



ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL

FIFTY-FIRST SESSION

OFFICIAL RECORDS

Monday, 19 July 1971

at 10.20 a.m.

PALAIS DES NATIONS, GENEVA

CONTENTS

Agenda item 17:

Measures to improve the organization of the work of the Council	111
---	-----

Président: Mr. DRISS (Tunisia)

AGENDA ITEM 17

Measures to improve the organization of the work of the Council (E/4986 and Add.1-9, E/L.1382, E/L.1408/Rev.2, E/L.1421/Rev.1, E/L.1422, E/L.1423, E/L.1431, E/L.1435)

1. The PRESIDENT announced that Indonesia had withdrawn its sponsorship of the amendment in document E/L.1431.

2. The general debate on the topic constituting agenda item 17 at the present session having been completed during the fiftieth session, he invited the members of the Council to make known their views on the draft resolutions before it.

3. Mr. SCOTT (New Zealand), introducing the new revised text of the draft resolution sponsored jointly by Greece and New Zealand (E/L.1408/Rev.2), said that three important changes had been made in the previous version of the draft (E/L.1408/Rev.1). The fourth preambular paragraph and section IV had been omitted, so that the proposal was concerned only with procedural matters. The reason was that both sponsors wanted the substantive amendments — relating to the membership of the Council and the sessional committees — to be the subject of a separate resolution. Operative paragraph 4 of section III had also been omitted, since that seemed to be the wish of most members of the Council. He hoped the Council would unanimously adopt the draft resolution, which contained measures which all Member States considered desirable.

4. Mr. SKATARETIKO (Yugoslavia) suggested that the draft resolution submitted by Greece and New Zealand should be examined paragraph by paragraph, together with the amendments to that proposal submitted at the fiftieth session, unless they had since been withdrawn, and any other amendments which might be presented.

5. His delegation could not share the New Zealand representative's view that the substantive issues should be the subject of a separate resolution. It was logical that the draft resolution should refer to the increase in the

membership of the Council, since that was a question which had been discussed at length during the fiftieth session. The text would therefore lose all its purpose if section IV was deleted. It was evident from the discussions that most Council members wanted an increase in the number of members of both the Council and the sessional committees so as to enable the Council to accomplish properly the tasks within its competence.

6. He wished to make some comments about the various bodies responsible for co-ordinating United Nations activities as a whole. Those bodies were meeting more frequently and that led to increased expenditure. His delegation was not suggesting that there was no reason for the activities of the ACC or of the CPC, which had already been discussed in the Co-ordination Committee of the Council, but it firmly believed that they needed reforming. For instance, when the CPC examined questions of a budgetary nature, it was duplicating the work of the governing bodies of the specialized agencies and the Co-ordination Committee. A simple way of avoiding such duplication would be either to abolish the Co-ordination Committee and decide that CPC should concern itself strictly with co-ordination, or to abolish the CPC, in which case the Co-ordination Committee would have to meet between sessions. His delegation would prefer the latter solution, but if certain delegations thought otherwise it was prepared to support any other measure designed to strengthen the Council's co-ordinating role.

7. It was with those considerations in mind that he now wished to introduce on behalf of the sponsors an amendment (E/L.1431) to draft resolution E/L.1408/Rev.2. It proposed the insertion of a new section IV, paragraph 1 of which would reflect the general opinion that the membership of the Council should be increased to fifty-four. The membership of the Council's subsidiary bodies should also be increased with immediate effect, as stated in paragraph 3, since the present membership was inadequate; all countries should be given a chance to participate more frequently in the work of the Council. Lastly, the sponsors considered it to be of the utmost importance that the machinery for co-ordination should be reviewed, and paragraph 5 contained a proposal to that effect.

8. He hoped that the amendment would be accepted and that the Council would take a definite decision which would enable it to carry out in a proper manner the functions entrusted to it by the Charter.

9. Mr. FERNAND-LAURENT (France), speaking on behalf of the four sponsors (Brazil, France, Tunisia and Uruguay), introduced draft resolution E/L.1435. It contained nothing new, its purpose being simply to ensure that two basic rules — namely, that documents should be distributed sufficiently in advance (in other words at least

six weeks before the opening of the session) and that they should be distributed simultaneously in all the working languages of the Council would be better applied in future. The sponsors took the view that those two categorical rules should be observed and that neither should be sacrificed for the other. Any breach of the second rule was an actual case of discrimination against delegations which used a working language other than that in which a given document had initially been drafted. If the Secretariat was properly organized both rules would be respected. The rule was strictly applied by UNESCO, where no document was circulated unless it already existed in all the working languages; in the unusual event of the rule being broken, there was an inquiry to ascertain the reason. WHO and the ILO applied the same principle. If those three organizations were able to adhere to the rule, there was no reason why a United Nations organ such as the Economic and Social Council should not do likewise. Moreover, the Council had already referred to those principles in 1965, in its resolution 1090 E (XXXIX) dealing with the whole question of documentation.

10. Admittedly, a distinction had to be drawn between documents produced by the Council itself and those it received from other United Nations bodies; observance of both rules was simpler in the former case. That was why, in operative paragraph 2 of the draft resolution, the sponsors were calling upon the CPC to submit to the Council, at its fifty-third session, practical suggestions for achieving that objective. They realized that the accumulated delays could not be overcome immediately and were giving the Secretariat a year in which to rectify that state of affairs. Meanwhile, the Secretariat could ask for an outside opinion, a procedure which UNESCO had found most useful, and it was therefore suggested in operative paragraph 3 that the Secretary-General should obtain any outside advice which he might think helpful to review the measures currently in force with respect to the preparation, translation and distribution of documents submitted to the Council or to its subsidiary bodies.

11. There was no question of dictating to the Secretariat the means it should choose in putting into effect General Assembly resolutions 2247 (XXI) and 2292 (XXII). For instance, the Secretary-General could invite the heads of the publication boards of WHO, the ILO and UNESCO to give him the benefit of their experience on the subject; he might request the Joint Inspection Unit to inquire into the matter, or resort to any other method he deemed appropriate.

12. The proposal was obviously not intended to be prejudicial to the languages which were not working languages of the Council. The sponsors simply wanted the existing rules to be respected and hoped that their draft resolution would be unanimously supported by the members of the Council.

13. Mr. CHAMMAS (Lebanon) reminded the Council that, at its fiftieth session, his delegation had proposed several amendments to the Greek and New Zealand draft

resolution (E/L.1408);¹ some of them had been taken up by the sponsors of the amendments in document E/L.1421.

14. It was regrettable that Greece and New Zealand had thought it necessary to delete the last preambular paragraph of their draft resolution, together with section IV, since their proposal was totally inadequate unless it called upon the General Assembly to amend the Charter with a view to ensuring an increase in the Council's membership at an early date. Any amendment to the Charter should be the subject of negotiation, so that a text likely to gain unanimous support could be prepared. Under Article 108 of the Charter, amendments to the Charter had not only to be adopted by a two-thirds majority of the members of the General Assembly but also to be ratified by two-thirds of the Members of the Organization, including all the permanent members of the Security Council. His delegation took the view that it was most important to increase the Council membership. The developing countries showed only a limited interest in strengthening the Council because they were not sufficiently represented on it. During the Second United Nations Development Decade it was important that all countries, especially the developing countries, should be equitably represented in the Council if it was to carry out its duties under the Charter.

15. His delegation had rather reluctantly associated itself with the sponsors of the amendment proposed in document E/L.1431, since it did not consider that the number of Council members should be specified at the present stage. However, faced with a political choice, it had decided that it must be consistent, since it had suggested, with the sponsors of the amendment contained in document E/L.1421, that the Council's membership should be enlarged. Some delegations were experiencing difficulty in accepting a larger membership; his delegation agreed with them that the Council must be made more efficient and that was admittedly the aim of the draft resolution proposed by Greece and New Zealand. That proposal had become inadequate however, owing to the omission of a vital provision. His delegation had no hard and fast views as to the number of members, and was prepared to accept any figure on which agreement could be reached after consultations, provided that the effectiveness of the Council was not impaired. His delegation hoped that steps would be taken as quickly as possible to ensure that the objectives of the Second Development Decade and the International Development Strategy were achieved. It would support any proposal to strengthen the Council's powers.

16. His delegation endorsed the French representative's views and unreservedly supported draft resolution E/L.1435.

17. Mr. SMOQUINA (Italy) said that item 17 was one of the most important items on the agenda. He would not go into the history of the problem, but he thought it would be useful at the present stage if delegations were first to state their precise positions.

¹ See *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, Fiftieth Session*, 1768th meeting.

18. His own country's position was based on three main ideas. The first and most important - and one to which he had referred at the fiftieth session of the Council² - related to the purpose of the proposed decision: it was to raise the Council's prestige and strengthen its powers and responsibilities. That objective was in accordance with the duties entrusted to the Council by the Charter and with developments in the present-day world. The second idea was that the problem should be viewed as a whole; it would be wrong to proceed on a sectoral basis and so run the risk of overlooking some other aspect of the problem. Only a comprehensive solution would really achieve what was desired. The third idea was that the Council's decision should reflect the widest possible consensus because, if the decision was to be workable, there had to be some guarantee that it would be put into practice; in other words, it must have general support.

19. It would therefore be readily understood why his delegation was greatly interested in the solution advocated in the draft resolution by Greece and New Zealand, the latest version of which (E/L.1408/Rev.2) took account of a number of amendments proposed by his delegation. In addition, his delegation, with several others, had made further suggestions with a view to ensuring that the final decision would be as comprehensive and harmonious as was required. The Council now had several proposals before it, each of which contained features that were worth retaining; but they dealt with the problem piecemeal, so that there was no unified approach.

20. In his delegation's view, the solution would be comprehensive and final only if it met certain requirements. The first and most important was to restore to the Council all its functions and to re-establish confidence in a body which had to interpret a common political will. What was needed was to re-establish and broaden the Council's competence, particularly in matters which had been of concern to the Council for only a fairly short period. Other requirements were the need to make the Council more representative and the introduction, both within and through the Council, of a more effective system for co-ordinating its activities. There were also several secondary but none the less important requirements relating to the functioning of the Council, its procedures and the organization of its work.

21. He appealed to representatives to try to find a joint solution which would meet all those requirements and secure the widest possible support, not only among the States members of the Council but also among the States Members of the United Nations. What mattered for the time being was that there should be such a joint approach.

22. Mr. de AZEVEDO BRITO (Brazil) said he shared the disappointment of the Yugoslav and Lebanese representatives at the fact that, in its latest version (E/L.1408/Rev.2), the proposal by Greece and New Zealand had lost its most important feature, namely the former operative section IV, which ensured that there was a certain balance between the provisions dealing with the reorganization of

the work of the Council from the procedural aspect and those which were concerned with its substantive aspects.

23. If there was to be a genuine dialogue in the Council, the first thing to ensure was a more balanced representation. It was because that representation was no longer satisfactory that Brazil had become a co-sponsor of the amendment in document E/L.1431, which proposed the addition of a new section IV to the operative part of the Greek and New Zealand draft resolution. There were many advantages in enlarging the Council, and the Yugoslav and Lebanese representatives had already referred to them; but a decision to that effect would need ratification by the permanent members of the Security Council. That was a crucial point, which the representatives should bear in mind in stating their positions.

24. His delegation had also been anxious to co-sponsor the draft resolution to improve the organization of the work of the Council as regards documentation (E/L.1435), for the Council itself had often made the mistake of not insisting that documents should be submitted to it six weeks before the beginning of the session, and it was difficult for delegations to make a useful contribution to the discussions when they had had only a few days in which to study documents, which dealt with increasingly complex matters and required correspondingly close attention.

25. His delegation had also submitted an amendment (E/L.1422) to the draft resolution by Greece and New Zealand, the purpose of which was to encourage observers attending the Council's debates to make the fullest possible use of rule 75 of the Council's rules of procedure and to submit proposals. The precedents that existed were a proof of the vitality of the organ concerned, and he hoped that the Council would encourage the effective participation of all Member States in its work.

26. Mr. OSMAN (Sudan), referring first to the Soviet Union draft resolution (E/L.1382), said he thought that operative paragraphs 1 and 3 should be amalgamated. Although Chapters IX and X of the Charter gave very wide powers to the Council, the Council was not the only advisory body to be approached in dealing with new technical and economic problems. Operative paragraph 4 posed the question why the Council had not been successful in effectively regulating and co-ordinating economic, social, scientific and technical activities within the United Nations system. The answer probably was that its membership should be enlarged, and negotiations should therefore be undertaken to that end.

27. The draft resolution by Greece and New Zealand (E/L.1408/Rev.2) also raised the question of co-ordination; at all events, on that aspect of improving the Council's procedures, consideration might be given to amalgamating the Soviet Union draft with the draft by Greece and New Zealand.

28. He was glad to note that the changes made in the last-mentioned proposal had taken many of the suggestions which had been put forward into account, and it should therefore be acceptable to most of the members of the Council. He was quite content that the sponsors of the draft resolution should have eliminated operative section

² *Ibid.*, 1761st meeting.

IV, the wording of which had not been satisfactory even at the fiftieth session. In his view, the omission of that section was a useful step, as it undoubtedly opened the way to negotiation on the fundamental issue of enlarging the membership of the Council.

29. The amendment (E/L.1421) to the former section IV of the draft resolution by Greece and New Zealand gave a fairly accurate idea of the position of the developing countries in general on the question of enlarging the membership of the Council, and his country was one of the sponsors. Some other countries, with which Sudan had not associated itself, had submitted a new amendment (E/L.1431) to the revised text of the draft resolution by Greece and New Zealand. He agreed with the Lebanese representative that it was essential to enlarge the membership of the Council and its sessional committees, but it seemed to him that the main need at the present stage was to hold a thorough discussion with the developed countries which had not yet taken up a definite position on the question. As the original amendment (E/L.1421) had not been withdrawn, his delegation preferred to stand by it rather than to support the new amendment (E/L.1431); it hoped that the sponsors of the latter proposal would embark upon the necessary discussions without delay, so that the Council could come to a decision before the end of the session.

30. The United States amendment (E/L.1423) was indicative of an attitude which gave grounds for hope that a broad agreement could be reached.

31. His delegation also supported the draft resolution by Brazil, France, Tunisia and Uruguay (E/L.1435); the Council was undeniably inconvenienced by the fact that the necessary documents were not submitted to it in sufficient time and that the versions other than those in the original language reached it even later.

32. Mr. ODERO-JOWI (Kenya) said that the world had changed radically since the establishment of the Council, and it should have been reorganized many years ago. It was imperative that it should be given a new lease of life if it was to regain its authority and to perform the tasks assigned to it under Chapters IX and X of the Charter. Kenya therefore supported the idea of enlarging the membership of the Council, in the first place because, as the representative of Norway had pointed out,³ it was necessary that the Council should be truly representative of an organization with 127 Member States, which it could not claim to be at present. Moreover, the enlargement of the Council should make it possible for the United Nations to harmonize the aspirations of the peoples of the world, who were being brought much closer together by science and technology, and to solve the problems which those aspirations engendered. New problems could not be settled by old methods. Furthermore, the enlargement of the Council would undoubtedly make it possible to fulfil the pledges entered into the adoption of the Strategy for the Second Development Decade, at the end of which it was to

be hoped that better results would have been obtained than in the first Decade. Like the Lebanese delegation, his delegation's main concern was with the Council's effectiveness, and it shared that delegation's view that the Charter must be amended so as to enlarge the Council's membership.

33. At the same time, the Kenyan delegation did not believe that the enlargement of the Council would be a panacea for all ills; other measures would also have to be taken to give the Council fresh vigour. The sponsors of draft resolutions E/L.1408/Rev.2 and E/L.1435 were in fact advocating measures that were likely to strengthen the co-ordinating role of the Council and to improve the organization of its work; his delegation would therefore support both those proposals.

34. It was to be hoped that once its means of action had thus been strengthened, the Council would no longer adopt unduly vague and cautious decisions but be more clear-cut and precise. For the present, his delegation was prepared to take part in any negotiations to arrive at a formula for enlarging the membership of the Council that would obtain the greatest measure of support.

35. Mr. AWUY (Indonesia) said that he would like to explain why Indonesia was withdrawing from the list of sponsors of the amendment in document E/L.1431, although, at the fiftieth session of the Council, it had been one of the sponsors of the amendment in document E/L.1421/Rev.1.

36. His delegation was in favour of increasing the number of Council members, but considered that, even so, the Council would not be in a position to make an adequate appraisal of the Strategy for the Second Development Decade or to review the complex scientific and technical problems of the present day. Consequently, enlargement of its membership should be accompanied by the establishment of two standing committees, one on the application of science and technology to development and the other to assist the General Assembly in the over-all review and appraisal of the aims and objectives of the Second Development Decade. His delegation would be obliged to vote against any draft resolution which provided for an increase in the number of members of the Council without at the same time establishing committees to assume responsibility for those two problems.

37. The question under consideration was particularly complex. The many proposals submitted to the Council should be the subject of negotiations among the various delegations with a view to arriving at a definite agreement. He might have occasion to speak again on the matter if the need arose.

38. With regard to draft resolution E/L.1435, he associated himself with earlier speakers in thanking the representative of France and the co-sponsors of that proposal, which his delegation was prepared to support.

Mr. Frazão (Brazil), Vice-President, took the Chair.

39. Mr. ZAGORIN (United States of America) said that the Council had reached an important turning point in its history.

³ *Ibid.*, 1768th meeting.

The question under discussion was directly concerned with the discharge of its functions under the Charter. To achieve the desired results, it was essential to consider both the work of the Council – what it would be charged to do – as well as its size and composition. His delegation had already made it clear that it was in favour of increasing the membership as it was accompanied by other actions to make the Council more effective, so that it could carry out to the full its role under the Charter as leader and co-ordinator. Those actions were: (1) To set up a standing committee of the Council on review and appraisal of progress toward achieving the goals of the Second Development Decade; and (2) to set up a standing committee on science and technology.

40. In taking actions to rejuvenate the Council, they should look to the provisions of Chapters IX and X of the Charter, in order that the Council assume its proper role in economic and social affairs. The title of Chapter IX – “International economic and social co-operation” – clearly showed the angle from which the task of improving the Council’s work should be approached. Approaching the question of rejuvenating the Council required real co-operation and partnership between the members of the Council which reflected a harmonizing of interests and a harnessing of efforts on the part of all members. The needs of the world for economic and social improvement were too pressing, the problems too complex, the resources too limited and the time available too short for the Council to afford the luxury of polarization and divisiveness of one group of countries – or competition of one UN organization – against another. It was a historic moment in the life of the Council. His delegation was prepared to seek with others every means of seizing that opportunity of revitalizing and strengthening the Council.

Mr. Driss (Tunisia) resumed the Chair.

41. Mr. VIAUD (France) said that there were two issues, one more important than the other: the question of the Council’s methods of work, and the question of its structure.

42. With regard to the first, there were two draft resolutions, one submitted by Greece and New Zealand (E/L.1408/Rev.2) and the other by the USSR (E/L.1382); they were not incompatible. His delegation could accept the first proposal, and it thought that the second was also useful because it represented an attempt to solve the question of the relationship between the Council and the General Assembly, which had been debated at length in the Council some years previously. It should therefore meet with the support of all delegations, either as a separate proposal, or in combination with draft resolution E/L.1408/Rev.2 if it was considered that the Council should adopt a single resolution on its methods of work. Then there was draft resolution E/L.1435; he wished to thank those representatives who had supported it. It seemed to him that all those draft resolutions concerning the Council’s methods of work could be dealt with independently of the question whether the Council’s membership should be increased or whether it should set up standing committees with an enlarged membership.

43. With regard to the Council’s structure, his delegation wished to know whether amendments E/L.1421/Rev.1 and E/L.1423 were still before the Council, despite the fact that

section IV of draft resolution E/L.1408/Rev.1 to which they related had been deleted by the sponsors.

44. On the substance of the matter he was in general agreement with the Italian representative’s view and thought that the Council should be made more representative. That could be done by setting up enlarged standing committees, one of which would be responsible for the appraisal of the results of the Second Development Decade and the other for science and technology.

45. On the other hand his delegation was still doubtful about the wisdom of enlarging the Council itself and opposed the amendment in document E/L.1431, which, in its opinion, did not respect the positions of the General Assembly and of the Council in the hierarchy of authority. The Council could express a wish, but it had no power to prejudice a decision to be taken by the General Assembly, as the proposal appeared to do when referring to the possible amendment of the Charter. It was important to ensure perfect co-operation between the two principal organs of the United Nations.

46. His delegation could accept the enlargement of the Council only if the countries which advocated such a step gave it a logical basis by setting up the two standing committees to which he had referred to deal with the new fields of action.

47. It was regrettable that the sponsors of document E/L.1431 had preferred to submit it as an amendment to the draft resolution by Greece and New Zealand (E/L.1408/Rev.2). If it had been a separate proposal it would have been possible to dissociate the particularly important question of improving the Council’s methods of work from the question of its structure.

48. Mr. SKATARETIKO (Yugoslavia) said it seemed to him that there was confusion not only in the documents before the Council, but also in the minds of its members. In particular, he found it difficult to understand why the Indonesian representative made his support of the amendment contained in document E/L.1431 contingent on the establishment of a particular kind of machinery, when the Indonesian delegation had voted in favour of General Assembly resolution 2641 (XXV), providing that the General Assembly should take a final decision at its twenty-sixth session concerning a system of over-all appraisal. He could not see the connexion between that question and the question of enlarging the Council. The review and appraisal of the objectives and policies of the International Development Strategy was covered by item 3 of the agenda, and science and technology were covered by items 7 (d) and 10, so there was no need to deal with those questions in the draft resolution on item 17.

49. It was essential that formal or informal consultations should be held to enable members of the Council to reach agreement on specific points.

50. Mr. ASANTE (Ghana) proposed that the meeting be adjourned for consultations, so that a more profitable discussion of agenda item 17 could take place at a future meeting.

The meeting rose at 12.45 p.m.