to the Council and hoped it would be unanimously adopted.

92. Mr. FORTHOMME (Belgium) said that, although resolution E/L.1275 and Add.1 had been drafted with great care, some points were not clear, such as the reference in paragraph 4 to "highly qualified representatives" and the general endorsement given in paragraph 1. Furthermore, the co-operation requested in paragraphs 6, 7 and 9 would undoubtedly lead to the submission of a large number of documents, and he believed that the Secretary-General should be authorized to reduce the size of that documentation. Otherwise, there might be complaints that a particular contribution had not been taken into account. He therefore asked the sponsors of the draft resolution whether, on the basis of the statement by the representative of Norway, it would be possible to prepare, for submission to the General Assembly, a document which would accompany the draft and clarify certain points.

93. Mr. KHANACHET (Kuwait) said that his delegation appreciated the initiative taken by the Swedish Government in placing the problem of the human environment before the General Assembly and the Council. The topic was a vast one and although it applied to all countries, some of the

problems related to it had become especially acute in the developing countries. Tropical and sub-tropical climates, for instance, favoured the existence and spread of infectious diseases. Poverty was aggravated by the detrimental effects of climatic conditions and consequently the whole process of economic and social development was therefore seriously handicapped. The problem shared by all was that of human settlement. The situation was aggravated by rapid urban growth, which had led to overcrowded dwellings, slum conditions and poor sanitation. A campaign against many of those problems could only be successful only if the masses became aware of the seriousness of the matter and were taught to take a personal interest in resolving the problems. Education and information media could help to achieve those objectives, but there were certain problems such as air and water pollution, which were caused by modern industry and in which mass consciousness played a small part. Those problems should be resolved through the close co-operation of Governments and the private sector. Other problems were within the exclusive domain of Governments and their solution would be a matter of State policy. They related to the conservation of forests, nature and animal reserves.

94. The Secretary-General's report had succeeded in simplifying the subject and in making it more manageable by giving a precise and pragmatic definition of the term "human environment". The proposed conference should concentrate on specific problems and avoid becoming involved in academic discussions. The most important task would be to determine the scope of the problems and to concentrate efforts on the means of resolving them.

95. His delegation supported the view that the conference should be held in Sweden because it was a prototype of a modern country having experienced most of the problems of the human environment and succeeded in resolving many of them.

96. His delegation agreed that the documentation of the conference should be limited and be divided into two parts. The information documents could be voluminous and should be circulated long in advance to help delegations in their preparations. However, care must be taken in determining the kind of documentation to be circulated. The action documents should be brief and related to specific issues. That was particularly important for the developing countries, if they were to benefit from those documents of a highly technical nature. His delegation had sponsored General Assembly resolution 2398 (XXIII) on the problem and supported the suggestion for the establishment of a preparatory committee.

97. Governments should be invited long in advance to prepare background papers on specific problems of particular concern to them. In addition, developing countries should be invited to describe problems of the human environment which pre-dated industrialization and which might be unknown to the advanced countries. Such problems might be neglected unless they were included under a separate item. His Government had a special

interest in the conference because the country's arid climate, the abundance of oil and natural gas, the absence of thick forests and the frequency of sandstorms had all combined to create problems of the human environment which required long-range solutions.

98. Mrs. ZAEFFERER de GOYENECHE (Argentina) said that the conference on the human environment would provide proof to the public of the effectiveness of United Nations action. The subject of the proposed conference was the human being himself and the dangers with which he was threatened as a result of the achievements of science and technology. Her Government believed that all necessary steps should be taken to ensure the success of the conference. It considered that priorities should be established and hoped that the conference would give rise to helpful co-operation among the developing countries, in particular with a view to avoiding the dangers that threatened their natural resources and the potential evils of urbanization and industrialization. Her delegation therefore thought that regional conferences should be held in advance of the world conference.

99. While her delegation believed that every effort should be made to reduce the costs of the conference to a minimum, it considered that the usefulness of the undertaking should not be jeopardized by a decision to withhold the necessary funds.

100. Her delegation thanked the Government of Sweden for its invitation to hold the conference in that country. In conclusion, she hoped that draft resolution E/L.1275 and Add.1, of which her delegation was a co-sponsor, would be unanimously adopted by the Council.

101. Mr. HILL (Jamaica) said that the problems facing mankind as a result of deterioration in the environment had been recognized for some time. Three years before the conference to be held in 1972, two major types of problem had been identified: those arising from changes in the environment resulting from increasing population and the inadequately controlled use of technological advances, and those caused by the impact of such changes on human

beings in terms of health and working and living conditions frequently as a result of increasing urbanization.

102. The United Nations conference on the human environment was intended to provide the basis for action by public authorities at the local, national, regional and international levels to deal with the problems of planning, management and control of the human environment for economic and social development (E/4667, para. 86). Among the considerations to which due attention must be paid in preparing for the conference were the following: that it should focus on international action to supplement national and regional efforts, and that it should aim not merely at listing problems but at combining the substance and the strategy for practical action at the earliest possible juncture. It would be extremely desirable to hold a short meeting immediately before the conference itself, so that representatives at the actual conference would be free to concentrate on decisions which had to be taken, rather than on general discussions. In addition, the participation of developing countries should be ensured, both in the work of the preparatory committee and in the conference itself. One of the main purposes of the conference was to enable developing countries to forestall the occurrence of environmental problems, and it was therefore important that they should play a part in formulating its policies.

103. It was extremely important that the recommendations emerging from the conference should lead to meaningful action. The period after the conference would be one of national self-restraint on the part of the industrialized countries, to prevent further pollution of the sea and the biosphere, and of imaginative use of its recommendations in planning and action by the developing countries.

104. His delegation was a co-sponsor of draft resolution E/L.1275 and Add.1, and wished to commend the continued initiative of the Swedish Government, particularly in offering a venue for the conference.

The meeting rose at 6.15 p.m.