



ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL

Fiftieth Session

OFFICIAL RECORDS

Tuesday, 18 May 1971,
at 3.20 p.m.

NEW YORK

President: Mr. Rachid DRISS (Tunisia).

AGENDA ITEM 11

Science and technology (continued):

(a) Future institutional arrangements for science and technology (continued) (E/4959, E/4989, chap. VII; E/L.1400, E/L.1407 and Add.1)

1. Mr. KITCHEN (United States of America) recalled that during its successive statements on the question under consideration, the United States delegation had always borne in mind the interests which the General Assembly, UNCTAD, the specialized agencies and IAEA had in the matter. He hoped that the tendency for dispersal of work programmes and co-ordination activities would cease. If the Council agreed to consider measures designed to entrust scientific and technological questions to a standing committee of the Council, the United States delegation would be prepared to give serious study to the other aspects of the question. It had listened with interest to the Brazilian delegation's introduction of draft resolution E/L.1400. However, if it was decided to adopt the proposed measures many activities which had originally been envisaged would no longer come under the Council.

2. He wished to stress the importance of operative paragraph 2 of the United States draft resolution (E/L.1407) which provided that, pursuant to Article 62 of the Charter, the Council would report to the General Assembly what action it had taken on the report of the standing intergovernmental committee on science and technology, establishment of which was envisaged, and what matters in the committee's report were forwarded for its consideration. The draft did not state definitely how many members would serve on the intergovernmental committee and provided for equitable geographical distribution. The committee could draw on scientific and technical expertise supplied by *ad hoc* panels of experts attached to it or from the specialized agencies and the IAEA. The United States delegation had already stated that its draft resolution did not aim at limiting the work of the Advisory Committee on the Application of Science and Technology to Development.

3. Mr. DE SEYNES (Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs) noted with concern that draft resolution E/L.1400 made no mention of the possible maintenance of the Advisory Committee on the Application of Science and Technology to Development and that draft resolution E/L.1407 was rather vague on the subject.

4. It was not easy to define the role of the Advisory Committee on the Application of Science and Technology

to Development, because that Committee had no prospect of being able to act in a positive and practical fashion. Although some had become impatient at not seeing the work of the Committee translated into concrete programmes, it had performed a great deal of work. The experience of other international organizations showed that the success of national or international action, particularly in questions of science and technology, greatly depended on the interaction between intergovernmental and independent scientific bodies. In most countries, such interaction was systematically organized. In the same way, in other international organizations, whether the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) or the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance, there was a subtle balance between government bodies and panels of experts. It would seem that such interaction was just as necessary for the United Nations to achieve effective work in the application of science and technology to development.

5. The work of the Advisory Committee had an obvious influence, even outside the United Nations system, as was shown by the following instance. During a recent meeting of an OECD committee of experts, science and technology specialists from industrialized countries chose a dozen points from the plan of action drawn up by the Advisory Committee. They recommended that an OECD intergovernmental body should particularly encourage new research and an overhaul of teaching programmes.

6. The Advisory Committee's influence on intergovernmental and national bodies should be borne in mind before taking a decision on its future. Its initial success was certainly due to the eminence of its members and to their prestige in their own countries, which had enabled them to have direct access to decision-making government bodies. By means of that happy combination of scientists and economists, the needs of developing countries had never been lost sight of in academic discussions. The Committee's uncertainty for the past two years as to the renewal of its mandate had certainly not been favourable to its work. A speedy end should therefore be brought to the situation. With regard to the proposal that the Advisory Committee's responsibilities should be divided up, it should be recalled that in any event its usual method of work was to form working groups, whose activities were subsequently taken up by the Committee itself. Moreover, since its establishment, the Committee had acquired an identity, an outstanding reputation, which enhanced its influence.

7. He had abstained from taking part in the debate on the question of which government bodies should have problems submitted to them. In his opinion, the interplay of political factors was not really affected at present by the choice of the body where those problems were to be discussed. Consequently, the work of the United Nations bodies might perhaps be divided up in a rational manner on the basis of

their functions, with a view to achieving maximum impact and efficiency.

8. The PRESIDENT stated that, in view of the complexity of the question being considered, he thought it better to wait until a subsequent meeting before voting on the two draft resolutions before the Council. Consultations aiming at a compromise could thus continue.

9. Mr. VIAUD (France) noted that the Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs was not alone in his concern regarding the future of the Advisory Committee on the Application of Science and Technology to Development. The French delegation also shared that concern when it saw that the aim of the United States draft resolution appeared to be to terminate the Committee's mandate. The French delegation was not in favour of any proliferation of independent groups of experts, since current work was often made more complicated because of the large number of bodies which were devoid of governmental responsibility and which made recommendations to the Council. However, an exception was justified in the case of the Advisory Committee and of the panel of experts on planning, because of the important part that those two committees could play in the relatively new activities of the United Nations concerning science and technology and the evaluation of the work of the Second Development Decade.

10. The French delegation was somewhat perplexed by the United States draft resolution (E/L.1407) because of its lack of precision, and was frankly dismayed by the draft resolution of Brazil, Kenya, Sudan and Yugoslavia (E/L.1400). There could be a place for an independent body in the structure of subsidiary bodies of the Council.

11. Although the time-limit for the submission of draft resolutions had expired, the French delegation would like to be authorized to present a text which would bridge the gaps in the other two drafts. If the Council found it impossible to agree to that request, the French delegation would propose an amendment to replace operative paragraph 6 of the United States draft resolution.

12. The PRESIDENT asked the French representative if his amendment related to the question as a whole or only to the Advisory Committee.

13. Mr. VIAUD (France) said that his delegation's draft resolution was not incompatible with the other two drafts and related to the Advisory Committee only. Were it to be submitted as an amendment it would complete the United States draft resolution (E/L.1407) which would then consist of two parts.

14. The PRESIDENT said that, if there was no objection, he would consider that the Council authorized the French delegation to submit its draft resolution.

It was so decided.

15. Mr. DE AZEVEDO BRITO (Brazil) said that the sponsors of draft resolution E/L.1400 had tried to be as specific as possible and had even taken one paragraph (operative paragraph 4) from the text submitted by the United States. While acknowledging the excellent work

done by the Advisory Committee in certain sectors, particularly that of proteins, the sponsors had nevertheless decided to recommend to the General Assembly the establishment of a standing committee to deal with all questions relating to science and technology. Brazil for its part would not object to the term of the existing Advisory Committee being extended, but the question was one to be decided by the General Assembly at the appropriate time. Contrary to what certain members seemed to be contending, politics played a very important role and that was why the question should be settled by the General Assembly, the most democratic body of the United Nations.

16. Mr. ODERO-JOWI (Kenya), speaking as a sponsor of draft resolution E/L.1400, said that the intentions of the sponsors, who were fully aware of the importance of science and technology in economic and social development, could not be questioned. It now appeared essential to establish a committee with sufficient authority to enable it to co-ordinate activities and establish the necessary priorities. The sponsors did not want to prejudge the standing committee's mandate. His delegation had already said that the Advisory Committee should be maintained; it would be able to furnish technical support to the standing committee whose establishment was recommended in operative paragraph 1. Moreover, the doubts expressed by certain delegations had been taken into account in the wording of operative paragraph 4. The standing committee to deal with all questions related to science and technology should be a General Assembly committee. The democratic nature of that proposal, which was designed to give the new committee sufficient authority, must be admitted. The purpose of the recommendation in operative paragraph 2 that the proposed standing committee should report to the General Assembly through the Economic and Social Council was to ensure the efficacy of the new body.

17. Mr. LISOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that the statement of the Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs had been extremely useful in that it had made it possible to form a coherent idea of the experience of United Nations bodies in co-operation in science and technology and provided a summary of the Secretariat's views on the matter. The emphasis had rightly been placed on the need to combine the activities of two bodies, one an intergovernmental body responsible for defining general policy in science and technology and the other a body composed of leading experts in the application of science and technology to development. The Under-Secretary-General had referred to factual data, particularly to the activities of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance which prepared basic directives for scientific and technological co-operation at the intergovernmental level, and, in doing so, relied on the advice of leading experts. The same practice was followed at the national level. The systematic combination of expert advice and policy-making should be adopted by the Council. In that connexion, he endorsed the French representative's comments.

18. Any intergovernmental organ must of course receive its instruction from a governing body, in the present case the General Assembly, and take account of the role to be played by the Secretary-General. Now, in its resolution 2658 (XXV), the General Assembly had requested the Secretary-General to inform the Council at its fifty-first

session of progress made in economic, technological and scientific co-operation between States. His delegation wondered, therefore, if the Council was indeed adopting the right approach. It was difficult to draw precise conclusions from the current discussions.

19. The PRESIDENT said that progress did not necessarily consist in formal decisions. In any case, the Council should facilitate the Secretary-General's task by making progress in its work.

20. Mr. OSMAN (Sudan) said that the main point of disagreement was whether the proposed body should be a Council or a General Assembly body. He wondered whether the sponsors of the two draft resolutions could not hold consultations with a view to producing a joint text. In view of the very pronounced differences prevailing in the Council, that would seem the best course.

21. Mr. AKWEI (Ghana) said that neither of the drafts before the Council fully satisfied his delegation. The text of draft resolution E/L.1407 was too vague about the role to be allocated to the Advisory Committee. As the Under-Secretary-General and the French representative had emphasized, the Committee discharged an extremely useful function and was in a position to assume responsibilities other bodies could not. Both draft resolutions placed emphasis on *ad hoc* panels of experts attached to the proposed intergovernmental body or to the specialized agencies. Now, the Advisory Committee was useful precisely because it had a global view of all matters relating to science and technology whereas expert panels dealt with only one particular subject. As several countries' national experience showed, the various sectors of science and technology could not be separated. As constituted, the Advisory Committee could if it wished establish *ad hoc* expert panels to meet its needs. The sponsors of the texts should therefore indicate more clearly that they intended to maintain the Advisory Committee's very positive role.

22. Some speakers had contended, in support of the idea of an intergovernmental committee, that the Advisory Committee's ineffectiveness stemmed from the fact that it could not call on the support of Governments. If that was so, it would be up to the Council to make recommendations to remedy the situation. Moreover, if the proposed committee's main function was to provide expert advice, it was difficult to see what purpose would be served by its being an intergovernmental body.

23. The representative of Ghana did not agree with those who felt that the proposed committee would be more effective if it came under the General Assembly rather than the Council. That would merely complicate the Council's work of co-ordination and weaken its role as the organ responsible for economic and social matters. It might even lead to a kind of confrontation between the Council and the Assembly.

24. According to draft resolution E/L.1400 the Secretary-General would be requested to submit a report to the General Assembly on the possible terms of reference of the standing committee. If the sponsors were convinced of the value of the new committee they must already know what role they wished it to play. The draft resolution submitted

by the United States (E/L.1407), on the other hand, clearly defined the responsibilities of the new body. However, it appeared that the Advisory Committee on the Application of Science and Technology to Development would be perfectly capable at present of undertaking those responsibilities.

25. Lastly, draft resolution E/L.1400 stated that the standing committee would deal with all questions related to science and technology. That seemed extremely ambitious. Obviously, the Committee would have to confine itself to certain well-defined areas.

26. In view of the differences of opinion it would, perhaps, be advisable to hold informal consultations, as the representative of the Sudan had suggested. The amendment suggested by the French delegation might expedite decisions.

27. Mr. KITCHEN (United States of America) agreed with the representative of the Sudan that informal consultations might help to reconcile the texts of the two draft resolutions.

28. The principle of the independence of experts would be upheld by the existence of *ad hoc* panels of experts to assist the standing committee. His delegation was prepared to clarify operative paragraph 6 of its draft if anyone felt that its purpose was not clear.

29. In the third paragraph of his note (E/L.1407/Add.1) the Secretary-General indicated the financial implications of implementing operative paragraph 6 of draft resolution E/L.1407. He wondered whether the sum of \$60,000 mentioned in that paragraph was more or less than the sum that would be necessary to maintain the Advisory Committee on the Application of Science and Technology to Development in its present form.

30. Mr. GRESFORD (Director for Science and Technology) said that no funds had been requested for the Advisory Committee in the budget estimates for 1972 since it was not yet known if its mandate would be renewed. The estimate for the current year (1971) was \$100,000, that was to say more than the estimated cost of the expert panels (\$60,000).

31. Mr. DE AZEVEDO BRITO (Brazil) said that the representative of Ghana had quite rightly emphasized the need for an integrated approach to matters relating to science and technology. That was precisely why the sponsors of draft resolution E/L.1400 had suggested that the standing committee should deal with "all" questions relating to science and technology. However, that did not mean that the committee would examine all those matters in detail but merely that it would deal with them "at a general and planning level" (operative paragraph 1). Each field of activity would therefore be studied by the various panels of experts and the standing committee's task would be to prepare an integrated plan covering the whole field.

32. The four sponsors of draft resolution E/L.1400 had decided not to spell out the standing committee's terms of reference because they felt that it was the task of the General Assembly since the Assembly would establish the

committee. However, sufficiently clear indications relating to the question had been given in operative paragraphs 1 and 3.

33. It should be emphasized that it was the Advisory Committee itself which had felt that it would be advisable to establish an intergovernmental body. Far from wishing to ignore the Advisory Committee the sponsors had, on the contrary, sought to comply with the wish it had expressed.

34. The PRESIDENT suggested that the sponsors of the two draft resolutions should hold consultations in order to reach agreement on a compromise text for the two draft resolutions (E/L.1400 and E/L.1407).

AGENDA ITEM 14

Report of the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination (E/4989)

35. The PRESIDENT recalled that the Council had already reviewed most of the chapters of CPC's report in connexion with its consideration of other items of its agenda. That was so for chapter VI (Selected Programme Areas), chapter VII (Future Institutional Arrangements for Science and Technology), chapter VIII (Question of the Establishment of a United Nations Transport Centre) and chapter IX (Development of Tourism). As for chapter II (Review of the Sphere of Activities and Competence of the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination), CPC had recognized that more time would be needed to examine the question and had therefore decided to include it in the agenda of its ninth session. The Council would no doubt receive CPC's report on that important item at its fifty-first session. It would then have an opportunity to undertake a detailed study of general co-ordination questions and the reports of the Joint Inspection Unit.

36. If there were no objections, he would suggest that the Council should take note of the report of the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination on the work of its eighth session.

It was so decided.

AGENDA ITEM 3

Outflow of trained personnel from developing to developed countries (*continued*)* (E/4798, E/4820 and Corr.1 and Summary, E/4820 and Add.1 and Corr.1, E/L.1379/Rev.1/Add.1, E/L.1412, E/L.1416, E/L.1417, E/L.1418)

37. The PRESIDENT stated that three delegations had expressed a desire to submit amendments to draft resolution E/L.1412. He invited the members of the Working Group set up by the Council at its 1763rd meeting and the sponsors of the amendments to hold an informal meeting.

The meeting was suspended at 5 p.m. and resumed at 7.10 p.m.

38. Mr. GHORRA (Lebanon) said that an agreement had been reached between the members of the Working Group who had drawn up draft resolution E/L.1412 and the delegations which had submitted amendments. The amendment to operative paragraph 3(e), proposed by the USSR delegation (E/L.1417) had been accepted with a slight change proposed by the Sudan. The Sudanese amendment (E/L.1416) had been accepted after a slight modification. The Working Group had then considered the amendments submitted by Brazil, Haiti, Jamaica and Kenya (E/L.1418). It had agreed to the addition of a new paragraph (a) after the second paragraph of the preamble. On the other hand, the co-sponsors of the draft amendments agreed to withdraw the proposed paragraph (b). It had been decided to add the three new paragraphs between operative paragraphs 4 and 5.

39. The PRESIDENT congratulated the Working Group and the sponsors of the amendments for their spirit of co-operation. Voting on the draft resolution would have to be postponed until the new text had been distributed.

The meeting rose at 7.20 p.m.

* Resumed from the 1765th meeting.