



ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL

Fifty-second Session

OFFICIAL RECORDS

Friday, 2 June 1972,
at 11 a.m.

NEW YORK

President: Mr. Károly SZARKA (Hungary).

AGENDA ITEM 15

Consideration of the provisional agenda for the fifty-third session (continued) (E/L.1488 and Corr.1, E/L.1494, E/L. 1495 and Amend.1)

1. The PRESIDENT said that he and the Vice-Presidents had discussed the various suggestions put forward at the preceding meeting. In particular, they had noted the general view that the agenda for the fifty-third session should be shortened. Accordingly, they had reviewed the list of items in document E/L.1488 and Corr.1 and had decided that certain of them, which seemed to be of lower priority than the others or for which the necessary documentation was not available, ought to be deferred until a later session. The officers of the Council therefore proposed that consideration of the following items should be deferred until the fifty-fourth session: item 5 (Fiscal and financial matters), item 7 (Economic and social consequences of disarmament), item 9 (c) (Study on regional structures), item 11 (f) (United Nations Volunteers programme), item 17 (Tourism) and item 18 (Food problems and needs). They also proposed that consideration of item 15 (Question of the establishment of an international university) should be deferred until the resumed session in the autumn. Lastly, they proposed that item 9 (a) (Reports of the regional economic commissions and UNESOB) and item 9 (b) (Report on the meeting of the Executive Secretaries) should be considered in plenary meetings.

2. The officers had also agreed to recommend that the Council should adopt the United Kingdom proposal for the establishment of an informal working group to consider the question of the rationalization of the Council's methods of work and structure. The group would be composed as suggested by the United Kingdom delegation at the preceding meeting and would be open-ended. If the Council agreed to its establishment, the group would meet four or five times during the next two weeks.

3. Mr. ZAVALA (Bolivia) said that his delegation fully endorsed the officers' proposals.

4. Mr. OGISO (Japan) said the Council should examine very carefully the proposal that the consideration of certain items should be deferred. His delegation strongly objected to deferring item 15 (Question of the establishment of an international university) until the resumed session in the autumn. It would be recalled that

the question had been on the agenda of the resumed fifty-first session but had not been discussed because delegations had not had sufficient time to study the relevant documentation. The fact that discussion of the item had already been deferred once made it essential that the Council should now take it up at the earliest possible opportunity. He understood that the report of the Panel of Experts on the Establishment of an International University was ready and would be circulated shortly. If consideration of the item was again deferred, the General Assembly might not have enough time to examine it properly. His delegation therefore urged that the item should be retained on the agenda for the fifty-third session.

5. Mr. DRISS (Tunisia) said that the officers were to be congratulated on their efforts to lighten the agenda of the fifty-third session. They had carried out their work carefully and scrupulously. If circumstances had been different, his delegation might have put forward certain suggestions. In view of the short time remaining to the Council, however, it felt that the officers' proposals should be approved, subject to the agenda's being discussed as usual at the beginning of the fifty-third session, when members would have had time to study all the items. He therefore suggested that the Council should approve the officers' proposals and proceed to the next item on its agenda.

6. Mr. CAVAGLIERI (Italy) suggested that the item on the international university should be retained on the agenda for the fifty-third session but be discussed in the plenary. Apart from that, his delegation could support the officers' proposals.

7. Mr. MVOGO (Observer for Cameroon) said that his delegation welcomed the proposals for lightening the agenda. It hoped, however, that the informal working group proposed by the United Kingdom delegation would not become another permanent organ of the Council. At the twenty-sixth session of the General Assembly, the Second Committee, when discussing the question of the enlargement of the Council, had rejected a United Kingdom proposal that a small body should be established to deal with some of the major questions before the Council, on the ground that it would be impossible for a Council of 54 members to work effectively. He hoped that the United Kingdom delegation was not now advancing the same proposal in a different form. The proposed working group must not become a permanent committee of the Council.

8. Mr. PRAGUE (France) said that his delegation agreed with many of the views which had been expressed during the discussion at the preceding meeting. It

endorsed the United Kingdom proposal for the establishment of an informal working group and hoped to participate in the group's work.

9. The fifty-third session of the Council would, of course, be entitled to consider the question of the reorganization of its work and the lightening of its agenda. Any decision on that subject at the current session would therefore be indicative, not final. The Council had a definite responsibility in relation to each item on the original provisional agenda. Therefore, any decision to postpone consideration of certain items should not be interpreted as a failure by the Council to assume its responsibilities. It would be interesting, in that connexion, to know at which session it was proposed that the deferred items should be taken up.

10. His delegation shared the Japanese delegation's objection to the proposal to defer consideration of item 15; the question of the establishment of an international university should be discussed at the fifty-third session. He wondered whether it would not be possible instead to defer consideration of another item, for example, item 6. France had, of course, no substantive objection to the item on permanent sovereignty over natural resources of developing countries and had always voted in favour of United Nations resolutions on the subject. It must be borne in mind, however, that the Economic Committee had adopted a draft resolution (E/AC.6/L.438/Rev.2), which the Council would no doubt endorse, requesting the Secretary-General to make a further very exhaustive and ambitious study on the question. If the Council felt that such a study was essential to the further discussion of the item, it would be only logical to postpone consideration of item 6.

11. Mr. SCOTT (New Zealand) assured the representative of Japan that the officers of the Council had had no intention of minimizing the importance of item 15. They had proposed its deferment because they considered that Governments should be allowed sufficient time to study the reports of both the Panel of Experts and the Secretary-General, at least one of which was not yet available. If the Council considered the question at its resumed fifty-third session, it would still have time to submit a report to the General Assembly for consideration at the twenty-seventh session.

12. Mr. OGISO (Japan) said that, despite the explanation given by the representative of New Zealand, his delegation could not agree that consideration of item 15 should be deferred until the resumed fifty-third session. The question had not been considered at the twenty-sixth session of the Assembly precisely because the Secretariat had been unable, after the resumed fifty-first session of the Council, to prepare documents in sufficient time for thorough study by delegations. His delegation feared a repetition if consideration of the item was again deferred until the resumed session. It was understandable that some delegations were opposed to the idea of an international university, but they should state their views clearly, instead of trying to postpone discussion of the item.

13. Mr. DE RIVERO (Peru) said that, while in general his delegation endorsed the officers' proposals, it shared

the concern expressed by the French and Japanese delegations concerning the proposed deferment of item 15. It was important that the Council should discuss the report of the Panel of Experts at its fifty-third session.

14. His delegation agreed with many of the comments made by the United Kingdom delegation at the preceding meeting. It wished, however, to reserve its position concerning the establishment of an informal working group because it did not know what criteria would govern the composition of the proposed group.

15. The PRESIDENT observed that the composition of the proposed group had been outlined at the preceding meeting. In his opening statement at the current meeting, he had confirmed that it was on that basis that the officers were proposing the establishment of the group.

16. Mr. CARANICAS (Greece) said that the radical surgery performed by the officers had come as a surprise to his delegation. The agenda for the fifty-third session had been substantially reduced. His delegation could not agree with the suggestion made by the representative of Tunisia, the adoption of which might result in prolonged discussion of the question at the fifty-third session.

17. The fact that the United Kingdom proposal seemed to have won wide support was a cause for satisfaction. With the adoption of that proposal, the whole question of co-ordination would take more concrete form before the Council started its discussions in Geneva. In that connexion, he wished to suggest that the Council should deal with co-ordination during the second, and not the last, week of its fifty-third session.

18. As the French delegation had suggested, there might be no harm in deferring consideration of item 6. The Economic Committee had erred in requesting an elaborate and cumbersome study which the Secretariat would be unable, for lack of financial and human resources, to make properly.

19. His delegation also agreed with the French delegation that, if items were to be deferred, the Council should have some idea of when they would eventually be taken up.

20. The officers' proposal that item 9 (a) and (b) should be considered in plenary meetings would not result in a saving of time. The Economic Committee should continue to consider those subitems.

21. There were other items which might usefully be deferred, including item 11 (e) and item 16. Land reform (item 16), which the Council had been discussing for 15 or 20 years, did not seem to be a priority question, nor did the World Food Programme. The same was true of item 15, which would become urgent if a delegation were to propose making a grant for the establishment of the university. Originally, Greece had supported the idea of establishing an international university. Latterly, however, the scope of the question had changed. It did not seem, therefore, that much would be lost if consideration of it were deferred until the Council's fifty-fourth session. He could not support the Italian suggestion that

the item should be discussed in plenary meetings. Nor could he agree that it should be taken up at the resumed fifty-third session, because the Council would not have sufficient time then to discuss it thoroughly.

22. In general, his delegation endorsed the other proposals made by the officers but would have liked more time to consider them. It did not wish to make any formal proposals concerning the items he had mentioned, but had merely expressed its ideas with a view to ascertaining the opinions of other delegations. Greece's main concern was that the item on co-ordination should be discussed during the second week of the fifty-third session.

23. Mr. ZAGORIN (United States of America) said that the representative of Tunisia had expressed very well a viewpoint which he shared. He, too, supported the proposals which had been made by the officers of the Council. If there had been more time to go into detail, each delegation would perhaps have had its own preferences, but what was needed was a rapid decision which would lighten the workload at the fifty-third session so that the Council could handle it effectively.

24. He agreed with the views expressed by the representative of New Zealand with regard to the international university and was in favour of deferring the item so that it could be considered in the best possible way at a later stage.

25. He agreed with the representative of Greece that radical surgery was in order. If the Council accepted the proposals made by the officers, it would simplify its task at the opening of the fifty-third session.

26. He had no doubt that the establishment of an informal working group would be of great assistance in improving the working methods of the Council and in co-ordinating activities in the economic and social fields. In addition, item 21(*d*) must be wide enough in scope to encompass the entire range of Council reform and should not be approached in too limited a manner.

27. Mr. DRISS (Tunisia) suggested, in the light of the views which had been expressed during the debate, that the Council should adopt the officers' proposals, retaining item 15 and requesting the officers to consider the possibility of submitting, at the fifty-third session, proposals for the deletion of items 6, 11(*e*) and 16, which many representatives felt could be deferred.

28. As to the establishment of a working group, while he fully agreed with the representative of Cameroon, who had expressed certain reservations, he felt that contacts should be maintained so that decisions could be taken at the fifty-third session. Item 21(*d*) should be given priority.

29. Mr. FACK (Observer for the Netherlands) felt that the Council should support the United Kingdom proposal pertaining to the extremely important matter of the overloading of the Council's agenda. In addition, the officers of the Council were to be congratulated on the

prompt efforts they had made and on the proposals they had put forward.

30. He had originally intended to make a short statement concerning some fundamental aspects of the organization of the Council's work but would refrain from doing so, in view of the proposals made by the officers and in order to save time. He wished, however, to be given some assurance that the members of the sessional committees would have an opportunity to express their views in the informal working group if it was set up.

31. Mr. GOBBA (Observer for Egypt) said that his delegation was very concerned with the question of the overloading of the agenda. The Council should have a reasonable workload so that it could handle it properly and allow time for informal consultations during its sessions.

32. He felt that the Council would have enough time to consider the question of the establishment of an international university at its fifty-third session if some of the other items were deleted. He agreed with the representative of Japan that deferring the item to the resumed fifty-third session would make it impossible for the General Assembly to consider the question at its twenty-seventh session, in which case the Council would not be carrying out its task under Assembly resolution 2822 (XXVI). Item 15 should therefore be retained, especially if the Council agreed to the Tunisian representative's suggestion that the possibility of deleting other items should be left open.

33. He welcomed the proposal that an informal working group should be established, since that would facilitate the Council's task with regard to item 21(*d*) at its fifty-third session.

34. Mr. MAKEEV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that he supported the officers' proposals for lightening the agenda, although he was not satisfied with all of them. Like other representatives, he had in mind a number of suggestions for the deletion or addition of items, but he would refrain from making them in order not to prolong the debate. He appealed to delegations which had urged the retention of item 15 not to press their point. The item had been under consideration for two years and, since the proposal was not supported by a majority of the members of the Economic and Social Council or of the General Assembly, the only correct course was to defer consideration of it.

35. He did not agree that item 6 should be deleted, since the question of permanent sovereignty over natural resources was of great importance to the economic and social development of developing countries. Item 16 should be also retained, because it was extremely important and was directly related to resolutions of the Council and the General Assembly on the need to implement radical economic and social reforms that would lead to progress in developing countries.

36. The problems mentioned by the United Kingdom representative when he had proposed the establishment

of an informal working group were not new; they had been raised at practically all recent sessions of the Council and the General Assembly and had been the subject of many Council and Assembly resolutions. His delegation had always been guided by the idea that, under the Charter, the Council was the principal United Nations organ for the formulation of policies and the co-ordination of activities in the economic and social fields. Some representatives had attributed its lack of effectiveness to lateness in beginning meetings and to statements that were too lengthy. Those were not the main reasons, however. The essential problem was the extent to which the Council could discharge its responsibilities and carry out its duties. Serious thought should be given to the present situation, and measures should be taken to rationalize and improve the work of the Council and its subsidiary bodies. In that connexion, he drew attention to Council resolution 1622 (LI) of 30 July 1971, paragraph 5. He regretted that the General Assembly had not had enough time to consider that resolution at its twenty-sixth session. He was pleased that the representatives of such countries as Brazil and Tunisia, which had previously had doubts with regard to the resolution, were now expressing concern over the problem. If most of the members of the Council felt that the establishment of a working group would help to enhance the effectiveness of United Nations activities in the economic and social fields, his delegation would not oppose the United Kingdom proposal. It understood, however, that any such group would be informal, and it shared the concern of the representative of Cameroon that it should not become an additional permanent body.

37. Mr. ILONIEMI (Finland) said that he welcomed any suggestions for making the workload more realistic. He particularly appreciated the United Kingdom proposal, and he also supported the officers' proposals for the deletion of certain items. As the United States representative had said at the preceding meeting, the Council had two choices — either to do less and less about more and more or to concentrate on certain items and produce something worth while. He would welcome further suggestions from the officers of the Council for the deletion of other items. It was better to leave that task to the officers, rather than to have it done hastily in the Council without full knowledge of the possible consequences.

38. Mr. MONDJO (Observer for the Congo) said he was extremely satisfied with the officers' proposals. He hoped that the Council, when taking a final decision on the agenda, would bear in mind that his delegation attached great importance to the question of permanent sovereignty over natural resources.

39. Mr. RABETAFIKA (Madagascar) said that his delegation agreed with the officers' proposals. However, in a spirit of conciliation, and in view of the concern expressed by several delegations with regard to the postponement of item 15, his delegation would have no objection to that item's being maintained on the agenda for the fifty-third session, but in that case some other items should be deferred, as had been suggested. Although his delegation was, of course, aware of the importance of item 6, concerning permanent sovereignty

over natural resources of developing countries, it would be better from the practical point of view to defer consideration of it, since only seven reports had thus far been received on the question from Member States.

40. He agreed with the representative of Greece that item 9 (a) and (b) should not be taken up in the plenary. His delegation could accept the proposal on that point if it was made only with a view to gaining time in the Economic Committee, but he did not think that that was the case.

41. His delegation supported the United Kingdom proposal for the establishment of an informal working group to consider the rationalization of the Council's methods of work and structure. However, in his delegation's view, the main function of the Council was to take decisions on economic, social and human rights questions, rather than to carry out co-ordination work.

42. His delegation supported the suggestions made by the representative of Tunisia and hoped that they would be given due consideration.

43. Mr. HEMANS (United Kingdom) welcomed the proposals made by the officers of the Council for lightening the Council's agenda at its fifty-third session. He agreed with the Soviet representative that any such proposals could not please everyone. His delegation did not wish to comment on the proposals individually or to make further suggestions as to how the agenda might be lightened. It would be best to accept the officers' proposals in the spirit in which they had been offered and leave it to the officers to make further proposals for shortening the agenda at the beginning of the fifty-third session. If that course of action was adopted, it should be without prejudice to his delegation's views on the items to be postponed.

44. His delegation entirely shared the view expressed by the representative of Cameroon. In proposing the establishment of an informal working group, the United Kingdom had no intention of creating a new organ of the Council. There was absolutely no need for any more permanent machinery within the Council. He was glad to note that the officers had endorsed his delegation's suggestion that the working group should be open-ended, in order to allow for the widest possible participation. He appreciated the positive response to his delegation's proposal and hoped that it would achieve positive results.

45. Mr. FIGUEROA (Chile) agreed that something should be done to improve the Council's methods of work, as experience at the current session had shown. The informal working group proposed by the United Kingdom would be able to make concrete proposals which would provide a rational starting-point for a productive exchange of ideas.

46. His delegation agreed with the officers' proposals for the postponement of certain agenda items. It was difficult in the case of so full a programme to try to defer items, since different items were of interest to different delegations. He appreciated the officers' efforts to take

into account the problem of priorities in making its proposals.

47. His delegation could not agree with any of the proposals made by other delegations for the postponement of additional items. The Council should bear in mind that discussion on item 6 had been requested two years previously and, since the General Assembly did not examine the question annually, it should be considered at the fifty-third session of the Economic and Social Council. Other items which speakers had suggested deferring were also important to different delegations. As he had already noted, the officers of the Council had taken into account the problem of priorities in making its proposals.

48. Mr. ZAVALA (Bolivia) agreed with the Soviet representative that there had been sufficient discussion of the provisional agenda for the fifty-third session. He therefore moved the closure of the debate on the item under rule 53 of the rules of procedure, so that the Council could vote on the officers' proposals.

49. Mr. CARANICAS (Greece) and Mr. ODERO-JOWI (Kenya) opposed the motion.

The motion for closure of the debate was rejected by 10 votes to 8, with 7 abstentions.

50. Mr. WANG (China) said that his delegation supported in principle the officers' proposals for shortening the Council's agenda at the fifty-third session. Item 6 was of great importance to most of the countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America and should therefore be considered at the fifty-third session. He supported the views expressed by the representatives of the Congo and Chile.

51. Mr. DRISS (Tunisia) said he wished to make it clear to the Soviet representative that he had not proposed deleting items from the agenda of the fifty-third session. The Soviet representative had said that the Tunisian delegation had criticized Council resolution 1622 (LI); while his delegation might have criticized the initial text, it had supported the resolution in its final form.

52. He formally proposed that the Council should decide to maintain item 15 on the agenda for its fifty-third session, to adopt the officers' proposals for lightening the agenda and to recommend that the officers should if possible submit further proposals at the fifty-third session for shortening the agenda.

53. Mr. CHAKRAVARTY (Observer for India) said that his delegation agreed with the officers' proposals. However, he would like some clarification concerning item 11 (a). As a member of the working group on the United Nations revolving fund for natural resources exploration, his delegation would like to know whether the working group's report, which would be considered by the Governing Council of the United Nations Development Programme, would be covered by item 11 (a).

54. His delegation agreed that item 15 should be retained on the agenda for the fifty-third session, but it was for the Council to take a decision on the matter. He hoped that item 5 (b), on the transfer of operative technology, would receive early attention, since it was important to all developing countries.

55. Mr. ODERO-JOWI (Kenya) said the fact that so much time had been spent in discussing the agenda for the fifty-third session indicated that the Council's working methods should be modified. It appeared that the tendency to defer items would increase in the future.

56. It was impossible to obtain a unanimous decision on which items should be deferred. Although his delegation attached the highest priority to item 6, he appealed to the representative of developing countries to agree to the postponement of that item, since the subject would be discussed at the meeting of non-aligned countries during the current year and the report of that meeting might provide useful guidance.

57. He was surprised by the proposal to postpone such important items as that relating to tourism (item 17). The Council was just beginning to assume its responsibilities in that area and should proceed to consider the various agreements and conventions on the subject. He hoped that it would be retained, since it was of prime importance to many countries. Item 15 was also important, but it could be postponed in order to make the agenda for the fifty-third session more manageable. With the same end in view, he suggested that certain items might be grouped together; for example, item 18 could be taken up simultaneously with item 11 (e).

58. Mr. MOBARAK (Lebanon) said that his delegation supported the Tunisian suggestions, and in particular the maintenance of item 15.

59. Mr. CARANICAS (Greece) said that, while he had made certain suggestions for the postponement of items, he would be ready for the sake of harmony, to accept the officers' proposals as they stood.

60. It was somewhat paradoxical that so many speakers had stated that the Council should reform its methods of work. At the fifty-first session, many delegations had expressed satisfaction at the "package deal" which was intended to solve such problems. It was evident that the situation was now worse than before.

61. The Kenyan proposal for grouping certain items together was interesting. He suggested that items 21, 22 and 23 might be taken up together.

62. He noted that, in the past, the agenda had been tailored to suit the heads of departments or agencies. In his view, the Secretariat should draw up an agenda in keeping with the interests of the intergovernmental bodies concerned.

63. Mr. AMINA (Niger) said that his delegation supported the officers' proposals and the views expressed by the representative of Japan concerning item 15. Although he would favour retaining item 6 on the agenda

for the fifty-third session, he would be willing to respond to the appeal made by the representative of Kenya. He supported the United Kingdom proposal for an informal working group, and he agreed with the representative of the Netherlands that the group should be open to all members of the sessional committees.

64. Mr. OGISO (Japan) said that he wished to clarify his delegation's position. He supported the Tunisian proposal, but if the officers' proposals were put to the vote first he would himself make a formal proposal for the maintenance of item 15 in the agenda. If the Tunisian proposal was adopted his delegation would not press its own proposal, but if the officers' proposals were put to the vote before the Tunisian proposal the Japanese amendment should be put to the vote first.

65. Mr. ODERO-JOWI (Kenya) formally proposed that item 6 should be deferred and that item 17 should be included in the agenda for the fifty-third session.

66. Mr. PATAKI (Hungary) said that his delegation agreed with the officers' proposals. He pointed out that at the resumed fifty-first session the Council had not had the report of the Panel of Experts on the Establishment of an International University in time to study it in detail. The Council would be in a similar position at its fifty-third session, and it would therefore be best to defer item 15 until the resumed fifty-third session. He appealed to the representative of Japan to consider that point. Deferring item 15 would not affect the outcome of the discussion in either the Economic and Social Council or the General Assembly.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.