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ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL

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PROVISIONAL SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 49th MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Monday, 24 July 1995, at 10 a.m.

President: Mr. TEJERA-PARIS (Venezuela)
(Vice-President)

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In the absence of Mr. Kamal (Pakistan), Mr. Tejera-Paris (Venezuela),
Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.25 a.m.

ECONOMIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL QUESTIONS: REPORTS OF SUBSIDIARY BODIES,
CONFERENCES AND RELATED QUESTIONS (agenda item 6) (continued)

- (d) SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY FOR DEVELOPMENT (continued) (E/1995/L.40)
- (n) INTERNATIONAL DECADE FOR NATURAL DISASTER REDUCTION (continued)
(E/1995/L.38)

Draft decision on terms of office of members of the Commission on Science and
Technology for Development (E/1995/L.40)

Miss THOMAS (Jamaica), introducing the draft decision, said that it provided the most appropriate solution to the problem of the lack of synchronization of the terms of members of the Commission. That problem had been called to the attention of the Council in the Commission's report (E/1995/31) with the recommendation that it should take steps to resolve it so as to ensure the Commission's continued efficient functioning.

Operative paragraph (b) allowed for the staggering of the terms of office of the members of the Commission, to resolve the problem and allow for continuity in its work. Her delegation hoped that the draft decision could be adopted by consensus.

Draft resolution on the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction
(E/1995/L.38)

Mr. RUNGE (Germany), introducing the draft resolution on behalf of its sponsors which had been joined by the delegation of Costa Rica, said that it was being proposed in pursuance of General Assembly resolution 49/22 B on the early-warning capacities of the United Nations system with regard to natural disasters. It also took into account the recommendations of the Plenipotentiary Conference of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), held at Kyoto in 1994.

Telecommunications formed a vital part of natural-disaster reduction and must therefore be able to withstand the impact of natural disasters. Furthermore, they were an indispensable instrument in disaster management,

in particular with respect to early warning, and ensured that messages could be disseminated and received. He hoped that the draft resolution could be adopted by consensus.

REGIONAL COOPERATION IN THE ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND RELATED FIELDS (agenda item 7) (continued) (E/1995/L.37 and L.39)

Draft resolution on a Europe-Africa permanent link through the Strait of Gibraltar (E/1995/L.37)

Mr. ABOUTAHIR (Observer for Morocco), introducing the draft resolution on behalf of its sponsors, the observers for Morocco and Spain, said that it was based on the interest expressed by the ministers of transport of the six countries of the Western Mediterranean who had adopted the project of a permanent link as a matter of priority for the physical integration of the region.

The draft resolution also constituted a catalyst for cooperation between the two sponsoring countries, the two regional commissions for Europe and Africa and other international organizations. In view of the interest shown in the project by the two regional commissions, the executive secretaries of the two commissions were requested to continue their work and to report to the Council at its substantive session of 1997.

It should be stressed that paragraph 7, which requested the Secretary-General to provide support to the two commissions, had no financial implications for the general budget of the United Nations. None the less, it was desirable that the two commissions should have the resources needed to carry out their mission.

Draft resolution on the Middle East peace process (E/1995/L.39)

Mr. HOPE (United States), introducing the draft resolution on behalf of its sponsors, said that it was based on a resolution on the same subject adopted by the Council the previous year. It also followed the subsequent resolution adopted by the General Assembly. It was to be hoped, therefore, that the Council would be able to adopt it by consensus.

The Middle East peace process had continued to make progress since then and was currently in a particularly important phase. The draft resolution thus acknowledged the progress made so far and urged the parties involved to continue the efforts that had led to such momentous changes.

SOCIAL, HUMANITARIAN AND HUMAN RIGHTS QUESTIONS: REPORTS OF SUBSIDIARY BODIES, CONFERENCES AND RELATED QUESTIONS (agenda item 5) (continued)

- (a) SPECIAL ECONOMIC, HUMANITARIAN AND DISASTER RELIEF ASSISTANCE (continued)
- (f) SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT QUESTIONS (continued) (E/1995/24)
- (g) CRIME PREVENTION AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE (continued) (E/1995/30 and Add.1)
- (h) NARCOTIC DRUGS (continued) (E/1995/29 and Corr.1 and Add.1)
- (i) UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES (continued)

Ms. NUNOD (International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)) said that, throughout the past year, ICRC had witnessed an extraordinary proliferation of violence involving a systematic and flagrant defiance of the most fundamental rules of humanity. Serious violations of international humanitarian law had become the rule rather than the exception although humanitarian questions had a higher place than in the past on the agenda of the international community.

The nature and scope of the conflicts it had to confront had caused ICRC to accord more and more importance to preventive action, which had hitherto been regarded as being much less of a priority than efforts to put an end to conflicts. Her organization therefore could not but encourage any initiative designed to make possible a multidimensional preventive approach based on the complementary nature of political, military and humanitarian contributions. However, the humanitarian dimension had to be guided by neutrality and impartiality and had to remain clearly distinct from political or military strategies. For its part, ICRC concentrated on creating awareness of the consequences of war at the humanitarian level and inculcating respect for international humanitarian law. In Burundi, for instance, it had launched with a programme to relieve tension and violence, taking as a point of reference the country's traditional humanitarian values.

A network of regional delegations, covering about 100 countries, was an essential element of the ICRC strategy in the field of preventive action. In addition to their important role with regard to the promotion of international humanitarian law, the regional delegations also served as an early-warning system. In the field, they carefully monitored the development of any situation likely to degenerate into a conflict. However, early warning was a

condition that preceded the rapid action that was frequently crucial for the survival of the victims. In Chechnya, ICRC had been prepared to intervene immediately after the beginning of hostilities, in December 1994, as a result of the early-warning signals transmitted to it by its regional delegation in Moscow.

In an increasing number of armed conflicts, serious violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law were being committed. In those situations, it was necessary to combine efforts to ensure respect for humanitarian law and human rights. ICRC welcomed the fact that, in the former Yugoslavia, the civilian police of the United Nations force (UNCIVPOL) had been authorized to stress the importance of human rights and humanitarian law.

Rwanda was another example of the need to act in concert. The genocidal horrors which that country had experienced would be resolved only after serious efforts had been made to resolve the humanitarian problems and questions related to human rights. In that context, the numerous observers dispatched by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCR) played an important role, in particular with regard to the rehabilitation of the judicial system. For its part, ICRC was endeavouring to meet essential needs with regard to the care and protection of some 50,000 persons imprisoned in Rwanda and was trying to resolve the serious problem of overcrowded prisons. It also maintained a data bank of prisoners and of minors separated from their parents.

Chechnya was a good example of a situation where the role of ICRC - which sought to provide protection and assistance in situations of conflict - had been recognized, since it had assumed the global responsibility for humanitarian aid in the conflict area. In the former Yugoslavia, on the other hand, ICRC considered that the complementarity of its operations and those of the United Nations could be improved. The role of ICRC, which was to reach the victims with the agreement of all parties, remained crucial with regard to the humanitarian efforts undertaken.

ICRC and the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies constituted a formidable independent humanitarian network which sought to ensure respect for its principles - humanity, impartiality and neutrality. The Red Cross could accomplish its humanitarian mission more effectively by acting in conjunction with the humanitarian agencies of the United Nations and non-governmental

organizations (NGOs). The twenty-sixth International Conference of the Red Cross and the Red Crescent, which was to be held at Geneva in December 1995, would constitute an important platform for the non-political discussion of strictly humanitarian questions. ICRC was confident that the Conference would strengthen the Movement and also enable the international community to reaffirm its commitment to international humanitarian law.

Mr. SENE (United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat)) said that he wished to stress first of all the importance of the activities carried out by UNHCR on behalf of millions of refugees and displaced persons. In that connection, his own organization and UNHCR were in the process of preparing for the major international conference of HABITAT II, which was to be held at Istanbul in June 1996.

His organization attached great importance to the "White Helmets" initiative. Habitat had made it clear that it was prepared to collaborate in the establishment of such bodies of national volunteers to carry out missions involving urgent humanitarian assistance and reconstruction following conflicts and catastrophes. In that connection, he stressed the praiseworthy action carried out over a number of years by the United Nations Volunteers Programme (UNV) as a full partner in humanitarian operations and the consolidation of peace as well as in activities designed to support the process of democratization.

The report of the Secretary-General (A/50/203-E/1995/79) highlighted the great number and size of the operations being carried out by the United Nations, in connection with emergency humanitarian relief, reparation and reinstallation of refugees and displaced persons. Furthermore, the report revealed that UNV had always sought to promote the participation of the local population.

In conclusion, he stressed the important role played by the Department of Humanitarian Affairs (DHA) which, in close collaboration with the resident coordinators and the operational partners, would be able to define the programmes required according to each particular case.

Recommendations contained in the report of the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (E/1995/30 and Add.1)

The PRESIDENT invited the Council to take action on the draft proposals contained in the report of the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice on its fourth session (E/1995/30 and Add.1), namely, the nine draft resolutions and three draft decisions the Commission recommended for

adoption by the Council. All those draft proposals, which had been approved in the Commission by consensus, were contained in chapter I of the report.

Ninth United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders (to be recommended for adoption by the General Assembly)

The draft resolution was approved and recommended to the General Assembly for adoption.

Implementation of the resolutions and recommendations of the Ninth United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders (draft resolution I)

Mr. FERNANDEZ (Observer for Spain), speaking on behalf of the European Union, requested postponement of the Council's decision on the draft resolution in question so as to enable the members of the Union to consider its financial implications (E/1995/30/Add.1).

Guidelines for the prevention of urban crime (draft resolution II)

Draft resolution II was adopted.

Criminal justice action to combat the organized smuggling of illegal migrants across national boundaries (draft resolution III)

Draft resolution III was adopted.

Implementation of the Naples Political Declaration and Global Action Plan against Organized Transnational Crime (draft resolution IV)

Draft resolution IV was adopted.

Establishment of a clearing-house for international projects in the field of crime prevention and criminal justice (draft resolution V)

Draft resolution V was adopted.

United Nations standards and norms in crime prevention and criminal justice (draft resolution VI)

Draft resolution VI was adopted.

Action against corruption (draft resolution VII)

Draft resolution VII was adopted.

Technical cooperation and interregional advisory services in crime prevention and criminal justice (draft resolution VIII)

Draft resolution VIII was adopted.

Appointment of members of the Board of Trustees of the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (draft decision I)

Draft decision I was adopted.

Organization of work for the fifth session of the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (draft decision II)

Draft decision II was adopted.

Report of the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice on its fourth session and provisional agenda and documentation for the fifth session of the Commission (draft decision III)

Draft decision III was adopted.

Recommendations contained in the report of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs (E/1995/29 and Corr.1 and Add.1)

The PRESIDENT invited the Council to take action on the draft proposals contained in the report of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs on its thirty-eighth session (E/1995/29 and Corr.1 and Add.1). Chapter I of the report contained five draft resolutions (I-V) and three draft decisions (I-III) for action by the Council; the corrigendum contained an additional draft decision (IV) recommended for action. He also drew attention to addendum 1, containing the text of an oral statement made by the Chief of Financial Service of the United Nations Office at Vienna to the Commission at its thirty-eighth session.

Draft resolutions I-V and draft decisions I-IV were adopted.

Recommendations contained in the report of the Commission for Social Development (E/1995/24)

The PRESIDENT invited the Council to take action on the draft proposals contained in the report of the Commission for Social Development on its thirty-fourth session (E/1995/24).

Mr. FERNANDEZ (Observer for Spain), speaking on behalf of the European Union, said that the members of the Union would prefer the Council merely to take note of the report of the Commission for Social Development, pending further consideration of the draft proposals recommended to the Council for adoption, particularly since, in the case of draft decision B, in a draft Council resolution on the possible role of the Commission could affect the text.

As for resolution 34/1, adopted by the Commission, the text as given in chapter I, section C of the report did not reflect what had been agreed upon in the Commission; in particular, agreement had not been reached on paragraph 3. Since the Union had understood that the matter had subsequently been clarified at the Council's organizational session, it was surprised to see that paragraph included and felt that it should be deleted. With regard to paragraph 2 of the same resolution, it felt that the Secretariat should provide some information, as soon as possible, on the feasibility of setting up an open-ended working group on youth during the Council's resumed substantive session in September 1995.

Mr. ELDEIB (Egypt), Chairman of the Open-ended Working Group on Youth at the Commission's thirty-fourth session, said that, in the light of the informal consultations that had taken place over the past few days, he fully understood the observations made on behalf of the European Union. He drew attention, however, to General Assembly resolution 49/152, whose provisions, which were paramount, stipulated that high-level meetings should be convened as soon as possible after the Organization's fiftieth-anniversary celebrations. The timing of the Council's resumed session could affect the need for it to adopt a further resolution. Therefore, the Secretariat should clarify matters quickly.

Ms. STARR NEWELL (Deputy Secretary of the Council) said that the Council's resumed session would be held at the end of September; information on the exact dates was expected from New York the following day.

Mr. ELDEIB (Egypt) stressed that the Council must reach a decision on the matter by the following day at the latest.

Following a brief procedural discussion in which Ms. LIMJCO (Philippines), Mr. FERNANDEZ (Observer for Spain), Mr. IRUMBA (Uganda) and the PRESIDENT took part, the PRESIDENT suggested that consideration of chapter I, sections B and C, of the report be postponed until the following day.

It was so agreed.

The PRESIDENT, referring to chapter I, section A, of the report, invited the Council to take action on the draft resolution on the International Year of Older Persons: Towards a society for all ages, approved by consensus in the Commission.

The draft resolution was adopted.

The PRESIDENT said that chapter I, section D, of the Commission's report contained a draft decision on Nomination of members of the Board of the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development, which required action by the Council. He took it that the Council wished to confirm the candidates listed in decision 34/101 for membership of the Board.

It was so decided.

- (e) ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN (A/50/38, A/50/257-E/1995/61; E/1995/26, and 80; E/1995/NGO/5)

Mrs. MONGELLA (Assistant-Secretary-General, Secretary-General of the Fourth World Conference on Women) said that she wished to give the Council

a final progress report on the preparations for the Fourth World Conference on Women, to which the Council had given the initial impetus by adopting its resolution 1987/20.

The Conference seemed likely to exceed all expectations in terms of size, breadth of issues addressed and the mobilization of support for a push towards the goal of equal rights, in law and practice, for women and men. The purpose of the Conference would be not only to stimulate national and international action to implement the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women, as originally envisaged, but also to break new ground by making women's action more significant in development and for international peace and security.

Preparations for the Conference had been in hand for a number of years; the Platform for Action had been under active preparation since 1993 and most of the Conference's structural details had been completed in 1992. The process had therefore been more dynamic than was sometimes possible in intergovernmental forums, and had also allowed interaction with other United Nations conferences of the 1990s.

It had been extremely comprehensive, embracing activities at the national and regional levels, specialized seminars and meetings and local activities. She had attended all the regional preparatory meetings which had, for the first time, included all the United Nations regions. Input had been received from places as diverse as Indian villages and small United States cities, and from the high-level group of advisers to the Secretary-General to women in a Latin American shelter for battered women.

Almost all countries had prepared reports on the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies. Governments had also requested the Conference secretariat to suggest indicators for use. The result was one of the most comprehensive sets of information ever brought together in a United Nations conference, including information on aspects, such as access to economic instruments, never previously available on such a scale.

The report on the second review and appraisal (E/CN.6/1995/3 and Add.1-10), considered by the Commission on the Status of Women at its thirty-ninth session would, together with the 1994 World Survey on the Role of Women in Development (A/49/378), enable the Conference to view women's current and projected role in global development. The facts supported and justified the details of the Platform for Action, making it an accurate as well as a

"politically correct" document. It would take the recommendations stemming from previous major United Nations conferences and seek to translate them into specific action for the advancement of women.

The defining term for the preparatory process was "openness". The intergovernmental organizations and accredited NGOs expected to participate would represent a spectrum of opinion wider than in the case of any preceding international conference; for the first time, NGOs would outnumber government delegations at a major conference.

A feature of the Platform was that it had been written not by a few Secretariat officials or government delegates, but by numerous authors representing Governments, NGOs and regional bodies, reflecting the interest which would be the soundest basis for the Conference's success. The 12 critical areas of concern addressed encompassed almost every aspect of human endeavour and contained specific proposals which, if implemented, could produce significant changes in the world during the coming century.

Informal consultations, mandated by the Council under the direction of the Chairperson of the Commission on the Status of Women, would begin during the coming week, with a view to seeking agreement on further parts of the text of the Platform. She and her colleagues would give maximum support to the negotiations. There would also be consultations aimed at an orderly and manageable approach to the Conference itself, which would be both a culmination of the preparations and the beginning of the follow-up and implementation stage, leading to commitment and concrete action.

The challenge would be to carry forward the Conference's momentum to the Organization's fiftieth-anniversary celebrations; she hoped to be able to report to the Council, at its next session, that the challenge, and the expectations of the millions of women who had placed their trust in the United Nations, had been met.

The meeting rose at 11.50 a.m.