



Chairman: Mr. Narciso G. REYES (Philippines).

AGENDA ITEM 46

Identification of the least developed among the developing countries: report of the Secretary-General (continued)
(A/8403, chap. VI; A/8459, A/C.2/L.1168/Rev.1, A/C.2/L.1169-L.1174)

1. Mr. RUIZ MORALES (Spain) said that the agenda item under discussion was based on paragraphs (56) to (58) of the International Development Strategy for the Second United Nations Development Decade; the purpose of draft resolution A/C.2/L.1168/Rev.1 was to promote the implementation of the measures referred to in those paragraphs. His delegation agreed that the 25 countries identified by the Committee for Development Planning were the most deserving of special assistance on the part of the United Nations to compensate for their particularly handicapped economic situation. At the current stage, it would not be desirable to reopen the substantive debate which had already taken place, but there were two points which needed to be made.

2. The first had already been referred to by the representative of Colombia, as well as other delegations: special measures to be adopted in favour of the relatively least developed countries should not prejudice the development efforts made by the remaining developing countries. That point was clearly made, moreover, in paragraph (56) of the International Development Strategy. It was therefore important that the guidelines laid down for United Nations development assistance should not neglect those countries which, while they could not be classified among the least developed, would continue to need international assistance to supplement their own development efforts.

3. Secondly, the concept of proportionality in the provision of development assistance was important, since obviously countries occupying different places in the broad spectrum of development should not all be treated alike. The same consideration should apply to continents which, for geographical reasons, had not received United Nations assistance. On the basis of the three identification criteria used by the Committee for Development Planning, as well as other criteria such as the ratio of imports to exports and autonomous capital formation, it was clear that the concept of relatively least developed nations existed not only in Africa, Asia and America.

4. The Lima Declaration (A/C.2/270) recently agreed upon by the Group of 77 had referred to the need for regional and subregional organizations to take measures

giving more favourable treatment to their least developed member countries. Unfortunately, Spain, as one of the least developed countries in Europe, had not received such preferential treatment. For various reasons, it had been treated less favourably than the rest of the continent, and had not enjoyed the advantages accorded to developing countries. The concept of classification by geographical regions was therefore, in his delegation's view, an excellent means of ensuring international justice and balanced development.

5. His delegation would support the draft resolution before the Committee, on condition that it was taken in the context of paragraphs (56) to (58) of the International Development Strategy, which covered the two principles to which his delegation attached particular importance. It might be desirable to insert between operative paragraphs 1 and 2 of the draft resolution an additional paragraph stressing the importance of those paragraphs of the Strategy.

6. Mr. ISAKSEN (Denmark) said that his delegation welcomed the current trend in the international community towards acceptance of joint responsibility for solving the serious problems of the least developed among the developing countries. That solidarity, reflected in the International Development Strategy, had been the main motivation for General Assembly resolution 2724 (XXV), which had invited the Economic and Social Council, the Trade and Development Board and other organs to accord high priority to identifying those countries. The Committee for Development Planning had made an extremely valuable contribution to that process, and his delegation supported the methods on which the Committee had based its work. The experiments conducted by UNCTAD on the use of a composite index based on a large number of indicators were very interesting, but such an approach might in practice turn out to be extremely complicated. His delegation therefore agreed with the Committee that the definition should be based on a few highly significant and widely available indicators. The criteria it had used were relevant and acceptable, and the 25 countries it had selected would in all conceivable circumstances fall within the category of least developed countries.

7. His delegation was of the opinion that the Committee's list should be used flexibly with regard to countries which met only some of the criteria but nevertheless were faced with particularly severe development problems. It might include land-locked countries or those which depended on exports of one or a few commodities. It could not be taken for granted that the same countries should be regarded as least developed in relation to all kinds of measures. Nevertheless, flexibility should not be exaggerated to the extent of diluting the definition. It might therefore be

advisable in the near future to consider establishing guidelines for deviations from the criteria used by the Committee.

8. All organizations within the United Nations system should, of course, use the definition of least developed countries in the special programmes they were called upon to implement for those countries. In particular, the Governing Council of UNDP should take full account of the needs of the least developed countries when revising the criteria governing indicative planning figures. It should not, however, be forgotten that most development aid was bilateral. The proposed definition of the least developed countries should also serve as a guideline for donor countries in planning their bilateral assistance to such countries. One of the aims should be to ensure that bilateral aid was provided to the least developed countries on sufficiently soft terms.

9. His delegation fully supported the draft resolution.

10. Mr. VERCELES (Philippines) said that the first step towards a definition of the least developed countries had been General Assembly resolution 2564 (XXIV). It was his delegation which had first brought to the attention of the Second Committee the need to identify those countries; accordingly, it welcomed the list submitted by the Committee for Development Planning and noted that 8 of the 24 hard-core least developed countries were located in Asia and the Pacific region. His delegation's support for the list was without prejudice to future action aimed at modifying it, which was explicit in the Committee's recommendations as well as in resolution 82 (XI) of the Trade and Development Board. That point was reiterated in operative paragraph 5 of the draft resolution before the Committee. His delegation supported the draft resolution; it was aware that certain countries in a marginal situation might have been identified as among the least developed countries, but felt that, in view of the urgent need for action, assistance to the latter, as defined, should begin as soon as possible. The list could be reviewed during the mid-Decade review of the International Development Strategy.

11. Mr. NEPALI (Nepal) said his delegation was encouraged by the understanding shown of the problems faced by the least developed among the developing countries. The approach to identifying those countries had been pragmatic and in keeping with General Assembly resolution 2724 (XXV). In view of the paucity of data, the criteria used by the Committee for Development Planning were satisfactory; if a simple method of identifying the least developed countries had not been used, unnecessary delay in the implementation of action-oriented programmes would have resulted.

12. In addition, the list which had been arrived at was flexible, and there was ample scope for improving it. Nevertheless, although the three criteria used for the identification had been fully appropriate, it was in the vital interests of the land-locked countries that, in any future effort to improve those criteria, their problems should be taken fully into account.

13. As the representative of a country appearing on the list of the Committee for Development Planning, his

delegation welcomed the draft resolution submitted by the representative of Sudan, and would like its name added to the list of sponsors.

14. Mr. BENCHEIKH (Algeria) said that the draft resolution was in line with the principles and programme adopted by the recent meeting of the Group of 77 at Lima. His delegation supported the list of least developed countries prepared by the Committee for Development Planning, but nevertheless welcomed the fact that the draft resolution made provision for its subsequent modification, if necessary. It accordingly supported the draft resolution.

15. Mr. ASHTAL (People's Democratic Republic of Yemen) said that his delegation supported the draft resolution. Nevertheless, it had a number of comments on the list of hard core least developed countries prepared by the Committee for Development Planning. The Committee's report stressed the fact that the criteria recommended for identifying those countries should be viewed as tentative and should be elaborated further. The draft resolution should clearly reflect that understanding. Moreover, the list should be modified more frequently than was suggested either in the Committee's report or in operative paragraph 5 of the draft.

16. Where the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen was concerned, the data used by the Committee appeared to be based on the economic situation which had prevailed before independence. Since June 1967, his Government had experienced serious economic setbacks resulting from the closure of the Suez Canal, which had reduced public and private income by \$25 million. In addition, the refusal of the United Kingdom Government to continue the payment to the new Government of financial assistance it had previously promised to the former Government of the Federation of South Arabia had reduced national income by \$50 million and *per capita* income to \$87.50 instead of \$112.50. More than 130 years of rule by the United Kingdom had left the whole country without schools, with the exception of the city of Aden, where all foreign-owned companies were located. His delegation therefore hoped that the list of hard core least developed countries could be updated to incorporate the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen and other countries in a similar situation.

17. Mr. EGUINO LEDO (Bolivia) noted that considerable progress had been made in identifying the least developed of the developing countries and that the affirmation in General Assembly resolution 2724 (XXV) of the urgency of identifying them in order to enable them to benefit as early as possible from the special measures in their favour was fully justified. The task of identification had not been easy, and the various organs that had studied the question had recognized the difficulty of formulating objective criteria. As the report of the Secretary-General (see A/8459, para. 2) pointed out, however, the Committee for Development Planning, in recognizing the difficulty, had stated that some rational criteria and procedures had to be devised in order to give a concrete expression to the political will to implement those special measures.

18. The *Ad Hoc* Group of Experts of UNCTAD had concluded that the recommendations of the Committee for Development Planning concerning the list of 25 least

developed among the developing countries could serve as a starting point for special international action in their favour; the Group of Experts thought that the list must be interpreted in a flexible way (see A/8459, para. 7), and that it would be useful to add certain other indicators and possibly some modifications in the criteria employed. In the Trade and Development Board, and on various occasions, Bolivia had maintained the view that the process of identification should take account of the regional framework, within which special treatment was granted to certain countries, and also of the fact that, according to the recommendation adopted by the second session of UNCTAD in its decision concerning the land-locked developing countries, the fact of being land-locked should be one of the determining factors in identifying the least developed among the developing countries. Bolivia, in addition to being a land-locked country, among other economic circumstances had a high level of illiteracy and only a rudimentary infrastructure. The question of identifying the least developed among the developing countries was not yet closed. There must be a more far-reaching and detailed study before the last word could be said.

19. His delegation would support any resolution that left open and flexible the possibility of continuing the work of identification already begun, which would allow the tentative list to be extended. His delegation would support the amendment submitted by Ecuador (A/C.2/L.1174), and wished to become one of its sponsors.

20. Mr. HUTAGALUNG (Indonesia) said that his delegation wholeheartedly agreed with the list of hard core least developed countries established by the Committee for Development Planning, on the understanding, as implied in operative paragraphs 4 and 5 of the draft resolution, that it would be open to future modification. He supported the amendments to the revised draft resolution that had been submitted by Colombia (A/C.2/L.1169), Pakistan (A/C.2/L.1170) and Bolivia, Ecuador and El Salvador (A/C.2/L.1174) which, he hoped, the sponsors of the revised draft resolution would have no difficulty in accepting.

21. Mr. BOMELE (Zaire) said that the identification of the least developed countries was a matter of capital importance in so far as it would allow the international community to launch urgent programmes of economic and social development on their behalf. It was important that that community should act collectively in an area where only a concerted, well planned and co-ordinated action could ensure a more rapid rate of economic development for those countries.

22. Although the three criteria adopted by the Committee for Development Planning in identifying the least developed countries were inadequate and could have followed more rational lines, the urgency of the situation was such that Governments and international organizations should adopt suitable measures and programmes of action as soon as possible. His delegation therefore approved the list of least developed countries that had been established but urged that the process of identification should remain sufficiently flexible to allow countries which met only two of the three criteria to be included in future lists.

23. Many economic difficulties continued to confront the least developed countries while, with few exceptions, the

rich countries refused to heed any appeal made by the international community on their behalf. The identification of the least developed countries should encourage a rational study of the problems faced by them in order to increase their capacity to promote the development of their economic sectors.

24. Mr. ODERO-JOWI (Kenya) commended the comprehensive nature of draft resolution A/C.2/L.1168/Rev.1. The amendments contained in document A/C.2/L.1173 were intended merely to draw attention to certain aspects of the question which appeared to have been overlooked.

25. The first additional preambular paragraph proposed by his delegation reflected its dissatisfaction with the criteria that had been adopted for identifying the least developed countries and its concern that not enough attention had been devoted to several factors, of a social, demographic and institutional nature, which affected their rate of economic development. The Committee for Development Planning should have gone further in identifying all the main factors inhibiting economic development in the least developed countries. The second additional preambular paragraph was self-explanatory. The third was intended to emphasize that the least developed countries could not be considered in isolation because of their commercial and other links with other countries. Attention should be devoted to the entire economic context in which they found themselves.

26. The new operative paragraph 5 proposed by his delegation emphasized the idea that the least developed countries should not be considered in isolation. The East African countries were actively engaged in helping their neighbours to accelerate their economic development. For that reason, his delegation wished to introduce the concept of a sliding scale in order to help all developing countries to adjust their relationships with the least developed among them.

27. Mr. GATES (New Zealand) said that the question of identifying the least developed countries had raised a number of difficult questions but that definite progress was at last being made. The list of hard core least developed countries established by the Committee for Development Planning was a useful first step which would hasten the introduction of special measures.

28. His delegation agreed with several speakers who had urged that dependent territories should not receive any less favourable treatment than they would if they were independent. The criteria adopted by the Committee for Development Planning and by UNCTAD should therefore be interpreted as encompassing both dependent territories and independent States.

29. He was unsure exactly what purpose the draft amendment submitted by Colombia (A/C.2/L.1169) was intended to serve, since the whole concept of special measures for the least developed countries meant, *ipso facto*, that other developing countries would receive relatively less advantageous treatment. The amendment therefore appeared to be inconsistent with the general objective of promoting greater economic progress among the least developed countries.

30. As to the amendment proposed by Pakistan (A/C.2/L.1170), he pointed out that the way Governments responded to the establishment of special measures for the least developed countries would depend on the nature of those measures. An appeal for additional resources to finance a so far undefined action programme was somewhat premature and, therefore, his delegation would not be able to support the amendment.

31. The amendments submitted by Madagascar (A/C.2/L.1171) and by Bolivia, Ecuador and El Salvador (A/C.2/L.1174) referred to the establishment of criteria on the basis of backwardness in regional and in sectoral terms. Although his delegation had no objection to the preparation by the Committee for Development Planning and UNCTAD of subsequent lists of least developed countries, it could not see the usefulness of substituting a new list for that already devised by the Committee for Development Planning.

32. Twenty-five countries, which represented roughly 25 per cent of the developing countries, appeared to be a reasonable proportion for inclusion in a list of the least developed. As the representative of the Netherlands had pointed out, a larger list would mean reducing the volume of resources available for each country. Although he was very sympathetic towards the very logical sliding scale referred to in the amendment submitted by the Kenyan delegation (A/C.2/L.1173), current techniques for measuring development were not yet sufficiently sophisticated. The introduction of such a sliding scale would, in fact, delay interminably the application of special measures and would in fact be a retrograde step.

33. Mr. KASATKIN (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that he approved of the list of hard core least developed countries established by the *Ad Hoc* Group of Experts of UNCTAD and the Committee for Development Planning, provided that it was considered as merely preliminary. Further additions might well be made to that list through the recommendations of regional economic commissions.

34. His delegation supported draft resolution A/C.2/L.1168/Rev.1. Some amendments attempted to raise the question of the validity of the criteria used to identify the least developed countries while others referred to the adoption of concrete measures. However, his delegation preferred the revised draft resolution as it stood. It hoped that the debate on the criteria to be used in defining the least developed countries would not be revived, as the existing list appeared to meet with general approval.

35. Mr. BRADLEY (Argentina) said that the amendments of Colombia (A/C.2/L.1169) and Pakistan (A/C.2/L.1170) were in line with his delegation's view that the very necessary and well deserved assistance to be given to the least developed countries should not prejudice aid to the developing countries as a whole. The amendments submitted by the delegations of Bolivia, Ecuador and El Salvador (A/C.2/L.1174) focusing attention on the special role of the regional economic commissions and the regional aspects of development were also most pertinent. His delegation supported all those amendments because it believed that they were in accordance with the principles

formulated at the recent Meeting of the Group of 77 and that those principles should be incorporated into the draft resolution on the identification of the least developed among the developing countries.

36. Mr. OGISO (Japan) said that his delegation had always maintained that the identification of the least developed among the developing countries and appropriate measures to accelerate their economic development deserved the highest priority. The work of the Committee for Development Planning and the *Ad Hoc* Group of Experts of UNCTAD had provided a useful starting point for special international action in favour of the least developed countries. The list drawn up by the Committee for Development Planning was merely tentative. It did not rule out the possibility of future reviews and the use of alternative systems of classification whenever the need arose.

37. While his delegation fully appreciated the considerations which had led the delegations of Madagascar and Bolivia to contemplate sectoral or geographical approaches to the problem, it felt that operative paragraph 5 of the revised draft resolution met those concerns adequately. It was vital to concentrate on the list of hard core least developed countries and on the implementation of special measures in their favour. The criteria adopted by the Committee for Development Planning were reasonable.

38. With regard to the Pakistan amendment (A/C.2/L.1170) which called for additional resources to finance action-oriented programmes in favour of the least developed countries, his delegation felt that additional resources were not necessarily a prerequisite for national or international programmes. The question of resources should be taken up later in conjunction with the formulation of the programmes themselves. It would be inappropriate to incorporate the additional operative paragraph proposed by Pakistan into the revised draft resolution.

39. Finally, his delegation had some misgivings regarding the technical feasibility of the new operative paragraph 5 proposed by the delegation of Kenya (A/C.2/L.1173) and hoped that it would not press the amendment.

40. The CHAIRMAN announced that Nepal and Ceylon had become sponsors of the revised draft resolution (A/C.2/L.1168/Rev.1).

41. Mr. FALL (Senegal) said that while his delegation supported the revised draft resolution, it felt that the text could be further strengthened. Many of the amendments put forward embodied the idea that the list of hard core least developed countries should not be regarded as final and stressed the need for machinery for a periodic review. The provision of review machinery did not necessarily imply that the list established would be lengthy. His delegation welcomed that approach and felt that the amendments should be incorporated into the revised draft resolution.

42. Any review of the criteria used to identify the least developed countries should take into account the special problems of land-locked countries and single-commodity countries. The economies of single-commodity countries

—such as that of Senegal—were extremely vulnerable and their *per capita* income was subject to violent fluctuations from year to year. His delegation hoped that the amendments suggested by Madagascar (A/C.2/L.1171) and Kenya (A/C.2/L.1173) would be incorporated into the text of the revised draft resolution.

43. In the view of his delegation, the amendment submitted by Colombia (A/C.2/L.1169) was not incompatible with the spirit of the draft resolution. His delegation could also support the amendment to the preamble (A/C.2/L.1173) introduced by the delegation of Kenya. His delegation was prepared to support the revised draft resolution as a whole if the sponsors were prepared to incorporate those amendments in the revised draft.

44. Mr. RASOLOMANANA (Madagascar) said that the purpose of his delegation's amendment (A/C.2/L.1171) was to facilitate the identification of additional least developed countries on the basis of more refined criteria; more complete data would enable the international community to provide more effective assistance. It went further than the Kenyan amendment, which his delegation also supported.

45. Mr. DELPREE-CRESPO (Guatemala) proposed that the word "tentative" should be inserted before the word "list" in operative paragraph 4. If the sponsors accepted that amendment and the amendment contained in document A/C.2/L.1174, his delegation would wholeheartedly support the draft resolution and would be pleased to become a sponsor.

46. His delegation endorsed Trade and Development Board resolution 82 (XI) and believed that further efforts to identify the least developed countries should take into account classifications of countries prepared by regional organizations.

47. Mr. MATSEBULA (Swaziland) said that the new preambular paragraphs proposed by Kenya (A/C.2/L.1173) wisely reflected the acknowledgement by the Committee for Development Planning that its work was not conclusive because of the paucity of data. The new operative paragraph 5 proposed by Kenya also merited inclusion in the draft resolution.

48. Mr. OHIAMI (Togo) said that his delegation would vote in favour of the revised draft resolution and urged the inclusion, in particular, of the amendments in documents A/C.2/L.1169, A/C.2/L.1171 and A/C.2/L.1173. The list drawn up by the Committee for Development Planning was only provisional and should be revised whenever necessary, inasmuch as the criteria on which it had been based were insufficient and relative.

49. Mr. YEGEN (Turkey) said that his delegation would vote in favour of the revised draft resolution. It shared the view that assistance programmes undertaken in favour of the least developed countries should not hinder the development of other developing countries; it therefore endorsed the Colombian and Pakistan amendments.

50. Mr. HOEUR LAY INN (Khmer Republic) said that his delegation—which represented a developing country whose economy was being ravaged by war—endorsed the revised draft resolution and was pleased that its comments on operative paragraph 5 of the original text had been reflected in the new version. It also supported the amendments in documents A/C.2/L.1173 and A/C.2/L.1174.

51. Mr. FIGUEROA (Chile) supported the revised draft resolution and urged the incorporation of the amendments in documents A/C.2/L.1169, A/C.2/L.1174 and, in particular, A/C.2/L.1170. Consideration should also be given in the future to the possibility of allocating resources from the United Nations Capital Development Fund to assist the least developed among the developing countries.

52. Mr. RUTTEN (Netherlands) said that his delegation fully supported the revised draft resolution; however, it would welcome an explanation of operative paragraph 7, since UNDP normally did not initiate programmes itself under the new country programming arrangements.

53. It would be premature at the present stage to attempt to establish new criteria for identifying additional least developed countries. The refinement of the existing criteria must not be pushed too far, and the task should, in any event, be left to the Committee for Development Planning, the Economic and Social Council and other bodies concerned. His delegation therefore could not support the amendments in documents A/C.2/L.1171 and A/C.2/L.1174, although it understood the reasons behind them.

54. Similarly, the Kenyan representative's remarks in support of inserting a new operative paragraph 5, although relevant to Kenya, could not be applied to all developing countries. If the concept of "least developed" countries was expanded too far, the speedy implementation of action on behalf of the countries already on the list would be jeopardized.

55. Mr. CAVIGLIA STARICCO (Uruguay) said that the purpose of his delegation's amendment (A/C.2/L.1172) was to emphasize that the criteria established by the Committee for Development Planning were only provisional, a fact which the Committee itself had acknowledged. His delegation also supported the amendments in documents A/C.2/L.1169 and A/C.2/L.1174.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.