



President: Mr. Rachid DRISS (Tunisia).

AGENDA ITEM 8

Natural resources:

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

1. Mr. ODERO-JOWI (Kenya) pointed out that it was an error that the name of the Soviet Union appeared in document E/L.1399.
2. The Council had created by resolution 1535 (XLIX) of 27 July 1970 the Committee on Natural Resources in recognition of the great importance of that question for development, particularly that of the developing countries. The utilization of natural resources should be based on certain principles; firstly, raw materials should be processed more fully in the developing countries themselves rather than being exported to developed countries in the raw state. That was actually the only way for States to exercise permanent sovereignty over their resources. In that regard, attention should be paid to the need for interregional co-operation for natural resources development. Lastly, emphasis should be laid on the importance of multipurpose development, as in the case of river basin development not only for irrigation, but also for the production of power.
3. Although some might consider that the work of the Committee on Natural Resources at its first session had not been very encouraging because it had had to feel its way, it had nevertheless taken some extremely important decisions, particularly with regard to establishing a revolving fund, convening an international water conference and setting up natural resources advisory services. In that regard the Committee had decided to recommend that the Council approve the proposal of the Secretary-General for the setting up of advisory services and further recommended that the concept be broadened to accept the offers made by delegations in the course of the debate (see E/4969, para. 107). He, being the Chairman of the Committee on Natural Resources, hoped that the Council would approve the proposal and endorse the idea of broadening the concept of advisory services by including any experts made available by States Members of the United Nations and not only those made available by the United Nations.
4. As was stated in paragraph 112 of its report, the Committee on Natural Resources had agreed to the setting up of an intergovernmental working group consisting of 15 members to work out the details of the United Nations revolving fund for natural resources exploration. His delegation welcomed that decision and hoped that the Council would view it favourably. Developing countries needed the international community to help them by providing the technical know-how which they lacked in order to accelerate the exploration and exploitation of their resources.
5. The proposal to hold an international water conference in 1975 had received wide support in the Committee on Natural Resources and the Government of Argentina had offered to host the conference. In accordance with paragraph 53 of the report, he suggested that the Secretary-General should work out the details of the conference before the second session of the Committee.
6. One particular reason why the Committee had encountered certain difficulties during its first session was that there was no clear definition of natural resources. It had therefore requested the Secretariat to prepare a number of studies (see paras. 94, 98 and 149) which would be important elements at the second session. For its part, the Kenyan delegation tended to favour as broad a definition as possible but had no firm opinion in that regard.
7. As had been pointed out by the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination, the Committee on Natural Resources should play a definite central role in assisting the Council in the formulation of natural resources policies and work programmes and should plan its work with a view to drawing up short-term and medium-term work programmes.
8. His delegation welcomed the fact that the Committee on Natural Resources had emphasized training and the transfer of technology in the field of natural resources. The developing countries did indeed lack qualified personnel and needed the assistance of the United Nations family of organizations. Since progress in the developing countries depended to a large extent on their ability to exploit their own resources, it was to be hoped that, at its next session, the Committee would be able to assume its full role as co-ordinating organ of the United Nations in the field of natural resources exploration and exploitation.
9. Mr. DE AZEVEDO BRITO (Brazil) said that for many developing countries, despite difficulties they might experience, natural resources were an invaluable asset, and they must see to it that their permanent sovereignty over the resources was recognized. The international community had an important role to play in assisting the developing countries to utilize their resources. Recognition of the importance of the three main sectors—water resources, mineral resources and energy resources—had led the United Nations to establish in 1970 the Committee on Natural Resources.
10. The results of the first session of the Committee had been somewhat disappointing, mainly because the Committee had been feeling its way. Although delegations had agreed on the main objectives, they had held divergent

views regarding priorities. A working group had endeavoured to draw up broad guidelines within the framework of the International Development Strategy for the Second United Nations Development Decade (General Assembly resolution 2626 (XXV)), but the consensus which it had reached had unfortunately not been considered by the Committee as a whole.

11. In the field of programming, the Committee had been presented with an unusual number of proposals, some of which had been based on politically unacceptable concepts, such as truly colonialist schemes for the intercontinental transfer of energy. Others had reflected a juridical approach of doubtful value and some had even manifested a dangerous tendency to interfere in the internal affairs of States. The initiative must clearly be left to the countries concerned.

12. The proposal to organize an international water conference in 1975 was one example of the faulty juridical approach taken by the Resources and Transport Division, which had been pointed out in the report of the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination (see E/4989, para. 65). In the view of his delegation, the conference was undesirable because of the activities already taking place or projected in related fields such as the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, the sectoral approach which prevailed in matters concerning water development and the essentially regional character of such questions. At best it would be a conference on generalities.

13. As a result of the defects in the proposals submitted to it, the Committee on Natural Resources had not been able to make any recommendations on possible programmes and had decided to revert to the matter at its second session. Until basic principles had been formulated and proposals evaluated at the technical level, CPC and the Council would not be able to act on medium- or long-term programmes in the field of natural resources. The best that could be hoped for was that when the Secretary-General drafted the 1972 work programme for the economic, social and related fields, he would take due account, where natural resources were concerned, of the comments made and the views and criticisms expressed on the various proposals both at the first session of the Committee on Natural Resources and at the eighth session of CPC (see E/4989, para. 67). In the meantime, it would seem only logical for the Secretary-General to avoid any proposal which had already proved controversial.

14. In short, he was sorry to say that the projects and objectives contained in the proposals had not been related to a set of priorities or to a rational plan. In some cases, moreover, the practical application of new technologies to development and the performance of research had been confused. Although research was highly desirable, it could not be carried out with the meagre resources of the Organization. Worse still, legal misconceptions permeated some of the proposals. There had been a lack of planning, and the basic role of the United Nations in the field of natural resources had often been misconstrued.

15. Mr. PRAGUE (France) said that, despite the voluminous documentation prepared by the Secretariat and the enlightened leadership provided by the Chairman of the

Committee on Natural Resources, the Committee, as was to be expected at its first session, had not been able to find a middle ground between the general and the particular.

16. The Committee had not been able to avoid the hazards of being too general. Too often it had lingered over purely political considerations and had held rather lengthy discussions on the principle of permanent sovereignty over natural resources. Since his delegation had, at the request of the Secretary-General, been composed of experts who did not consider their task to be purely a political one, it had not participated in those discussions. He hoped that the Committee would gradually move away from political considerations since it had more useful work to do in other areas.

17. The Committee had also succumbed to the dangers of being too particular. As had been pointed out by the representative of the Netherlands, the Committee on Natural Resources should not be looked upon as the governing body of one division of the Secretariat with the sole function of approving that division's work programme. There were procedures within the United Nations by which Governments could familiarize themselves with the work programmes of divisions of the Secretariat and express their views on them. It would be detrimental to the smooth functioning of the Organization for each division to attempt to set up its own individual parliament which would be predisposed to support its views. It was for CPC and the Economic and Social Council to approve the Secretariat's work programme. The Committee on Natural Resources had a different function. Steering a course between policy considerations and work programmes, the Committee should seek to define directions of work and over-all priorities applicable to all United Nations institutions working in the field of natural resources and not just those of the Resources and Transport Division.

18. Therein lay the main failing of the documentation submitted to the Committee at its first session. By focusing on the work programme of the Resources and Transport Division, it had not afforded a broad view of the work being done by the rest of the United Nations family. That error should be corrected at the next session.

19. Because it had not been able to take a comprehensive view of the question, the Committee had wandered in a maze of individual projects. An attempt had been made to remedy the situation by setting up a working group under the chairmanship of the representative of the Netherlands, which had tried to extract some priorities and broad objectives. Unfortunately, the Committee had not thought it possible to endorse the conclusions reached by the working group and had deferred their consideration to its second session, at which time his delegation hoped they could be adopted.

20. If the Committee was to carry out its task and form an accurate conception of all the work done by the Organization, it would probably be necessary for it in future to confine its agenda for each session to one clearly defined subject. It would be foolhardy to attempt to consider all the work of the Organization at each session. The Committee should specialize and should concentrate at each session on one of the three broad sectors coming within its

purview. If an urgent problem arose in another sector, the Committee could of course always turn to it. If it was decided to specialize in that way, less time might be left between sessions than originally envisaged. If the Committee did not specialize, it would not be necessary to tighten its schedule, and for that reason his delegation had reservations as to the advisability of holding the next session in February 1972, which would be less than one year after the first session.

21. Two decisions had been adopted at the past session. First, the Committee had decided that special advisory services should be set up. His delegation had not shared the majority view on that matter. It had not considered it wise to take a final decision on a problem which chiefly concerned UNDP, the more so when that decision ran counter to the view expressed by the UNDP Administration. A better understanding of UNDP's opposition to the creation of such services was needed. However, his delegation was not adverse to the principle behind the decision. The new way of deploying experts could be adopted as an experiment for a certain time, after which a final decision could be taken on the basis of the experience gained and the views of UNDP. It was inaccurate to speak of the "establishment" of special advisory services since there was no question of creating them but rather of a more flexible deployment of experts already recruited for short-term assignments.

22. Secondly, the Committee had decided to support the establishment of a revolving fund. His delegation was aware of theoretical and practical difficulties connected with the Fund's establishment. The preassignment of funds to a given sector ran counter to the reforms recently adopted by UNDP. It was also hard to see when and for which project a country would be obliged to pay a portion of the profits from a given project into the revolving fund. His delegation favoured the establishment of a working group to study those matters and was prepared to participate actively in its work.

23. Mr. OGISO (Observer for Japan), speaking at the invitation of the President, recalled that the exploration and development of natural resources were a decisive factor in the economic and social development of developing countries, which, in turn, was dependent on the expansion of the world economy as a whole. Due attention should be paid to the links between the natural resources development and the growth of the world economy.

24. It would be useful if, as suggested in paragraph 65 of the report of CPC on its eighth session (E/4989), documentation for future sessions of the Committee on Natural Resources could be presented in a more rational and systematic manner, with due regard to the time element and the need for presentation of financial implications. His delegation hoped that the Committee would in future concentrate on matters of high priority.

25. The Committee should take into account studies carried out by other United Nations bodies and agencies. He welcomed its recommendation that the Council should approve the proposal to set up special advisory services. It should be possible to utilize not only United Nations experts but also those placed at the disposal of the United Nations by individual countries.

26. The proposal to establish a United Nations revolving fund for natural resources exploration was a very complex question and his delegation had already explained its position in detail. He was glad that the Committee had agreed to set up an intergovernmental working group to consider the question and hoped that the group would consider both the proposals submitted by the Secretariat and other proposals, so that it could work out acceptable arrangements. The Committee was to consider the working group's proposals at its second session and the Council should wait until that session had been held before taking up the question.

27. Mr. LOUYA (Democratic Republic of the Congo) congratulated the Committee on Natural Resources and its Chairman on the high quality of the work it had done. In years to come the Committee would undoubtedly justify the hopes developing countries placed in it. His country attached great importance to international co-operation in the sphere of natural resources. Older technology had been made uneconomic by recent advances, and the new technology extended beyond the confines of national sovereignty. Many problems were universal and required the international community to make a periodic appraisal of the general situation in order to ascertain the requirements of international co-operation and to stimulate development at the national and regional levels. The United Nations had an important part to play in developing and marketing natural resources, and in their conservation and the protection of the environment. It should study ways of helping developing countries to make an inventory of their resources. Furthermore, the United Nations and, in general, all the organs and agencies concerned, such as UNDP, UNIDO and IBRD, should give developing countries increased aid for establishing new geological research institutes and strengthening those already in existence. The time had come for action to enable the developing countries themselves fully to develop their natural resources; it was regrettable that, with their vast untapped resources, they were unable to exploit them through lack of capital and technical facilities.

28. Water resources were of vital importance to the well-being of humanity. The research being done on the subject seemed inadequate and he therefore supported the idea of convening an international water conference in 1975. The objectives of the conference should, however, be clearly defined.

29. The intensification of the activities of the United Nations system in the sphere of natural resources justified the establishment of a United Nations revolving fund for the exploration of natural resources.

30. He hoped the Council would approve the report of the Committee on Natural Resources without reservation.

31. Mr. GEOGHEGAN (United Nations Development Programme) said, on the subject of the special advisory services, that similar services were already being provided by experts serving on short-term missions in different countries under preparatory aid arrangements made and financed by UNDP, as reflected in the report of the Committee on Natural Resources (see E/4969, para. 106). The proposed decision called for agreement of the countries

concerned and, in the case of UNDP financed projects, of the Administrator. Accordingly, it was believed possible to work out arrangements to the satisfaction of those concerned. The details were not clear to UNDP and he hoped they would be clarified at the working level. Details could, however, probably be worked out between the Secretariats and would necessarily include arrangements to adjust individual country programme figures. The Office of the Controller might also have to be consulted. Thereafter, certain details which could not yet be forecast would have to be agreed with recipient Governments.

32. The Administrator of UNDP looked forward to consulting with the proposed intergovernmental working group on the revolving fund. He had certain views and comments, and he would like to make them known in the appropriate way.

33. Mr. LISOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) congratulated the Committee on Natural Resources on its work and hoped it would continue to function satisfactorily. Some delegations had expressed their disappointment with the outcome of the Committee's work. However, it should be remembered that the session had been the Committee's first and that natural resources problems were very complex and involved scientific, technical and political issues. The representatives of Brazil and France had rightly pointed out that the Committee had had before it a huge volume of documents, information, draft decisions and proposals. He also congratulated the Secretariat on its work. Nevertheless, he said some proposals had been submitted prematurely or had been inadequately prepared. The composition of most delegations had been very representative. If the Committee had run into difficulties, the reason was that the Secretariat had not had time to study in depth the different proposals submitted to the Committee. There were grounds for optimism, however, in the proof the members of the Committee and its Chairman had given of their competence.

34. The USSR had a special interest in the international co-operation in the utilization of natural resources for the welfare of mankind. In the matter of exploring and developing national natural resources, the USSR itself could very well be considered a developing country: one needed only to mention the extent of the resources constantly being discovered in Siberia. The USSR was trying to exploit its own resources and at the same time to help other countries to develop their natural wealth. At the Twenty-fourth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, Mr. Brezhnev had stressed the importance of international co-operation in prospecting for and utilizing natural resources. Specific proposals had been submitted and the Congress had been greatly concerned with organizing international co-operation, particularly at the European level. For example, there had been a proposal to establish a European electric power network. Co-operation also involved many other countries. The earth was a small planet and its resources were very limited. It was the duty of all to establish effective international co-operation in the rational exploitation of natural resources and in the struggle against waste and the consequences of uncontrolled exploitation.

35. His delegation strongly opposed the view expressed by a number of delegations of Western countries that discus-

sions in the Committee should not deal with the political aspects of international co-operation in the utilization of natural resources and that the Committee should be a purely technical body composed entirely of technical experts. That position did not reflect the true state of affairs, since the question of natural resources, particularly in regard to the prospects for the economic development of the developing countries, could not be reduced to its technical aspects alone. It was a complex political question which embraced the areas of politics, economics and law. Even the question of inalienable sovereignty over natural resources, which some delegations sought to depict as purely political in nature, was essentially an important, complex problem with political, economic, scientific, technical and legal aspects. The Committee on Natural Resources should definitely give those various aspects its most urgent consideration. It was clear that satisfactory arrangements should be concluded between the developed countries and the developing countries whose natural resources they helped to develop. Countries in which foreign capital was invested for the exploitation of their natural resources should derive the maximum benefit from such capital. His own Government proposed to expand still further the technical assistance which it provided to developing countries, including that for the exploration and exploitation of mineral resources. Although his country lacked sufficient technicians to meet its own needs, it had increased the assistance which it provided without cost to the developing countries: it had, for instance, helped to train in geology more than 20,000 technicians in 22 African and Asian countries. Pakistan, in particular, had used the services of USSR experts in its petroleum exploration operations. The Committee on Natural Resources could usefully study the type of assistance provided by a socialist country to the developing countries.

36. His Government thought that the proposal to establish a revolving fund was excellent and had supported it in the Committee. His country had, however, refused to participate in the intergovernmental working group which was to consider the financial aspects of the proposal and in particular the question of the profit to be made from exploration projects, because it had never itself profited from the assistance which it provided for such work. His delegation considered that the establishment of special natural resources advisory services would be a waste of resources, because there was no need for such services.

37. Mr. RABETAFIKA (Madagascar) observed that it was difficult to produce new ideas and even more so to ensure that they were accepted from the outset. The task of the Committee on Natural Resources had been complicated by the confused documentation and the failure of the Secretariat to exercise selectivity with regard to the problems which had been assigned to it. Despite those difficulties, his delegation was convinced, given the obvious soundness of the Committee's aims, that the situation could be remedied.

38. He was gratified that the principle of self-help had been taken into account in the plans for the establishment of a revolving fund for natural resources exploration and therefore approved its establishment, on condition that the sources of finance and the amounts to be repaid were specified. His delegation thought it best not to have the fund financed by voluntary contributions. In its view, the

developed countries, too, should contribute to the financing of the new fund, as should foreign private companies involved in the exploration or exploitation of resources, in view of the fact that they made sizable profits from such operations.

39. As to the special natural resources advisory services, the proper course might be to expand UNDP's activities in that field which had been described earlier by the representative. In any event, the proposed advisory services should complement and not supersede current activities.

40. The organization of an international water conference should not lead to duplication of the forthcoming United Nations Conference on the Human Environment; that was why the Committee was required to define and consider in detail the purposes of the proposed meeting.

41. His delegation approved the decision, mentioned in paragraph 98 of the report of the Committee on Natural Resources (E/4969), to request the Secretary-General, in collaboration with the organs of the United Nations system concerned, to prepare a report on the operational activities of the United Nations system in the field of natural resources development for the second session of the Committee. Paragraph 149 of the report covered the French representative's comments on the Committee's difficulties as a result of the lack of information.

42. His delegation was convinced that the Committee and the Resources and Transport Division could do valuable work although their activities should in future be guided by the rational utilization of human and natural resources.

43. Mr. LA PORTA (United States of America) said that although his delegation was not a member of the Committee on Natural Resources it viewed its work with great interest, because the Committee was an important body with a responsibility to provide general guidance for United Nations activities in the field in question, including the function of identifying areas of desired programme emphasis.

44. His Government concurred with the comments of the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination on the work of the Committee on Natural Resources and believed it essential that the latter should concentrate at its second session on the formulation of a work programme which stated an order of priorities and was accompanied by a full explanation of its financial implications.

45. In addition, CPC and the Economic and Social Council should have an opportunity to review the full work programme of the Resources and Transport Division together with precise financial implications and projections for the future, if possible.

46. He endorsed the comments of CPC on the question of special advisory services. However, further details should be provided on the mode of operation of the services and their implications for similar services already provided by the United Nations system, particularly with respect to UNDP. Accordingly, the Council should defer approval of the proposal, even in principle, until full details, including the financial implications, were available and the relevant arrangements had been worked out with UNDP. Those arrangements should be examined by the Governing Council of UNDP and the Council.

47. With regard to the establishment of a revolving fund, his delegation awaited the report of the intergovernmental working group of the Committee on Natural Resources which was to consider in detail the administrative, institutional and financial aspects of the proposal and, in the interim, would appreciate the views of the UNDP Governing Council on its implications for UNDP policy and operations.

(b) International co-operation in cartography (E/4943 and Add.1)

48. The PRESIDENT said that under the agenda item the Council had before it the report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Sixth United Nations Regional Cartographic Conference for Asia and the Far East, held at Teheran from 24 October to 7 November 1970 (E/4943) and the administrative and financial implications of the proposals in that report (E/4943/Add.1).

49. The Council would take up the item when the New Zealand delegation had introduced the draft resolution which it was preparing.

Organization of work

50. The PRESIDENT said that, if there was no objection, the time-limits for the submission of draft resolutions would be the following: for item 11 (a): Wednesday, 12 May at 6 p.m.; for items 8 (a) and (b): Thursday, 13 May at 3 p.m.; and for item 16: Friday, 14 May at 6 p.m.

The meeting rose at 5.40 p.m.