



## ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL

Fiftieth Session

OFFICIAL RECORDS

Wednesday, 12 May 1971,  
at 10.45 a.m.

NEW YORK

President: Mr. Rachid DRISS (Tunisia).

## AGENDA ITEM 3

**Outflow of trained personnel from developing to developed countries (continued)\* (E/4798, E/4820 and Corr.1 and Summary, E/4820/Add.1 and Corr.1, E/4948 and Corr.1, E/L.1379)**

1. Mr. PATAKI (Hungary) said that his delegation had found the reports of the Secretary-General (E/4820 and Corr.1 and Add.1 and Corr.1) and the Executive Director of UNITAR (E/4948 and Corr.1) very useful. If any doubt remained about the importance of the problem or its significance to the developing countries, it should be dispelled by the figures quoted in the study entitled *Emigration of Highly Skilled Manpower from the Developing Countries*<sup>1</sup> made by UNITAR in 1970, one of the conclusions of which was that some 100,000 experts and professionals from the developing countries were working in developed countries, while roughly the same number of highly trained persons from the developed countries were working in the developing countries. While it was true that those workers were not necessarily equivalent in terms of training or working in the same fields of activity, the figure provided ample grounds for presuming that much waste and duplication could be avoided. It also tended to contradict the view expressed in the Secretary-General's report that the lack of absorptive capacity of the developing countries, in terms of economic demand and manpower policies, was the cause of the problem of the "brain drain".

2. His delegation could not agree that major responsibility for stopping the "brain drain" rested with the developing rather than the developed countries. Although the developed countries disclaimed responsibility for the problem, which they felt resulted from the play of economic laws impelling trained persons to move to areas where better incentives and a demand for their services existed, those countries did not follow the same reasoning with respect to the free flow of unskilled labour. Moreover, the very concept of the International Development Strategy for the Second United Nations Development Decade (General Assembly resolution 2626 (XXV)) implied that the economic future of the developing countries could not be left to the play of free market forces. His country therefore supported the draft resolution submitted by the Soviet Union delegation (E/L.1379), the adoption of which, it felt, would bring the developing countries closer to realizing the goals and objectives of the Second Development Decade.

\* Resumed from the 1756th meeting.

<sup>1</sup> UNITAR Research Report No. 3.

3. Although it was true that at some points in the history of human civilization certain urban cultural centres had tended to act as a magnet for migration, it was also true that no country could prosper unless it made full use of its own intellectual capacities and no country could be expected to sacrifice its own interests to a historical phenomenon of limited significance. Solutions to the new and unprecedented problems involved in the "brain drain" must be found in accordance with the needs of the modern world.

4. Mr. ORČIĆ (Yugoslavia) expressed his delegation's satisfaction with the reports submitted on the subject under consideration and noted that the findings of the studies on certain countries in the Secretary-General's report (E/4820/Add.1 and Corr.1) were also applicable to other developing countries faced with the problem of the "brain drain".

5. His delegation believed that the problem could not be solved by the developing countries alone, without the help of the international community, including the developed countries. Moreover, when studying the practical steps that could be taken it should be kept in mind that the problem could not be solved in isolation from related economic and social problems which were the main cause of the difficulty. In that connexion, his delegation endorsed the conclusion in paragraph 13 (i) of the summary of the report (E/4820) and stressed that under-development, the cause of the "brain drain", could not be solved unless the international community and especially the developed countries lived up to their commitments under the Second Development Decade.

6. Mr. LOUYA (Democratic Republic of the Congo) expressed his delegation's satisfaction with the report, which clearly analysed the problems facing the developing countries and presented practical recommendations for their solution. Although it was difficult to form any accurate idea of the dimensions of the "brain drain", the phenomenon was unquestionably harmful to the developing countries, which lost their most highly qualified people to the advanced countries. The problem, though not new, was particularly complex inasmuch as it involved some deeply rooted human traits as well as the intangible balance between an individual's obligations to himself and his duties to his society. His delegation welcomed the efforts being made by the United Nations, especially UNDP, to help the developing countries, at their request, to cope with the problem through research and assistance. The developing countries were fully aware of the dangers which the "brain drain" represented to their economies.

7. The time had come to turn from a somewhat theoretical discussion to the practical consideration of ways of solving the problem. In view of its scope and gravity, the

assistance which the developed countries were rendering to the developing countries should be increased; if their assistance remained at its present level, the developing countries would have no alternative but to take drastic action to improve the situations especially by modifying their educational systems, which they had inherited from their colonial rulers and which were becoming more and more out of touch with reality, and by reducing the gap between their training programmes and actual employment opportunities.

8. His delegation welcomed the USSR draft resolution (E/L.1379) but had not yet taken a stand on it.

9. Mr. FAROOQ (Pakistan) observed that it was not possible, on the basis of the information presented to the Council, to draw conclusions which were generally applicable. Each country had to tackle the problem of the "brain drain" in the light of its own circumstances. Moreover, since the problem was essentially a human one, the short-term solution must be humane and the long-term solution scientific. To state that the developed countries were enticing qualified persons from the developing countries was as erroneous as to assert that the developing countries themselves were responsible for the "brain drain". A distinction should be drawn between two different types of students. The first category comprised officials sent by their respective Governments for further training abroad. Such students were obliged to return to their home countries in order to retain their jobs and receive promotions; very few of them failed to return. The second category comprised students studying abroad at their own expense. The latter group had no obligation to return on the completion of their training and generally did not return because of the paucity of suitable jobs and the inadequacy of material and working conditions in their home countries. Since there was little inducement for them to give up the jobs they had found abroad, efforts to persuade them to return were unlikely to be successful.

10. The real causes of the "brain drain" were under-industrialization, lack of scientific and technological advancement, lack of capital and a slow rate of economic development. To over-emphasize the importance of the "brain drain" would be to lose sight of the main issue. Measures to combat the problem should at the outset be taken at the national level, although co-operation at the international level in the form of exchanges of experience and information could be invaluable. In essence, the problem could be described as an overproduction of graduates and a kind of inertia in using them to the full. Preventive measures designed to stop people from emigrating could not be effective: they would contravene the various instruments adopted by the United Nations with respect to human rights and would deny to scientists and engineers the benefits of contacts and exchanges of ideas with their counterparts in the developed countries. The best course would be to create conditions at home which would encourage expatriates to return. On the other hand, the developed countries which had profited from the immigration of professionals from developing countries should feel a special obligation to help those countries improve conditions of education, especially in the fields of science and technology, and should offer substantial assistance in the establishment of additional international institutions

for development, as had been suggested in the Secretary-General's report on the subject to the twenty-third session of the General Assembly.<sup>2</sup>

11. In his view, a humane approach should be taken. The Council should not urge the adoption of steps which might affect the lives and careers of many qualified persons without making a thorough and critical examination of all the factors involved. The steps taken by his Government to encourage the return of persons it sent abroad for study—although it did not have a serious problem in that regard—included a reorganization of its educational structures, efforts to achieve a better balance between education and employment opportunities, an undertaking on the part of trainees to return, and an informal understanding with developed countries to discourage Pakistanis from remaining abroad.

12. In the final analysis, the "brain drain" was caused by under-development and any fruitful solution of the problem must be based on recognition of that fact. Any proposal for the payment of compensation would be unrealistic because the services rendered by trained personnel could not be quantified and no acceptable formula could be devised for payment in monetary terms for the utilization of experts. In his view, the recommendations in the Secretary-General's report to which he had just referred were far more helpful.

13. In conclusion, he suggested that UNITAR might be requested to submit its full report to the Council at its fifty-first session.

14. Mr. SPENCER (Observer for Canada), speaking at the invitation of the President, said that his country's immigration policy was both universal and non-discriminatory in that its selection criteria were applied in the same way to all immigrants regardless of their race, colour or geographical origin. The adoption of that policy had been accompanied by an expansion of its immigration facilities in many areas of the world. Canada was aware of the criticism by some developing countries that its policy tended to favour immigrants from more developed countries because of its requirements for educational and technical skills and it realized that some of the immigrants coming to Canada from developing countries possessed talents which those countries needed and would prefer to retain. However, its policy was designed to ensure that only those immigrants who could successfully settle in Canada were accepted; that was surely in the best interests of the immigrants themselves and enabled Canada to maintain its economic growth and thereby its ability to accept immigrants in large numbers. At the same time, because Canada recognized that the immigration of skilled persons represented a loss to their own countries, it had long followed a policy of refraining from actively promoting immigration from developing countries.

15. Despite its low population density, Canada was a highly complex, industrialized and urbanized society; accordingly, immigrants must of necessity have the education and training which would enable them to fill the jobs

<sup>2</sup> See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Twenty-third Session, Annexes*, agenda item 47, document A/7294, paras. 127 and 128.

available. Moreover, they must be able to enjoy the same standard of living as other Canadians. A policy which brought to Canada only unskilled or semi-skilled immigrants from a specific country would tend to create undesirable racial bias and a false impression about the abilities of the nationals of that country.

16. It should not be forgotten that Canada admitted more students from developing countries than immigrants. Furthermore, students admitted under bilateral programmes sponsored by the Canadian Government were nominated by their Governments for training in Canada on the understanding that they would return to their home countries upon completion of their studies. Canada itself suffered from a very substantial outflow of trained personnel, both through emigration to other industrialized countries and through temporary emigration to developing countries in connexion with its many and varied technical assistance programmes.

17. Mr. KOSCIUSKO-MORIZET (France) said that it was quite natural that people should choose the best employment available to them, and that tendency caused problems for all countries, not just the developing ones. Although it appeared to have more serious effects in the latter countries, it was a simplistic argument to blame the host countries, which, it should be remembered, had often borne the cost of at least part of the training of the persons concerned. Before a remedy could be found, the causes of the "brain drain", which was a serious and widespread economic and social problem, would have to be thoroughly diagnosed.

18. To begin with, it was important to distinguish between the "brain drain" and emigration in general. For example, Lebanon, whose position had been described, although somewhat superficially, in the Secretary-General's report (see E/4820/Add.1 and Corr.1, chap. III) had been an exporter of people for over a century, and there were today as many Lebanese outside Lebanon as in that country itself. With the rise in living standards and the expansion of education, it was natural that Lebanese emigrating today should be better educated than in the past. He observed in that connexion that the figures given were based on the experience of a single educational institution and that the conclusions based on them should perhaps be re-evaluated. In the African countries the attainment of independence had been accompanied by a wave of enthusiasm for expanded education as a means of solving national problems. Unfortunately, that had led to a glut of well-trained graduates in the administrative and political sciences who had inadequate opportunities for practising their skills and had become an unstable element in the political and social life of their countries. Many graduates found that their countries' growth rates were too low to enable them to find suitable jobs and were therefore reluctant to return from abroad, or, having returned, were soon eager to leave again. Even where there were suitable jobs, salaries and working conditions were in many cases unsatisfactory, and more often than not there were fewer opportunities for research and further training than in other countries.

19. His delegation believed that it would be better to try to solve the problem through international co-operation

than to have the countries of origin compensated by the host countries. Indeed, the principle underlying the latter solution was questionable in the extreme, for students were not being kept in the host countries by force, and the scholarships that had enabled them to carry on their studies had in many cases been granted under educational assistance programmes the purpose of which was precisely to help the developing countries. His delegation would be opposed to any authoritarian measures on the part of the host countries, which would be contrary to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the liberal principles subscribed to by France. Nevertheless, France was willing to use methods of persuasion and to refuse to permit endless extensions of studies without valid reasons.

20. With regard to the study on Cameroon (see E/4820/Add.1, chap. V), the author had neglected to mention a number of recent developments to which France had contributed, such as the University of Yaoundé and the establishment of a medical school. France's current policy was to encourage African students to continue their studies at local universities whenever possible and it had ceased to grant scholarships in cases where the desired training was available at local establishments. At the same time, it could not prevent students from coming to France at their own expense or convince them that one university was better than another. In co-operation with the other Governments concerned, France was endeavouring to keep the number of requests for education in France to a minimum and it assisted local training as much as possible.

21. For the countries of origin, it was of course essential to relate training to development and to ensure that manpower planning was in harmony with the requirements of future economic and social development. A conference of National Education Ministers from French-speaking African countries, which was dealing with that very problem, was currently taking place in Paris, and many similar meetings had been held in the past. In that connexion, it was important that the private sector, which had many job vacancies because qualified personnel were not available, should not be neglected.

22. His delegation had no objection to the idea of a contract being concluded between a student and his Government at the commencement of his studies. Such a procedure was followed in France and it was good for a scholarship holder to know that he was committing himself to serve his country for a number of years. Another good idea was to arrange for persons who studied abroad and returned to their own country to take refresher courses after a few years, and they should also keep their professional knowledge up to date in the meantime by means of correspondence and specialized journals.

23. However, men were not robots and they were not always willing to make decisions affecting their careers on the basis of their countries' requirements. A number of French-trained doctors who had returned to the Democratic Republic of the Congo had for financial and family reasons preferred to take up private practice in Kinshasa rather than do work of greater national importance in the provinces. A great international effort was needed to solve the problem and he hoped that after consultations with the Soviet Union a common text could be produced.

24. Mr. DUNN (United States of America) said that the public and private sectors in the United States had both expressed concern about the flow of skilled personnel from developing as well as developed countries and a number of studies had been carried out with a view to shedding light on the complex factors involved, which were economic, social, educational, political and even ethical. Of course, there had always been a strong tradition in the United States that the international mobility of human beings was beneficial for mankind as a whole, and the flow of skilled personnel moved in all directions. Moreover, article 13 (2) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights stated that everyone had the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country. His delegation was therefore not in favour of restricting the movement of people, but would prefer to find a solution to the underlying and broader problem by developing a political, economic, educational and scientific climate that would both encourage and challenge trained people to stay in their own countries and contribute to their development. One essential element was careful manpower planning by the developing countries to enable them to meet their needs accurately in the context of balanced economic and social progress.

25. The United States Agency for International Development screened all applicants for its training schemes to ensure that they were serious, mature and interested in their own countries' problems. As a result of that process, less than 1 per cent of the 100,000 persons trained under the Agency in education, health, engineering and atomic science had failed to return to their own countries after training. Moreover, the Fulbright Programme required foreign students who had received training in the United States to leave the country for at least two years before being allowed to return.

26. His delegation found the proposals in draft resolution E/L.1379 unacceptable and considered that paragraphs 13, 14 and 15 of the Secretary-General's report (E/4820) offered a well-balanced and sensible approach to the problem.

27. Mr. ANTOINE (Haiti) said that the principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights were reflected in most national constitutions, including that of Haiti. However, it was distressing for the developing countries to see their skilled nationals, trained at considerable expense, leave their homes and enter the international labour market, where there was intense competition on the part of employers, in addition to high salaries. Skilled emigrants often took the citizenship of the countries in which they settled, and were thus permanently lost to their countries of origin. In view of the seriousness of the situation for the developing countries, the draft resolution (E/L.1379) submitted by the Soviet Union was most timely. There should indeed be some method of compensating countries of origin for their expenditure on training.

28. Mr. MARSH (Jamaica) said that Jamaica had been an exporter of people for over a century and now regarded the "brain drain" problem as a very serious one. As far back as the late 1940s, calculations had been made of the precise loss incurred by a country when its skilled graduates emigrated, the figure for an arts graduate being at that time

£5,000, for science graduates £10,000 and for doctors and other professionals £20,000. Moreover, there was an additional incalculable loss to the society of origin as a whole.

29. One factor that should be taken into account in seeking a solution to the problem was the difficulty encountered by students not only in adjusting at first to the way of life in the host country but also in readjusting to life in their own countries after extended periods of residence abroad. Perhaps ways might be found to absorb émigré graduates in some of the new investment projects in the developing countries that were being carried out within the framework of the Second Development Decade. Another possible solution would be to grant extra aid for manpower planning and training in the developing countries themselves, which would obviate the need for students to undergo those processes of adjustment and readjustment to which he had referred.

30. The greater part of the loss to the developing countries was suffered by the private sector, whose industrial patterns were often archaic and unattractive to returning graduates. The solution to that aspect of the problem would be to modernize personnel policies.

31. A factor favouring a reverse flow was that graduates who migrated to the developed countries were sophisticated enough to realize that their real salaries were not as high as they might seem. Very often, it was more advantageous to remain in their own countries, where they could enjoy a social status and standard of living that was unattainable in the developed countries.

32. If all the psychological and social aspects of the "brain drain" were studied, the problem as a whole should be capable of solution, with the assistance of the developed countries and the United Nations.

33. Mr. DE AZEVEDO BRITO (Brazil) said that the "brain drain" was a powerful factor militating against the development of the developing countries and was becoming increasingly serious. In support of that view, he drew attention to the difference between the 1956 and 1967 figures for immigration of scientists, engineers and doctors from developing countries into one developed country—1,769 and 7,913 respectively. The latter figure represented a loss to the developing countries equivalent to \$158 million on the basis of \$20,000 *per capita*. Brazil was one of the countries participating in UNITAR's study of the "brain drain" problem. It fully supported the study and hoped that it would give a complete and accurate analysis of the situation, which could not be viewed in purely statistical terms. The study would be of great assistance to the developing countries in drawing up their future manpower plans. Although not all the factors influencing the "brain drain" were fully understood, the main reasons lay in the under-development of the developing countries, which meant that career possibilities, research facilities and salaries were below the levels offered in the developed countries. As a first step in finding a solution to the problem, his delegation welcomed the proposal made by the representative of Uruguay (1756th meeting) to the effect that there should be an exchange of experience at the national level. Developing countries would certainly benefit

from information about what steps had been taken in other countries to cope with the problem. Even before the "brain drain" had been fully studied, it seemed fairly clear that one of the best ways to ensure that trained personnel remained in their countries of origin was to provide local training adapted to the conditions prevailing in the developing countries. However, that alone would not reverse the tendency observed, for instance, among doctors to remain in the major urban centres after returning to their own countries. To combat that tendency, Brazil's policy was to establish training facilities in various parts of the country, including the provinces.

34. He hoped that the Council would be able to have a more substantive discussion on the item when the UNITAR study was completed, at which time it should be possible to decide on a general international policy as well as on effective local action.

### AGENDA ITEM 9

#### Transport development (*continued*):

(a) **Establishment of a United Nations transport centre (*continued*)\* (E/4964 and Add.1-4, E/4989, chap. VIII; E/L.1381, E/L.1397, E/L.1401)**

35. Mr. FINGER (United States of America) said that his delegation had sponsored draft resolution E/L.1397 because, in its opinion, there was widespread support for the view that the Council did not yet possess sufficient information to take the important and irrevocable step of establishing a transport economics and technology documentation centre. The general debate on the question had shown that a number of delegations, including some of the sponsors of draft resolution E/L.1401, had different views on the activities of such a centre. The Council would therefore be well-advised to take the action proposed in his delegation's draft, which provided for the gradual development of activities over the next few years and subsequent consideration of the desirability of establishing a centre. It had been conservatively estimated that the total budget of the centre, if it became operative, would amount to approximately \$558,000. His delegation did not object to the amount involved, which was relatively small, but merely wanted to be sure that United Nations resources were being put to the best possible use. It was not convinced by the arguments adduced by the sponsors of draft resolution E/L.1401.

36. Mr. DE AZEVEDO BRITO (Brazil) said that draft resolution E/L.1401 was the product of extensive consultations on transport development and embodied proposals which not only were reasonable but also met the actual requirements of developing countries. The preambular paragraphs were self-explanatory. The Council needed to have a clear view of action taken by the United Nations in the field of transport development. It was now confronted with a specific problem: it must promote assistance to the developing countries in the area of transport development and it must enable the United Nations to provide appropriate back-stopping facilities for all problems in the field. There was at the present time a trend towards increased

regional activities; the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), for example, already possessed substantial capability and experience in transport problems. However, the situation in the other regional economic commissions was quite different; only during the last 15 years had efforts been made to develop more integrated systems of transport. Of course, all the available resources could be put at the disposal of the regional economic commissions, but his delegation favoured a middle course: the activities of the commissions should gradually be expanded and, at the same time, for reasons of economy, substantive support in the form of research and the dissemination of information should be provided from one central point at United Nations Headquarters. Individual countries could, of course, undertake such activities, but they could ill afford the research needed to plan a transport network consistent with modern technology. A centre would obviate unnecessary difficulties in obtaining information, as well as duplication of activities by developing countries.

37. In proposing, in operative paragraph 2 of the draft, that the establishment of the centre should be phased over a period of time, the sponsors wished to give the centre an opportunity to modify its activities in the light of experience. The terms of reference outlined in operative paragraph 3 were modelled on those suggested in paragraph 12 of document E/4964/Add.3. It was made clear in operative paragraph 3 that other international organizations concerned should be consulted on all relevant questions. The sponsors had taken account of all the reservations raised at previous sessions of CPC and the Council and hoped that the draft resolution would be adopted unanimously.

38. Mr. FINGER (United States of America) said that a confrontation between the developing and developed countries on the question at issue would be extremely undesirable. It would be wrong to assume that the two groups of countries had adopted monolithic positions, since in the general debate the delegations of three developing countries had expressed doubts concerning the establishment of a transport centre. The sponsors of both draft resolutions agreed that transport was a particularly important element in the economies of the developing countries, that the adequate dissemination of information was vital to transport planning and development, and that those countries should be given assistance in developing their transport systems. The only difference of opinion was whether the irrevocable step of establishing a transport centre should be taken at the present time. His delegation considered that such a step would be unwise and was not convinced that it would represent the most efficient use of resources. In view of the limited resources now available, it would be a mistake for the Council to commit itself to a regional approach.

39. Mr. GAMACCHIO (International Civil Aviation Organization) said that ICAO reserved its position on both the draft resolutions before the Council. His organization's views had been expressed in document E/4964/Add.1. The proposal that either a transport centre or the Department of Economic and Social Affairs should deal with intermodal transport might create many difficulties for ICAO. For example, inclusive tours, comprising travel by air and surface transport, and city-airport transportation, on which

\* Resumed from the 1757th meeting.

ICAO provided up-to-date information to all interested States, might be interpreted as being covered by the expression "intermodal transport".

40. As far as air transport was concerned, the proposed centre would not only involve duplication of ICAO's activities but would also complicate the procedure by which a developing country could receive up-to-date information on relevant subjects. ICAO compiled and catalogued information on all matters relating to air transport and that information could be provided directly to any country. If a separate documentation centre was established, a situation might arise in which a country would have to apply first to the centre for information which it could obtain directly from ICAO.

41. Mr. CARANICAS (Greece) said that the Brazilian representative had not made a convincing case for regional co-operation in solving transport problems. There were other fields of activity which deserved greater attention and a higher priority than the establishment of a transport centre. Not only ICAO but also IMCO and the UNCTAD Committee on Shipping favoured the existing arrangements, which enabled all developing countries to obtain the information they wanted. Document E/4964/Add.3 likewise failed to present a convincing argument for the establishment of a transport centre. The action proposed in draft resolution E/L.1401 was consistent with the tendency towards duplication of the activities of various international organizations. His delegation would support the United States draft resolution (E/L.1397).

42. Mr. LISOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that his delegation found it difficult to decide which of the

two draft resolutions to support. At the present time there were in existence a large number of international organizations that were concerned with transport questions. The Council was successfully co-ordinating their activities through the Department of Economic and Social Affairs. There was accordingly no urgent need to establish a transport centre, especially when a Transport Section already existed within that Department. All the relevant specialized agencies provided copious information on the economics and technology of transport; to establish a small documentation centre in the Secretariat would merely confuse the situation and reduce the effectiveness of their work. Furthermore, UNCTAD, IMCO, ICAO and ECE, which possessed a wealth of experience in transport questions, had all expressed opposition to the establishment of a centre, because it was not clear what purpose it would serve. The United Nations Secretariat, too, was not convinced of the need for a centre. The question was not yet ripe for consideration.

43. A confrontation between two groups of countries on such a minor matter would be regrettable. The Council should seek a rational solution to the problem on the basis of mutual understanding. His delegation fully appreciated the need for attention to be paid to the development of the developing countries, but could best help them to attain that goal by removing the real obstacles to development, and not by frittering away their good intentions on a comparatively minor matter. It was simply not in the interests of the developing countries to set up the small six-man department envisaged. In that connexion, the Council should bear in mind the opinion expressed by ICAO in paragraph 12 of document E/4964/Add.1.

*The meeting rose at 1.5 p.m.*