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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 14th MEETING

Chairman:

Mr. BARAC
(Vice-Chairman)

(Romania)

CONTENTS

AGENDA ITEM 12: REPORT OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL (continued)

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In the absence of the Chairman, Mr. Barac (Romania),
Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 12: REPORT OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL (continued)
(A/46/3, A/46/19, A/46/163, A/46/132-E/1991/58, A/46/171-E/1991/61,
A/46/204-E/1991/80 and Add.1 and 2, A/46/263-E/1991/88, A/46/288, A/46/467,
A/46/477, A/46/493, A/46/520; A/C.2/46/2, A/C.2/46/5; A/C.2/46/L.8 and Corr.1,
L.10 and L.12; E/1991/32)

1. Mr. BABINGTON (Australia) said that the problem of acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) was a source of growing concern, especially in view of the latest estimates of the World Health Organization (WHO), which set the number of AIDS-infected people by the end of the 1990s at 30-40 million, including 10 million children. The effects of the AIDS pandemic were particularly pronounced in developing countries, including those in the Asian and Pacific region, where the number of people infected by the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) was growing at a pace similar to that observed in sub-Saharan Africa in the early 1980s, but with even greater potential for spread of the disease. Australia therefore fully supported the work undertaken by WHO and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in conjunction with other United Nations agencies, recipient Governments, non-governmental organizations and community-based groups to combat AIDS. The emphasis placed on that problem by UNDP was particularly encouraging. Australia expected that the General Assembly would adopt another strong resolution on AIDS at the current session, placing special emphasis on the plight of women and children, the need to intensify information-dissemination activities and the importance of multisectoral efforts to combat the disease.

2. The restructuring of the economic and social sectors of the United Nations was essential if the Organization was to respond effectively to the important development challenges facing the world in the 1990s. His delegation therefore looked forward to further progress in that area during the current session, particularly in the review of the subsidiary bodies of the Economic and Social Council.

3. Mr. AHMIA (Algeria) said that the Special High-level Meeting of the Economic and Social Council had been a valuable innovation, shedding important light on the economic implications that the recent evolution of East-West relations would have for the world as a whole. He regretted, however, that those discussions had not led to the adoption of a decision, although the concluding statement by the Chairman of the Meeting would provide a useful basis for future discussions. He welcomed the solemn commitment given by the developed countries that their assistance to the countries of Central and Eastern Europe would not in any way be detrimental to their assistance programmes to the developing countries. Those assurances had been one of the most valuable contributions made by the Meeting, and had been noted with

(Mr. Ahmia, Algeria)

satisfaction by the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the States members of the Group of 77 in their recent declaration (A/46/520).

4. In view of the success of the Special High-level Meeting, Algeria welcomed the decision by the General Assembly, in its resolution 45/264, to incorporate such high-level segments in all future sessions of the Council so that the Council could continue to monitor the impact of current developments.

5. With regard to assistance to the Palestinian people, Algeria remained deeply concerned by the ongoing deterioration of the social and economic situation in the occupied territories, a problem exacerbated by the policies of the Israeli authorities. Notable among those policies, which had reduced the Palestinian people to a state of despair, were the confiscation of Palestinian lands, the accelerated establishment of Jewish colonies in those territories in violation of the provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention of 12 August 1949 and Security Council resolution 465 (1980), the diversion of water resources, the systematic destruction of the environment, the imposition of restrictive trade practices and the obstruction of economic and social assistance projects conducted by the United Nations and other organizations. In view of Israel's deliberate policy to dispossess the Palestinian people of its land and confiscate its water resources, the international community and the United Nations system must step up their economic and social assistance to the Palestinian people, working in close cooperation with the Palestine Liberation Organization, since a definitive solution to the Palestinian problem could only be achieved through the realization of the national rights of the Palestinian people.

6. Mr. MANSOR (Malaysia) said that, in view of the Economic and Social Council's vital role in the process of reforming the United Nations in the economic and social fields, the Council's restructured format had proved to be most encouraging. The Special High-level Meeting of the Council had represented a successful attempt to revitalize that body, although there was certainly still room for improvement of the framework and functioning of such meetings in the future. For instance, participants ought to engage more in open and free discussion from the floor, rather than reading prepared statements. Since many ideas that might provide guidance for future policy directions had emerged during the high-level segment, a proper record should be made of future proceedings.

7. Another new idea introduced at the Council's second regular session of 1991 - a mechanism for informal exchanges of views to facilitate active and direct dialogue among delegations - had also proved useful. The informal exchange of views on the report of the South Commission had enabled participants to understand the challenges facing the developing countries and the determination of those countries to pursue developmental goals despite an increasingly difficult international environment. The exchange of views on the economic, social and environmental consequences of the situation between Iraq and Kuwait had likewise contributed to a better understanding of the

(Mr. Mansor, Malaysia)

global impact of the Gulf conflict. The exchange of views on strengthening multilateral cooperation in international economic affairs had highlighted the fact that the goal of a better climate of international economic cooperation for development was still far from being achieved. It should be noted in that connection that, while many developing countries had taken steps to restructure and liberalize their economies to promote growth, the countries of the North had failed to respond by improving the international economic environment. Instead of pontificating on the importance of good macroeconomic policies and the free-market economy, the North should address the long-standing problems, including the external debt crisis which were at the root of the economic and social decline being experienced by many developing countries.

8. In that regard, the Commonwealth scheme for writing off two thirds, or \$18 billion, of the official debt of the poorest countries - the "Trinidad and Tobago terms" - deserved special support from the international community. At the recent meeting of Commonwealth finance ministers at Kuala Lumpur, participants had agreed that those terms must be strongly promoted if they were to secure acceptance at the forthcoming Annual Meetings of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) at Bangkok, for they offered the only formula that could alleviate the severe indebtedness of many low-income countries.

9. The discussions at the most recent session of the Council had also focused on the development of human resources, widely recognized as the most valuable resource a nation possessed. Developing human resources by enhancing the options of disadvantaged groups would in turn promote human freedoms and democracy. Women were one such disadvantaged group. Accordingly, Malaysia had joined in sponsoring Economic and Social Council resolution 1991/64, on the Summit on the Economic Advancement of Rural Women, to be held at Brussels in 1992. That meeting would make an important contribution to the Fourth World Conference on Women, to be held in 1995.

10. The Council had agreed that the recovery and development of Africa required further assistance. In that regard, the decision by the Government of Japan to convene an International Conference on Africa in 1993 was a laudable initiative. General agreement had also been reached on the need for a swift and coordinated response by the United Nations to man-made and natural emergencies. If a decision was to be taken on that question at the current session of the General Assembly, delegations must adopt an open and consensual approach, analysing the weaknesses of the current system and refraining from reaching hasty conclusions.

11. Another innovation at the Council's latest session, the informal discussions with the Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund, had also proved extremely useful. His delegation hoped to see not only a continuation of that dialogue, but also an improvement in its quality. The President of the World Bank should also be invited to participate in an

(Mr. Mansor, Malaysia)

informal dialogue, as another means of revitalizing the Council and helping it to strengthen international cooperation.

12. In view of the tight situation in the international capital market, it was clear that there was a need for a healthy discussion at the forty-sixth session of the question of development and financing and of the Secretary-General's proposal to convene an international conference on that subject, in keeping with Economic and Social Council decision 1991/274. Such a conference should focus not on new capital, but on an examination of existing resources which might be redirected towards internal development. Considerable savings could accrue if the developed countries were willing to cut back their defence spending and subsidies to agriculture and industry.

13. His delegation was optimistic about the outcome of the reform of the Economic and Social Council, but was concerned at the negative attitudes and manifestations of the North-South divide that had pervaded the Council's most recent session. It was imperative that members should develop a more positive spirit of cooperation, moving away from a rigid North-South approach and a donor-recipient mentality while displaying an openness to new ideas. The process of holding informal dialogues on a broad range of subjects could also be further developed.

14. Mr. KUDRYAVTSEV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that his country was completely satisfied with the results of the most recent session of the Economic and Social Council and had welcomed, in particular, the substantive and open exchange of opinions at the Special High-level Meeting, which had shed valuable light on the impact that the processes under way in Eastern Europe and the USSR and the new relations emerging between East and West would have on the entire international community. At that Meeting consensus had been reached on the need to provide assistance for the fundamental structural transformations under way in the USSR and Eastern Europe and to ensure the full integration of those countries into the world economic system.

15. Future high-level meetings should focus on clearly defined issues of real concern to all delegations. The agenda should therefore be set during the Council's organizational session earlier in the same year. Furthermore, discussions at such meetings and in other economic organs of the United Nations should, as far as possible, avoid ideological concerns, in the hope of revitalizing the Organization's work.

16. The informal exchange of views on the economic, social and environmental consequences of the Persian Gulf conflict had underscored the importance of an integrated approach to the resolution of world problems and, by extension, of a reorientation of the Organization's social, economic and humanitarian activities towards the strengthening of peace and security throughout the world. Article 65 of the Charter provided for the Economic and Social Council to furnish information to the Security Council and assist the Council in

(Mr. Kudryavtsev, USSR)

dealing with the non-military consequences of military and political conflicts; closer attention might therefore be given to that and other as yet unimplemented provisions of the Charter.

17. A positive achievement of the Council's second regular session of 1991 had been the adoption of a resolution dealing with the work of the United Nations Centre on Transnational Corporations, as that resolution paved the way for the increased participation of business circles in the Centre's work. Other useful resolutions had been adopted by the Council in such areas of concern as the Chernobyl problem, AIDS prevention, energy and population problems, regional cooperation, the economic development of the developing countries, and natural disasters. The Council's fruitful debate on the last subject led his delegation to hope that a decision would be adopted in due course which would considerably enhance the Organization's capacity to deal with natural disasters.

18. Above all, the USSR welcomed the new atmosphere that had prevailed at the session, an atmosphere which was characterized by common sense, a rejection of sterile, politicized rhetoric and a willingness to listen to the opinions and concerns of others, and reflected the new spirit of partnership and consensus underlying the Organization's economic work.

19. Mr. ZHANG Yesui (China), said that the work of the Economic and Social Council in 1991 marked an important step towards the realization of the objectives set forth in General Assembly resolution 45/264. The Special High-level Meeting held during the Council's second regular session had been the first of its kind in 20 years. The informal exchanges of views on various issues of concern to the entire international community, and especially to the developing countries, had also proved useful. The Council had demonstrated its ability to respond to new issues and new situations, and his delegation hoped that the revitalized Council would play a fuller role in focusing attention on the issue of development, enhancing international economic cooperation, and helping to address the urgent development problems faced by developing countries.

20. It was vital for the international community to overcome the severe shortage of financing available to developing countries for their development. His delegation therefore supported the Secretary-General's proposal, made at the opening of the Council's second regular session, to convene a conference on development financing, and hoped that a positive decision would be reached thereon at the current session of the General Assembly.

21. With 22 per cent of the world's population and only 7 per cent of its arable land, China attached great importance to population questions. Experience had shown that population growth was closely linked to economic development. Though excessive population growth was mainly a problem in the developing countries, its impact was universal. Wide-ranging international

(Mr. Zhang Yesui, China)

cooperation was needed to address the problem. His delegation thus supported the convening of the International Conference on Population and Development in 1994 and hoped that all parties concerned would work to ensure the success of the Conference preparations.

22. His delegation hoped that agreement could be reached on a code of conduct on transnational corporations on the basis of the current text. It was unfortunate that the tasks enumerated in General Assembly resolution 45/186 had gone unfulfilled. Given the expansion of international investment activities, negotiations on the code of conduct must not be delayed indefinitely. It was to be hoped that the current President of the General Assembly could arrange for their early resumption and that all countries would show greater willingness to cooperate in finalizing the code.

23. Mr. SILOVIC (Yugoslavia) said that the Special High-level Meeting at the Economic and Social Council's second regular session of 1991 had helped to make the Council's work more relevant. He wished to draw attention to two central points which the Chairman of the Meeting had made in his concluding statement: assistance to the countries of Central and Eastern Europe should not be at the expense of aid to the developing countries, and facilitation of the integration of the countries of Central and Eastern Europe in the world economy would, in the long run, give a significant impetus to global growth and development.

24. In spite of some initial difficulties, the Special High-level Meeting had set a useful example, and its results would contribute to preparations for the following year's high-level segment within the Council's new framework. Notwithstanding any problems that might result, the ministerial segment of future sessions of the Council should have a formal outcome if the high-level meetings were not to become an ineffectual talking-shop. Another significant innovation at the recent Council session had been the informal exchanges of views on such topics as the report of the South Commission and the economic, social and environmental consequences of the situation between Iraq and Kuwait, and informal discussions with the Executive Secretaries of the regional commissions and the Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund. There had also been important new initiatives, including the Secretary-General's timely proposal for the convening of a conference on development financing and the proposal to strengthen the United Nations mechanism for responding to disaster-related emergency situations, both of which required serious consideration and urgent decisions.

25. The deliberations of the resumed forty-fifth session of the General Assembly on enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of the United Nations machinery in the economic and social sectors had led to a significant breakthrough in the revitalization of the Council as the central coordinating and policy-making body in the economic, social and related fields. The decision to hold a single substantive session of the Council dealing with economic and social issues in an integrated manner would contribute to a more

(Mr. Silovic, Yugoslavia)

rational, effective and meaningful functioning of that body. The sensitive issue of reform in the economic and social sectors called for a cautious and gradual approach, and the interests of all countries must be taken into account. The challenging tasks of reviewing the functioning of the subsidiary bodies of the General Assembly and the Council, the relationship between the Council and the Assembly and the Council's composition should be tackled with imagination and boldness.

26. Mr. MALONE (Canada) noted the positive steps which the Economic and Social Council had taken to rationalize its work. His delegation looked forward to further progress in that regard during the first consolidated session of the Council, to be held in June 1992.

27. Acknowledging the importance of population growth and dynamics to the achievement of sustainable development, he called for future work programmes of the Population Commission to address the need for effective action that went beyond research, analysis and planning activities to include activities related to the delivery of maternal and child health and family planning services. Generally speaking, it was essential to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of United Nations assistance to countries in implementing population programmes, particularly through the United Nations Population Fund.

28. In response to the HIV/AIDS pandemic, the Canadian Government had established a national AIDS strategy, which provided support for education and prevention programmes, and an international programme of assistance to developing countries, which emphasized health promotion and education, strengthening the management of AIDS-related programmes by Governments and non-governmental organizations and helping Governments develop stronger linkages between AIDS programmes and other health programmes. Canada had committed a total of \$83 million to the WHO Global Programme on AIDS and bilateral AIDS programmes, mainly in Africa and the Americas. His delegation believed that to provide ongoing efforts to monitor and mitigate the impact of the disease, to prevent its spread and to find a control or cure for AIDS should be encouraged, taking into account the vital role and special requirements of women and children in national AIDS programmes.

29. Canada was deeply concerned about the plight of the people in the Horn of Africa and had provided some \$80 million of relief assistance to the region in 1991. Assistance had been channelled through the United Nations system and through non-governmental organizations working in the area. Canada was actively considering the inter-agency appeal issued on behalf of the countries of the Horn of Africa with a view to identifying priority areas for maximum assistance impact. The programme established to assist those countries had demonstrated how emergency humanitarian assistance coordination could work effectively at a global level.

30. Canada remained committed to the concept of multilateral food aid and attached great importance to the revision of the General Regulations of the World Food Programme.

(Mr. Malone, Canada)

31. The Committee for Development Planning was to be commended for its expeditious and careful review of the criteria for identifying least developed countries. Canada supported the establishment of a more relevant set of criteria and welcomed the Committee's efforts to introduce a degree of automaticity in the way in which countries were added to and removed from the list. The recommendations made by experts in the matter should be heeded; otherwise serious consideration to the advisability of retaining a category that could not command unanimous support should be considered.

32. Mr. MARKS (United States of America) was gratified to note that the process of restructuring and revitalizing the Economic and Social Council was bearing fruit. The most recent session of the Council had reached an unusually high degree of consensus in resolutions which were more focused, less contentious and fewer in number than was customary. The discussion on resource flows to the developing world in the context of the integration of the Eastern European countries into the world economy would contribute to further consideration of that important question. The Council's discussion of the consequences of the Gulf crisis testified to its potential as a forum for the analysis of current events, while the discussions on the designation of a coordinator for humanitarian assistance provided a useful example of the work the Council could do as a de facto preparatory committee for the General Assembly.

33. His delegation looked forward to seeing more dramatic changes as a result of the implementation of General Assembly resolution 45/177. Reforms should aim at improving coordination between the Secretariat and the agencies and between the United Nations system and other intergovernmental bodies. The changes made should provide the Council with a number of more clearly differentiated roles: a forum for discussion, an intergovernmental body for the review of United Nations agencies, an arm of the General Assembly in the economic and social fields and a de facto preparatory committee for the Assembly.

34. The Assembly's review of the operations of its subsidiary bodies and those of the Economic and Social Council should establish whether the mandates of those bodies were still valid, their organization and resources appropriate and their product of value; any reforms of those bodies should be carefully thought out, gradual and continuous.

35. His delegation had been proud to support Israel's application for membership in the Economic Commission for Europe and regarded the vote in favour of Israel's admission as a step towards that country's full integration and participation in the Economic and Social Council and United Nations activities. The normalization of relations between Israel and the United Nations could only help broader efforts to achieve peace in the Middle East.

36. He welcomed strong international support for efforts to control AIDS. The World Health Organization should remain the central coordinating agency for those efforts, but discussions in the General Assembly were a useful means