

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL

FIRST REGULAR SESSION, 1979

Summary records of the 3rd to 18th plenary meetings, held at Headquarters,
New York, from 10 April to 11 May 1979

3rd meeting

Tuesday, 10 April 1979, at 11.05 a.m.

President: Mr. Hugo SCHELTEMA (Netherlands).

E/1979/SR.3

Opening of the session

1. The PRESIDENT declared open the first regular session of 1979 of the Economic and Social Council.

Statement by the President

2. The PRESIDENT expressed feelings of outrage at the execution of Solomon Mahlangu on 6 April. Once again the Government of South Africa had decided to turn a deaf ear to appeals voiced by numerous Governments, the Secretary-General of the United Nations and large sections of international opinion, and to the Security Council's demand for clemency. The acts for which Mr. Mahlangu had been condemned testified to the feelings of frustration among young South Africans.

3. It seemed appropriate that, as President of the Economic and Social Council, an organ which concerned itself with human rights and humanitarian questions, and speaking on behalf of all members of the Council, he should urge the Pretoria Government to release political prisoners and stop the repression of blacks and the opponents of *apartheid*. Only when the abhorrent policies of *apartheid* and racial discrimination had been brought to an end, would the death of Solomon Mahlangu not have been in vain.

AGENDA ITEM 1

Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters (E/1979/21, E/1979/25, E/1979/30 and Corr.1, E/1979/L.21 and Corr.1, E/1979/L.23-25)

4. The PRESIDENT said that if there were no objections, he would take it that the Council wished to adopt the provisional agenda as contained in document E/1979/30 and Corr.1.

The provisional agenda for the first regular session of 1979 was adopted.

5. The PRESIDENT said that, as was customary, the spring session would concentrate on social items and on human rights. With regard to social questions, the Council would consider three important questions: the holding in 1978 of the World Conference to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination, the recent examination of the world social situation by the Commission for Social Development, and certain aspects of the new international development strategy. The Council also had before it a broad assessment of the short-comings with regard to the world social situation, as well as a report on international action that had been undertaken or that it was proposed to undertake. The Council would once again consider the question of strengthening the social sector within the United Nations, as well as measures aimed at eradicating inequalities for reasons of race or sex. Thus, the Council had to examine the Secretary-General's report and proposals on the Decade for Action to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination and would also have to deal with the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace.

6. The Council also had before it the conclusions and proposals for action of the Commission for Social Development with regard to children, youth and the elderly. The decision taken by the General Assembly (resolution 33/52 of 14 December 1978) to hold a World Assembly on the Elderly was a significant event in the social field. Furthermore, the Council would deal with two special groups: the handicapped, who would be the subject of the International Year for Disabled Persons, and migrant workers. Finally, the Council would have to review reports on two problems which gravely affected a number of countries: criminality and drug abuse.

7. In the field of human rights, the Council would have a specific task during the current session: since the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (General Assembly resolution 2200 A (XXI), annex) had entered into force in January 1976, it

would have to implement article 16, entrusting the Economic and Social Council with certain tasks. The Council would have to establish a sessional working group for that purpose.

8. Lastly, in the economic field, the Council would have before it two important reports: the report of the Population Commission (E/1979/22), which dealt with concerns and responsibilities affecting the entire international community, and the report of the Statistical Commission (E/1979/23), which was indispensable to most of the work of the Council, since the latter had to rely on the best possible data with regard to numerous aspects of the human condition.

9. After making those preliminary remarks, he read out paragraph 2 of document E/1979/L.21 and said that, if there were no objections, he would take it that the Council agreed to the assignment of functions proposed in that paragraph.

It was so decided.

10. The PRESIDENT recalled that the Council had decided to establish an *ad hoc* sessional committee to consider agenda item 15 (Medium-term plan for 1980-1983), in order to ensure that the policies laid down by the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council had been fully reflected in the plan, and to make the necessary recommendations to that end. The Council had also decided to consider at the beginning of the session item 14 (Restructuring of the economic and social sectors of the United Nations system) and item 17 (Establishment of an *Ad Hoc* Intergovernmental Working Group of Experts on International Standards of Accounting and Reporting).

11. He suggested, first, that the *Ad Hoc* Sessional Committee established to consider agenda item 15 should be chaired by Mr. Hollai (Hungary) and should meet during the current week, and, second, that member States should hold informal consultations under the chairmanship of Mr. Navarrete (Mexico) on agenda items 14 and 17, in order to formulate recommendations which the Council would then consider and approve in plenary meeting.

12. If there were no objections, he would take it that the Council adopted those proposals.

It was so decided.

13. The PRESIDENT suggested that the informal consultations on agenda item 17 should begin during the current week and that the informal consultations on agenda item 14 should begin the following week. It was imperative that the first part of the session should be used for those informal consultations, so that the committees would have time to consider the documentation relevant to their work when it became available.

14. If there were no objections, he would take it that the Council adopted the schedule for the consultations which he had just suggested.

It was so decided.

ELECTIONS

15. The PRESIDENT urged regional groups to hold consultations well in advance and to submit their slates to the Secretariat, if possible before 6 p.m. on 7 May, so as to enable the Secretariat to distribute to the members of the Council all slates received by that date.

16. He also drew the attention of the Council to subparagraph (m) of the annotation to item 16 (Elections) in document E/1979/30 concerning General Assembly resolution 33/25, in which the Assembly requested the Council to elect, at its first regular session in 1979 and in

consultation with the regional groups, up to nine additional members of the Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme from those States with a demonstrated interest in and devotion to the solution of the refugee problem. He suggested that interested delegations should submit the names of their candidates to their respective groups as soon as possible.

SESSIONAL WORKING GROUP ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL COVENANT ON ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS

17. The PRESIDENT recalled that, by its decision 1978/10, the Council had established a Sessional Working Group composed of 15 of its members which were also States parties to the Covenant: three members from African States, three members from Asian States, three members from Eastern European States, three members from Latin American States and three members from Western European and other States. In accordance with subparagraph (d) of decision 1978/10, the Council had requested the Working Group "to prepare for the consideration of the Council recommendations on its methods of work in connexion with the reports of States parties to the Covenant".

18. Arrangements had been made for the Working Group to meet from 16 to 27 April and, in accordance with Council decision 1978/9, it would be provided with summary records of its proceedings.

19. He suggested that the Working Group should elect its own officers. He appealed to the chairmen of the regional groups who had not already done so to submit to him the names of their respective candidates.

DOCUMENTATION

20. The PRESIDENT recalled that the Council, in paragraph 3 (c) of its decision 1979/1, had decided to review at the outset of each regular session of 1979, in the light of the annotated agenda, the documentation that it would submit to the General Assembly, with a view to deciding which documents should be transmitted without debate and dispensing, when appropriate, with the practice of introducing them twice, thereby avoiding a repetition of their discussion and enhancing the effectiveness of its work. All the documents that the Council was required to transmit to the General Assembly and which were submitted under agenda item 7 (Social development questions) had already been examined by the Commission for Social Development, whose report (E/1979/24) would be before the Council and would be considered by the Second (Social) Committee.

21. He suggested that the decision as to whether those documents should be referred to the General Assembly without debate be left to the Second (Social) Committee.

It was so decided.

22. The PRESIDENT added that the Second Committee might also wish to review all its recurrent documents simultaneously, in order to determine whether they had become redundant, had lost their usefulness or could be issued at less frequent intervals.

23. Mr. MARSHALL (United Kingdom) suggested that the heads of delegations meet informally to consider the possibility of examining simultaneously the questions covered under items 7 (Social development questions), 8 (Activities for the advancement of women), 10 (Statistical questions) and 11 (Population

questions), because of their numerous interrelated implications.

PARTICIPATION OF ICEM IN THE DELIBERATIONS OF THE COUNCIL (E/1979/25)

24. The PRESIDENT invited the Council to consider the note by the Bureau submitted in accordance with rule 79 of the Council's rules of procedure. In that note, the Bureau had recommended that the Intergovernmental Committee for European Migration (ICEM) should be designated to participate on an *ad hoc* basis in the deliberations of the Council on questions within the scope of its activities. If he heard no objection, he would take it that the Council approved the Bureau's recommendation.

It was so decided (decision 1979/10).

ESTABLISHMENT OF AN AD HOC WORKING GROUP ON REINFORCING THE SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT SECTOR WITHIN THE UNITED NATIONS (E/1979/L.23)

25. The PRESIDENT recalled that the Commission for Social Development, in its resolution 13 (XXVI), had requested the Council to decide that the *ad hoc* working group provided for in paragraph 1 of its resolution 2079 (LXII) of 13 May 1977 should be appointed and convened as soon as possible and report to the Council possibly at its first regular session of 1980 on ways and means of strengthening the social development sector within the United Nations. He believed that that question required more informal consultations and suggested that it be taken up again at a subsequent plenary meeting.

It was so decided.

CALENDAR OF CONFERENCES AND MEETINGS FOR 1979 (E/1979/L.24)

26. The PRESIDENT said that, if he heard no objection, he would take it that the Council wished to approve the postponement of the meeting of the Working

Group on International Statistical Programmes and Co-ordination to 29 and 30 October 1979 at Geneva.

It was so decided (decision 1979/11, subpara. (a)).

CONTROL AND LIMITATION OF DOCUMENTATION (E/1979/21)

27. Mr. STIBRAVY (United States of America) requested clarification on the way in which the Council would deal with the problem of control and limitation of documentation, which was the subject of document E/1979/21 and to which his delegation attached great importance.

28. Mr. CORDOVEZ (Assistant Secretary-General for Secretariat Services for Economic and Social Matters) said that the situation with regard to documentation had become extremely problematic, as delegations must already be aware, to the point that it was currently impossible to make any forecasts with regard to any document. In his opinion, the problems which existed in that connexion could be examined during the informal consultations among heads of delegations suggested by the representative of the United Kingdom. The Council would then consider the question in plenary towards the end of the current session, on the basis of the results of those consultations.

29. The PRESIDENT pointed out that, in the note by the Secretariat on that question (E/1979/21), the problem had been represented as a formidable one. In particular, it was stated in paragraph 1 of the note that the documents reproduction facilities in New York currently turned out so many pages that, laid end to end, they would stretch for more than 160,000 kilometres, or four times around the earth at the equator. He hoped that the Assistant Secretary-General's proposal for an examination of that question during informal meetings of heads of delegations would be acceptable to the Council.

The meeting rose at noon.

4th meeting

Wednesday, 11 April 1979, at 11.05 a.m.

President: Mr. Hugo SCHELTEMA (Netherlands).

E/1979/SR.4

AGENDA ITEM 3

Non-governmental organizations (E/1979/18 and Corr.1, E/1979/26)

1. The PRESIDENT drew the attention of the Council to section I of document E/1979/18, which contained the recommendations of the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations calling for a decision by the Council. Since the Committee had approved those recommendations by consensus, he proposed that the Council take a decision on all of the recommendations, in the order in which they appeared in the document, and then hear the representatives who wished to make statements on the subject.

NEW APPLICATIONS FOR CONSULTATIVE STATUS

2. The PRESIDENT recalled that the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations had recommended to the Council that one non-governmental organization be given category I consultative status, seven organizations be given category II consultative status and 23 organizations be placed on the Roster. If there was no objection, he would take it that the Council decided to approve those recommendations, as contained in paragraph 1 of document E/1979/18.

It was so decided (decision 1979/12, subpara. (a)).