

United Nations GENERAL ASSEMBLY

TWENTY-FIRST SESSION

Official Records



**SECOND COMMITTEE, 1056th
MEETING**

Thursday, 3 November 1966,
at 10.35 a.m.

NEW YORK

CONTENTS

	Page
<i>Agenda item 50:</i>	
<i>Programme of studies on multilateral food aid: report of the Secretary-General (continued)</i>	203

Chairman: Mr. Moraiwid M. TELL (Jordan).

AGENDA ITEM 50

Programme of studies on multilateral food aid: report of the Secretary-General (*continued*) (A/6306, chap. XII, sect. V; A/6425, E/4210 and Add.1, E/4236)

1. Mr. TADJO (Ivory Coast) said that his delegation unreservedly supported the draft resolution recommended by the Economic and Social Council (A/6425, para. 2). The world food situation had changed radically in recent years; in place of widespread malnutrition, the world community now had to face a real threat of famine. The United Nations and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) had repeatedly drawn attention to the magnitude and urgency of the problem and to the need for concerted international effort to avert the impending crisis.

2. The crisis was one which would inevitably affect the developing countries most of all, since they had been transformed in one generation from net exporters of food-stuffs to net importers and would, even if the most optimistic estimates of production and population growth proved correct, be importing food-stuffs on an increasing scale from 1970 onwards. There was little doubt that existing food aid programmes, which offered bilateral assistance to cope with under-production in developing countries, would have to be replaced by long-term food planning at the world level, implemented through multilateral programmes.

3. If the World Food Programme was to undertake that work, it would clearly have to be given three major functions. First, it should continue to provide emergency food aid in crisis situations. Secondly, it should promote structural reform in agriculture in both developing and industrialized countries; it was perhaps surprising to learn that the Ministers of Agriculture of the member countries of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, at a recent meeting, had stressed that, if a world food crisis was to be averted, the developed countries would have to increase their output and modernize their agricultural methods. The task to be carried out in the developing countries was well-known: to promote land reform, increased output for domestic consumption and agricultural productivity. The third

responsibility of the Programme should be the type of measures envisaged in the fourth preambular paragraph of the draft resolution for improving the distribution and flow of food-stuffs. Any such long-term programme would, of course, have to take into account the effect of increased domestic consumption of food-stuffs on the developing countries' export earnings and the impact of its activities on world commodity trade and prices.

4. With the technological knowledge available to the international community, none of the problems involved should be insuperable. His delegation was convinced that the world food shortage would be overcome through international co-operation and that the World Food Programme would receive the increased support it required for its current and future efforts.

5. Mr. KAUL (India) observed that the provisions of Economic and Social Council resolution 1149 (XLI) and General Assembly resolution 2096 (XX) provided adequate and comprehensive parameters for the Secretary-General's preliminary study on multilateral food aid. His Government would particularly welcome the opportunity provided by operative paragraph 1 (b) of the draft resolution recommended by the Council to submit its views on the matter and to provide any information which might be useful in connexion with the preparation of the study.

6. His country was deeply concerned about the existing world food situation. Transfers of food grains from surplus to deficit countries, vital as they were, were only a temporary expedient, since within a decade such supplies would be inadequate to meet deficits. Future assistance to the countries concerned should therefore be aimed particularly at increasing their food production by providing the necessary imports for that purpose. The imports should take the form of fertilizers, improved seed and modern agricultural machinery. Moreover, the success of agricultural development efforts was obviously dependent on economic progress in general, and industrial development in particular. Both the agricultural and industrial sectors must develop equally an increased production of steel and cement, Power supply, dam construction, the production of farm equipment and fertilizers were all essential if agricultural output was to be improved. The developing countries should not have to divert any of their development capital to the purchase of food grains to meet shortages; the resources required should, in fact, be added to, not deducted from, general-purpose development aid.

7. His country welcomed the prospect of multilateral food aid. Bilateral food aid, however, would be required for some years to come. It was to be hoped that other countries would follow the example of India

in the field of multilateral food aid in pledging an increased contribution to the World Food Programme to enable it to reach its new target for the period 1966-1968.

8. His delegation was anxious to correct the widely-held view that India was making little headway in dealing with recurrent food shortages. The image in people's minds was perhaps based on the events of 1965, when the country had suffered an unprecedented drought and production of food grains had fallen by 15 million tons—but, in spite of that, although there had been malnutrition and suffering, there had been no famine. During the previous fourteen years the production of food grains alone had, in fact, increased in India from 50 million to 80 million tons, extensive areas had been brought under cultivation and irrigated, and fertilizer production had greatly increased. It was expected that food production in 1966 would again show a substantial increase. Agricultural production was being given the highest priority in the country's development planning: what the planners had in mind, in fact, was a complete technological revolution in agriculture with the aim of achieving self-sufficiency in food supplies within five years, when it was expected that agricultural production would increase to a level of 120 million tons.

9. Mr. FILALI (Morocco) said that the world food shortage was a matter of immediate concern to the international community, and the deteriorating situation required urgent steps to avert the danger of widespread hunger and famine. The shortage had reached alarming proportions, particularly in the developing countries with rapidly expanding populations, and it was imperative that those countries should reform their agricultural systems and greatly increase their agricultural productivity.

10. The spectre of famine was already looming large in many over-populated regions of the world, especially in Asia and the regions with irregular rainfall. Fortunately, the danger had been foreseen by FAO and other specialized agencies concerned with the world food supply, but the task of meeting world food needs had been rendered much more complex by the steady reduction in the surplus stocks of the great food-producing countries, such as the United States. It was, however, encouraging to note that the United States had now recognized the gravity of the situation by changing its agricultural policy so as to increase rather than restrict output.

11. The problem of food shortage could be solved only through broad international action. While the studies undertaken by the Secretary-General in pursuance of General Assembly resolution 2096 (XX) would be of great value, more immediate action in the form of increased contributions by Member States to the World Food Programme was required. Resources available under the Programme, which had failed to reach the target of \$275 million for the period 1966-1968, were clearly inadequate, and his delegation therefore appealed to all countries to make the necessary additional contributions.

12. The draft resolution before the Committee would enable the rapid completion of studies on multilateral food aid; the Moroccan delegation hoped that it would receive unanimous support.

13. Mr. KILLION (United States of America) said that his delegation would support the draft resolution recommended by the Council since it would carry a stage further the important and carefully-planned study being prepared pursuant to General Assembly resolution 2096 (XX). His delegation approved of that study and hoped that the draft resolution would be adopted unanimously.

14. At the same time, the Committee must realize that the essential aim was an international attack on the problem of hunger and that no task was more necessary for the preservation of peace. The United States had shown its concern for that problem in many ways. It had modified its agricultural programme so as to bring millions of idle acres into production; it had given food aid to other countries both on an emergency and on a regular basis; and it also gave substantial support to the World Food Programme. It had recently undertaken to match with commodities all additional Programme pledges (either of cash or commodities) made after 31 July 1966; the United States would defray the shipping costs for all commodities which it provided under the Programme.

15. Nevertheless, such assistance could not solve the problem of hunger. The fact remained that half of the present world population was ill-fed and that, in the future, the developing countries' supplies of food-stuffs would be incapable of keeping pace with the growth of population, if present productivity and population rates continued. Whereas, earlier, many developing countries had been net exporters of food-stuffs, they now relied heavily on imports and very soon the food surpluses of the world would not suffice to meet their needs. For example, in recent years United States grain reserves had fallen from 40 million tons to 10 million tons. In fifteen years' time, food would have to be found to satisfy an additional 1,000 million persons. There would be increasing appeals to the developed countries to extend their food aid; more and more foreign exchange would be swallowed up in food purchases; and gradually the position would be reached where all the production of all the countries in the world would be unable to satisfy food demands. Such a position might well be reached within a generation.

16. The remedy did not lie in increasing the food potential of the developed countries which was already reaching a limit. Nor could much be done by bringing more land into cultivation, for that was a long and difficult process. There might well be unconventional sources of food supplies, for example, the oceans, but their possibilities were not yet known. The best solution was to increase the yields of existing acreage in the developing countries. In the last twenty-five years the yield per acre in the United States had increased dramatically but the developing countries had not yet been able to apply the benefits of agricultural technology; they lagged far behind the developed countries in terms of agricultural productivity.

17. One of the keys to the prevention of world famine therefore lay in bringing the benefits of agricultural technology to the developing countries. Such a policy would be in complete harmony with other efforts to promote economic progress, with the aims of the

World Food Programme and with the bilateral food programmes of the United States. It would release for industry labour now employed inefficiently in agriculture and would enable the food requirements of the population to be satisfied.

18. The question before the Committee was not one of an academic study but one involving man's very survival. On no subject was international co-operation more necessary. The problem of hunger was vital and the United States pledged its full support in the attempts to solve it.

19. Mr. MARTIN WITKOWSKI (France) said that his delegation preferred to discuss the substance of the problem when the study on multilateral food aid would be made available. Meanwhile, he would comment on the draft outline for the study (E/4210 and Add.1). He was glad to note the care and detail that had gone into the preparations for the study in co-operation with FAO. He hoped that the study itself would result in practical decisions which would guide international policy during the next twenty-five years.

20. An important feature of the outline was that it brought out the need to substitute "planned production" for "chance surpluses". Some parts of the outline might be considered somewhat academic (for example, the cost studies mentioned in chapter IV), and more emphasis might be placed in chapter VI on the relationship between food aid and international commodity agreements, since that point had been expressly mentioned in General Assembly resolution 2096 (XX). It also seemed illogical to include in the outline recommendations for the consideration of Governments before the Governments had actually commented on the study. He therefore suggested that chapter X should be eliminated. Finally, the studies mentioned in chapter III should be based on the Indicative World Plan for Agricultural Development of FAO and the time-table adjusted to make that possible.

21. He congratulated the United States on the recent action it had taken and particularly on the changes it had made in its agricultural policy. While the long-term aim must be to increase agricultural output in the developing countries themselves, the fact remained that the developed countries had an immediate duty to provide food aid. He recalled, in that connexion, the proposals his country had presented as far back as 1961 relating to market organization, known by the name of the Baumgartner-Pisani Plan. Those proposals would facilitate both the desired increase in agricultural output in the coming years and the large-scale financing of food aid.

22. Mr. BRADLEY (Argentina) proposed that the Committee should immediately adopt the resolution recommended by the Economic and Social Council (A/6425, para. 2).

23. Mr. SADI (Jordan) and Mr. KAUL (India) supported that proposal.

24. Mr. POLIT (Ecuador) said that his delegation had indicated at the preceding meeting its intention of submitting a draft resolution on the subject of surplus banana supplies in Ecuador; since, however, the inter-agency study to be carried out in pursuance of General Assembly resolution 2096 (XX) was com-

prehensive enough to include a survey of that problem, his delegation had decided not to ask the Committee to consider a further draft resolution. Moreover, under the draft resolution recommended by the Economic and Social Council, his country's banana surplus might be utilized within the World Food Programme. In operative paragraph 1 (b) of that resolution provision was made for the views of Member States to be taken into account in the preparation of the preliminary study by the Secretary-General; his delegation therefore wished its view that a study should be made of ways of using in the World Food Programme the 40 million stems of bananas which went to waste each year in Ecuador to be reflected in the record of the meeting and in the Committee's report on the agenda item.

25. Mr. LOBANOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) asked that a vote should be taken on the draft resolution.

26. The CHAIRMAN invited the Second Committee to vote on the draft resolution recommended by the Economic and Social Council (A/6425, para. 2).

The draft resolution was adopted by 90 votes to none, with 8 abstentions.

27. Mr. LOBANOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics), speaking in explanation of his vote, said that the statements made in the debate had indicated the magnitude of the world food problem, which was one of the most urgent before the United Nations. Half the world's population suffered from malnutrition or starvation, and the prospects of an alleviation of the situation through a rapid growth of agricultural productivity in the developing countries could scarcely be regarded as bright. The Soviet Union, which itself extended substantial aid to the developing countries in food, clothing and other essential commodities, fully appreciated the need for concerted international action. Unfortunately, the aid provided under the World Food Programme was a mere drop in the ocean when seen in the over-all context of the needs of many developing countries whose populations were almost at starvation point. Indeed, the world food situation had deteriorated since 1961, when the Programme had been launched.

28. The world food shortage could be attacked effectively only by radical and extensive measures commensurate with the magnitude of the problem. The World Land Reform Conference, held at Rome in 1966, had shown that the key to a solution of the problem lay in the adoption of widespread, democratic land reform. The importance of democratic land reforms had been stressed by many speakers in the general debate, as well as in the report entitled: "The work of FAO 1964-1965".^{1/} It was therefore regrettable that the resolution just adopted made no reference whatsoever to the question of land reform, which was of crucial significance in increasing agricultural productivity.

29. Another serious defect in the resolution was the omission of any reference to the importance of

^{1/} Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (Rome, 1965), document C 65/23, transmitted to the members of the Economic and Social Council as document E/4195/Add.1.

eliminating the vestiges of colonial domination in the agricultural field. A valuable contribution towards increasing agricultural productivity could be made by the elimination of such aspects of colonialism as outmoded agricultural methods, exploitation by monopolies and the establishment of military bases on land which could otherwise be used for agriculture. Regrettably, that important factor, too, had been omitted from the draft resolution.

30. A third shortcoming of the draft resolution was its failure to reflect the need to create conditions in which the developing countries could find adequate

and equitable markets for their agricultural produce. An expansion of surpluses could have serious effects on the agricultural exports of developing countries, and the need to increase rather than restrict world food trade should have been reflected in the draft resolution.

31. For all those reasons, and because it did not participate in the activities of FAO, which would play a major role in the proposed studies, his delegation had abstained in the vote on the draft resolution.

The meeting rose at 12.20 p.m.