



## ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL

FIFTY-FIRST SESSION

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*President: Mr. DRISS (Tunisia)*

### Expression of sympathy to the Government of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

1. The PRESIDENT asked the USSR representative to convey to his Government the sincerest sympathy of the Economic and Social Council on the tragic loss it had just sustained by the death of three cosmonauts in the performance of their duties.

### Opening of the session

2. The PRESIDENT said he would like to wish the Secretary-General a speedy recovery, so that he might resume his activities in the cause of peace and justice. In the present atomic era, any progress towards justice and international stability constituted a step forward for man, respect for whose rights and freedoms would depend on international understanding.

3. He extended a welcome to members of the Council and expressed the earnest hope that their efforts would meet with success. A difficult task awaited them. As usual, a number of specific items would be considered by the Economic Committee and the Co-ordination Committee, while the Council would concentrate, in plenary, on certain important questions, including the system of over-all appraisal of progress in implementing the International Development Strategy for the Second United Nations Development Decade (agenda item 3 (a)). The Economic Committee would be required to deal with the technical aspects of that appraisal, and he hoped that it would submit its report and recommendations as soon as possible, so that the Council would have time to take an appropriate decision. The Strategy had been launched on the twenty-fifth anniversary of the United Nations, and if it was to be successful there must be no delay in elaborating the

necessary machinery for its appraisal. Moreover, whatever arguments might be put forward for delaying the implementation of the Strategy or the application of that machinery, they could serve only to demonstrate, once again, that while the aims of the United Nations could not be achieved by the mere assumption of formal commitments, such commitments were a moral support to those whose right and duty it was to persevere along the path of international co-operation.

4. The Council would also resume its consideration of two important items, namely, measures to improve the organization of the work of the Council (agenda item 17) and future institutional arrangements for science and technology (agenda item 10 (b)).

5. It was also proposed that the reports of the specialized agencies and of the regional economic commissions should be submitted to the Economic Committee and to the Co-ordination Committee, which would examine their content and make appropriate recommendations. In his opinion, those reports should in future be submitted in an abridged form, and spaced out in time, so that at any one session the Council would have to consider only a small number of such reports, in addition to urgent communications calling for a decision on its part. The steps which the Council was authorized to take under Article 64 of the Charter in connexion with the reports of the specialized agencies had become in practice a kind of duty, and the Council had fallen into a routine. It was precisely now, when there was so much talk of rationalizing activities, and when ways and means of improving the Council's working methods were being studied, that action should be taken, although there could of course be no question of excluding the representatives of the specialized agencies from participation in the Council's work. It was in that spirit that he had taken the initiative of asking the executive heads of the specialized agencies to participate in the general discussion, not to submit reports of their organizations' activities, but to give the Council the benefit of their knowledge and experience and to express their views on the development of economic and social policy in the world at large, on the implementation of the International Development Strategy and the role which each agency was called upon to play in that context, and perhaps also on the strengthening of the Economic and Social Council. Together with the statements of government representatives, such information and views would provide the foundation for a fruitful debate, for the more the Council was able to concentrate on the subjects taken up, the better able it would be to reach a pertinent judgement and positive conclusions.

6. The Council's function was to receive and analyse, to orient and co-ordinate, not to act as a governing body to which each agency felt obliged to render a detailed account.

The primary requirements were efficiency and integrity of purpose, and it was the responsibility of the Council as a whole to see that the fifty-first session was marked by a clearer awareness of the problems, as well as of the possibilities, of international co-operation, and by the elaboration of new methods designed to strengthen that co-operation and achieve the objectives of the United Nations.

7. He declared open the fifty-first session of the Economic and Social Council.

#### AGENDA ITEM 1

##### Adoption of the agenda (E/5015)

8. Mr. MOJSOV (Yugoslavia) said he would like to know how the Council proposed to deal with agenda item 9, concerning the report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

9. Mr. ODERO-JOWI (Kenya) said that he, too, would like to have some information on that subject.

10. Mr. ASANTE (Ghana) said he believed that, if there were no comments, the report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees would be dealt with as indicated in the provisional agenda (E/5015) and in the note by the President on the organization of work (E/L.1426), and transmitted to the General Assembly.

11. Mr. CARANICAS (Greece) said he thought it would be logical to decide immediately whether or not there would be any discussion on item 9.

12. Mr. SCOTT (New Zealand) pointed out that the annual report of the High Commissioner (E/5037 and Corr.1) related to the period from 1 April 1970 to 31 March 1971, on which latter date a very extensive movement of population had begun, that of the refugees from East Pakistan to India. The scale of that movement and its economic consequences were such that it was hard for his delegation to conceive how at its present session the Council could pass over that question in silence. He hoped the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees would inform the Council of the present situation, either by making a statement or by submitting an additional report, whichever he deemed the more appropriate. He also hoped the information provided would be complete, in keeping with the High Commissioner's responsibilities. In order that governments could study that information and give instructions to their delegations, and in order that consultations could be held, he would suggest that the adoption of that agenda item should be deferred on the understanding that the decision taken by the Council at its resumed forty-seventh session<sup>1</sup> could be no bar to the High Commissioner's making a statement to the Council.

<sup>1</sup> See *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, Resumed Forty-seventh Session, Supplement No. 1A* (E/4735/Add.1), p. 3.

13. Mr. SHAIKH (Pakistan) said that while he quite understood the New Zealand delegation's desire to obtain information concerning the situation of the refugees from East Pakistan, it seemed to him that, though undeniably humanitarian, the suggestion that the High Commissioner should make a statement to the Council or submit to it an additional report raised questions of procedure and problems of a constitutional and political nature which would have to be taken into consideration.

14. His delegation fully supported the New Zealand representative's suggestion that any decision on agenda item 9 should be postponed, to enable interested delegations to hold consultations and reach an agreement. The High Commissioner's report related to the period from 1 April 1970 to 31 March 1971, and the relief measures taken on behalf of the refugees from East Pakistan were outside the scope of that report; they constituted a new subject. So far as his own delegation was concerned, the point at issue was of a constitutional nature, since the High Commissioner took such action under the authority of the Secretary-General of the United Nations and not by virtue of his mandate or of a decision by responsible bodies. It would therefore be advisable to postpone a decision and try to reach an agreement which took into account both the preoccupations of the international community regarding the situation of the refugees from East Pakistan and the desire not to prejudice the fundamental political interests of the member States concerned.

15. Mr. MOJSOV (Yugoslavia) recalled that at the resumed forty-seventh session, in October 1969, the United Kingdom delegation had pointed out that, since the Executive Committee met only once a year, in the autumn, the High Commissioner's report was no longer up to date when the Council considered it the following summer.<sup>2</sup> That time-lag was normal enough in the circumstances, and it had been the chief reason why a recommendation had been made that the report should be transmitted to the General Assembly; but it was more glaring than ever in 1971, in view of the recent extraordinary events. World public opinion was greatly concerned with the tragic fate of the millions of refugees from East Pakistan; a vast international effort had been undertaken; in May 1971 the Secretary-General of the United Nations had himself launched an appeal to which the Government of Pakistan had given a favourable reply; and the High Commissioner had taken some very useful action to assemble resources and provide assistance to the refugees. In the circumstances, it seemed inconceivable that the Council should not find time to consider the High Commissioner's report; it would hardly be appropriate to postpone such consideration till the following year, when the situation would be altogether different. So negative a step would, besides, be detrimental to the organization of a large-scale international effort to help the refugees, and contrary to the very spirit of the appeal launched by the Secretary-General.

16. For all those reasons, the Yugoslav delegation proposed that there should be a debate on agenda item 9, so

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, *Resumed Forty-seventh Session*, 1640th meeting.

that members of the Council could have a better understanding of the problems and difficulties which the High Commissioner was currently encountering in his efforts to assist the refugees from East Pakistan. It entirely approved the New Zealand representative's suggestion that the adoption of agenda item 9 should be adjourned, for it was of the opinion that consideration of the matter by the Council should lead to highly constructive results, likely to assist the High Commissioner in carrying out the difficult task with which he was entrusted by the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

17. Mr. AKRAM (Pakistan) said that he, like the New Zealand representative, thought it would be better to postpone consideration of item 9, to give an opportunity for consultations so that a consensus might be reached. In that way a debate involving both political and procedural matters could be avoided.

18. Mr. NESTERENKO (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) thanked the President for the sympathy he had expressed to the people of the Soviet Union on the occasion of the death of the three Soviet cosmonauts; he would convey that message to his Government.

19. Referring to the matter of the East Pakistan refugees, he dwelt on the serious situation on the frontier between Pakistan and India and the deplorable conditions of the refugees in that area. In such circumstances, procedural considerations should not stand in the way, and his delegation would support any form of discussion on the matter, then or when item 9 was considered.

20. Mr. GORSE (France) hoped that the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees would give his opinion.

21. The PRESIDENT said that if there were no objections, he would ask the High Commissioner to speak.

22. Prince Sadruddin AGA KHAN (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) said that he had listened attentively to the debate on the question of consideration of the situation of the East Pakistan refugees. It should, however, be pointed out that a question of procedure arose in that connexion. After the Secretary-General's appeal in May, the High Commissioner had been made responsible for channelling aid to India for the East Pakistan refugees. It was a matter of providing good offices at a time, moreover, which fell outside the period covered in his annual report. That explained why there was no report on the matter.

23. It was for the Council to decide whether the High Commissioner should report to it on the situation of the East Pakistan refugees. If the Council so decided, he would respond to its request, as he had done in 1969 in connexion with a specific problem in Africa.

24. Mr. HAMBRO (Norway) said he thought that all delegations would like to have information on the subject of the East Pakistan refugees. The Pakistan representative had asked that there should be an opportunity for consultations. Perhaps there should be a vote on that proposal.

25. Mr. CARANICAS (Greece) noted that the High Commissioner had pointed out that his function in connexion with aid to refugees in India was one of good offices, and that the matter had arisen outside the period dealt with in his report.

26. He personally was in favour of examining the situation of the refugees, but would prefer the matter not to be put to a vote.

27. Mr. NESTERENKO (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that he, too, was opposed to a vote being taken, which would be a clumsy procedure in a matter of that kind. A better solution should be found.

28. Mr. MOJSOV (Yugoslavia) suggested that the agenda should be adopted as a whole, including item 9. The Council could decide later how the matter should be dealt with.

29. The PRESIDENT proposed that, having regard to the views which had been expressed, the Council should approve the inclusion of item 9 in the agenda. If later on a delegation thought it urgent to consider the question of the East Pakistan refugees, it could raise the matter at the time if deemed appropriate.

*It was so decided.*

*The provisional agenda (E/5015) was adopted.*

#### Statement by the Secretary-General

30. Mr. de SEYNES (Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs) said that the Secretary-General deeply regretted that he was unable to be present at the fifty-first session of the Economic and Social Council. He read out a message from the Secretary-General to the Council:

31. The Secretary-General regretted that he was unable to be present at the outset of the Second United Nations Development Decade. He nevertheless wished to convey to the members of the Council, together with his best wishes, his views on some of the economic and social problems with which they were dealing.

32. The responsibilities entrusted to the Council were an essential part of the work of the United Nations. During his ten years as Secretary-General he had derived comfort from the great progress achieved by the Organization and its family of agencies in the economic and social fields. The record was to be found in the documents placed before the Council each year and could be seen in the benefits which had been brought throughout the world to children, the hungry, the sick, the handicapped, the illiterate, the unskilled and refugees. Never before had there been such hopeful signs that some day, perhaps in the not too distant future, the inhabitants of the earth would be united and blessed with world-wide peace, prosperity and justice. The members of the Council had the privilege of being among the first men turning away from national divisions towards

the fulfilment of more meaningful lives for all people on a safe and protected planet.

33. Among the Council's accomplishments the International Development Strategy for the Second United Nations Development Decade stood out as a particularly notable event. Only a year before, few people had been convinced that a global development strategy for the 1970s could be agreed upon; since then, the dedication of the members of the Council had confounded the sceptics. However, the task of translating the International Development Strategy into practice would require even more determination, understanding and good will. The Council might have to challenge and even reject some of the established patterns of thought and policies. If the present patterns of international trade and assistance had to be changed, then the United Nations – whether in the General Assembly, UNCTAD or the Economic and Social Council – should not rest until they were changed. That would be one of the functions of the review and appraisal envisaged under the Strategy.

34. The relationship between United Nations efforts in the economic and social fields and the political pursuits of the Organization was vital. The international economic solidarity brought about since the Second World War between rich and poor countries had helped to avoid a coalition of the latter into a hostile political camp. That effort must be continued, and he called on the governments and peoples of developed and developing nations alike to join in the great endeavour of the Second United Nations Development Decade.

35. During the coming years, the Council would have to help rectify the distorted priorities which prevailed at present in the world: in 1970 alone, some 204,000 million dollars, in other words the equivalent of a total year's income of all the developing countries, had been spent on armaments. The common goals of men were different; to call for disarmament was no longer to adopt an unrealistic, idealistic priority. No government should rejoice at the silence of its own people and the turbulence of another, for upheavals in any country today could have serious repercussions elsewhere.

36. In the wake of the present *détente*, a great alliance of all peoples should be formed against their common enemies: poverty, injustice, moral and physical misery and the rapid deterioration of the earth's beauty and life-sustaining elements. The Economic and Social Council was a natural forum for such an undertaking.

37. Many things would change on earth from the moment when nations, especially the Great Powers which were able to determine so much of the world's fate, would begin to join forces and cope with those problems instead of going their separate ways. That was the only great driving force that could give full meaning to the twin decades launched by the United Nations: the Second Development Decade and the Disarmament Decade.

38. Economic development required collective endeavours. New scientific and technological waves incessantly originated from the more advanced countries; because of persisting differences between nations, they ran the risk of

further dividing the world instead of uniting it. Two satellite systems were competing in outer space. Tomorrow there might be three or more. On the seas and the oceans, countries were unilaterally extending national sovereignty or departing from international conventions, when what was needed was a rapid agreement on an international régime for the benefit of all mankind.

39. Never before had an era been marked by such tragic contrasts. Hundreds of millions of people had shaken off the yoke of foreign domination but were still unable to obtain freedom from want. Throughout the world countries had raised themselves from the depths of under-development, yet the dominant scene in many areas of the world was still one of economic backwardness and mass poverty. There were millions of jobs to be filled in the provision of both infrastructures and essential services, yet huge numbers of able-bodied men failed to find employment. Education was recognized as a right, but the world did not know how those who had received it could be usefully integrated into society. The most intricate substances were isolated and synthesized, but no assurance could be given that the simplest health care would be available to the masses. Skyscrapers were being built, but the majority of people lived in slums. Men knew how to harness the latent energies of the atom, yet no way of defusing the potentially explosive human situation had yet been found. Men had reached the moon, but had not yet reached out their hands and hearts on their own planet. While the under-developed world yearned for industrialization, the developed world was now concerned about the environment. New scientific and technological discoveries continued to improve and change men's lives, but many began to long for simplicity, austerity and for cultures which were more than materialistic achievements.

40. All those currents and preoccupations were reflected in the Council's agenda and the reports submitted to it by the specialized agencies. As new problems were examined, new institutional arrangements for coping with them were considered. The ACC had engaged over the past two years in a process of self-examination and reappraisal of its tasks and methods of work. The initiative taken by the Council regarding the role and operation of the ACC had been welcomed by that body, as it clarified many issues and led to a better understanding of the respective responsibilities and functions of the governing bodies and the secretariats of international organizations. The ACC was looking forward to any further expression of views by the Council on that subject, and was ready fully to co-operate in seeking practical solutions to the manifold problems involved in the operation of the United Nations system of organizations.

41. The International Development Strategy provided a most valuable frame of reference within which all the organizations of the United Nations family must exercise a large degree of what could be described as positive co-ordination, that is, one which, consistent with present thinking on programme budgeting, took place at the planning stage rather than, as unfortunately had so often been the case in the past, as a means of reconciling *a posteriori* conflicts of jurisdiction and work. A good



beginning in that direction was the special report prepared by the ACC on the implications of the "green revolution" (E/5012 (Part II)) before the Council at the present session. Positive co-ordination would also call for effective co-operation amongst the agencies in the process of review and appraisal, and to that end the necessary mechanism for consultation had been set up and would be adapted as necessary to the decisions that the Council and the Assembly were expected to adopt in that regard.

42. The United Nations system was increasingly called upon to face new challenges of international co-operation. For instance, he had just established within the Secretariat a focal point for the co-ordination of international assistance in connexion with national disasters; those arrangements had greatly facilitated inter-agency consultations in such situations. Nevertheless, the international community felt that efforts fell considerably short of needs; that concern was confirmed by the situation of refugees from East Pakistan. Existing arrangements within the United Nations system must therefore be strengthened, and the Council might wish to consider an upward revision of the very modest proposals contained in his comprehensive report on assistance in cases of natural disaster (E/4994).

43. He expressed satisfaction at the co-operation and understanding shown over the past ten years by the executive heads of the organizations and programmes of the United Nations system.

44. It was within a clearer historical perspective that the review of the Council's structure and methods of work must be considered, and the progress achieved in that respect as a result of recent debates, particularly at the Council's fiftieth session, was encouraging. It was imperative that such changes as might be found necessary, including those pertaining to the size and membership of the Council and of its committees, should be defined and promoted at the present session. That would prepare the ground for decisions by the General Assembly on the process of review and appraisal, which was the crucial element in the international strategy.

45. He hoped that the trying period of the 1960s and the 1970s would soon be seen as a period of transition towards a system of peace, justice and well-being. Never had those dreams been so closely within reach and so universally in demand. Mankind must confront the unjustified pessimism of our time and the disbelief of so many, for men of government should never cease to be providers of hope.

46. He wished the Council every success in its work.

#### Election of a Vice-President

47. The PRESIDENT reminded the Council that, under rule 23 of its rules of procedure, it should elect a new Vice-President, who would also be the Chairman of the Co-ordination Committee, as a replacement for Mr. Castro (Brazil), who had been called upon to carry out other duties.

48. Mr. JOHNSON (Jamaica) nominated Mr. Frazão (Brazil).

49. Mr. ODERO-JOWI (Kenya), Mr. HUDA (Pakistan) and Mr. ANTOINE (Haiti) seconded that nomination.

*Mr. Frazão (Brazil) was elected Vice-President by acclamation.*

#### Organization of work (E/L.1426)

50. The PRESIDENT drew the attention of members of the Council to his note (E/L.1426) setting forth the tentative arrangement of business for the fifty-first session which, in consultation with the Bureau, he had suggested. Although agenda item 2 (General discussion of economic and social policy) had been selected as the main topic for the general debate, it had been proposed that, if the delegations so wished, in their general statements they could state the views of their Governments concerning the review and appraisal of the goals of the International Development Strategy and measures to improve the organization of the work of the Council (items 3 (a) and 17), in order to begin constructive negotiations with a view to arriving at positive results.

51. In addition, it had been proposed that agenda item 6, on regional co-operation, should be studied by the Economic Committee, on the understanding that the executive secretaries of the regional economic commissions, as well as the Director of the United Nations Economic and Social Office in Beirut, would make statements during the general discussion, and would review the economic and social situation in the regions with which they were concerned and give their opinions about the progress achieved in the implementation of the International Development Strategy. The reports of the regional economic commissions would then be studied in detail by the Economic Committee. That procedure should provide better knowledge of the activities of the commissions, and encouragement for the positive efforts that had been made at the regional level.

52. After an exchange of views in which Mr. MOJSOV (Yugoslavia), Mr. PATHMARAJAH (Ceylon), Mr. OSMAN (Sudan), Mr. AKRAM (Pakistan), Mr. ZAKARIA (Malaysia), Mr. ODERO-JOWI (Kenya), Mr. GHORRA (Lebanon) and Mr. SCOTT (New Zealand) took part, the PRESIDENT explained why he had been prompted to make the suggestions contained in his note, and to give some particulars concerning the way in which agenda item 6 should be considered.

53. He recalled that, although the Economic and Social Council was bound by the Charter and by its own rules of procedure, nothing prevented it from departing from the usual procedure. If tangible results were to be achieved, it was in fact quite necessary for the Council to break away from the traditional procedures that prevailed during its sessions. If it did not make rapid progress toward reforms, it would probably have to resign itself to being nothing more than a body of minor importance.

54. When they began their meetings the Economic Committee and the Co-ordination Committee would need to have some idea of the general orientation of their work so that it would lead to concrete proposals. It was the task of the delegations to provide that orientation by explaining in the plenary meeting the views of their Governments concerning the main topics before the Council, namely, agenda items 3, 10, (concerning science and technology) and 17. Perhaps it would even be necessary to consider the suggestion that had been made to the effect that the Co-ordination Committee should not meet during the first week of the session, so that the importance of the discussion in the plenary meeting would be duly taken into account.

55. Since the goal was, above all, efficiency, he thought that a practical attempt could be made to implement the new procedure that had been proposed, namely, that, as the Council came to the consideration of items in the order suggested in his note, it might decide to refer certain items from the plenary meetings to the Committees, and *vice versa*.

56. Mr. MOJSOV (Yugoslavia) observed that the delegations could always come back to the question of the

organization of the work of the Council during consideration of agenda item 17.

57. Mr. PATHMARAJAH (Ceylon) pointed out that on page 6 of the President's note, it was provided that during the second week of the session the Economic Committee and the Co-ordination Committee would each study the subjects included in agenda item 6 that it had been instructed to consider. In order that all the delegations, even the smaller ones, could participate usefully in the work, he expressed the wish that the two Committees would stagger their discussions of the various aspects of that item.

58. The PRESIDENT said that the secretariat would make the necessary arrangements in that connexion.

*Subject to that reservation, the suggestions contained in the note by the President (E/L.1426) were adopted.*

The meeting rose at 6.35 p.m.