



Economic and Social Council

PROVISIONAL

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Organizational session for 2000

PROVISIONAL SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 1st MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Thursday, 27 January 2000, at 11 a.m.

Temporary President: Mr. FULCI (Italy)

President: Mr. WIBISONO (Indonesia)

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The meeting was called to order at 11.15 a.m.

OPENING OF THE SESSION

The TEMPORARY PRESIDENT declared open the organizational session of the Economic and Social Council for 2000.

STATEMENT BY THE TEMPORARY PRESIDENT

The TEMPORARY PRESIDENT said that combating poverty was the international community's overriding goal and that much remained to be done in that area. Greater commitment and a spirit of teamwork were needed on the part of Governments, civil society and international organizations. Bold steps must be taken in areas such as finance, debt, trade, social policies, health and education, and the focus on sound governance and sound macroeconomic policies must be maintained. Vulnerable population groups including women and children, must be given priority attention. The world conferences of the 1990s had helped the international community to rethink and improve the effectiveness of its strategies, but poverty must be combated with concrete actions. There was a need for political will to meet agreed goals and for benchmarks to measure progress.

For fully five years, the Economic and Social Council had worked consistently to integrate international efforts to achieve the goals agreed upon at the world conferences of the 1990s. At its 1999 session, whose primary focus had been poverty eradication, the Council had adopted a ministerial communiqué supporting integrated strategies to eradicate poverty, empower the poor, empower women and promote employment and work; adopted forceful guidelines to gear the activities of the United Nations system towards poverty eradication and national capacity-building; and spurred a new effort to coordinate international support to Africa. The Council was increasingly recognized as a forum in which Governments, non-governmental organizations, United Nations organizations, the Bretton Woods institutions and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development/Development Assistance Committee (OECD/DAC) came together to discuss how to achieve common goals.

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For the last two years, efforts had been made to reinvigorate the Council, inter alia, through the organization of panel discussions and special high-level meetings on globalization, finance, trade, poverty and post-conflict peace-building. In the coming weeks, the Council secretariat, in cooperation with United Nations University (UNU), would bring together the results of those debates in a publication entitled "Globalization: the United Nations dialogue", which would be the first United Nations publication devoted to the work of the Economic and Social Council. That publication would highlight the Council's key policy and coordinating role in the United Nations system and would show that the new Economic and Social Council was an intellectually vibrant body that was playing the role envisaged by the founders of the United Nations.

The Council had made good progress in all areas of the agenda which he had set upon assuming the presidency the preceding year, with one exception: the strengthening of coordination with the specialized agencies and the funds and programmes. He trusted that the Council's clear sense of its mission would enable it to make progress in that fundamental sphere.

Mr. MONTEIRO (Portugal), speaking on behalf of the European Union and the associated countries Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia and Turkey, said that he appreciated the work of the outgoing President and Bureau of the Council in strengthening and deepening the Council's relations with international financial institutions, particularly with regard to poverty eradication, and in strengthening its dialogue and institutional cooperation with the Security Council through the reactivation of Article 65 of the Charter. Other notable achievements had been the focus on Africa at the most recent substantive session, the steps taken to enhance the Council's credibility and stature and the creation of a web site on the Council. The countries on whose behalf he was speaking reaffirmed their commitment to the Council's work.

Ms. KING (United States of America) said that she appreciated the activism of the outgoing President, which had greatly contributed to the renaissance of the Council. She welcomed the continued strengthening of the Council's coordination function and of its relations with the Bretton Woods institutions and certain specialized agencies, and hoped that the next President would extend those efforts to other specialized agencies. She had also welcomed the outgoing President's efforts to ensure that the Council had the information

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it needed to conduct informed debates on key topics. The Security Council's recent discussions on AIDS and humanitarian issues demonstrated the prescience of the outgoing President's revival of Article 65 of the Charter; those issues should be followed up in the Council. Lastly, she was grateful for the outgoing President's role in enabling the Council to meet once again in its own Chamber.

Mr. SATOH (Japan) said that he shared the views expressed by the preceding two speakers. The outgoing President's emphasis on the importance of concrete results had revitalized the Council's activities in many areas. For example, the strengthening of the dialogue with the Bretton Woods institutions had invigorated the Council's work in the area of development. Other important achievements had been the renovation of the Economic and Social Council Chamber and the revitalization of the functions of the President of the Council.

Mr. TCHOULKOV (Russian Federation) said that he shared the views of the preceding speakers on the enormous contribution made by the outgoing President, and that the latter would long be remembered for his role in the revitalization of the Council.

Mr. PRADHAN (Observer for Bhutan), speaking on behalf of the Group of Asian States, said that the initiatives and dynamism of the outgoing President had left their mark on the Council's important work in the fields of economic and social development, health, education and poverty alleviation. Members therefore had a responsibility to discharge the Council's mandates effectively, particularly since the existence of the link between development and international peace and security was now generally accepted.

ELECTION OF THE PRESIDENT

The TEMPORARY PRESIDENT informed the Council that the Group of Asian States had nominated Mr. Wibisono (Indonesia) for the post of President of the Council for 2000.

Mr. Wibisono (Indonesia) was elected President by acclamation.

Mr. Wibisono (Indonesia) took the Chair.

The PRESIDENT said that he would build on the efforts of his predecessor to re-establish a clear identity for the Council, which was a key organ of the United Nations. While there was need for continuity in pursuing ongoing programmes, at a time of rapid change the Council should also be open to new ideas and initiatives for addressing emerging challenges. In an

increasingly complex and integrated world, moreover, the President and Bureau of the Council depended on the cooperation, expertise and active involvement of all member States.

One of the top priorities of his Presidency would be to reassert the Council's central coordinating role and core function to enable the Council to enhance its effectiveness and maintain its status vis-à-vis its subsidiary bodies, functional commissions, funds and programmes and specialized agencies. The Council must also be able to respond in a timely manner to emerging issues and problems of major international significance in the social and economic fields. The Bureau should therefore be authorized to convene a meeting or special session of the Council at any time during the year to deal with crises and emergencies.

The Presidency would give top priority to the crucial issue of the role of information technology in international development and cooperation. Information technology represented the most powerful contemporary technological revolution, and its impact and rapid development defined the challenges and opportunities which all countries faced. While it could be a major force for promoting equitable economic growth and development and for narrowing the gap between the developed and the developing countries, information technology could also further marginalize the developing countries and widen the gap between them and the developed countries. Full advantage should therefore be taken of the current year's high-level segment of the Council to help shape the path of information technology and ensure that it benefited all humankind, not just those who had the connectivity and capacity to harness its potential.

To that end, a series of panel discussions would be held in New York during the high-level segment to heighten awareness of information technology and development. Efforts would also be made to organize regional dialogues co-sponsored by the Council and the regional economic commissions during the period leading up to the high-level segment. An exhibition on information technology and its role in international cooperation and development would also be held at Headquarters. He hoped that the exhibition would help to further reduce barriers to accessing such technologies and facilitate networking and increased contacts between Governments and the private sector.

The Council would also continue its engagement with the Bretton Woods institutions by strengthening the annual meeting it held with them and by

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focusing on specific social and economic issues. It would intensify contacts with the Director-General of the World Trade Organization (WTO) and with the Secretary-General of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) in order to promote greater coherence and dialogue between the economic and trade sectors.

ELECTION OF THE BUREAU

The PRESIDENT said that, in accordance with rule 18 of its rules of procedure, the Council was required to elect four Vice-Presidents. After consultations between the regional groups, the following candidates had been nominated: Mr. Belinga-Eboutou (Cameroon), Group of African States; Mr. Niehaus (Costa Rica), Group of Latin American and Caribbean States; Mr. Sotirov (Bulgaria), Group of Eastern European States; and Mr. Pfanzelter (Austria), Group of Western European and Other States.

Mr. Belinga-Eboutou (Cameroon), Mr. Niehaus (Costa Rica), Mr. Sotirov (Bulgaria) and Mr. Pfanzelter (Austria) were elected Vice-Presidents of the Council for 2000 by acclamation.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA AND OTHER ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS (E/2000/1 and E/2000/2)

The PRESIDENT drew attention to the provisional agenda (E/2000/2) and said that, with the adoption of its resolutions 1988/77 and 1989/14, the Council had decided upon a number of measures aimed at revitalizing and improving its functioning. Further measures to that end had been adopted by the General Assembly in its resolutions 45/264, 48/162, 50/227 and 52/12 B. On the basis of the guidelines set out in those resolutions, the Council would have before it for consideration at its organizational session the provisional agenda for that session (E/2000/2) and a note by the Secretary-General containing the proposed basic programme of work of the Council for 2000 and 2001 (E/2000/1).

In conformity with the provisions of paragraph 2(1) of Council resolution 1988/77, he intended to hold informal consultations on the proposed basic programme of work of the Council and other organizational matters, on the basis of which the Bureau would submit its recommendations to the Council for consideration at its next formal meeting. He invited the Council to adopt the provisional agenda.

The provisional agenda was adopted.

The PRESIDENT drew attention to a letter dated 21 January 2000 from the Permanent Representative of Malta, in his capacity as Chairman of the Group of Western European and Other States, informing the Secretariat that Belgium would not be able to serve as a member of the Commission on Sustainable Development for the period from 29 January to 15 February 2000 and that the Group of Western European and Other States had endorsed the candidacy of Finland to replace Belgium as a member of the Commission during that period. He took it that the Council wished to elect Finland as a member of the Commission for the period in question, after which Belgium would resume its membership in the Commission.

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 12.10 p.m.