



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

AGENDA ITEM 12

Report of the Economic and Social Council [chapters III to VII, VIII (sections A to E), IX to XIV, XXI and XXII] (continued)* (A/8403; A/C.2/264, A/C.2/L.1148/Add.1, A/C.2/L.1148/Rev.1, A/C.2/L.1165)

1. Mr. AHMED (Secretary of the Committee) informed the Committee that, in the list of sponsors of draft resolution A/C.2/L.1148/Rev.1, Ireland should be substituted for Iceland.

2. Mrs. THORSSON (Sweden) introduced draft resolution A/C.2/L.1148/Rev.1 on behalf of the sponsors. The revised draft incorporated a number of editorial changes and several amendments which had been accepted during previous discussion. The new title of the draft resolution reflected the division of the operative part into two parts, the first dealing with regional and subregional advisory services and the second with the United Nations regular programme of technical assistance. Although part II appeared, superficially, to advocate a considerable addition to the resources made available for technical assistance purposes, which might at first sight be alarming to countries which were strongly opposed to any budgetary increases, it should be borne in mind that steadily rising costs combined with the current weak position of the dollar abroad had considerably depreciated the real value of those resources.

3. It was time for the United Nations to take concrete steps to assist the least developed among the developing countries. The report of the Committee for Development Planning (E/4990) indicated that it was the responsibility of the United Nations to take special measures to improve the capacity of the least developed countries to undertake an expanding range of development efforts. If the Organization wanted to help the least developed countries effectively, it could not rely merely upon voluntary contributions but must provide the necessary financial resources for doing so.

4. She therefore hoped that the draft resolution would win the broad support of the members of the Committee.

5. Mr. OSMAN (Sudan) said that the draft resolution had already been discussed at considerable length and suggested that it be put to the vote.

6. Mr. GATES (New Zealand) said his delegation had certain difficulties in accepting part II of the draft

resolution and felt obliged to vote against it. He therefore requested that a separate vote be taken on that part.

7. Mr. RANKIN (Canada) requested that separate votes be taken on parts I and II.

8. Mr. VIAUD (France) said that, as the French translation of the draft resolution had only just been distributed, no vote should be taken until delegations had had time to study the text and, if necessary, to state their position on it. He feared that, otherwise, it might subsequently be said that the draft resolution had been adopted in irregular circumstances.

9. The CHAIRMAN said that, if there was no objection, he would take it that the Committee adopted the proposal of the French representative and would resume discussion of the item at its next meeting.

It was so decided.

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)

10. Mr. OSMAN (Sudan) introduced draft resolution A/C.2/L.1168 and drew the Committee's attention to its salient points. In view of the short notice at which the text had been drawn up, it had been impossible to consult all delegations. However, Chad and Rwanda had already signified their intention to co-sponsor the draft resolution.

11. Mr. VIAUD (France) said that the problem of the least developed among the developing countries was relatively recent. Far from denying its importance, all delegations recognized that the international community must devise effective action-oriented programmes in favour of the least developed countries.

12. There were, however, two basic issues. The first was the question of defining the least developed countries. In the opinion of his delegation, they should in any case, include the land-locked countries and countries with very little infrastructure and a very low *per capita* income. The United Nations should not attempt to establish absolute criteria but should draw up a flexible list which would take into account the general characteristics of those countries. His delegation approved the list of hard-core least developed countries established by the Committee for Development Planning, provided that it was open to subsequent revision. The largest number of least developed countries was to be found in Africa and the main development effort

* Resumed from the 1397th meeting.

should therefore be concentrated on them. That was not to suggest, however, that the least developed countries in Asia and Latin America should be overlooked and his delegation was anxious that no discrimination should be made between least developed countries on grounds of geographical location. Account must also be taken of low levels of development in relative terms. Certain countries, though more developed than others, might be significantly underdeveloped in the regional context. A distinction must therefore be made between steps taken to assist least developed countries on a universal scale and those taken on a regional level so that individual cases of relative underdevelopment could receive adequate attention.

13. The second problem concerned the concrete steps that were to be taken. His delegation hoped that the General Assembly would agree to a number of principles and adopt a set of guidelines and would then notify the specialized agencies and other international organizations accordingly so that they could all act in a concerted manner. Those guidelines could, for example, assist the Secretary-General of UNCTAD in working out the detailed action-oriented programme referred to in operative paragraph 6 of the draft resolution. They should also be communicated to UNDP, which had already decided to set aside a certain volume of its resources for the least developed countries but had not yet started to implement such a programme.

14. He therefore suggested that the words "including the United Nations Development Programme" should be incorporated in operative paragraph 7 of the draft resolution, after the words "United Nations system". The General Assembly's directives should also be transmitted to the Economic and Social Council so that it could co-ordinate the policies of the United Nations with those of the specialized agencies. Although that aspect was partly covered by operative paragraph 5 of the draft resolution, the French delegation hoped that the Economic and Social Council would examine to what extent the resources it had set aside for scientific and technological purposes could be used to assist the least developed countries. Finally, as the supreme international body, the General Assembly should circulate its general directives among all international institutions.

15. He then proposed the insertion of an additional operative paragraph 8, as follows:

"Further requests the international organizations within the United Nations system to take fully into account the special needs of the least developed among developing countries when formulating their programmes of activities or selecting the projects they finance."

16. Generally speaking, his delegation gave its full support to the draft resolution, submitted by the representative of Sudan, which corresponded to the views which it had expressed on a number of occasions and was a step forward on the way to solving the problem of the least developed countries. The amendments he had proposed were intended merely to enable the resolution to go even further in that direction.

17. Mr. HOEUR LAY INN (Khmer Republic) felt that the latter part of operative paragraph 5 was perhaps too

restrictive. At the present time, his own country was in a state of war, but subsequently it would like to be able to request a review of the list of hard core least developed countries. He therefore proposed that the words "at the time of the mid-term review" should be replaced by "at the time of each review". He felt that the text should be couched in more general terms to make it clear that the list of hard core least developed countries was neither exhaustive nor immutable.

18. Mr. RUTTEN (Netherlands) drew the attention of the Committee to the dangers of a protracted debate on the soundness of the criteria adopted by the Committee for Development Planning to identify the least developed among the developing countries. The Committee for Development Planning had acknowledged that other criteria could have been used, but the fact remained that it had succeeded in establishing a list of countries generally acknowledged to be the least developed among the developing countries. The next step would be to adopt urgent measures so that the United Nations and its specialized agencies could implement action-oriented programmes in favour of those countries as early as possible, while bearing in mind that the list could be reviewed and revised as and when the need arose. Since the question had been carefully examined by the Committee for Development Planning, the *Ad Hoc* Group of Experts of UNCTAD, the Economic and Social Council and the Trade and Development Board, it should be referred to the General Assembly during the current session.

19. While it was perfectly understandable that many more developing countries would wish to be included in the list of hard core least developed countries in order to qualify for additional assistance, it was equally obvious that if the list became too long, the volume of resources which the United Nations would be able to allocate to each country would be correspondingly reduced.

20. In conclusion, his delegation supported the draft resolution and the amendments introduced by the French representative.

21. Mr. ZAGORIN (United States of America) said that his delegation fully supported draft resolution A/C.2/L.1168. It agreed with the Netherlands representative that that was an urgent question which deserved special attention and priority and that the General Assembly should follow up the valuable work of the Committee for Development Planning and other bodies by formally recognizing and approving the list of hard core least developed countries drawn up by the Committee for Development Planning.

22. His delegation hoped that a flexible approach would be adopted with regard to the concept of the least developed countries requiring special attention. The Committee for Development Planning had in fact suggested that alternative criteria could be devised, and it should be borne in mind that different bodies concerned with initiating programmes in favour of the least developed among the developing countries had different aims and objectives. He strongly supported the stress in the draft resolution on concrete measures to be taken in assisting the least developed countries.

23. Finally, his delegation was able in general to accept the amendments proposed by the French representative, but wanted to see them in writing.

24. Mr. RANKIN (Canada) commended the work of the Committee for Development Planning and the *Ad Hoc* Group of Experts of UNCTAD. His delegation supported the draft resolution and felt that important progress could now be achieved. It approved the inclusion of a mechanism for reviewing the list of hard core least developed countries.

25. Mr. OSMAN (Sudan) said that Ethiopia and Mali had joined the list of sponsors of the draft resolution under consideration. The amendment to operative paragraph 7 and the new operative paragraph 8 proposed by the French representative were acceptable to the sponsors. With regard to the amendment to operative paragraph 5 proposed by the representative of the Khmer Republic, he felt that the original formulation indicated quite clearly that the list was neither definitive nor immutable. The timing of the review had been formulated in the light of the recommendations of the Committee for Development Planning. In any event, the process of identification of the least developed among the developing countries would be lengthy, and it was unlikely that the list could be amended before 1975.

26. Mr. RAMIREZ-OCAMPO (Colombia) said that his delegation supported the draft resolution and considered the identification of the least developed among the developing countries an important first step towards the elaboration of special measures in their favour. The report of the Committee for Development Planning (E/4990) and Trade and Development Board resolution 82 (XI) would continue to provide the basis for the review of criteria for the identification of those countries and the expansion of the list. It was imperative that objective criteria be used.

27. In order to ensure a balanced approach to development assistance, his delegation proposed the insertion of the following text at the end of operative paragraph 7:

“Such programmes and those referred to in paragraph 6 above should be viewed as complementary to the measures proposed to attain the general objectives of the International Development Strategy for all developing countries and should not prejudice the development efforts of other developing countries.”

28. Mr. NTAKABANYURA (Burundi) said that economic security merited just as much attention in the United Nations as international security, for a further deterioration of the economic plight of the developing countries would create tension and threaten world peace. Although the current world economic situation gave ample cause for pessimism, it was encouraging to note that the necessity of according priority to the least developed among the developing countries had been recognized.

29. His delegation wished to become a sponsor of the draft resolution under consideration and welcomed in particular the suggestions by the representative of France. Although it was true that the major responsibility for their development rested with the developing countries themselves, assistance from the wealthier countries was imperative. He welcomed the Swedish delegation's statement that

increased development assistance should be devoted to the least developed among the developing countries.

30. Mr. McCARTHY (United Kingdom) said that his delegation endorsed the flexible approach adopted by the sponsors of the draft resolution to the criteria established by the Committee for Development Planning. The United Kingdom would join the sponsors since the French representative's amendments were accepted by the sponsors. He reiterated the view expressed by his delegation in the Trade and Development Board that dependent Territories which would qualify as least developed countries should receive equally favourable attention.

31. Mr. CABEZAS (Ecuador) said that his delegation had certain reservations concerning the criteria established by the Committee for Development Planning. *Per capita* gross domestic product was not an accurate indicator of development in a number of countries, including his own. In order to ensure greater flexibility, he proposed that the words “in their respective geographical regions” should be inserted after the words “least developed countries” in operative paragraph 5. He also had doubts concerning the timing of the review called for in that paragraph and proposed that the words “at the time of the mid-term review” should be replaced by the words “at the periodic review”

32. Mr. JAIN (India) said that his delegation endorsed the list of hard core least developed countries and welcomed the call in the draft resolution for a periodic review of that list to reflect changing situations. It also urged the speedy elaboration of special measures in favour of the least developed countries, for the disparity between them and other developing countries must not be allowed to grow. Moreover, due attention to borderline cases would ensure that no country's interests would be neglected.

33. The final document adopted at the recent Ministerial Meeting of the Group of 77 (A/C.2/270) contained the essential elements for a thorough, practical and forward-looking programme of action on behalf of the least developed countries. It showed that there was no conflict between the interests of those countries and the interests of the developing countries as a whole, emphasized the importance of avoiding any further delay in the elaboration of special measures in favour of the least developed countries, and was fully in accordance with resolution 24 (II) adopted at the second session of UNCTAD.

34. His delegation wished to become a sponsor of the draft resolution, for his Government hoped to provide whatever assistance it could through bilateral and multi-lateral programmes in order to accelerate the development of the least developed countries.

35. Mr. VIAUD (France), clarifying his earlier remarks, said that if the words “other organizations in the United Nations system” in the English version of operative paragraph 7 were amended to read: “other organs in the United Nations”, it would be absolutely clear that operative paragraph 6 referred to UNCTAD, operative paragraph 7, to such organs as UNDP and UNIDO, and the proposed operative paragraph 8, to other international organizations such as IMF and IBRD.

36. His delegation endorsed the first amendment to operative paragraph 5 proposed by the representative of Ecuador and would join the list of sponsors of the draft resolution if its own amendments were acceptable to them.

37. Mr. CARANICAS (Greece) agreed with previous speakers that the matter under consideration was urgent and that a vote should be taken as soon as possible. He appreciated the Sudanese representative's comments concerning the Khmer amendment to operative paragraph 5; however, in view of the possibility that changes necessitating additions to, or even deletions from, the present list might occur before the mid-term review, the Khmer amendment merited inclusion in that paragraph. He planned to vote in favour of the draft resolution.

38. Mr. POISSON (Niger) said that his delegation wished to join the list of sponsors of the draft resolution. Discussion of such matters as criteria for different geographical regions and ways to ensure that the measures adopted in favour of the least developed countries did not hamper the development of other developing countries should be left until a later stage.

39. Mr. AKRAM (Pakistan) said that his delegation agreed with the identification of the 25 hard core least developed countries arrived at by the Committee for Development Planning; it had voted for Economic and Social Council resolution 1628 (LI) and Trade and Development Board resolution 82 (XI). It believed that the identification made by the Committee for Development Planning must be regarded as preliminary, and therefore welcomed the provision in operative paragraph 5 of the draft resolution for a continuing review of the criteria used for identification.

40. Like other developing countries, Pakistan did not believe that there was any basic conflict between the interests of the least developed and the remaining developing countries. It attached considerable importance, however, to the fact that measures taken in favour of the former should not have an adverse effect on the development efforts of the latter, and believed accordingly that such measures should be financed from additional resources provided to the various programmes within the United Nations system for that purpose. His delegation fully supported the draft resolution, but wished to propose the addition of a new operative paragraph 9 reading:

"Recommends that additional resources should be made available to the United Nations and its specialized agencies in order to ensure early and effective implementation of action-oriented programmes in favour of the least developed countries."

41. Mr. RASOLOMANANA (Madagascar) said that his delegation supported the proposal to insert the word "provisionally" after the first word of operative paragraph 4. It also wished to propose the addition of a new operative paragraph, to be inserted between the present paragraphs 4 and 5, reading:

"Requests that a list of the developing countries which are relatively backward in certain key sectors of their economies should be added to that list as soon as possible."

Such countries had problems requiring special assistance, and the addition of that paragraph would complete the draft resolution.

42. Mr. CASTAÑEDA-CORNEJO (El Salvador) said that the draft resolution satisfied his delegation's aspirations, as well as those of the least developed countries in other regions, for rapid action to promote their development. However, the list of hard core least developed countries prepared by the Committee for Development Planning contained no Central American country. The reason for that situation was that the criteria used by the Committee were not fully comprehensive. Aid to the least developed among the developing countries as a whole should not be prejudicial to interests of those countries which were the least developed in their respective regions, and his delegation therefore strongly supported the amendment proposed by the representative of Ecuador.

43. Mr. CAVIGLIA STARICCO (Uruguay) said that his delegation supported the draft resolution and some of the amendments to it, in particular that proposed by the representative of France, which met Uruguay's view that the General Assembly should establish guidelines for the action to be undertaken to benefit the least developed countries. Operative paragraph 5 was particularly important, and the amendment suggested by the representative of Ecuador might profitably be incorporated in it. In addition, his delegation believed that there might well be other criteria than those now being used, as it had expressed at length during its statement in the debate on the item, and wished accordingly to propose the addition after the words "now being used" of a phrase reading "as well as any other criteria which may in due course be deemed appropriate". His delegation also supported the spirit of the Colombian amendment, but would await the written text before taking a final position on it.

44. Mr. AL-SAMMAN (Syrian Arab Republic) said that the draft resolution constituted a decisive step towards enabling the least developed among the developing countries to benefit from the special measures in their favour which have been incorporated in the International Development Strategy. His delegation supported the amendments proposed by the representative of France, and wished in addition to propose the replacement of the words "the review of criteria" in operative paragraph 5 by "the improvement and completion of criteria"; the criteria used by the Committee for Development Planning were both inadequate and incomplete, and further research was required to achieve more precise criteria with a view to making the list flexible and dynamic by including or eliminating countries as appropriate.

45. His delegation would support the draft resolution, and would welcome the opportunity to become a co-sponsor of it.

46. Mr. ORČIĆ (Yugoslavia) said that his delegation also wished to become a co-sponsor of the draft resolution. It would comment on the proposed amendments when the written texts were available.

47. Mr. DELPREE-CRESPO (Guatemala) said that, although the preparation of a list of the least developed

among the developing countries was a major step forward, his delegation was not convinced that the criteria used in its preparation had been the most suitable for the purpose. The list had omitted many countries which merited the special co-operation of the international community, because the three criteria used had been relative, and the extent to which they were fulfilled varied widely among individual countries and among the different regions. The criterion of gross national product did not necessarily provide an accurate reflection of a country's economic situation, nor did the percentage of literacy adequately reflect its cultural level. His delegation therefore accepted the list on the understanding that the criteria would be modified in the future as part of a dynamic process aimed at making it more realistic. The remarks of the representative of the Netherlands, which might be taken to mean that the list should not be increased to cover more than the 25 countries it currently included, aroused his delegation's concern. The list was, rather, merely a first step towards enabling the international community to provide special assistance to the least developed countries. Moreover, his delegation attached particular importance to the amendment submitted by the representative of Ecuador, relating to the least developed countries within each region.

48. Mr. KOTOBALAVU (Fiji) said that his delegation fully supported the list of least developed countries prepared by the Committee for Development Planning, and would accordingly support any draft resolution which endorsed that list. It particularly welcomed the view expressed in paragraph 70 of the Committee's report (E/4990) that the existence of the list would not rule out the use of different classifications for special purposes, and that in specific areas the competent organizations of the United Nations system and other intergovernmental bodies should elaborate their own criteria for identification. Fiji was one of a number of countries which did not qualify as least developed under the three criteria used by the Committee. Nevertheless, it had serious economic problems resulting from its dependence on a small number of primary commodities which were subject to large price fluctuations on the international market.

49. The list also made no reference to dependent Territories. In the South Pacific region there were many such Territories which would benefit from special measures in their favour. The United Nations had always shown

considerable interest in their political development, and his delegation urged that it should also give sympathetic consideration to their economic development.

50. Mr. BRADLEY (Argentina) said his delegation agreed that more aid should be given to the least developed among developing countries, and supported the draft resolution, as well as the amendments to it. It seemed to be generally agreed that the list of least developed countries prepared by the Committee for Development Planning should not be regarded as final; in view of its flexibility, it might in time expand to cover more than half of the developing countries in the world. There must be a proportionate increase in the over-all level of development aid, if aid to the least developed countries was to be increased.

51. Mr. DO RIO-BRANCO (Brazil) said his delegation would vote for the draft resolution, whether or not the amendments to it were accepted. In particular, operative paragraphs 3 and 5 dispelled any fears his delegation might have had that the least developed countries might have to compete for aid with the remainder of the developed countries. In that context, he endorsed the view of the representatives of Pakistan and Argentina that any special measures taken in favour of the developing countries should be supplementary to aid programmes to the developing countries as a whole.

52. Mr. OSMAN (Sudan) welcomed those delegations which had expressed the desire to co-sponsor the draft resolution. The new operative paragraph 8 proposed by the representative of France had already been accepted; with regard to the remainder of the amendments submitted, consultations among the co-sponsors would be necessary.

STATEMENT BY THE CHAIRMAN

53. The CHAIRMAN again drew the attention of the Committee to the note by the Secretary-General which had been distributed as Conference Room paper MAIN COMMITTEE/2. In particular, he wished to remind members that when they had texts of statements they intended to deliver, they should provide at least six copies to the Conference Officer.

The meeting rose at 1.15 p.m.