

PROVISIONAL

E/1995/SR.21

6 July 1995

Original: ENGLISH

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL

Substantive session of 1995

PROVISIONAL SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 21st MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,  
on Monday, 3 July 1995, at 10 a.m.

President: Mr. KAMAL (Pakistan)

CONTENTS

ECONOMIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL QUESTIONS: REPORTS OF SUBSIDIARY BODIES,  
CONFERENCES AND RELATED QUESTIONS:

- (1) PREVENTION AND CONTROL OF ACQUIRED IMMUNODEFICIENCY SYNDROME (AIDS)

---

Corrections to this record should be submitted in one of the working languages. They should be set forth in a memorandum and also incorporated in a copy of the record. They should be sent within one week of the date of this document to the Official Records Editing Section, room E.4108, Palais des Nations, Geneva.

GE.95-62472 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 12.55 p.m.

ECONOMIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL QUESTIONS: REPORTS OF SUBSIDIARY BODIES,  
CONFERENCES AND RELATED QUESTIONS:

(1) PREVENTION AND CONTROL OF ACQUIRED IMMUNODEFICIENCY SYNDROME (AIDS)  
(agenda item 6) (E/1995/71; E/1995/L.22/Rev.1)

Mr. SPETH (Chairperson of the Committee of Co-sponsoring Organizations (CCO)) introducing the report of the Joint and Co-sponsored United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (E/1995/71), said that the worldwide epidemic of AIDS was one of the major tragedies of the contemporary era. The HIV epidemic continued to grow at a rate of over 6,000 new infections per day, and the resulting sickness and death from AIDS continued to wreak havoc among individuals, families and societies. Nearly 5 million people were currently suffering from the disease, but that was only the most visible part of the epidemic: the World Health Organization (WHO) estimated that a further 13 to 15 million people were living with HIV infection and by the year 2000, the cumulative total of infected individuals was predicted to reach 30 to 40 million. The disease struck those who were at the most productive age in society and left their children orphans and their elderly relatives without support. The social and developmental consequences were thus incalculable.

In the decade and a half since AIDS had first been described, many attempts had been made to slow its spread. There had been many successful prevention programmes and a great deal had been learnt about the reasons for their success. They had usually been small-scale programmes with a strong community base and had often combined several approaches to prevention. It had become apparent also that prevention was often inadequately pursued, largely for socio-economic and political reasons and because of difficulties in reshaping societal forces and structures. There was often a tendency to deny the danger, or indeed the very existence, of AIDS, and that had led to inadequate political commitment.

An expanded response to the epidemic was needed: it must be broad-based and multisectoral and include all aspects of human development and economic planning. Prevention and care had to be enhanced, and action needed to be taken on the societal factors influencing vulnerability to HIV/AIDS and to develop stronger programmes designed to help communities and families cope

with the impact of the epidemic. In order to succeed, HIV/AIDS prevention, care and coping strategies must involve all segments of the population and promote and protect human rights.

A special global programme was required for the HIV/AIDS epidemic because of its urgency and magnitude, its complex socio-economic and cultural roots, the denial and complacency still surrounding HIV and the covert behaviours through which it spread, and the discrimination and human rights violations faced by the people affected.

The report of the Committee of Co-sponsoring Organizations of the Joint and Co-sponsored United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (E/1995/71) had been prepared in response to Economic and Social Council decision 1995/222. The Joint Programme, which was scheduled to become fully operational by 1 January 1996 at the latest, had initially been called for in a resolution of the World Health Assembly in May 1993. Economic and Social Council resolution 1993/51 supported that resolution and called upon the six co-sponsoring agencies to work together toward establishing a joint and co-sponsored programme.

The six agencies in question - WHO, UNDP, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNICEF and the World Bank - had formed an inter-agency working group which had met regularly for over a year and had prepared a study laying out three options for the establishment of such a programme. That study had been submitted to the Executive Board of WHO, which had chosen the option of establishing a large entity - a Joint Programme - to work together with the co-sponsoring organizations in a unified United Nations response. Endorsement by the WHO Executive Board had been followed by that of the Boards of UNDP, UNESCO, UNFPA and UNICEF; the measure also had the full support of the World Bank.

With the adoption of Economic and Social Council resolution 1994/24, an important new stage in the process of establishing the Joint Programme had begun. That resolution called for the transformation of the inter-agency working group into the Committee of Co-sponsoring Organizations (CCO) and provided a strong basis for cooperation and the resolution of key issues. A transition team had been established, comprising representatives of all six co-sponsoring agencies, which had worked intensively for several months.

The Committee of Co-sponsoring Organizations (CCO) had then met four times from September 1994 onwards. It had reached consensus on recommending Dr. Peter Piot for the position of Executive Director of the

Joint Programme, a recommendation that had led to Dr. Piot's appointment by the Secretary-General in December 1994. In collaboration with the new Executive Director, the transition team had finalized its report, which had been forwarded to the Economic and Social Council in January 1995. A great deal of work had thus gone into the establishment of the Joint and Co-sponsored United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, or UNAIDS for short.

The primary purpose of UNAIDS was to strengthen national capabilities to sustain an expanded response to HIV/AIDS. UNAIDS brought together the many and varied technical and operational strengths of its co-sponsoring agencies to enhance the quality of support available to the many partners in that expanded response. At the country level, UNAIDS would operate through the resident coordinator system. A United Nations theme group on HIV/AIDS would be established to coordinate the activities of the United Nations system in supporting a country's response to HIV/AIDS.

At the global level, the functions of UNAIDS were to focus the world's attention on the problem; to develop and provide the policy and technical guidance needed; to promote and support research of relevance to the developing countries; and to convince the world to put sufficient resources into AIDS prevention, care, support and impact alleviation.

The work of establishing UNAIDS had been progressing well. The Executive Director and his staff had developed a strategic plan through a collaborative process of regional consultations. Five regional workshops had been held between April and June 1995 and discussions had taken place with the co-sponsors on developing their own activities. The involvement of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in UNAIDS had been discussed with their representatives during a conference at Cape Town in March 1995 and at a meeting in Washington D.C. Plans were being developed to assist countries during the transitional phase after the WHO Global Programme on AIDS had ceased to exist: funding of country activities by WHO could not suddenly stop, since that would jeopardize the achievements gained through past investments. A proposed structure for UNAIDS with a staffing plan had been devised and an indicative budget for 1996-1997 had been prepared for submission to the Programme Coordination Board (PCB) in July 1995. Negotiations were still continuing with WHO on the administrative support to be provided to UNAIDS.

As a result of all those activities, it was expected that UNAIDS would be fully operational on or before January 1996, if all parties respected their commitments to the Programme, both technical and financial. Agreement on the Memorandum of Understanding among the six co-sponsors of UNAIDS was of the highest priority and it was hoped that such an agreement would be reached, subject to the necessary legal reviews, at the CCO meeting immediately prior to the meeting of the PCB on 13-14 July 1995.

The six co-sponsoring agencies were fully united and completely dedicated to the success of UNAIDS. They intended to build on the relative strengths of all the partners: international agencies and intergovernmental, governmental and non-governmental organizations. The intention was not to create a top-heavy structure but to maintain a lean secretariat devoted to harnessing the efforts made by others. The focus must be at the country level, where the desperation and the challenges were everyday realities. Each co-sponsoring organization would enhance its own mainstreaming capacity by integrating AIDS-related issues into all its activities at the global, regional and country levels.

On behalf of the CCO, he pledged to the Council its dedication to making the new Programme work: the organizations concerned believed they were not merely co-sponsors, but co-owners.

Mr. BUTLER (Australia), introducing the draft resolution on the Joint and Co-sponsored United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (E/1995/L.22/Rev.1) together with a summary of the informal consultations on HIV/AIDS that had taken place among Council members, said that those consultations represented the culmination of a process begun a year previously that had been set in motion by paragraph 11 of Council resolution 1994/24. They had involved issues of considerable substance, such as how a structure should be designed for a programme that would have a real impact in the field and on real people. The summary, which was available as an informal paper, had been drafted on the basis of extensive consultations and, he believed, faithfully reflected the outcome of those consultations. He commended that paper to the Council and suggested its inclusion in the Council's records.

If the scheduled timetable had not been adhered to, that was precisely because of the importance of the topic. However, if the draft resolution on the subject could be adopted immediately, the timetable could still be observed and implementation of the United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) by 1 January 1996 could go forward, as planned.

As for the draft resolution itself, there was a typographical omission in paragraph 4 that should be rectified: the words "Economic and Social Council resolution 1994/24 and to submit that memorandum through the Programme" should be inserted in the fourth line before the words "Coordinating Board".

Following consultations, the following revision had been decided upon: paragraph 10 was to be deleted and replaced by: "Decides that the participation as observers of member States and observer States, which are not members of the Board, in the work of the Programme Coordinating Board should be consistent with Economic and Social Council rules."

Mr. VALENZUELA (Observer for Spain), speaking on behalf of the European Union, paid tribute to the efforts made by Mr. Butler of the Australian delegation in pursuance of the call in Council resolution 1994/24 for informal consultations on the issues outstanding at the close of the Council's substantive session in 1994. The European Union, which had always supported the establishment of the Joint and Co-sponsored United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, reaffirmed the need to respect the deadline of January 1996 for its becoming fully operational.

Everyone was aware of the great challenge to the entire world represented by the pandemic in question, with its devastating consequence for human health and economic and social development. UNAIDS should therefore devote special efforts to strengthening national capabilities by promoting multisectoral approaches and comprehensive national strategies and by making maximum use of the respective strengths of its co-sponsoring agencies.

The Union fully supported the changes recently adopted to enable the Committee of Co-sponsoring Organizations (CCO) to make recommendations to the co-sponsoring agencies on their activities in support of UNAIDS, including ways of mainstreaming such activities and of establishing broad policies for the Programme. The co-sponsoring agencies should provide maximum support for the early and effective launching of programme activities, particularly through mainstreaming. They should do everything possible to reach agreement on the Memorandum of Understanding and to ensure its early submission to the Economic and Social Council through the Programme Coordinating Board. Any activities carried out by the co-sponsoring agencies should, of course, be evaluated and reviewed by their respective governing bodies.

As for the status of non-governmental organizations in the CCO, the Union agreed with the contents of the summary of informal consultations prepared by the delegation of Australia. The proposed arrangements struck the necessary balance between the active participation of NGOs, essential for ensuring that their experience and commitment to the struggle against AIDs were put to use, and the need to ensure that such arrangements did not create precedents for the work of other United Nations bodies or affect the formal decision-making process, reserved for the representatives of States.

The Council should adopt the draft resolution on UNAIDS as soon as possible, and certainly before the meeting of the Programme Coordinating Board on 13-14 July 1995, so that everything would be ready for UNAIDS to become operational in January 1996.

Mr. MUHAMMAD AMISH (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya), speaking on a point of order, said that his delegation had understood that matters of substance were not to be discussed at the current meeting and that, for the moment, the Council was merely concerned with the adoption of the draft resolution by consensus.

The PRESIDENT said that the Council appeared to be very close to reaching a consensus, but he wished to hear a few more speakers to ensure that such was the case.

Mr. PEDROSO (Cuba), having thanked Mr. Butler of the delegation of Australia for the way in which he had conducted the informal consultations over the past year, said that his delegation would like to have some clarification of the meaning of the "full rights" accorded to the Co-sponsors by paragraph 6 of the draft resolution.

With regard to the report on the informal consultations referred to in operative paragraph 7, which had been circulated to the members of the Council as an unofficial paper entitled "Summary of ECOSOC Informal Consultation on HIV/AIDS", he suggested that it should be annexed to the draft resolution.

Ms. YANG Yanyi (China) said that it was her delegation's understanding that the Executive Director of UNAIDS would report to the Council through the PCB; she suggested that that procedure should be explicitly indicated by adding the words "through the Programme Coordinating Board" after the word "programme" in paragraph 5 of the draft resolution.

Ms. POLLACK (United States of America) said she wished to express her delegation's appreciation of the contributions made by the representative of Australia, the Executive Director of the Joint Programme, the Chairperson of CCO and the heads of the various agencies concerned.

With regard to the suggestion by the representative of China, her own delegation had understood that the report referred to in paragraph 5 of the draft would, on the single occasion mentioned in that paragraph, be submitted directly by the Executive Director, and that the procedure would not set a precedent. The addition suggested by the representative of China was not, therefore, necessary.

In reply to a question by the PRESIDENT, she said that, in order to ensure adoption of the draft by consensus, her delegation would be willing to accept the suggested addition.

Mr. AGONA (Uganda) said that, in the campaign against AIDS, it would be the Programme's mission to provide leadership, to achieve consensus on policy, to strengthen the capacities of national Governments in developing comprehensive strategies, and to advocate greater political commitment on the part of all concerned, including the mobilization and effective allocation of resources. The CCO, the Programme secretariat and the new Executive Director, who had played such a decisive role in preparing the launching of the Programme, deserved every support from Member States, international institutions, NGOs and the private sector. His delegation, which looked forward to the successful launching of the Programme in January 1996, fully supported the draft resolution.

Mr. MALYSHEV (Russian Federation), having congratulated all the organizations and individuals involved in the preparations for the launching of UNAIDS, said he believed that, drawing upon the experience and expertise of the Co-sponsors, the Programme would be able to grapple successfully with the strategic and political issues involved and act as a catalyst in mobilizing a strong global response to the challenge presented by the epidemic.

While supporting the transsectoral and intersectoral integration of the Co-sponsors, his delegation also believed that WHO should not lose its leading role in dealing with health aspects of the Programme and that it should provide the administrative framework therefor. It endorsed, in general, the report of the CCO (E/1995/71) and commended it to the PCB for further



consideration. It hoped that all the Co-sponsors would finalize and sign the Memorandum of Understanding as soon as possible and ensure adequate support for the new Programme from their regular budgets.

The PRESIDENT said that, despite the appeal he had made to them, the interpreters had withdrawn from their booths. It was most distressing that, as all too frequently occurred, the line functions had not been given adequate support by one of the auxiliary functions. He suggested that, in the exceptional circumstances, the Council should continue its deliberations in English alone.

It was so decided.

Mr. MABILANGAN (Philippines), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that, in view of the urgency and gravity of the problem of preventing and controlling HIV/AIDS and the desirability of making the Programme operational as soon as possible, the Group of 77 and China was pleased to join in the consensus on the draft resolution which had emerged from the consultations so ably conducted by the representative of Australia.

The Group wished the PCB, its member States, and the participating Co-sponsoring Organizations, and non-governmental organizations every success in their work, and extended its cordial good wishes to the Executive Director. The objectives of the Programme were noble and it must not fail.

Mr. SHIBATA (Japan) expressed satisfaction that, at long last, the first step towards establishing the Programme was being taken. Progress in that area was of vital importance and he hoped that, under the leadership of the Executive Director, the Programme would function efficiently and succeed in achieving its objectives. Nevertheless, however well designed a machinery might be, it would fail if the agencies concerned did not adequately understand its purposes or their own role, or if they lacked commitment.

It was incumbent upon the members of the PCB to provide the secretariat of the Programme and the six co-sponsoring agencies with policy guidance, and upon the agencies to accept that guidance and to give full support to the Executive Director. It was also essential for the Executive Director to remain in frequent and close contact with all the countries members of the PCB in order to ensure the transparency of the Programme. For its part, his Government fully intended to provide strong support for the Programme and its

Executive Director, not least because the progress achieved would help to demonstrate the continuing ability of the United Nations system to make contributions of vital importance to people throughout the world.

The PRESIDENT said that it was his impression that a consensus was emerging on draft resolution E/1995/L.22/Rev.1 as orally revised by the representative of Australia and amended by the representative of China. There also appeared to be agreement that the summary of informal consultations should be annexed to the draft resolution as proposed by the representative of Cuba.

He asked whether the representative of Australia would like to clarify the meaning of the phrase "full rights" in paragraph 6, as requested by the representative of Cuba.

Mr. BUTLER (Australia) said that the full rights in question meant ability to participate in meetings of the Programme Coordinating Board and join in its discussions but, as the paragraph stated, without the right to vote. In that respect, and in that respect alone, their rights would fall short of those enjoyed by the member States.

In response to a question from The PRESIDENT, Mr. PEDROSO (Cuba) said that he accepted that clarification.

The PRESIDENT suggested that the Council should waive rule 54 of its rules of procedure, requiring that proposals and substantive amendments should not be put to the vote less than 24 hours after copies had been circulated to members.

It was so decided.

Draft resolution E/1995/L.22/Rev.1, as orally revised and amended and with the addition of the proposed annex, was adopted by consensus.

The PRESIDENT congratulated the Council on taking such a very important decision without interpretation, and thanked the delegations customarily using the other official languages for allowing the meeting to continue in English only. With the Council's permission, it was his intention to take official notice of the departure of the interpreters and to inform the Secretary-General that the absence of the interpreters had not prevented the Council from continuing its work on such an important matter.

Dr. PRIOT (Executive Director, Joint and Co-sponsored United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS) said he wished to thank all the members of the Council, and Mr. Butler of the delegation of Australia in particular,

for the many hours they had devoted discussing the establishment of UNAIDS. Work could henceforth begin on building up the Programme so that it could become fully operational on 1 January 1996. The first step would be a meeting of the Programme Coordinating Board in the following week in order to recruit staff. The strategic plan of action would also have to be finalized and the role of each Co-sponsor determined, a task on which progress had already been made.

Administrative arrangements with WHO would also have to be finalized and the role of the Programme and its procedures at the country level further defined. A plan was being worked out with WHO on managing the transition of responsibilities, including the continuation of financial and technical support.

The challenges facing UNAIDS were enormous. AIDS was not only one of the tragedies of the contemporary era but also one of the most complex issues of health and development. The new venture was also without a precedent in the United Nations system. He was, however, confident that UNAIDS would be operational by January 1996 and that it could continue to count on the support of the Co-sponsors at the Council.

The meeting rose at 2 p.m.