

# ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL

## SECOND SPECIAL SESSION

Summary record of the sole meeting,  
held at Headquarters, New York

### 1880th meeting

Monday, 17 September 1973, at 11.15 a.m.

President: Mr. Sergio A. FRAZÃO (Brazil).

E/SR.1880

#### *Opening of the session*

1. The PRESIDENT declared open the second special session of the Economic and Social Council. The session, which had been convened on the basis of the letter from the Permanent Representative of Pakistan to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Council (E/5417) and his own letter to the Secretary-General (E/5418), bore witness to the determination of the United Nations family to provide urgent relief for Pakistan following the disastrous floods in that country.

#### *Expression of sympathy in connexion with the death of King Gustav VI Adolf of Sweden*

2. The PRESIDENT, speaking on behalf of the Council and on his own behalf, expressed deep sympathy to the delegation of Sweden in connexion with the death of King Gustav VI Adolf, and requested that delegation to convey profound condolences to King Carl XVI Gustaf and to the Government and people of Sweden.

3. Mr. VALDES (Bolivia), speaking for the Latin American members of the Council, Mr. OGISO (Japan), Mr. RABETAFIKA (Madagascar), speaking for the African group, Mr. TEMPLETON (New Zealand), speaking for the Western European and other States, Mr. CZARKOWSKI (Poland), Mr. AKHUND (Pakistan) and Mr. LISOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) also expressed their sympathy to the Swedish delegation.

*On the proposal of the President, the members of the Council observed a minute of silence in tribute to the memory of King Gustav VI Adolf of Sweden.*

4. Mr. RYDBECK (Sweden), speaking at the invitation of the President, thanked the members of the Council for their condolences and said that the Swedish Government and people appreciated the expressions of sympathy received from all over the world.

#### AGENDA ITEM 1

##### Adoption of the agenda (E/5419)

5. The PRESIDENT drew attention to the provisional agenda for the second special session of the Council (E/5419) and said that, if there were no objections, he would take it that the Council wished to adopt the agenda.

*The agenda was adopted.*

#### AGENDA ITEM 2

##### Measures to be taken following the natural disaster in Pakistan (E/5417, E/5418, E/5420, E/L.1569)

6. The PRESIDENT said that in view of the urgent and non-controversial nature of the item he would assume, if there were no objections, that notwithstanding the provision of its resolution 1621 A (LI) of 30 July 1971, the Council wished to consider the item in plenary.

*It was so decided.*

7. Sir Robert JACKSON (Under-Secretary-General in charge of the United Nations Relief Operation in Dacca), speaking on behalf of the Secretary-General, expressed appreciation of the swift and substantial response made to provide assistance to the Government and people of Pakistan in meeting their most urgent needs. Much remained to be done, however, and he trusted that the international community would continue to respond generously and promptly.

8. A brief account of developments to date was contained in the note by the Secretary-General (E/5420). On 13 September, the Secretary-General had addressed a letter to all Member States regarding the humanitarian operations currently being carried out on the subcontinent. His main reason for so doing had been to ensure that all concerned fully appreciated the inter-

relationship of the operation being undertaken by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to assist in the return to their homelands of people displaced by war and the need to provide some assistance in resettling them, and remembered that, particularly in the case of Pakistan, such resettlement could be directly affected by the serious flooding there. While the primary purpose of the letter had been to reassure Governments that the United Nations system was dealing with all such humanitarian problems on a co-ordinated basis, the Secretary-General hoped that the session of the Council would concentrate on the great problems which the floods had created for Pakistan, thus leading to a clearer understanding of the damage caused and encouraging the international community to respond appropriately.

9. Mr. BERKOL (Disaster Relief Co-ordinator) said that on 8 August, following reports of heavy flooding in the Punjab and Sind provinces, he had communicated directly with the UNDP Resident Representative at Islamabad in order to obtain an official assessment of the situation. A week later he had received an official request from the Government of Pakistan for the Co-ordinator to undertake emergency relief measures.

10. In accordance with established procedures, a description of the disaster and details of the relief urgently required had been sent by telex to a large number of Governments, United Nations agencies, the League of Red Cross Societies, and other non-governmental and voluntary organizations. A request for the maximum allocation from the Working Capital Fund had at the same time been cabled to the Secretary-General who had immediately confirmed his authorization.

11. On 16 August a representative of his own Office had been dispatched to Pakistan to assist the local United Nations team and government authorities in assessing the magnitude of the disaster and the priority relief requirements. Massive relief aid had begun to flow to Pakistan from many sources. As his Office received further news from the disaster area, donors had been promptly informed of the nature of relief contributions and of the continuing priority requirements by means of situation reports sent by telex to concerned parties and through special *ad hoc* meetings convened by his Office at Geneva, such as the one held on 31 August with major voluntary agencies and that held on 4 September with the representatives of 39 Governments and United Nations agencies. A report listing contributions and the continuing priority requirements as of 12 September and also an on-the-spot narrative description of the disaster written by his personal representative could be obtained from the Secretariat.

12. On 23 August the Secretary-General had reported the worsening flood situation, noting the immense tasks of relief and rehabilitation which would have to be undertaken as soon as the emergency phase was completed and stating that the widespread destruction had created a tragic situation which called for the generous assistance of all Governments and organizations.

13. It was felt that the events he had described demonstrated once again the potentially valuable role which the Co-ordinator's Office could play in mobilizing and concerting effective relief assistance. He expressed thanks to all the Governments, United Nations agencies and voluntary agencies concerned for their rapid and generous response.

14. As the Council was aware, the involvement of the Office of the Disaster Relief Co-ordinator would gradually decrease as operations progressed from the emergency stage to the stage of rehabilitation and reconstruction (see E/5420), although the Office would continue to retain an interest in the subsequent activities of the United Nations agencies concerned within the context of its relief responsibilities. Food and medicine would still be needed for several weeks to come and more donors were urgently required. He paid a special tribute to the Government and people of Pakistan for their extraordinary efforts in combating the effects of the catastrophe.

15. Mr. COOMARASWAMY (Assistant Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme and Director of the Regional Bureau for Asia and the Far East) said that, at the request of the Government of Pakistan, the UNDP Resident Representative had been serving as co-ordinator of external relief assistance coming in from all parts of the world through bilateral and international agencies. A United Nations agency task force had been set up at the outset and met daily with the UNDP Resident Representative to report on the latest developments and requirements. The Resident Representative had taken the lead in mobilizing and directing the efforts of international personnel currently assigned to UNDP-assisted projects, the staff of United Nations agencies based in Pakistan and the entire staff of the UNDP office at Islamabad so that maximum priority could be given to helping the Government and people of Pakistan. During the initial rescue operations, permission had been given for the Representative to make UNDP project vehicles available for use by the Government. The Resident Representative had been requested to submit an assessment report on external aid requirements so that UNDP might see what fell within its terms of reference and financial possibilities.

16. Some areas in which assistance would be needed were already provided for in the UNDP country programme for Pakistan approved by the Governing Council in June. The Resident Representative thought that the Government might wish to replace some of the project proposals in the country programme with others more directly related to current priorities. UNDP would be in a better position to judge the extent and nature of the assistance required from it when it received an assessment report from its representative in the near future. The Government of Pakistan could rest assured, however, that UNDP would do its best to respond to the fullest extent possible. The Administrator had already directed that resources up to \$1 million be made available to finance UNDP assistance for rehabilitation and reconstruction purposes, in addition to UNDP resources already available for the Pakistan country programme.

17. Mr. AKHUND (Pakistan), speaking at the invitation of the President, expressed the profound gratitude of the people of Pakistan that the Council was meeting in special session to discuss the situation created in Pakistan by the recent floods, the worst in living memory. The readiness with which the Council had agreed to convene the session was proof of the world's concern and sympathy for Pakistan's plight.

18. Pakistan was only beginning to emerge from the consequence of political upheaval and military conflict. The repatriation and resettlement of hundreds of thousands of people following the agreement reached

at New Delhi in August 1973 would cost large sums but would put an end to an unnecessary chapter of human suffering. The disruptions which Pakistan had experienced had severely set back an economy which had once been considered a model of economic growth. The average growth rate of the gross national product (GNP) had fallen from more than 5 per cent in the 1960s to only 1.5 per cent in 1971-1972. He cited statistics indicating a dramatic improvement during the year 1972-1973 in the GNP, agricultural and industrial production and exports. It had been hoped that export earnings would reach the \$1,000 million mark within a year or two and, even more important, that Pakistan would become self-sufficient in food grains and perhaps even enter the wheat export market.

19. However, in July there had been disquieting signs that the 1973 monsoons would be unusually severe. Heavy rains had destroyed stored food-stuffs and other commodities and at Karachi had damaged property worth \$25 million. July had brought flash floods in Baluchistan and the North-West Frontier Province. In August, the full force of the monsoon had borne down on the fertile croplands of the Punjab and Sind.

20. In normal times, the five major rivers that flowed through Pakistan were a great boon to the country's predominantly agricultural economy. An extensive irrigation system testified to Pakistan's efforts to channel the precious waters of those rivers to reclaim the desert. Once every few years, however, the rivers spilled over their banks and caused varying degrees of destruction. In 1973, following unusually heavy rains in the catchment areas of the north, all five rivers had come into spate at about the same time, so that when they had entered the plains they had been virtually uncontrollable. Previous flood-level records had been surpassed. In the Punjab, with a population of over 37 million and an area of nearly 80,000 square miles, 21 per cent of the standing crops—mainly cotton and rice—had been destroyed and 16 per cent had been damaged. Roads, bridges, dikes, canal embankments and railway tracks had been washed away. Half a million houses had been damaged and 8 million people living in 6,500 villages had been displaced. That was a conservative estimate and did not include the cost of 1 million tons of stored food grains which had been almost completely ruined. No less severe had been the damage in the province of Sind, where a population of nearly 14 million lived in an area of some 28,000 square miles. In that province 2 million people had been affected and more than 22 per cent of the crops had been totally destroyed. In parts of the province, the authorities had been forced to breach certain dikes, deliberately flooding some tracts in order to save the more valuable areas.

21. He cited figures which indicated the tremendous damage which the floods had wrought on the irrigation system, the power transmission and distribution system, the transport and communication network, the industrial sector, the physical planning and housing sector, and schools, school books and equipment. In connexion with the latter, Pakistan was grateful to the Director-General of UNESCO for endorsing Pakistan's appeal for paper and newsprint. The loss of human life had been considerable, and was particularly poignant for those families who had already lost members in the recent upheavals. However, as a result of the effective and prompt rescue efforts of the authorities, loss of life had not been as heavy as might have been feared.

22. The Government and people of Pakistan had mobilized all their energies and resources to meet the flood emergency on a war footing. A flood relief committee had been established to conduct relief and rescue operations. The entire machinery of the Government, including the armed forces, had been pressed into service and all able-bodied men had come forward to help. Heavy equipment and vehicles of all kinds had been diverted from their normal tasks to that of holding back the flood waters where possible and of assisting the relief and rescue effort. Prime Minister Bhutto had personally inspected danger areas and supervised the work of thousands of government personnel and civilian volunteers. President Chaudhri, various governors and central government and provincial ministers had similarly supervised operations. No effort had been spared to rescue those in danger or deliver supplies to those who had been marooned. The rapid and energetic mobilization of relief efforts also accounted for the fact that there had been no major outbreak of epidemic diseases.

23. The relative success of Pakistan's relief and rescue efforts could be attributed in no small measure to the prompt material and financial help which had been, and was still being, received from all over the world. A paper recently circulated by the Secretariat provided a list of donors. He wished to express the sincere thanks of the people and Government of Pakistan to friendly countries, private and public groups, individuals and the United Nations, all of whom had done so much to help during the emergency. He paid a particular tribute to the efforts of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator, the Under-Secretary-General for Political and General Assembly Affairs and the Under-Secretary-General in charge of the United Nations Relief Operation in Dacca.

24. As to the current situation, in the Punjab, all breaches in canal embankments had been repaired and water was flowing through the canals normally. Damage to the Panjnad headworks would be repaired as soon as the flood level had gone down. In Sind many breaches had been closed but the situation was still far from normal. All damaged power units had been recommissioned except for one station at Khanpur. Part of the telephone and telegraph system had been restored. Pakistan's main communication line, the coaxial cable of Japanese origin, which linked Karachi to Lahore and Karachi to Rawalpindi, had been seriously damaged and an expert had recently visited Japan to purchase the equipment required to restore it. The repair of roads and railways was likely to take some time.

25. Measures had been taken to distribute wheat flour and other essential commodities to the affected areas. A major drive had been launched to save existing crops wherever possible and to increase the yield of the winter crop. Arrangements were being made to supply wheat seed to the flood-stricken areas and the system of fertilizer and pesticide distribution was being streamlined.

26. The Government was taking all possible administrative measures to increase production. To enable farmers to meet their seed and fertilizer requirements, the provincial governments were providing interest-free loans recoverable after the next harvest. A special tax had been imposed to help the Government meet emergency needs.

27. The National Health Laboratory had increased the production of vaccine and \$2 million in foreign exchange had been allocated for the purchase of medicines. The House Building Finance Corporation had been directed to earmark half of its loans for 1974 for the flood-affected areas.

28. A flood committee had been set up by the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Development and was formulating a long-term plan for flood control, flood relief and rehabilitation. Pakistan hoped that agencies of the United Nations system such as the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development would be able to help it in the control and prevention of floods.

29. Pakistan could not by its own unaided efforts repair the flood damage and provide the minimum required for the subsistence of its population. Repairs required not only money, but also equipment unavailable in Pakistan, for the purchase of which its strained foreign exchange resources would not suffice. The most serious situation concerned the supply of food-stuffs, where critical shortfalls were foreseen. Although Pakistan was grateful to the countries which had offered assistance, commitments thus far constituted approximately 12 per cent of the total requirements. Pakistan was apprehensive that in the absence of adequate international shipments of food grains and edible oils there would be extreme hardship and perhaps even famine until the harvesting of the winter crop in April.

30. The floods had severely jeopardized Pakistan's hopes for the future. According to some calculations, its development plans had been set back by five years, a prognosis which the Government hoped was pessimistic. The fact remained that much that had been painstakingly built over the years had been destroyed. The irrigation system—one of the finest in the world—might have to be remodelled where the rivers had changed their course. Funds earmarked for development in the current year and equipment committed to various projects had had to be diverted to relief work.

31. Pakistan was heartened by the knowledge that the international community was supporting the hard work, courage and determination of its own people to rebuild what had been destroyed and to restore the rate of progress which had prevailed before the floods. The people of Pakistan did not lose heart when disaster struck, nor their dignity when adversity seemed to become a way of life. They would begin as they had done on previous occasions, knowing that they would succeed although the road ahead was difficult.

32. Mr. OGISO (Japan) said that the recent floods of unprecedented magnitude had hit Pakistan at a time when its people had been working to restore their economy following the unfortunate event of 1971. The Government and people of Pakistan were again displaying great courage. The co-operation of the international community was urgently needed to assist their rehabilitation and development efforts. The nations of the world had responded with profound sympathy and generous assistance. On behalf of the members of the Asian group, he expressed the deepest sympathy and ready co-operation of the Governments and peoples of the Asian region. Through the Red Cross Society of Japan, his own country had donated medical supplies, milk powder, blankets and other items in the amount of 100 million yen. The decision to convene

a special session of the Council to discuss the pressing situation in Pakistan had been a wise one.

33. Introducing draft resolution E/L.1569 on behalf of its sponsors, who had been joined by the delegations of Mali, Mongolia, the Netherlands, and Trinidad and Tobago and, in accordance with rule 75 of the Council's rules of procedure, by the delegations of Egypt, Ghana, Indonesia, the Philippines, Sweden and Turkey, he said that the draft resolution was similar to those previously adopted by the Council in cases of natural disasters. He summarized the substance of the operative portion and pointed out a minor drafting correction in paragraph 5. The sponsors believed that the adoption of the draft resolution would encourage further assistance from the international community and promote the co-ordination of assistance programmes. They hoped that it would meet with the unanimous approval of the Council.

34. Mr. VALDES (Bolivia), speaking on behalf of the Latin American members of the Council, assured the representative of Pakistan of their solidarity with his country in the difficult situation in which it found itself as a result of the recent floods. The Latin American delegations also were grateful to the President for having convened the session so promptly.

35. The letter from the Permanent Representative of Pakistan to the President of the Council (E/5417) rightly stated that facts and figures, however accurate, could not adequately describe the human misery and suffering that resulted from natural calamities. It was indeed difficult to conceive of the full extent of the suffering caused by a flood which had covered more than 20,000 square miles, directly affecting more than 8 millions persons, destroying or making uninhabitable a million houses, destroying thousands of head of cattle and more than a million tons of food-stuffs. It was no easier to imagine the effort which would be necessary, currently and in the future, to combat the danger of epidemics, to rehabilitate people and industries and to restore public services, transport and irrigation systems and means of communication. The effort required of the people of Pakistan in the reconstruction work would indeed be an immense one.

36. While the international community had demonstrated its solidarity through immediate assistance and promises of future contributions, a further urgent response was still required. In its humanitarian work of studying measures to deal with the situation, the Council should concentrate on those which would help to reduce the gap between the promises of assistance received and the real needs. That was the purpose of draft resolution E/L.1569, and he was pleased to announce that his own delegation, as well as those of Argentina, Barbados and Peru, under rule 75 of the rules of procedure, wished to sponsor that draft, which his delegation hoped would be adopted unanimously.

37. Mr. RABETAFIKA (Madagascar), speaking on behalf of the African members of the Council, said that the rapidity with which the Council session had been convened showed the general understanding both of the decisive role it could and should play in the case of natural disasters, and of the urgency of the case currently before it. The floods in Pakistan were unprecedented in extent, and it was clear both from the letter from the Permanent Representative of Pakistan to the President of the Council (E/5417) and from the statement by the representative of Pakistan

that the situation, particularly in the Punjab and Sind, was indeed critical, the more so since the catastrophe had struck an area which had suffered from the conflict in 1971, and a population which had only just recovered from the results of that conflict.

38. The countries of Africa had also experienced natural disasters, and could therefore not remain indifferent to the situation in Pakistan. They were well placed to understand the human suffering caused by shortage of food, and there was a danger that that shortage would be prolonged in Pakistan as a result of the destruction of crops and the damage the floods had caused to the harvest and to the economy in general. The African countries were also aware of the difficulties confronting the Government of Pakistan, and wished to congratulate it on the efforts it had made, together with its people, to face up to the situation. They welcomed the speed with which the Disaster Relief Co-ordinator had been able to organize relief operations and the readiness of the international community to meet the most urgent needs. He wished to assure the representative of Pakistan of the sympathy of the African members, both of the Council and of its sessional committees, and of the feelings of solidarity which their peoples felt with the people of Pakistan.

39. The delegation of Tunisia had become a sponsor of draft resolution E/L.1569 under rule 75 of the rules of procedure.

40. Mr. TEMPLETON (New Zealand), speaking on behalf of the group of Western European and other countries represented in the Council, thanked the representative of Pakistan and the Under-Secretary-General for their reports on the current situation in Pakistan. Their accounts had confirmed the impression derived from newspaper reports and other sources that there had been appalling losses of food stocks, that vast areas of arable land had been inundated, crops destroyed, cattle drowned, villages swept away and millions of people displaced. The orderly and planned development of Pakistan had been seriously disrupted, and the delegations on whose behalf he was speaking wished to extend full sympathy to the Government and people of that country. It was an irony of fate that Pakistan should suffer such a staggering setback to its plans for the future at a time when it had shown courage in recovering from the disturbances of recent years and when its economy was beginning to show a healthy rate of growth.

41. Apart from sympathy, Pakistan was also entitled to support. Practical assistance was obviously essential, and the immediate response of the international community in providing emergency relief said a great deal for international co-operation. The countries on whose behalf he was speaking had been pleased to hear of the effort made by the Disaster Relief Co-ordinator to identify immediate needs, mobilize relief supplies and facilitate their distribution throughout the disaster zone. The Co-ordinator's vigorous and effective efforts indicated that the Council had been right to establish his Office which, it was now apparent, possessed the necessary flexibility and capacity to respond quickly in emergency situations and to perform the functions the Council had envisaged for it. At present the Co-ordinator's most important function was assistance after the event; however, in future the Council should give serious consideration to the possibility of giving him the authority and the facilities to engage in more pre-disaster planning. While it was unlikely that in

the foreseeable future disasters could be prevented, the international community should be able to ensure that their consequences were minimized.

42. In the meantime, it was appropriate that the Council should request its subsidiary bodies, the specialized agencies and other organizations to provide all possible assistance within their respective programmes to the Government of Pakistan. His delegation, as well as those of the other members of the group of Western European and other States in the Council and its sessional committees, accordingly fully supported draft resolution E/L.1569.

43. Mr. LISOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that his delegation, too, sympathized with the Government and people of Pakistan at the human and material losses that had resulted from the recent natural disaster in that country. On learning of the floods in Pakistan the Soviet Red Cross, motivated by principles of humanity and international solidarity, had decided to render immediate assistance. Special aircraft carrying tons of medicines had been sent to the areas affected, and the Soviet Union, through the International Red Cross and the Red Crescent, had at the very outset provided assistance to the total value of 100,000 roubles.

44. His delegation believed that the draft resolution before the Council should be adopted without a vote, but as in similar cases in the past wished to draw attention to his delegation's assumption that such action would not lead to any increase in expenditure under the regular budgets of the United Nations or the specialized agencies.

45. Mr. CZARKOWSKI (Poland) said his delegation joined the President and other speakers in expressing sympathy to the Government and people of Pakistan. The Polish Government had decided to provide relief assistance, consisting mainly of medicines, to the value of 500,000 zloty, and the Polish Red Cross was discussing with the appropriate authorities in Pakistan the modalities for their delivery. On the understanding that its adoption would have no financial implications for the regular budgets of the United Nations or the specialized agencies, his delegation was prepared to support draft resolution E/L.1569.

46. The PRESIDENT invited the Council to vote on draft resolution E/L.1569.

*Draft resolution E/L.1569 was adopted unanimously.<sup>1</sup>*

47. Mr. AKHUND (Pakistan) said his delegation wished to thank the representative of Japan for introducing the resolution, and the Council as a whole for adopting it unanimously. He also wished to thank those who had spoken, on behalf both of the regional groups and individual delegations; his delegation was heartened by their words of comfort and encouragement, and he was sure that the people of Pakistan would be encouraged by the Council's decision to come to their assistance in their time of trial. He also wished to thank the President for acceding readily and promptly to his request that the Council should be convened.

48. The PRESIDENT said he wished to congratulate the Council on the efficient manner in which it had dealt with the urgent question of ensuring the greatest impact for the assistance to be provided by the United

<sup>1</sup> Council resolution 1828 (S-II).

Nations system to help Pakistan recover from the natural disaster it had recently suffered. The Council's prompt response to the request for action in that humanitarian cause struck a positive note for the revitalized Council all delegations were striving to build.

*Closure of the session*

49. The PRESIDENT declared the second special session of the Economic and Social Council closed.

*The meeting rose at 12.40 p.m.*