

1673rd meeting

Tuesday, 21 October 1975, at 3.15 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. Olof RYDBECK (Sweden).

A/C.2/SR.1673

AGENDA ITEM 59

United Nations Environment Programme (*continued*) (A/10003, chap. IV, sect. F; A/10169, A/C.2/L.1428/Rev.1, A/C.2/L.1434, E/5689):

- (a) Report of the Governing Council (A/10025);
- (b) Habitat: United Nations Conference on Human Settlements: report of the Secretary-General (A/10234);
- (c) Criteria governing multilateral financing of housing and human settlements: report of the Secretary-General (A/10225)

1. Mr. KAUFMAN (Netherlands) agreed with the views expressed by the Executive Director of UNEP that developmental and environmental concerns were intimately linked. The ultimate aim of development went beyond the achievement of higher standards of living; the challenges faced by the industrialized world included a reappraisal of patterns of consumption and the use of resources. That reappraisal, and the need to harmonize environmental and developmental factors in the developing world, were all part of the search for a new international economic and social order.

2. He fully endorsed the decisions of the Governing Council at its third session (see A/10025, annex I). The future activities of UNEP should be focused on three priority areas: the role of the environment secretariat in co-ordinating environmental programmes within the United Nations system should be emphasized; effective policy guidance should be promoted for environmental programmes within and outside the United Nations system; and priority should be given to increasing public appreciation of environmental issues by stimulating the flow of information. Co-ordination of environmental action should be accompanied by efforts to improve environmental information, education and training.

3. At the third session of the Governing Council his delegation had reiterated the importance it attached to the progressive development of international environmental law. UNEP's work in developing better legal instruments for environmental measures was commendable.

4. UNEP should continue to give high priority to the development and improvement of the Earthwatch programmes and to the "outer limits" activities, which implied a concurrent search for ways to achieve "inner limits", which could be defined as agreed control of specific bio-economic systems. He supported UNEP's role in providing guidance to Governments on the environmental consequences of energy generation and use, and noted with appreciation that UNEP and IAEA were collaborating in the preparation of environmental standards in the matter of nuclear energy.

5. The improvement of the quality of life in human settlements, especially for the most deprived people, should

be the main pre-occupation of the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements, which was to be held at Vancouver from 31 May to 11 June 1976; however, the Conference should also be an effort to find solutions for specific problems. The improvement of human settlements, particularly for the poorest people, was an important generator of economic and social development, since a man who was housed better could produce better. The recommendations emerging from the Conference should be concerned not only with national action, but with a programme for international co-operation. His Government had provided financial assistance for the preparation of the Conference, largely by helping developing countries to participate. He also attached great importance to the participation of non-governmental organizations active in the fields covered by the Conference.

6. Mr. VELLA (Malta) said that his delegation was gratified to note that UNEP was actively involved in current efforts to save the Mediterranean from environmental disaster. In the planning of the Mediterranean project several bodies of the United Nations system, besides UNEP, had been involved, including IMCO, the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO, the General Fisheries Council for the Mediterranean of FAO, the International Commission for the Scientific Exploration of the Mediterranean Sea and WHO. UNEP had supported an international workshop on marine pollution in the Mediterranean and a subsequent meeting which had developed pilot projects concerning the effects of pollutants on marine organisms, the effects of pollution on marine communities and ecosystems, and the monitoring of metals and pesticides in marine organisms. The Executive Director had convened an Intergovernmental Meeting on the Protection of the Mediterranean Sea at Barcelona from 28 January to 4 February 1975, at which a plan of action had been approved.

7. At the Barcelona meeting the delegation of Malta had emphasized that the functions and activities envisaged by the action plan for the protection of the Mediterranean Sea could best be co-ordinated through a regional centre, and had offered Malta as a site. Work on the action plan was to be concluded at a plenipotentiary conference in February 1976.

8. The Barcelona meeting had requested the Executive Director of UNEP to consult the Governments of the Mediterranean region on the possibility of establishing a regional centre to combat oil pollution, and the Executive Director had accordingly invited governments of the region to join in consultations held in Malta in September 1975. There had been agreement that a regional centre to combat oil pollution should be established as a co-operative effort among Mediterranean States to deal with accidental massive oil spills and accumulated oil pollution, that the offer of

Malta to be host to the centre should be favourably considered and that the final decision would be made at the plenipotentiary conference in February 1976.

9. UNEP's Mediterranean activities were completely without prejudice to any decisions that the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea might take; indeed, the countries bordering the Mediterranean Sea were likely to find themselves better equipped to put into practice the anti-pollution measures which any new treaty or treaties on the law of the sea would undoubtedly contain.

10. The matter of environmental law referred to in paragraph 54 of the report of the Governing Council (A/10025) was of the highest importance to his Government and to all countries bordering on the Mediterranean Sea, which were well aware that pollution of the seas came not only from ships; the main culprit had been and remained land-based pollution, which, unless checked by national legislation, would be practically impossible to control at the international level. His Government was doing its utmost to become more responsive to developments in the environmental field not only at the national level but also at the regional and international levels.

11. The Governing Council in its report (A/10025, para. 187) had referred to the Mediterranean project as an example of an activity in which UNEP could most profitably engage. It was to be hoped that it would provide an incentive for the preparation of similar agreements in other important regional seas.

Mr. Valdés (Bolivia) took the Chair.

12. Mr. ZYBANOV (Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic) said that because of the application of modern technology to the utilization of natural resources, man's influence on his environment tended to be destructive, and the question of his relations to his environment had therefore assumed great importance. Solutions to environmental problems could only be pursued in an atmosphere of international peace and security. Consequently, measures such as the limitation of armaments, and general and complete disarmament, were a prerequisite for international co-operation in the preservation of the environment. One positive step in that direction would be the implementation of the proposal submitted by the USSR to the current session of the General Assembly for the conclusion of a treaty on the complete and general prohibition of nuclear weapon tests (agenda item 122), and on the prohibition of the development and manufacture of new types of weapons of mass destruction and new systems of such weapons (item 126). Another helpful development would be the implementation of the USSR proposal for the conclusion of an agreement on the prohibition of action to influence the environment and climate for military and other hostile purposes incompatible with the maintenance of international security, human well-being and health (item 47). Such measures of détente would release financial resources for the capital-intensive operations required for environmental protection on an international scale.

13. During the three years of its existence UNEP had shown that it could co-ordinate the work of the United

Nations and its specialized agencies. Representatives of the Ukrainian SSR and other delegations had stated in meetings of ECE that the Commission's work on environmental programmes should be co-ordinated with that of UNEP. He hoped also that UNEP would help to implement the decisions of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe in such fields as air and water pollution control, water use, low-waste and no-waste technology, soil conservation and environmental monitoring. Such projects were of great interest to Member States of the United Nations and by concentrating on them, UNEP would avoid dispersion of its resources.

14. He agreed with the Governing Council's decisions on programme policy and implementation. The UNEP secretariat should speed up action on a number of matters, such as those referred to in paragraphs 23 and 24 of the report of the Council, and the institutional arrangements referred to in decision 22 (III). The Executive Director should also devise modalities for the development of ocean resources without degradation of the marine environment, in accordance with decision 25 (III). In budgetary matters, the Executive Director should exercise economy and should continue to consult the Secretary-General regarding the rational distribution of costs between the regular United Nations budget and the Fund of UNEP.

15. Preparations for the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements were not as far forward as could have been wished, and the secretariat of the Conference had not taken sufficient advantage of the professional expertise of the Centre for Housing, Building and Planning. He was concerned about decision 37 (III) in which the Governing Council approved an additional allocation of \$1.5 million for the budget of the Conference. The secretariat was seeking additional funds to help developing countries in the preparation of audio-visual aids, while at the same time spending large sums on consultants and experts and non-essential meetings. The Executive Director and the UNEP secretariat should improve the status of preparations for the Conference and should make greater use of the resources of ECE in preparing materials.

16. His Government was working on a number of problems concerning the environment and the development of natural resources, including a scientific and technical prognosis of changes in the biosphere over the next 20 or 30 years as a consequence of industrial processes. Scientific standards for drinking water and clean air had been drawn up. Publicity campaigns advocated the rational use of natural resources and a conservationist attitude, and the public was kept aware of new developments in environmental protection. Recent scientific work in the Ukrainian SSR included a system for thermal purification of waste gases in the chemical and petrochemical industries, a new type of combustion system to reduce the discharge of nitrous oxide into the atmosphere by power stations and factories, new systems of fly-ash control and water recycling processes.

17. The Government of the Ukrainian SSR had decided to make a voluntary contribution of 96,000 roubles to the Fund of UNEP for the period 1975-1977, 25 per cent of which would be convertible into other currencies for the payment of seconded Ukrainian experts and for the procurement of equipment for UNEP programmes.

18. Mr. SPROETE (German Democratic Republic) said that his delegation had endorsed the report of the Governing Council on its third session; it considered the Council's decisions on co-operation between UNEP and other United Nations bodies concerned with the environment to be of great importance.

19. His delegation also endorsed the order of priorities of UNEP's activities, as defined in 1974 and subsequently amended. Of particular importance were pollution control and the efficient utilization of water; the protection and improvement of the environment as a source for food production; the ecological aspects of economic development planning, particularly environmental improvements for human settlements and the development of low-waste or no-waste technologies and installations.

20. His country was conducting a considerable volume of research on pollution control and the rational use of water resources. Remarkable progress had been achieved with respect to eutrophication and at the suggestion of his Government, an international symposium on eutrophication and rehabilitation of surface water was to be held in September 1976 under the auspices of the Executive Director of UNEP. The symposium would contribute to the preparations for the United Nations Water Conference to be held in 1977, and a portion of his country's voluntary contribution to UNEP would be used to finance it.

21. Measures to protect the environment were futile without decisive progress in disarmament and arms limitation. The Committee shared the responsibility for achieving such progress. His delegation strongly advocated the speedy conclusion of a convention on the prohibition of military or any other hostile use of environmental modification techniques, as proposed by the Soviet Union and the United States at the 684th meeting of the Conference of the Committee on Disarmament on 21 August 1975.¹ His delegation also welcomed the new proposal of the Soviet Union concerning the conclusion of a treaty on the complete and general prohibition of nuclear weapon tests, and the prohibition of the development and manufacture of new types of weapons of mass destruction and new systems of such weapons.

Mr. Rydbeck (Sweden) resumed the Chair.

22. Mr. CROS (France) said that the multidisciplinary nature of environmental questions presented UNEP with an inexhaustible range of activities but also imposed serious limitations on it. One inescapable restriction was the provision of General Assembly resolution 2997 (XXVII) which stipulated that UNEP would have a small secretariat to serve as a focal point for environmental action. The Fund's resources should be managed in such a way that administrative and programme support costs did not absorb an excessively high proportion of the voluntary contributions. The organizational structure of UNEP should be rationalized in order to minimize administrative and functional overlapping. A more rigorous distinction should be drawn between the functions of management, planning and financial administration.

¹ See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Thirtieth Session, Supplement No. 27*, para. 45.

23. It was essential for UNEP to confine itself to limited operational objectives. He welcomed the general agreement on that point and on priorities, which had been reached at the third session of the Governing Council.

24. His delegation attached the utmost importance to the protection of the marine environment. Constant surveillance was essential, especially at the regional level, and he had in mind the Mediterranean Sea in particular. Demonstration programmes on dealing with marine pollution could be implemented in two or three "critical" regions, but action to prevent marine pollution was equally crucial to the success of efforts to preserve the marine environment.

25. The protection of water resources was a similarly critical area, and he welcomed the decision taken by the Governing Council to instruct UNEP to co-ordinate the activities of the specialized agencies and other bodies in water resources development (decision 31 (III)) and to support the establishment of training centres for water resources management (decision 29 (III)). France was prepared to share its experience in that field with UNEP and all States.

26. Many States were carrying out national or regional programmes in raw materials conservation. UNEP should publicize those activities and should establish a small number of demonstration centres in rural areas of the third world for the development of locally-available renewable energy resources, such as solar and geothermal energy.

27. The conservation of genetic resources and the campaign against desertification required assessment, assistance and detection programmes to be established at the regional and interregional levels. His delegation regretted that the efforts of the United Nations in the latter field—which was so crucial to the survival of several countries—were so diffuse. Three forthcoming conferences would all be dealing with individual aspects of desertification, and it was unfortunate that for political reasons, a single conference could not be organized on that subject. His delegation hoped that the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination would do its utmost to co-ordinate the results of the conferences.

28. Although his delegation did not underestimate the importance of the problem of human settlements, it was concerned that the forthcoming Habitat Conference was placing too heavy a burden on the budget of UNEP and the regular budget of the United Nations, despite the generous financing provided by the Canadian Government. Nevertheless, France had participated actively in the preparations for the Conference and would make all its documentation available, particularly for the audio-visual programme. No further financial commitments to the Conference should be made.

29. In view of the importance of integrating the activities of UNEP in the global development effort, he welcomed the fact that the secretariat was preparing a comprehensive framework for consideration of the relationship between environment and development. UNEP should co-ordinate such an examination by the entire United Nations system and should encourage Governments of developed and

developing countries alike to undertake such research, which was not given adequate weight in the International Development Strategy. His delegation fully supported the comments by the Executive Director on the relationship between environment and development.

30. His country was firmly convinced that the establishment of a new international economic order required an environmental dimension which interpreted "environment" in its broadest sense. That implied the definition of a new type of growth, oriented less towards quantitative performance than towards better quality of life. UNEP was particularly well equipped to assist Governments in identifying, formulating and solving the problems involved in attaining that goal in accordance with each country's particular requirements.

31. Mr. DARSA (Indonesia) said that the development of a comprehensive programme of UNEP activities based on the three-level programmatic approach described in decision 20 (III), section I had made the concept of UNEP as a leader, catalyst and co-ordinator in environmental matters a living reality. Although his delegation agreed that resources should not be spread too thinly and that support by UNEP should lead to the formulation and implementation of concentrated "spearhead" programmes, it believed that a satisfactory balance should be ensured among the priority areas and between geographical or ecological regions. Considerable progress had been achieved in recent years in elaborating the concept of environmental management, and he commended the decision of the Governing Council to make the relationship between *environment and development* a special item on the agenda of its fourth session (decision 31 (III)).

32. With regard to Fund programme activities, although UNEP was not intended to be a project funding agency, it should not exclude support of small projects, especially national pilot projects which could be applied on a wider scale or integrated within the activities under the priority subject area concerned. Moreover, although many environmental problems were of a global character, there should always be room for a regional or subregional approach, and full use should be made of the excellent regional centres already operating in specific fields or typical of certain ecoregions. UNEP should endeavour to strengthen the capabilities of such centres, and supporting measures in the fields of information, education, training and technical assistance should be intensified. His delegation was pleased to note that the Global Environmental Monitoring System (GEMS) and International Referral System (IRS) components of Earthwatch would be developed with an emphasis on providing technical assistance to meet the needs of developing countries. It commended the decision of the Governing Council to give high priority to environmental education and training and to support the proposed international conference on environmental education to be held in 1976 in co-operation with UNESCO. It also welcomed the establishment on an experimental basis of the programme activity centre on environmental education (decision 29 (III)).

33. His delegation welcomed the setting up of a clearing-house for technical assistance. However, it was concerned that no staff growth was envisaged during the biennium

1976-1977 in the Division of Technical Assistance and Training. The Secretary-General should be asked to reassess, for the biennium 1978-1979, the distribution of staff costs between the regular budget of the United Nations and the programme and programme support costs of the Fund of UNEP.

34. A National Committee for Environmental Problems had been established in Indonesia and environmental activities had been placed on a more solid basis within the framework of the national development plan, which provided clear guidelines regarding the need to harmonize economic and ecological considerations in the development of natural resources. The plan also provided that the inventory, utilization and conservation of all resources should be pursued in an integrated manner. High priority was given to the improvement of human settlements, reforestation, regeneration of the soil, the prevention of marine pollution, and environmental education and legislation.

35. A national programme for the conservation of genetic resources had been established and, with FAO assistance, would be expanded to neighbouring countries. His delegation hoped that UNEP would also consider assistance to the programme. His country also planned, possibly with UNEP assistance, to promote the work of the National Institute of Oceanography at Ambon as an atmospheric monitoring station in the Earthwatch system.

36. His delegation attached great importance to the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements. The human settlement problem in Indonesia was aggravated by a high population growth rate and unbalanced population distribution. Efforts to improve human settlements were being pursued in co-ordination with a programme to slow down the rate of population growth and encourage migration of the population of Java to the outer islands. Programmes had been launched to improve the habitat in rural and urban areas, and future settlement patterns would take into account the integrated development of those areas. His country was grateful for the assistance it had received from United Nations agencies, including the World Bank, to improve human settlements, and was gratified by the fact that UNEP was considering Indonesia as the site for a pilot demonstration project on the improvement of slums and marginal settlements. When selecting a regional programme activity centre for the human settlement technology programme, UNEP should consider the Regional Housing Centre at Bandung, which had already been designated a regional centre for the ESCAP region.

37. As part of the preparatory work for the Conference, the national preparatory committee for Habitat had prepared an interim report on human settlements, and a symposium on strategies for human settlements had been held at Jakarta with the assistance of UNDP.

38. Mr. KANAZAWA (Japan) said that his delegation was pleased that solid results were being achieved through UNEP's programme activities. The Governing Council had successfully carried out its task of giving pertinent and much-needed policy guidance to the expanding activities of UNEP. His delegation endorsed all the decisions in the Council's report (A/10025).

39. Japan attached great importance to GEMS and IRS and hoped that the necessary action would be taken to make them fully operational. His delegation fully recognized the significance of the United Nations Conference on Desertification, the success of which would require the active co-operation of other United Nations bodies, particularly UNDP. He stressed the importance of paragraphs 2 and 3 of Council decision 30 (III) in that connexion.

40. Developing and developed countries alike faced the problem of improving human settlements. Japan had many urgent problems in that field and was eager to co-operate with others in seeking practical solutions. The Habitat Conference would provide a useful forum for exchanging experience, and his Government intended to participate actively in making it a success. Every effort should be made to avoid possible duplication of work by the United Nations Habitat and Human Settlements Foundation and the Centre for Housing, Building and Planning of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs. The work of the Foundation should proceed cautiously until the results of the Habitat Conference had emerged.

41. Although UNEP was tackling increasingly complex and wide-ranging issues and its activities were expanding accordingly, it should continue to be a catalytic and co-ordinating agency with a small secretariat. His delegation commended the efforts of the Executive Director and his staff to keep UNEP and its activities in line with the principles in which it was founded and hoped that UNEP would continue to bear in mind its true function in order to make the most effective use of its limited resources. Governments, too, should always bear in mind the need to concentrate the Programme's efforts on selected areas.

42. Among the complex issues facing UNEP was that of determining how to deal with the fundamental issue of environment and development. He urged all delegations to confirm their commitment to protect the environment and to be practical and flexible in promoting international co-operation on environmental matters.

43. Mr. RAJAONARIVELO (Madagascar) thanked the Executive Director for his efforts to improve the quality of documents. In addition, the documents of the third session of the Governing Council had been circulated in time, and Governments had been able to study them properly; he hoped that the UNEP secretariat would continue that practice.

44. The world was in a period of change, and recognized the need for an integrated and global approach to the problems of the environment. The environment and the international economic system were closely interrelated, and separate aspects of development could be understood only in the context of their system of relations. Accordingly, his delegation disagreed with the view that UNEP should confine itself to environmental matters and relegate to second place the need always to take account of the fundamentals of the new international economic order. The Declaration and the Programme of Action adopted by the General Assembly at its sixth special session (resolutions 3201 (S-VI) and 3202 (S-VI)) remained the basis; UNEP's programmes should contribute to translating the new order into reality, not by multiplying projects but by establishing

sound priorities. UNEP must concentrate on a small number of clearly defined problems according to a definite time-table which took account of the urgency of the situations in question. His delegation therefore welcomed the views given in paragraph 40 of the report of the Governing Council, and decision 20 (III) on programme policy and implementation.

45. Decent housing was as basic a need as food, but that truth was not very evident in the developing countries, particularly in rural areas. Accordingly, the human settlements programme should not emphasize the urban aspect of the question at the expense of the study of rural development. He welcomed decision 37 (III) concerning an additional allocation of \$1.5 million to Habitat to cover the cost of presenting audio-visual material from the developing countries at the Conference. The Conference should develop policies designed to satisfy social needs and work out practical ways of implementing them. The solution of the problem of housing depended on the solution of the problems of land ownership and use, and that topic should be included in the agenda of the Conference.

46. His delegation endorsed the views recorded in paragraphs 316, 317 and 318 of the report concerning the plan and programme of operations of the United Nations Habitat and Human Settlements Foundation. The Foundation should deal first with the most needy, and its programmes and projects should conform to UNEP's general objectives; technical assistance and research should be financed by grants and the Foundation's staff should hold suitable qualifications. All countries should contribute funds to the Foundation, and public opinion should be mobilized in its favour.

47. Natural disasters could not be regarded as a purely humanitarian and social problem; they were also a development problem. Every year his country was hit by cyclones, and on several occasions the Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator had taken prompt action, for which his Government was most grateful. But intermittent action was no longer adequate, and it was time to prepare a strategy for organizing the assistance rendered by the specialized agencies and other United Nations bodies. Natural disasters caused so much damage that the sum mentioned in decision 36 (III) was merely symbolic. It was especially surprising that no increase had been made for 1976 and 1977 in view of the increase in the over-all total of UNEP's funds.

48. Mr. BIGGS (Chile) said that the item under consideration had great significance for the future of mankind and especially for the developing countries. Environment issues and the process of development were closely linked, and his delegation agreed with the Executive Director that any environmental strategy should take account of the interaction of the environment, development, population and resources.

49. His delegation had read with particular interest the progress report of the Secretary-General concerning international co-operation to combat desertification (E/5689), because desert and semi-arid zones formed almost a third of his country's territory, and it was benefiting from the joint UNDP/UNEP programmes. In view of the need to halt

desert encroachment his delegation fully supported the United Nations Conference on Desertification.

50. UNEP's resources and efforts so far had been spread over a wide range of projects. The Programme would have to become more selective, and he therefore welcomed the plan to focus on specific programmes in each of the areas chosen by the Governing Council as requiring special attention.

51. His delegation supported the recommendations concerning GEMS and IRS, which were important for both the formulation and implementation of environmental policies. As a token of its growing interest in UNEP's work, his Government had decided to send a permanent representative to Nairobi, as 17 other States had done.

52. On the whole, his Government was in agreement with the proposed agenda for the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements. His country had been participating in the preparations for the Conference at both the national and international levels; its view was that the Conference should seek solutions to the most urgent social needs and define a practical approach to the problems of human settlements, especially in the developing countries. His country had been represented at the regional preparatory conference for Latin America, held at Caracas from 30 June to 4 July 1965, and at the meetings of *ad hoc* intergovernmental working groups held at Geneva from 22 to 26 September; it had made a specific technical contribution to the debates and to the agreements reached. At the beginning of 1975 his Government had established a national preparatory committee for the Conference which had already produced a provisional national report and laid the groundwork for national demonstration projects *in situ* and for the Chilean audio-visual project. In that connexion his country had received a grant of \$10,000 from Habitat for the preparation of an audio-visual project on the influence of the co-operative movement on the improvement of human settlements in Chile; additional funds had been provided by the Chilean co-operative movement. His delegation thought that the Secretary-General of the Conference should pursue the idea of organizing special seminars of particular interest to the developing countries.

53. Mr. SCHUPPUS (Togo) said that his delegation was happy to note that UNEP had overcome its structural and organizational problems and was seeking practical ways of protecting and improving the environment. UNEP had already achieved remarkable results, and the Executive Director deserved commendation for the role he had played.

54. His delegation noted with satisfaction that the Governing Council had stressed in its report the interdependence of such phenomena as overpopulation, limited resources, economic crises, food shortages and dangers to the environment, and that the Council had recognized the need for a global and integrated approach to environmental problems. His delegation was happy that problems relating to the physical conditions of the planet had been given particular attention by the Council, because such problems still affected the lives of two thirds of mankind.

55. The work of UNEP and of the other bodies of the United Nations system must be complementary; co-ordina-

tion was necessary in order to reduce duplication of activities and waste of resources. His delegation therefore supported the Executive Director's proposal for developing medium-term strategies and a systematic intersectoral approach to environmental problems in close consultation with the specialized agencies, with UNEP continuing to serve as co-ordinator and catalyst. Consultation teams might be set up in UNEP's regional offices to organize co-operation. Existing services must be strengthened and adapted to the multidisciplinary activities for which UNEP was responsible.

56. His delegation shared the view that UNEP should gear its activities to priority projects, especially to action-oriented projects on human settlements, the prevention of pollution, and soil erosion and desertification. However, such subjects as training, information and research should not be excluded. The transfer of knowledge was essential for the developing countries and should be accompanied by training and education programmes in environmental disciplines. His country would support all UNEP schemes for establishing regional, subregional and national infrastructures to encourage the rational use of information systems. There too, UNEP should co-operate with other agencies and should consult Governments about their own development plans.

57. His delegation welcomed the results of the third session of the Governing Council, especially decision 29 (III) concerning programme and Fund programme activities, and decision 30 (III) concerning international co-operation to combat desertification. The latter phenomenon had a very detrimental effect on the environment, and long-term measures must be adopted to halt the advance of deserts. His delegation was sure that the programme drawn up by the Governing Council as part of the preparations for the United Nations Conference on Desertification would yield new scientific and technical knowledge and so help to overcome the problem. A global integrated plan for the solution of specific problems of desertification must cover arid and semi-arid regions and the resources of the desert biosphere.

58. The documents on the preparations for the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements showed that no effort had been spared in evaluating the global aspects of the problem and drawing up priorities. His delegation agreed with Barbara Ward, author of the report entitled "Human settlements: Crisis and opportunity",² that the blind cult of advanced technology often impeded the launching of valuable projects in which a traditional and an innovative approach to the problems of human settlements were combined and in which the people who would benefit from the projects participated. His delegation hoped that the Conference would adopt a coherent global policy for human settlements based on long-term planning and involvement of populations and taking account of the social, cultural and ecological needs of the developing countries.

59. Mr. FREYBERG (Poland) said that his delegation had always been of the opinion that the environment was one of the most suitable subjects for international co-operation.

² Published under the authority of the Hon. Ron Basford, P.C., M.P., Minister of State for Urban Affairs, Ottawa, January 1974.

His Government's support of international co-operation in protecting the environment resulted from its own long experience in that field, particularly since the Second World War. "Socialization" of the basic means of production and transport in Poland had created favourable conditions for a comprehensive approach to all environmental problems, which were taken into account in the preparation and implementation of social and economic plans. His country had been among the first to establish a ministry for community and environment protection affairs, and its legislative system imposed considerable responsibilities on sectors whose activities affected the environment.

60. His delegation was convinced that the relaxation of international tension, peaceful coexistence and practical steps towards disarmament were prerequisites for true co-operation on environmental matters. The resources released by such developments could be used for environmental protection projects. His country attached particular value to the environmental elements in the programme of socialist integration adopted by CMEA, as well as to co-operation with UNDP, European co-operation in accordance with the recommendations of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe and in the framework of ECE, and co-operation in the protection of the Baltic Sea against pollution. His country attached special importance to regional co-operation on the environment when participating countries had similar problems to solve. It also valued global international co-operation and had consistently supported practically all UNEP's activities.

61. UNEP should concentrate on a limited number of major projects and problems of world-wide concern, including pollution of oceans, protection and improvement of the environment as a source of food, prevention of desertification, exchange of information and experience on the protection of the environment, the establishment of GEMS and IRS, guidelines for the development of social co-operation, and the pollution of watercourses and the air. Accordingly, his delegation endorsed the priorities described by the Executive Director. It was convinced, in particular, that UNEP should devote more attention to the preparation of environmental law.

62. The problem of human settlements had the highest priority in his country's national plans for social and economic development; provision had been made, for example, for the construction over the coming decade of a volume of housing equal to the existing housing stock in Poland. His Government was therefore following with interest the preparations for the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements and was convinced that the Conference would not only improve international co-operation but also help Poland in its housing programme.

63. His country wished to strengthen its link with UNEP and was ready to increase its contribution by organizing seminars and training activities and sharing its expertise in environmental protection and improvement.

64. Mr. STRAUSS (Czechoslovakia) said that industrialization and the intensive use of natural resources often had harmful effects on the environment, making international co-operation and co-ordination of environmental activities essential. His country attached great importance to the

protection and improvement of the environment and was participating in the co-operation among the socialist States members of CMEA, which was operating a programme of consultations, exchange of experience and scientific and technological assistance. The programme had been made possible by the planned approach of the socialist countries which gave them the tools to tackle environmental problems in accordance with the wishes of the community and the need for harmonious development of life in human society. States not members of the Council could participate in the programme and share in its results.

65. His delegation held that UNEP should concentrate on a limited number of important problems, including the pollution of the oceans, the protection and improvement of the environment as a source of food, the conservation and improvement of soil fertility, and the prevention of desertification. UNEP should investigate the causes of damage to the environment, and the experience of countries and organizations should be pooled in order to facilitate practical action.

66. No-waste industrial technology was needed in industry and agriculture. The industrialized developed countries were already suffering the harmful effects of failure to control waste materials, and the developing countries which were just beginning to industrialize should try to prevent them before they arose. Co-operation and the exchange of experience had an important role to play in that connexion.

67. The misuse of technical programmes to serve imperialist, neo-colonialist and war-industry interests had turned the environment into a political issue. The uncontrolled exploitation of natural resources by many industrialized developed countries had led to the desertification of whole areas. The chemical weapons used in the war in South Viet-Name had laid waste large areas of fertile land; arsenals of chemical and bacteriological weapons were a constant threat to the environment, and nuclear weapon and rocket tests constituted a danger to countries far from the sites at which they were carried out. Since mankind had acquired an unprecedented capacity to influence the environment, his country welcomed the Soviet proposal concerning the prohibition of action to influence the environment and climate for military and other hostile purposes incompatible with the maintenance of international security, human well-being and health.

68. His Government attached importance to the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements and was preparing to participate in it. At the first meeting of the Preparatory Committee the Czechoslovak delegation had noted that the documents issued by the Habitat secretariat did not always give a true appraisal of the capacity of the developing countries to prepare their own national documentation; it had also noted that insufficient use was being made of the resources of the Centre for Housing, Building and Planning.

69. Implementation of the Soviet proposal for the reduction of the military budgets of States permanent members of the Security Council by 10 per cent (General Assembly resolution 3093 (XXVIII)) could make an important contribution to financing development activities, as could the convening of a World Disarmament Conference, since arms

expenditures absorbed enormous resources which could serve the aims of peaceful development and protection of the environment. Those were also the aims of the latest Soviet proposals on disarmament: a treaty on the complete and general prohibition of nuclear weapon tests, and the prohibition of the development and manufacture of new types of weapons of mass destruction and new systems of such weapons.

70. His country was prepared to make its knowledge and experience available to the developing countries and to provide opportunities for specialists from the developing countries to train in Czechoslovakia. It would continue to participate in United Nations environmental activities in the hope that the solution of problems would have a decisive influence on the environment.

Organization of work

71. The CHAIRMAN recalled that he had suggested at the 1668th meeting that, in order to ensure an integrated consideration of all questions relating to youth policies and programmes, the Committee should authorize him to inform the President of the General Assembly that the Second Committee agreed to refer to the Third Committee, for consideration under agenda item 72, the recommendation made by the Economic and Social Council in its resolution 1966 (LIX) concerning the United Nations Volunteers programme, which was before the Committee under item 58, on the understanding that the members of the Second Committee could also discuss those questions.

72. If there were no objection, he would take it that the Committee agreed that he should inform the President of the General Assembly accordingly.

*It was so agreed.*³

73. Mr. GONZALEZ DE COSSIO (Mexico) said that the Charter of Economic Rights and Duties of States had had a wide impact since its adoption at the twenty-ninth session of the General Assembly, and proposed that, for the consideration of agenda item 64, the Secretariat should be asked to prepare a document listing the references which had been made to the charter in United Nations resolutions and documents and during the general debate at the seventh special and thirtieth sessions of the Assembly.

74. The document, which should be available in time for delegations to study it before 17 November, when the Committee was scheduled to take up item 64, would greatly facilitate consideration of the item and enable the Committee to determine the direction which the charter should follow during the following five years, after which the first detailed review of its implementation was to be made.

75. Mr. MARTINEZ (Cuba), Mr. RAJAONARIVELO (Madagascar) and Mr. PARSİ (Iran) supported that proposal.

*The proposal of the representative of Mexico was adopted.*⁴

The meeting rose at 5.45 p.m.

³ Document A/C.2/298, dated 22 October 1975.

⁴ Documents A/C.2/300 and Add.1 and 2, dated 3, 6 and 18 November 1975.

1674th meeting

Wednesday, 22 October 1975, at 10.45 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. Olof RYDBECK (Sweden).

A/C.2/SR.1674

In the absence of the Chairman, Mr. Valdés (Bolivia) took the Chair.

AGENDA ITEM 59

United Nations Environment Programme (*continued*) (A/10003, chap. IV, sect. F; A/10169, A/C.2/L.1428/Rev.1, A/C.2/L.1434, E/5689):

- (a) Report of the Governing Council (A/10025);
- (b) Habitat: United Nations Conference on Human Settlements: report of the Secretary-General (A/10234);
- (c) Criteria governing multilateral financing of housing and human settlements: report of the Secretary-General (A/10225)

1. Mr. AKSOY (Turkey) thanked the Executive Director of UNEP and the Secretary-General of Habitat: United

Nations Conference on Human Settlements for their valuable opening statements at the 1672nd meeting of the Committee.

2. The developments in the world economy since the conclusion of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment at Stockholm in June 1972 had not been such as to allow the international community to accord high priority to environmental problems. The results of the two recent special sessions of the General Assembly indicated the desire of the international community for an integrated approach to development, an approach which had been consistently adopted by the Government of Turkey in implementing its development plans. The decisions on the establishment of the new international economic order would no doubt affect the future activities of UNEP.