



ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL

Fiftieth Session

OFFICIAL RECORDS

Thursday, 13 May 1971,
at 3.10 p.m.

NEW YORK

President: Mr. Rachid DRISS (Tunisia).

AGENDA ITEM 8

Natural resources (continued):***(a) Report of the Committee on Natural Resources (continued) (E/4969, E/4989, chap. VI, sect. C; E/L.1399)**

1. Mr. GATES (New Zealand) said that it was unfortunate that the report of the Committee on Natural Resources on its first session (E/4969), which had appeared late, contained no firm conclusions or recommendations. No doubt that was due to the fact that the Committee was meeting for the first time and was taking up vast new subjects. However that might be, it seemed unlikely that the report submitted to the Council could serve as a basis for productive discussion. It would have been better to postpone substantive consideration of the subject until after the Committee had reached a broader measure of agreement on the recommendations concerning its work programme. The Committee for Programme and Co-ordination had experienced the same problems because of the tardy submission of the report and the indecisiveness of its recommendations. In the absence of a work programme, CPC had expressed the hope that the Committee on Natural Resources would give priority at its next session to the consideration of a short-term and medium-term programme, which would enable CPC to revert to the matter early in 1972. New Zealand agreed with that recommendation.

2. Furthermore, it seemed desirable for the Committee to concentrate mainly on the technical aspects of the question of natural resources, although that should not preclude it from submitting policy recommendations to the Council.

3. The proposal regarding advisory services should make some 600 experts employed by the United Nations in the areas of geology, mining, cartography, energy and water available for short-term advisory assignments—to a maximum, for example, of three weeks—in the field of natural resources. Experts engaged on a project in one country could be detached on a short-term basis to another country. Arrangements of that kind would appear to have merit, provided that current projects would not be disrupted. It appeared from the report that most of the members of the Committee on Natural Resources and of CPC had supported the proposal. However, a number of representatives had felt that it would be premature to take a decision on the establishment of such a service until more information on its proposed scope was available and until the views of the Governing Council of UNDP were known.

It seemed advisable to defer a decision on it until the latter had been consulted; that statement, however, should not be taken to mean that New Zealand did not approve of the project in principle.

4. A number of delegations had thought that it would be useful if the Secretariat could maintain a roster of experts on natural resources matters who might be recruited in the same way for short-term assignments. There was still some uncertainty as to how such an arrangement would fit in with the tenor of the Jackson Report,¹ which had laid stress on recruiting experts on a sub-contracting or commission basis. That approach to expert assistance had much to commend it, and New Zealand would continue to make experts available to the United Nations whenever possible. The proposal before the Council of course complemented the normal methods of obtaining the services of consultants. It was an interesting innovation and deserved further study.

5. His delegation welcomed the proposal to establish a United Nations revolving fund for the exploration of natural resources. However, in view of the Committee's decision to set up an intergovernmental working group to study the question, there was no need for the Council to take a decision on the matter at that stage.

6. Mr. PATAKI (Hungary) said it was disappointing to learn from the report (E/4969) that the Committee on Natural Resources had not succeeded in establishing general principles or a coherent programme during its first session. It had been expected that the Committee would encounter difficulties during its first session, but it ought to have a more clearly defined action programme for its second session. Such a programme should take account of the recommendations of CPC and the Council, and should ensure the proper co-ordination with all the specialized agencies concerned. The financial implications of the programme should be determined in accordance with the usual Secretariat procedures. Economic and Social Council resolution 1535 (XLIX) and General Assembly resolution 2692 (XXV) clearly indicated that one of the guiding principles in establishing the Committee had been the recognition of the need to help developing countries in the formulation and implementation of their policies so as to enable them to make the fullest use of their own natural resources. Unfortunately, with few exceptions, the working papers submitted during the Committee's first session had failed to provide the proper guidance on that matter. It was to be hoped that shortcomings of that kind would be remedied when the work programme for the next session was prepared. The Resources and Transport Division had important responsibilities in that regard.

* Resumed from the 1758th meeting.

¹ *A Study of the Capacity of the United Nations Development System* (United Nations publication, Sales No.: E.70.I.10).

7. His delegation had noted with satisfaction that the Committee intended to devote particular attention to the problem of water resources. Hungary attached great importance to the protection of waters and to international co-operation in that field. Over 95 per cent of Hungary's surface water supply came from abroad. The Danube, which accounted for 71 per cent of the water supply, and the Tisza, which provided 14 per cent, rose beyond the frontiers of Hungary. The Hungarian Government therefore attached special importance to the conclusion of international conventions concerning water pollution control, flood prevention and related matters. The Government was making an immense effort to protect water supplies against pollution and to safeguard their quality. Hungary had joined in implementing programmes of the International Hydrological Decade. It had passed on the fruits of its experience in that area to other countries. On two occasions, an international extension course had been organized in Hungary to enable experts from developing countries to become acquainted with the most recent developments in hydrology and related sciences. On the other hand, Hungary itself needed more experience in matters of water quality control. In view of the importance of international co-operation in that field, the idea of organizing an international water conference in 1975 was most welcomed.

8. Chapter IV of the report (E/4969) reflected a tendency to advocate turning the Resources and Transport Division into a kind of world centre for depositing data on natural resources. His delegation could not approve of that tendency. The natural wealth of each country belonged to it alone and a world-wide compilation of data did not appear likely to promote the interests of developing countries.

9. His delegation was also opposed to the establishment of special advisory services. The report contained only a very sketchy outline of the proposed scheme, and the Council was therefore not in a position, considering the importance of the matter, to take a decision on it.

10. As could be seen from General Assembly resolution 2692 (XXV), one of the Committee's main tasks was to prepare a special report on the progress achieved by Member States in safeguarding the exercise of permanent sovereignty over their natural resources. That was a question of practical importance for every country, particularly the developing countries, and the Resources and Transport Division should give high priority to it in preparing for the Committee's second session.

11. Mr. SKATARETIKO (Yugoslavia) said that most of the difficulties arising in connexion with the Committee on Natural Resources were due to the different approaches taken by the developed and the developing countries to the question of the Committee's function. His delegation did not agree that the Committee's mandate was ambiguous or unclear. It felt that Economic and Social Council resolution 1535 (XLIX) made it clear that the Committee's main role was to assist the Council in formulating policy measures in respect of the development of natural resources and in establishing programmes of action. The Committee had not been able to make any headway at its first session because the developed countries, particularly the great Powers, had dwelt primarily on the Committee's co-ordinating role in

the formulation of action programmes and policy in the field of natural resources.

12. The Council had established the Committee on Natural Resources with a view not only to co-ordinating the activities of United Nations organs in the field of natural resources but also—and more importantly—to promoting the rapid acceleration of the activities of the international community through a carefully elaborated programme of action. In view of the importance of the exploitation of natural resources for the economic development of the developing countries, it was unthinkable that that aspect of the question should continue to be treated as though it was a minor consideration. He felt it was no accident that it had been relegated to a secondary position.

13. His country, like all developing countries, had to give urgent consideration to the formulation of development policies and programmes of action in the field of natural resources. It therefore felt that the Committee's activities should be brought into line with the objectives of the International Strategy for the Second United Nations Development Decade (General Assembly resolution 2626 (XXV)). It was especially important to respect the basic principles set forth in paragraphs 10 and 74 of the Strategy. Those principles should be taken into consideration by the States whose political philosophies were still opposed to the concept of multilateral economic co-operation and of equal partnership among States which had not been equally favoured at the outset. During the past few years, there had been a veritable boycott of some United Nations organs concerned with economic matters. The time had come for a change in attitude, for if the present trend continued, it could mark the beginning of the end for the United Nations. It was for the Council to play the leading role in that regard. The first positive measures to be taken by the Council should be to help the Chairman of the Committee on Natural Resources to set up an intergovernmental working group comprising 15 members of the Committee, as recommended in paragraph 112 of the Committee's report (E/4969).

14. He hoped that the Council would take a positive decision at its current session concerning the special natural resources advisory services and a United Nations revolving fund for natural resources exploration.

15. A draft resolution on all the matters raised at the first session of the Committee would soon be submitted to the Council, and he hoped that its sponsors would not again be confronted with an inflexible attitude on the part of certain countries.

16. He thanked the Government of Kenya for its offer to accommodate the second session of the Committee at Nairobi at the beginning of 1972.

17. Mr. AKRAM (Pakistan), noting that his delegation had participated in the first session of the Committee on Natural Resources, said it was to be regretted that the Committee's work programme and terms of reference had not been more clearly defined. Paragraph 4 of Council resolution 1535 (XLIX) gave a broad outline of some of the Committee's functions, but there was still some doubt as to the methods to be applied. It had not yet been decided

whether the Committee should formulate general guidelines, approve the work programme of the Resources and Transport Division, adopt draft resolutions or take decisions by consensus, make proposals only on the purely technical aspects of the problems considered or deal with their legal and financial aspects as well. The documentation submitted to the Committee had included a great many proposals. Those proposals had to a large extent blocked the action which some delegations had hoped to take with a view to defining the Committee's work programme. His delegation had felt that the Committee should retain only those short-term or medium-term proposals of immediate concern to the developing countries. It had also felt that emphasis should be put on ways of applying existing technology to the development of natural resources with a view to striking a real balance in the distribution of the benefits accruing from development. Moreover, it had seemed important to lay down guiding principles to enable the Committee to carry out its mandate, such principles to be applied not only to the Committee but to all United Nations. Since it had not been possible to adopt the Secretariat's proposals on non-operational activities separately, it had been felt that the Committee should confine itself to defining its work programme within the general framework of item 4 of its agenda (see E/4969, annex I).

18. The Committee had organized a working group to formulate guidelines for future action in the field of natural resources. However, those principles had not been adopted by the Committee, which had simply included them in annex V of its report. He hoped that they would be adopted at the next session. The fact that the Resources and Transport Division had not furnished a document on a future programme of non-operational activities had caused the Committee great difficulty. His delegation had submitted proposals (see E/4969, appendix I, para. 5), but unfortunately the Committee had not been able to reach agreement on them.

19. His delegation supported the proposal to set up a working group on the establishment of a United Nations revolving fund for natural resources exploration. It hoped that the Council would endorse the proposal and that the working group would be able to work out an acceptable scheme. His delegation also favoured the establishment of special natural resources advisory services.

20. In order to facilitate the Committee's future work, the areas in which the Council might provide guidance should be specified. As paragraphs 21 and 94 of the report (E/4969) showed, there were differences of opinion among members of the Committee on the very meaning of "natural resources". Although delegations favouring the broader interpretation had been in the minority, they had succeeded in having item 4 (a) (iv) placed on the agenda. Too broad an interpretation might, however, divert the Committee from its three main spheres of activity: water resources, mineral resources and energy resources.

21. Budgetary considerations should not be the sole criterion in determining the work programme; the intrinsic value of the questions to be considered should obviously be taken into consideration. The proposed advisory services should naturally be co-ordinated with similar services being provided by UNDP.

22. The Secretary-General's proposal to convene an international water conference in 1975 had aroused considerable interest, but much criticism, too. The Secretariat should work out the details of such a conference, including its objectives and procedures, with the assistance of a panel of experts and in close co-operation with the specialized agencies concerned. His delegation hoped that the Committee would take into account all the comments when it made its decision at the following session.

23. The representative of France had suggested that the Committee should devote each session to a particular sector; however, in view of the magnitude of the Committee's task, his delegation believed that that course would be unwise. It believed, in fact, that the Committee should meet early in 1972 and welcomed Kenya's invitation to hold the second session at Nairobi.

24. Mr. GUPTA (Observer for India), speaking in accordance with rule 75 of the Council's rules of procedure, said that he profoundly regretted that the delaying tactics of certain delegations had paralysed the Committee on Natural Resources during its first session. The Council should endeavour to remedy that situation.

25. The Resources and Transport Division had been roundly criticized for the documentation it had prepared for the Committee. His delegation contended, however, that the documentation had been very full and that the informal meetings which had been held to introduce the documents prior to their distribution had been most useful.

26. The arrangements for the Committee's sessions should not be subject to unduly narrow rules and his delegation agreed that the second session should be held early in 1972.

27. Despite the very clear statement by the representative of UNDP (1758th meeting), some delegations still maintained that the proposed advisory services would duplicate existing activities. His delegation approved the Secretary-General's proposal on that subject (see E/4969, para. 107). Moreover, his Government was prepared to provide a list of water resources experts who would be available for short-term missions under the proposed scheme.

28. The idea of establishing a revolving fund was excellent in principle; however, rational methods of financing would have to be adopted. For that reason the setting-up of an intergovernmental working group was justified.

29. A decision to convene an international water conference in 1975 would probably be premature, since preliminary studies would clearly have to be carried out in co-operation with the specialized agencies concerned before the utility of such a conference could be determined.

30. The Committee should have before it at its second session an integrated work programme, the objections repeatedly voiced by the Resources and Transport Division on the subject notwithstanding. The success of its work depended on the formulation of guiding principles and policy. The French suggestion that the Committee should devote each session to a specific sector had much merit.

31. Mr. AYOUB (Tunisia) said that, although his delegation approved in general of the report of the Committee on Natural Resources on its first session (E/4969), it greatly regretted that the Committee had been unable to work out guiding principles to govern work on natural resources. The Committee should make special efforts to do so at its second session. The lack of short-term and medium-term work programmes was equally regrettable and that deficiency should be remedied as a matter of urgency.

32. The proposed special natural resources advisory services were of great interest, since expert advice was essential; nevertheless, since the success of the system would depend on co-ordination with UNDP, it should not be put into effect until more information on its proposed scope and methods of operation was available and the views of the Governing Council of UNDP were known.

33. The setting-up of an intergovernmental working group to consider the detailed administrative, institutional and financial aspects of the proposed revolving fund was entirely justified. His delegation agreed that the developed countries should also be involved in the operation of financing of the fund.

34. His delegation also warmly welcomed the idea of convening an international water conference in 1975. It would be helpful if the Committee had before it at its second session a report by the Secretary-General on the question; the report should be prepared in close co-operation with FAO and UNESCO, which had already done extensive work on the subject.

35. His delegation also supported the suggestion that the Secretary-General and the specialized agencies should be requested to prepare a report on the activities currently being undertaken in the field of natural resources. On the question of the periodicity of the Committee's sessions, his delegation believed that the Committee should meet annually for a five-year trial period.

**(b) International co-operation in cartography (concluded)*
(E/4943 and Add.1, E/L.1406)**

36. Mr. SCOTT (New Zealand) introduced draft resolution E/L.1406 which was sponsored by his delegation and the delegations of Indonesia and Malaysia. There was a slight change in the third preambular paragraph and in operative paragraph 1, in which the date "October/November 1973" should be replaced by "during the second half of 1973"—a less rigid formula that would allow the organizers more latitude.

37. The wording of the draft resolution was very similar to that of resolutions previously adopted on the topic. He was aware that, although the Council normally adopted such documents unanimously, its content was unlikely to find favour with all members, if the differences of opinion that had emerged on the subject of the Conference on International Container Traffic was any guide. His delegation hoped, nevertheless, that the members concerned would be

content with having the views they had earlier expressed on the subject placed on record and allow the draft resolution to be adopted unanimously, as the draft resolution on the Sixth United Nations Regional Cartographic Conference for Asia and the Far East, held at Teheran in October-November 1970, had been.

38. Mr. SUMANTERA (Indonesia) and Mr. TAIB (Malaysia) commended the New Zealand delegation for its initiative in submitting a draft resolution which highlighted the importance of the Seventh United Nations Cartographic Conference for Asia and the Far East. They thanked the Japanese Government for its offer to act as host for the Conference and to provide all the assistance possible.

39. Mr. OGISO (Observer for Japan), speaking in accordance with rule 75 of the rules of procedure, said that his Government had agreed to defray the additional costs that would result from holding the Conference in Japan. His delegation assured the Council that it would co-operate fully with the Secretary-General with regard to making the necessary arrangements for the Conference and ensuring its success. It hoped that the Council would adopt draft resolution E/L.1406 unanimously.

40. Mr. LISOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that he was amazed that the sponsors of draft resolution E/L.1406 should have embodied in the document a restrictive and discriminatory formula which was at variance with the wording of the title. There was little prospect of achieving international co-operation if an entire group of Asian countries that played an important part in international relations was to be excluded from the Conference. Some countries were seeking to discriminate by such means against other countries whose economic and social structures differed from their own. While such an attitude on the part of New Zealand—which consistently sided with American imperialism—was to be expected, it was difficult to see what motive Indonesia and Malaysia had denying the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam and several other countries the right to participate in a regional conference. His delegation was not able to support draft resolution E/L.1406.

41. Mr. YOGASUNDRAM (Ceylon) said that he too would have preferred that participation in the Conference should be open to every country in Asia, but that, in view of the importance of the Conference, he would support the draft resolution with that reservation.

42. Mr. AKRAM (Pakistan) said that he too believed that all States should be invited to participate in the Conference and would support any amendment to that effect. He nevertheless intended to vote in favour of the draft resolution because of the great importance of the Conference.

43. He informed the Council that, by mistake, his delegation had voted against the Ceylonese amendment to draft resolution E/L.1402 at the 1760th meeting, whereas it had intended to vote in favour.

44. Mr. DUNN (United States of America) said that his delegation supported all the recommendations of the Sixth

* Resumed from the 1758th meeting.

Cartographic Conference and the observations in the Secretary-General's report (E/4943). In particular, it concurred with the recommendation on convening a group of experts to study in depth the problem of cadastral survey. It believed that a study of that subject should be included in the work programme of the Resources and Transport Division and should be financed from the resources available to the Division for its work programme.

45. His delegation thanked the Japanese Government for its offer to act as host for the Seventh Conference. It supported draft resolution E/L.1406 without reservations and, without any wish to revive a debate which had already taken up too much time, it felt bound to state that the invitation formula in operative paragraph 1 was satisfactory.

46. The PRESIDENT invited the Council to vote on draft resolution E/L.1406.

The draft resolution, as orally revised, was adopted by 22 votes to 2.

47. The PRESIDENT thanked the Japanese Government for its generous offer and its deep interest in the work of the Council. He expressed the hope that by the second half of 1973 all States would be members of the United Nations.

48. Mr. MOBARAK (Lebanon) stated that his delegation would have voted in favour of the draft resolution had it been present when the vote was taken.

The meeting rose at 5.5 p.m.