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Chairman: Mr. Bohdan LEWANDOWSKI
(Poland).

AGENDA ITEM 38

Population growth and economic development (A/4849,
A/5059, A/5222, A/C.2/L.657 and Add.1)

1. Mrs. LINDSTROM (Sweden), introducing the draft resolution (A/C.2/L.657 and Add.1), recalled that the question of population growth had been included in the agenda of the General Assembly's sixteenth session as a separate item, when the world population had just passed the 3,000 million mark. The urgent problem of economic development in the less developed regions had been discussed at great length in the Second Committee, but the subject would be much easier to deal with if the increase in the production of consumer goods could be compared with consumption requirements. Since those requirements depended to a great extent on the structure of the population, the sharp increase in population over the past decade—at the rate of about 50 million a year—had seriously restricted the possibilities of economic development. It was therefore only reasonable that the Committee should take up the population problem, which should be discussed with complete objectivity. It was not yet sufficiently acknowledged that the most important resource in the world economy was man himself. Nobody objected to the work of the United Nations and WHO to improve health, but progress in that direction was heavily dependent on the economic and social state of the population and, in areas of rapidly growing population, it might be more difficult to extend health facilities at the same pace. It was then that population policy came into the picture, and the third preambular paragraph of the draft resolution emphasized the relationship between the two factors.

2. It was hardly necessary to say that, if the coming generations in Asia, Africa and South America were to attain a level of living comparable with that of the other regions, much more economic and technical assistance would have to be given to the less developed countries, and Sweden was fully conscious of its share of the responsibility. It had been rumoured

that the sponsors intended to make technical and economic assistance dependent upon acceptance of birth control by the recipient countries. That was ridiculous: in the first place, the sponsors of the draft resolution agreed with the Population Commission that each country must decide for itself whether or not it wished to introduce birth control; that point was emphasized in the fourth preambular paragraph. In the second place, they considered it essential that economic and technical assistance should be intensified during the years to come and that no prosperous country should evade its obligations in that respect. Moreover, the second preambular paragraph stated that economic and social development and population policy were not alternatives to one another. Population trends should be viewed in long-term perspective; they would not change radically in less than ten years, and if people in needy countries had a right to expect an improvement in their living conditions in the current decade, their descendants had the same right. As Mr. Black, President of the International Bank, had rightly stated, population growth threatened to nullify all efforts to raise standards of living in many of the poorer countries. That would happen in the over-populated countries of Asia and the Middle East unless population growth could be restrained.

3. The latest census returns showed that the increase in the world population between 1950 and 1960 had exceeded that forecast by approximately 50 per cent; there was a reminder of that in the preamble to the draft resolution. Many developing countries had based their development plans on the lowest estimates of population growth. The result had been—in spite of all foreign aid—a decrease in the margin for savings and investment and, in some large countries, a drop in an already very low level of living.

4. The only way out of that vicious circle lay through redoubled efforts to devise methods of population control suited to the various cultures and religions in the parts of the world affected by the lack of balance between the increase in population and the increase in production. That imbalance had several causes. Wars had fortunately decreased in number and scope and the great epidemics had been checked through the development of modern medicine and public health services. In five or ten years' time, malaria would probably have been eradicated. The problem of hunger still existed, however, and affected two-thirds of mankind. Six out of seven children were born in economically less developed countries where it was difficult to increase food production at the same rate as the population increased. It was obvious that the Freedom from Hunger Campaign and the World Food Programme would not solve the problem once and for all, for the situation in the developing countries was aggravated by the demographic revolution which had not yet run its full course. No reasonable person could imagine that, if the total resources of the earth were mobilized and properly distributed,

it would be possible to feed the 6,000 million people who would populate the world in the year 2000. As FAO admitted, the food shortage would have to be solved country by country and region by region, through gigantic efforts of agricultural improvement and land reform.

5. It was, however, a delusion to maintain that food production and population could be brought into balance during the next few decades solely by intensifying agriculture, livestock husbandry, etc.; the possibilities in that direction were not unlimited. It was a matter not of choosing between a more energetic food policy and a wise population policy, but of applying both. It was known that, especially in the economically under-developed countries, savings were insufficient to finance the investments required to raise the level of living, but there were great differences between countries. There were countries with large uninhabited areas and considerable natural resources which regarded a rapidly growing population as a prerequisite for their development; but there were other countries where the opposite was true and where a sharp increase in population would be disastrous. It would be cynical to propose migration and redistribution as a solution to those problems. It was for the peoples to decide their own population policies as they saw fit.

6. If countries asked the international organizations for information on practical methods of stabilizing the population, the United Nations, the regional economic commissions or the specialized agencies should give them such aid, just as they gave them technical assistance. The Population Commission had admitted that fact, and the sponsors of the draft resolution proposed, in operative paragraph 5, that the General Assembly should endorse that view.

7. There was no denying the connexion between poverty, nutrition, health and literacy, on the one hand, and rapid population growth on the other. In some countries, parents had to send their children to work in the fields and workshops before sending them to school. The spacing of births was a protection for the physical and mental health of children and mothers. It was first and foremost a question of human rights—of the right to the standard of living envisaged in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. What she had said about absolute freedom with reference to the State obviously applied equally to the family; there was no contradiction between the interests of the nation and those of the family, if the measures taken by a Government were aimed at improving the welfare of the citizens.

8. The draft resolution requested various international conferences and organs to intensify their studies of the population problem. That point should give rise to no controversy. The tension set up by the effort to bring production up to the level of consumer requirements would become unbearable in a few decades unless the dilemma was resolved through sensible family planning. It was the task and the obligation of a world organization to deal with such problems inasmuch as they were important to world peace and progress.

9. The sponsors of the draft resolution hoped that their text would be discussed in a constructive spirit and would be favourably received by the Committee.

10. The CHAIRMAN suggested that the time-limit for the submission of resolutions and amendments on

agenda item 38 should be set at 6 p.m. and that the list of speakers on that item should be closed at the same time.

It was so decided.

11. In the opinion of Mr. CULLEN (Ireland), the reports of the Population Commission showed that the relationship between population trends and economic and social development was complex and not yet properly understood; it was regrettable that the draft resolution before the Committee should have taken a settled position on those problems. The Secretary-General's report concerning the United Nations Development Decade (E/3613) did not refer to the existence of defined interrelationships between population growth and development, as was suggested in paragraph 1 of the draft resolution; it spoke only of the consequences which population growth would have for the developing countries if economic and social progress in those countries was not accelerated. Again, the second preambular paragraph of the draft resolution gave the impression that population growth was in itself a barrier to progress and should therefore be artificially restrained. Yet nothing in history supported that argument, and it was weak on economics as well. The Swedish representative had herself acknowledged to the General Assembly, in September 1961 (1014th plenary meeting), that a population increase could promote the growth of many developing countries. The paragraph in question overlooked both that consideration and the fact that the lack of balance between population and resources was largely regional in character. The argument put forward was a static one and ignored the conquests of science and technology.

12. Study of the population problem should be constructive; it should not divert attention from the fundamental causes of poverty and the real possibilities of progress in economic development. In his delegation's view, the problem of raising levels of living was linked with the application of techniques and with reforms, investment and international trade. It must be remembered that many countries had serious problems of surplus, that the primary producing countries faced a deterioration in the terms of trade due to increasing production and technical advancement, and that the world had made considerable progress in economic development, even though amounts equivalent to half the world's capital formation went to support the sterile burden of the armaments race. It was his belief that sound commercial policies, technical assistance, planning and technological progress would meet the needs of the growing world population and allow the under-developed countries to raise their level of living and achieve sustained economic growth. The problems of the developing countries were not primarily problems of population. His delegation supported the work of the Population Commission and believed that it was essential to determine as accurately as possible how population growth in the developing countries was related to economic and social development, as that was an essential factor to be considered in formulating adequate development policies. But it rejected any proposal which failed to recognize the complexity of the problems and which would commit the United Nations to an unfounded opinion.

13. The purpose of operative paragraph 5 of the draft resolution was to endorse the views expressed by the Population Commission. It was not, however,

the Commission's intention to suggest to Governments what measures they should take; that was made quite clear in paragraph 15 of the report of the eleventh session (E/3451) and in paragraph 14 of the report of the tenth session (E/3207/Rev.1). In other words, the draft resolution disagreed with the Commission on that point for, although it claimed to share the Commission's views, its preamble took an attitude to population growth that seemed to imply a particular demographic policy.

14. His delegation could support no draft resolution that did not fulfil two conditions: in the first place, the text must take a scientific and uncommitted attitude to the role of population growth in economic development and to the possible relationship between those two factors; in the second place, it must be clear that the intention was not to advocate the use of United Nations technical assistance funds to promote artificial birth control. That idea was morally repugnant to the Irish people, as to many others, and his delegation was firmly opposed to any measures on those lines which would jeopardize the harmony and co-operation inherent in the technical assistance programmes and lead to a reduction in the funds allocated to those programmes.

Mr. Allana (Pakistan), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

15. Mr. BERNARDO (Argentina) said that his delegation joined in the discussion fully aware of the need for a responsible approach to a subject which went beyond economics to one of the profoundest mysteries of human existence. Economists had been studying the relationship between population growth and economic and social development since the remotest times. The United Nations had first taken up the problem in 1946, when the Population Commission had been established, and had been interested in it ever since, as witness the work done by the Commission itself, by the Secretariat and by the World Population Conference held at Rome in 1954.

16. The subject, then, was not a new one, though it had not previously appeared on the programme of the General Assembly. What was new and serious was the approach made to the question. In their explanatory memorandum (A/4849), the Governments of Sweden and Denmark regarded population growth as a negative factor in economic development and advocated the introduction of measures designed to prevent it from running at a faster pace than was consistent with the economic development desired and planned for the States concerned. Thus Sweden and Denmark did not confine themselves to proposing that the Assembly should examine a particular question, which was interesting in itself, and draw its own conclusions; they started out by regarding birth control as a possible solution to the problem of economic development. They went even further by stating that the United Nations should be given ample opportunity to render technical assistance to those States which were fully aware of the situation and desired advice or assistance in introducing such measures. The draft resolution proclaimed as recognized facts three dogmatic assertions which were equally false or which, at all events, had never been proved, namely, that population growth was an obstacle to economic development, that birth control was an efficient and adequate means with which to overcome the consequences of population growth, and that the United Nations should furnish technical assistance in order

to enable Governments to introduce or disseminate birth control techniques.

17. The fact was that the draft resolution under consideration marked the culmination of a long process aimed at using the United Nations for the dissemination of contraceptive practices. That propaganda campaign, conducted through the various information media, was particularly intensive in the United States, where the Organization had its Headquarters. There was no doubt that if even part of the money which had been spent on such propaganda or on the installation of clinics had been channelled into more productive sectors, the under-developed countries would be in a better position than they could hope to achieve by adopting contraceptive measures. It was characteristic of that campaign that it was conducted in the name of altruism, since its instigators never worried about the population increase in their own countries but only in the countries of Africa, Asia or Latin America. He trusted that the sponsors, in submitting their draft resolution, had not themselves yielded to the pressure of propaganda, and he was grateful to the Swedish representative for her statement that she was prepared to examine the question objectively.

18. The peoples of the world had united, in the face of everything that might have divided them, to achieve the objectives of the United Nations Charter; but the effectiveness of the Organization depended on respect for all opinions which reflected the national character of the Member States. Until now that principle had been upheld, and the General Assembly had never been known to take a stand against the conception of life held by the Western countries or the socialist countries. Failure to recognize that the subject under consideration involved the discussion of religious, moral, social and political questions would be a betrayal of that tradition. That was why his country had requested a separate debate on the subject and wished to state in detail the arguments on which it based its position. There was no question of starting a religious or moral controversy or trying to make converts: that would set a dangerous precedent; but Argentina had always opposed the idea of using the United Nations to disseminate any artificial system of birth control. In 1959 and 1960, his delegation had said that there were two possible attitudes to the relationship between population growth and economic development: a static attitude, of limiting the population, and a dynamic attitude, of increasing resources. It had noted that the FAO Committee on Commodity Problems had been unable to reach any conclusion on the subject and had expressed the opinion that the problem was one of unsatisfactory distribution of resources rather than one of limiting the population. It was thus clear that although Argentina's opposition to the measures proposed was based primarily on the conflict between those measures and its own religious and moral tenets, economic considerations were not lacking in its support.

19. The United Nations, moreover, had no authority to take a decision with regard to birth control. That question had a religious aspect; the adoption of the principle of birth control would place those countries whose conception of natural law excluded that principle in a very difficult moral position, as it would compel them to choose between the United Nations and their own moral obligations. Admittedly, such a situation would mainly affect countries with a Catholic population, but it was not a question of pro-

pecting the rights of one religion alone; tomorrow, other religions might see their principles disregarded and other Member States might be confronted by the same dilemma.

20. In the interests of international co-operation and universal respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, birth control should not be included in the United Nations international assistance services. It had been said that the adoption of such a system would not do violence to anyone, because such assistance would be given only to those requesting it. But if such assistance were supplied through the United Nations, all the Member States would participate in it whether they wished to or not, since they would be making a financial contribution to such operations and since the United Nations acted on behalf of its Members. It had also been said that to reject that system would be to impose the views of the opponents of birth control upon those in favour of it. No one, however, was opposed to the adoption of birth control by its supporters or to their helping others to profit from it. Each country was free to adopt the attitude which suited it and to envisage assistance in the matter on a bilateral basis. But the United Nations did not consist solely of countries which favoured birth control, and coercion would result from the system's adoption by the Organization, not from its rejection.

21. The General Assembly was not in a position to take a decision on that serious question, an objective study of which would come up against countless technical difficulties. In the first place, reliable data were lacking, particularly in the case of the under-developed countries which were the prime subject of attention. Secondly, opinions were divided both as to methods of assembling data and as to the manner in which the information obtained should be interpreted and presented. The report of a committee of experts, published in Population Bulletin of the United Nations of December 1954, ^{1/} pointed out, in fact, that little was known about the relationships between population trends and economic and social conditions and that it would be necessary to carry out a whole series of studies beforehand.

22. In addition, the World Population Conference held at Rome in 1954 had recognized that the economically under-developed countries did not have enough statistics and could not employ the statistical methods and definitions recommended by the international organizations, for want of experts and social institutions that would enable them to obtain the same results as those secured by the advanced countries. The Conference had advocated that those shortcomings be investigated and their causes in each country sought, and had recommended the specialized agencies to try to improve the methods used in calculating total population figures and in drawing up birth, marriage and death statistics. The Conference had considered the report of the above-mentioned Committee of Experts and also the study entitled The Determinants and Consequences of Population Trends. ^{2/} Its discussions had shown that basic population data were inadequate, that population theories were over-simplified and often outdated, that bases were lacking for the prediction of the effects of given economic or social changes on population and vice

versa, that information on a whole series of inter-dependent demographic, economic and social factors was insufficient and that the population data available did not enable general standards to be formulated for economic and social development programmes.

23. The deliberations of the Population Commission had shown that those shortcomings persisted. At its eleventh session in 1961, the Commission had pointed out the difficulties encountered in the preparation of population statistics in the under-developed countries. Moreover, the Demographic Yearbook for 1960^{3/} gave world birth and death rates based solely on estimates, a number of hypotheses and information which were not comparable from one year to another. It should also not be forgotten that one of the most important data for an analysis of the relationships between population growth and economic development was the structure of the population, particularly the percentage of active inhabitants. Such data could not, however, be compared because definitions and concepts on that point varied from country to country. The proposal for the adoption of birth control faced the Second Committee with an even more difficult problem. The authors of the study entitled The Determinants and Consequences of Population Trends had already admitted that they were deeply divided and that special studies would have to be carried out with the co-operation of countless experts—psychologists, economists, statisticians, biologists, physicians, geographers, etc.

24. All those factors proved that the Committee was not in a position to proceed to the necessary technical study. The only body which could do so would be the Population Commission; that commission, however, had not yet reached any final conclusions. It would be risky to disregard its opinion and the decisions of the Economic and Social Council, and to arrive at a conclusion before having received the necessary documentation. It was accordingly for the Population Commission and the World Population Conference to prepare the preliminary reports necessary for an objective study of that important problem. He hoped that the sponsors of the draft resolution would withdraw their text, so as to avoid placing the Committee in a difficult position; and he reserved the right, if the draft resolution were not withdrawn, subsequently to make observations on the text itself.

25. He could nevertheless say forthwith that the adoption by the General Assembly of a measure which would not be confined to requesting the supplementary study essential to precise knowledge of the nature of the relationship between population growth and economic development would call into question the very bases of the United Nations. It would amount to the imposition of a population policy repugnant to the moral conscience of most of the Organization's Member States and conflicting both with scientific and economic facts and with biological and medical research. The fourth world congress on fertility and sterility, held in August 1962 at Rio de Janeiro, had shown that nothing was known about either of those processes and that the use of artificial methods might produce untoward effects on the physical health of communities employing them, as instanced recently by the scandal created by the imprudent distribution of a drug.

^{1/} United Nations publication, Sales No.: 55.XIII.1.

^{2/} United Nations publication, Sales No.: 53.XIII.3.

^{3/} United Nations publication, Sales No.: 61.XIII.1.

26. Mr. LUBBERS (Netherlands) said that the draft resolution touched on an important problem which had already been the subject of various studies. Such research as the United Nations or the specialized agencies like WHO, FAO and UNESCO could carry out would be very interesting and might provide the Economic and Social Council with information about the influence of population growth on economic development. He noted with satisfaction that the sponsors had taken into account a number of objections to the initial text which his delegation had raised. The Netherlands started from the premise that there were many fields in which the State had no power greater than the right of the individual and that the State could not, in particular, determine the size of the family. His country was therefore gratified by Sweden's affirmation that each family's right of self-determination was absolute and could not be restricted.

27. Operative paragraph 4 of the draft resolution provided for wide dissemination of the studies which would be carried out. However, limited dissemination through the normal channels would be preferable so long as the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly had reached no decision. Moreover, the end of operative paragraph 5 was vague and did not make it sufficiently clear that the United Nations technical assistance requested by Governments should bear rather on the research mentioned at the beginning of the paragraph. The wording of paragraphs 4 and 5 and the explanations which would be given by the sponsors would determine his delegation's final position.

AGENDA ITEM 12

Report of the Economic and Social Council (chapters I to III, V and VI) (A/5203, A/C.2/L.666/Rev.2)

CONSIDERATION OF THE DRAFT RESOLUTION CONCERNING ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND THE CONSERVATION OF NATURE (A/C.2/L.666/REV.2) (continued)*

28. Mr. NAMSRAI (Mongolia) introduced the new version of the draft resolution (A/C.2/L.666/Rev.2). The first and second preambular paragraphs had been developed and the fifth had been deleted. On the basis of an agreement reached with the United Kingdom representative, operative paragraph 1 had been recast so as not to duplicate the resolution adopted by UNESCO,^{4/} while recalling the principal factors to which particular attention should be devoted. A few slight changes had also been made in operative

*Resumed from the 864th meeting.

^{4/} Resolution 2,214 adopted by the General Conference of UNESCO at its twelfth session.

paragraph 2. The sponsors of the draft thanked all those delegations which had made constructive suggestions and hoped that their text would be adopted unanimously.

29. Mr. LUQMAN (Mauritania) emphasized that Governments were taking an ever greater interest in the conservation of their national wealth in all its forms and that the question had been taken up by various national and international bodies—in particular by the Economic and Social Council and by UNESCO, which had just adopted a resolution on it. His delegation believed that the conservation of nature was of the highest importance and hoped that the draft resolution which it was co-sponsoring would receive unanimous support.

30. Mr. KOCHUBEI (Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic) said it was natural that the various organs of the United Nations should take an increasing interest in the problems of nature conservation facing the developing countries. The Economic Commission for Europe was concerning itself with the fight against water pollution and with the rational use of water resources, which was normal, since most of the large rivers flowed through several countries. Two conferences had already been organized to combat the pollution of sea water and, in so doing, to assure the preservation of sea resources. UNESCO, for its part, had just adopted a particularly interesting resolution on the conservation of nature. That problem was closely linked with tourism, which was an important industry for many countries; the Ukrainian SSR therefore thanked the sponsors for having called the Committee's attention to the question, and would support their draft resolution.

31. Mr. VEJAJIVA (Thailand) also thanked the sponsors for having taken the initiative of submitting a draft resolution on a subject of special interest to the developing countries, including Thailand. His country's forestry department had drawn up a whole series of regulations for the conservation of Thailand's resources and for the organization of national parks. Thailand had recently joined with several other countries in submitting on that subject a draft resolution which, by a unanimous decision, had become a UNESCO resolution. His delegation nevertheless believed that the text submitted to the Second Committee was of even greater merit. Thailand recognized that national and international organizations should supply technical assistance for the conservation and restoration of the developing countries' natural resources, flora and fauna, and his delegation would therefore vote in favour of the draft resolution.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.