



SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 13th MEETING

Chairman: MR. NAVAJAS-MOGRO (Bolivia)

CONTENTS

AGENDA ITEM 12: REPORT OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL (continued)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.40 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 12: REPORT OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL (continued) (A/43/3, 8 and Add.1, 122, 214, 235, 273, 325, 336, 341, 360, 367 and Corr.1-2, 370, 393, 432, 435, 446, 457, 450, 463, 544, 587, 671, 688 and 695; A/C.2/43/4; A/C.2/43/L.2-L.4)

1. Mr. KIBRIA (Executive Secretary, Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific) said that although the developing countries of Asia and the Pacific had recorded an average growth rate of 6 per cent in 1987 and expected a similar growth rate in 1988, it was due to the especially rapid growth of China and three other countries of East Asia. The least developed countries and physically isolated island nations of the Pacific continued to suffer stagnation or decline.

2. Although exports of manufactured goods from the dynamic economies of East and South-East Asia had further increased in 1987, protectionism, reduced direct foreign investment, external debt burdens, and low commodity prices were still serious problems. Since 1980 the least developed countries of the region had received only about half the per capita average of western and multilateral aid flows to all least developed countries world-wide. The region contained not only the majority of mankind but also most of the world's poor, hungry and illiterate, and much remained to be done to improve their lives through development.

3. As the only region-wide forum, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) played a unique role as a catalyst and initiator of inter-country ventures and arrangements that had created a substantial framework of regional co-operation and nurtured a growing sense of regional identity. ESCAP was currently concentrating on upgrading the skills and productivity of the region's vast human resources, improving the technological capabilities of member countries and updating transport and communications infrastructures.

4. Most member countries recognized that they could face the future with confidence only if the region's enormous human resources were made more productive and economically viable. That realization had come about because many countries already had or soon would have a rapidly expanding pool of would-be workers but a relatively slow increase in available jobs. It had also come about because the region lacked the academic and institutional framework for the scientific and technological revolution and it was clear that measures must be taken immediately in order to adapt the region's manpower to the new advances if the development potential they offered was not to be lost.

5. There was a consensus that the development of human resources needed to be addressed through comprehensive planning. That consensus had resulted in the adoption, in April 1988, of the Jakarta Plan of Action on human resources development, a flexible yet comprehensive policy guideline for balancing social and economic development, the main aims of which were to assist the region in preparing to cope with massive unemployment, to help the developing countries of the region to take advantage of scientific and technological progress, and to accelerate long-overdue improvements in the region's standards of living.

(Mr. Kibria)

6. ESCAP was also working to improve the technological capabilities of developing member countries. The Tokyo Programme on Technology for Development in Asia and the Pacific laid down a series of specific measures to accelerate technological progress and improve the technical capabilities of countries through both domestic efforts and subregional and regional co-operation. One of the major activities in implementing the programme was the preparation of a regional technology atlas, which would be a unique reference guide as well as a framework for the analysis of technology policy at the national level. ESCAP had also strengthened its activities in technology negotiation techniques, technology licensing procedures, technical collaboration methods, joint venture arrangements and the promotion of business collaboration between firms in the developed and developing countries.

7. The third main area of its work was concerned with developing the infrastructures of countries to the point where they could support the continuing expansion of dynamic economies based on up-to-date technology. There was no shortage of airlines in the region, and there were even a few communications satellites, but hundreds of millions of rural people had no access to telephones or even motorized transport, and many trains resembled relics from the nineteenth century. The Transport and Communications Decade for Asia and the Pacific had provided a much needed framework for enhanced action and co-operation.

8. Finally, he said that ESCAP devoted much attention to self-examination and that twice in the past four years it had overhauled its conference machinery and refined its procedures for greater effectiveness.

9. Mr. GROZDANOV (Bulgaria) said 1988 had been an important year for the Economic and Social Council. Although it had not been possible to reach agreement on the adoption of a common document, one positive result of the Council's summer session had been the adoption by consensus of resolution 1988/77. That resolution was an important step forward in enhancing the efficiency and role of the Council, and Bulgaria hoped that the General Assembly would adopt a positive decision on it.

10. At its summer session the Council had discussed as a priority item the multilateral responses to structural imbalances in the world economy. The item had been a topical one, for despite certain positive elements in the world economy the issues outstanding were far from being resolved and the outflow of financial resources from developing to developed countries continued. In that regard Bulgaria had endorsed Council decision 1988/160 on the net transfer of resources from developing to developed countries. United Nations resources should be deployed so as to clarify and gradually eliminate that phenomenon.

11. Unfortunately, no agreement had been reached on the question of confidence-building in international economic relations, and Bulgaria hoped that the discussions would be continued during the General Assembly session in a more constructive atmosphere.

(Mr. Grozdanov, Bulgaria)

12. Bulgaria also attached great importance to environmental problems, and favoured the setting up of a system of international ecological security to complement existing initiatives. I greatly valued regional co-operation and the contribution of the Economic Commission for Europe in developing interregional co-operation and deepening East-West co-operation.

13. Mr. WALTER (Czechoslovakia) fully supported the efforts made to increase the effectiveness of the Economic and Social Council. It was regrettable, therefore, that the Special Commission on the In-depth Study of the United Nations Intergovernmental Structure and Functions in the Economic and Social Fields had been unable to reduce the differences in approach of individual countries and groups of countries on many key issues. The adoption of resolution 1988/77 was significant in that it would make the Council better able to provide political guidelines, and to monitor and co-ordinate the economic and social activities of the United Nations system. The resolution also provided a point of departure for further efforts to strengthen the Council's role as one of the main United Nations bodies. He hoped that, in his report on the possible merging of the two sessions into one, the Secretary-General would take account of the relevant resolutions on the geographical distribution of sessions and on conference rules, and of the views of the Committee on Conferences. He welcomed the comments of the Director-General for Development and International Economic Co-operation with regard to restructuring.

14. At a time when the situation with regard to the solution of crucial economic problems contrasted sharply with the encouraging international political climate, his delegation appreciated the adoption of resolution 1988/75 on an early identification of world economic developments, which would contribute to the efforts being made to achieve greater predictability, stability and security in international economic relations.

15. Regional co-operation was also significant with regard to confidence-building. His delegation attached great importance to the activities of the Economic Commission for Europe, which not only served to implement the provisions of the Helsinki Final Act, but also had considerable potential in almost all other areas of its activity. Its co-operation with other regional bodies of the United Nations system was encouraging. Regional co-operation and confidence-building would also be enhanced by implementation by the Warsaw Treaty and North Atlantic Treaty Organization States of the Czechoslovak proposal to establish a zone of confidence and co-operation. That would help to increase confidence and strengthen security not only in the military sphere, but also in the economic and environmental fields.

16. With regard to the proposal concerning the convening of a special session of the General Assembly devoted to the reactivation of economic growth and development of developing countries, he hoped that the Committee would clarify the relationship between that initiative, global negotiations and a new international development strategy. Czechoslovakia had consistently supported the initiation of global negotiations by the developing countries.

(Mr. Walter, Czechoslovakia)

17. Referring to decision 1988/160 on net transfer of resources from developing to developed countries, he said that that phenomenon should be analysed in the context of negotiations on possible solutions to the external debt problem.

18. As an active member of the Commission on Transnational Corporations, Czechoslovakia welcomed the adoption of resolutions 1988/56, 57 and 58. Implementation of the resolution on the role of the Commission in promoting alternative and new forms of international economic co-operation would help enhance the role of the United Nations in that significant area. Work on the code of conduct for transnational corporations should be completed since it was of particular significance to the developing countries.

19. With regard to environmental protection, he expressed concern at the illegal dumping of toxic and radioactive waste, particularly in Africa, and supported the proposals made by the developing countries with a view to effective international-level action to eliminate the problem. The Czechoslovak and Ukrainian delegations would present a joint draft proposal with regard to the strengthening of international security and co-operation in the field of environment.

20. Mr. SALAH (Jordan) said that his delegation would restrict its remarks to chapter VI of the report of the Economic and Social Council (A/43/3), in particular to that part of section E dealing with assistance to the Palestinian people and to the report of the Secretary-General (43/367 and Corr.1 and 2).

21. The efforts in the occupied territories made by the organs and specialized agencies of the United Nations system merited special commendation. Their activities were of the greatest importance in easing the economic difficulties suffered by the Palestinian people after 21 years of occupation. The economic pressures exerted on the occupied territories and their inhabitants had been stepped up over the past year in an attempt on the part of the occupation authorities to suppress the uprising of the Palestinian people. Delivery of food supplies and fuel to the West Bank had been disrupted, electricity and water services cut off, and restrictions imposed on the movement of persons and goods. Shopkeepers had been arrested for opening their shops at unauthorized hours, export and import licences delayed or withheld and commercial contacts with the outside world interrupted.

22. The occupation authorities had given exclusive export rights to Israeli agencies, thereby increasing the cost of exports from the occupied territories and undermining their competitiveness on world markets. In the occupied territories, only producers in the Israeli settlements were permitted to export directly. The occupation authorities were also temporizing on the subject of allowing Palestinian businessmen to take advantage of the facilities offered to them by the countries of the European Economic Community. Subsidized Israeli agricultural produce was allowed to enter the occupied territories in unlimited quantities in unfair competition with locally grown produce. The new economic restrictions had been superimposed on measures that Israel had long been pursuing such as the

(Mr. Salah, Jordan)

expropriation of arable land and the denial to Palestinians of access to water resources. More than 75 per cent of such water resources were currently allocated to Israeli settlements and locations inside Israel.

23. The qualitative improvement of industry in the occupied territories had been prevented, as Israel sought to transform such industry into a subsidiary sector of its own. It exploited a cheap labour force for the production of rudimentary goods required by the Israeli market and thereby provided itself with the opportunity to free its own labour force for the production of more complex goods in order to promote its technological progress.

24. By continuing to deny the Palestinian people the right to exercise its sovereignty in political and economic affairs Israel was preventing the development of an independent and integrated economic system in the occupied territories. His delegation called for continued and increased efforts by the organs and specialized agencies of the United Nations to alleviate the suffering of the Palestinian people. Jordan urged all Member States to provide economic assistance to the occupied territories, while at the same time endeavouring to end the Israeli occupation and ensure the implementation of the relevant United Nations resolutions.

25. Jordan would stress its continued commitment to the Palestinian people by providing all possible assistance to the occupied territories through the Jordanian-Palestinian Joint Committee. It would also continue to co-operate closely with the United Nations, making available the facilities necessary for the continuation of the Organization's humanitarian efforts.

26. Mr. DARAS (Greece), speaking on behalf of the European Community, said that resolution 1988/77 on the revitalization of the Economic and Social Council was part of a wider reform exercise to which the Community attached great importance. The resolution, which was a further step towards remedying problems which had beset the Council for a number of years, represented a modest but none the less satisfactory approach to some critical areas where improvement was needed. The Community attached particular importance to the provision calling for in-depth discussions of previously identified major policy themes, and fully agreed with the emphasis placed on the Council's role in operational activities. The Council's contribution was important for the implementation of General Assembly resolution 42/196 on operational activities for development.

27. Some of the principles set out in resolution 1988/77 needed to be translated into practical arrangements in the form of a coherent package aimed at improving the Council's work. Past experience had shown that some resolutions had not produced the expected results largely because of difficulties associated with implementation. The Community expected that the proposed new working methods and organization of work would contribute substantially to the more effective operation of the Council. Reform was not an end in itself but a means of improving international economic and social co-operation for development, and efforts towards that end were taking place in an improved political climate. The member States of the Community attached particular importance to the success of the Council's mission and were ready to contribute actively and effectively in that regard.

28. Mr. PASHKEVICH (Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic) said that in the past year the Council had done useful work that had demonstrated the importance of informal consultations. In the case of some important matters it had not been possible to reach a consensus, but that should not diminish the importance of the resolutions and decisions adopted by a vote.

29. He drew attention to the importance of resolutions and decisions adopted by the Council on such questions as the early identification of world economic developments, revitalization of the Economic and Social Council, an international development strategy for the fourth United Nations development decade, strengthening the role of the Commission on Transnational Corporations and the activities of the United Nations Centre on Transnational Corporations in Support of Developing Countries, international co-operation on the environment, on taking the human factor into account in approaches to development, on the guiding principles for declaring and conducting international decades, and on condemning Israeli economic practices in the occupied Palestinian and other Arab territories. The Council had adopted important decisions on a number of organizational questions and on aid to the neediest countries.

30. Further joint efforts were required to enhance the Council's activity, and resolution 1988/77 envisaged specific measures in that regard. The resolution corresponded to the provisions of Chapters IX and X of the Charter and was based on resolutions already adopted by the General Assembly and the Council. It was therefore essential to achieve the complete implementation of the provisions of resolution 1988/77 and to agree upon a more effective division of labour between the Council and the General Assembly. In that connection, it might be possible to discuss certain ideas which had already been put forward such as making the membership of the Council universal, abolishing some of its subsidiary bodies while ensuring that ways and means of supporting United Nations activities in the relevant spheres of co-operation were secured, holding special sessions of the Council on specific important problems and also sessions at ministerial level, and other proposals which had emerged during the work of the Special Commission.

31. Improvements in the intergovernmental structure and functions in the economic and social fields must be accompanied by enhanced effectiveness of the Secretariat. The Council should make greater efforts to implement the relevant provisions of General Assembly resolutions 42/93 ("Comprehensive system of international peace and security") and 41/59 D. In addition, questions concerning the protection of the environment must be given special attention.

32. It was essential to ensure timely implementation at the appropriate level of the provisions of resolution 1988/75 on early identification of world economic developments. Implementation of that resolution and subsequent measures would assist the process of ensuring stability and predictability in world economic development and thereby ensure economic security. Closely connected with that problem was the question of confidence-building measures in international economic relations, to the consideration of which his delegation attached great significance.

(Mr. Pashkevich, Byelorussian SSR)

33. There were still many unresolved problems with respect to the effective co-ordination of the activity of the United Nations system in the economic and social spheres, and while resolution 1988/77 was a step in the right direction it was also necessary to enhance the effectiveness of the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination. Enhancing the effectiveness of the Council and the Second Committee was an integral part of the general task of enhancing the role of the United Nations in solving all global problems, and as such required new political thinking. To ensure that the United Nations functioned properly as the universal forum for the collective settlement of global problems it was essential that all States members should strictly observe their financial obligations towards the Organization. Financial pressure on the United Nations was inadmissible.

34. Mr. BABA (Uganda) said that the adoption by consensus of resolution 1988/77 had confirmed Council members' commitment to reform, and he hoped that, in his final report on the implementation of resolution 41/213 with regard to the restructuring of the Secretariat, the Secretary-General would take account of that resolution.

35. With regard to multilateral responses to the problem of structural imbalances in the world economy, there had been a renewed call to consider ways and means of halting the deterioration in economic conditions, particularly in the developing countries. At a time of increasing interdependence, there was a need to reaffirm the commitment to multilateralism as an essential element of the international co-operation urgently required to resolve major economic problems.

36. Experience had shown that the economic adjustments made by developing countries would be fruitless without a supportive international environment. Even where adjustment programmes appeared successful, new problems had emerged, counteracting the progress made. Debt repayment and debt servicing could quickly consume a country's entire export earnings.

37. Although there were encouraging signs of assistance from various quarters, the developing countries were becoming increasingly wary of aid. The conditions laid down cast doubt as to the seriousness with which such offers were made. The need to reiterate the appeal for "adjustment with a human face" had never been greater.

38. However, there was undoubtedly great potential for multilateral co-operation and his delegation believed that the United Nations system was best suited to play the leading role in all international assistance efforts.

39. Mr. SILALAH (Indonesia) said that his delegation firmly believed that there was an urgent need to reactivate world economic growth and to put multilateral co-operation for development back on the global agenda. Although the Economic and Social Council, as the main co-ordinating body for social and economic activity in the United Nations system, had an important role to play in that regard, it had had no major impact on the formulation of world economic and development policies. The adoption of resolution 1988/77 was, therefore, extremely gratifying. Full implementation of its provisions would ensure that the Council and its subsidiary

(Mr. Silalahi, Indonesia)

bodies properly fulfilled their mandate, and that the structures involved could be adapted to the new priorities, objectives and needs of the Member States. Although the Special Commission had been unable to reach consensus, its deliberations would provide basis for future activities within the framework of resolution 41/213.

40. With regard to efforts to increase international co-operation and counter structural imbalances in the world economy, he welcomed the adoption of decision 1988/160 on net transfer of resources from developing to developed countries.

41. The Council's resolution on the international development strategy for the fourth United Nations development decade was equally important. In that connection, he welcomed the recommendation that a special session of the General Assembly should be convened on the reactivation of economic growth and development of developing countries. Such a session was urgently needed.

42. The Council had made further progress with regard to regional co-operation, a proven complement to international co-operation. At its forty-second session, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) had decided to focus on human resources development as a main theme for economic development activities in that region. Since then, that development had been widely acknowledged to be an integral part of all such activities, an approach confirmed by the adoption, at the forty-fourth session, of the Jakarta Plan of Action on human resources development.

43. His delegation welcomed the emphasis given by the Council to environmental problems, in particular, those faced by the developing countries. There was increasing recognition of the inextricable link between environmental protection, development, poverty and deprivation. The only viable solution was to foster sustainable development.

44. He hoped that the political changes reflected in the current report and in the Council's resolutions would gain momentum, enabling the Council to fulfil its mandate and contribute fully and effectively to the promotion of world economic growth and multilateral co-operation for development.

45. Mr. MAIGA (Mali) welcomed the initiatives taken by the Economic and Social Council to promote international co-operation and to strengthen its own structures. He also welcomed the adoption by consensus of decision 1988/160 on net transfer of resources from developing to developed countries, and resolution 1988/76 recommending initiation of the process of preparation of the international development strategy for the fourth United Nations development decade.

46. He appealed to the international community for consensus approval of the proposal by the Group of 77 to convene a special session of the General Assembly devoted to the reactivation of economic growth and development of developing countries.

(Mr. Maiga, Mali)

47. Steps had been taken to ensure that the Council and its subsidiary bodies would be fully equipped to fulfil their mandates. In that connection, it was desirable, in the light of its valuable work, to extend the mandate of the Special Commission so that it could present a consensus document on the restructuring of the socio-economic mechanisms of the United Nations.

48. He welcomed the adoption by consensus of resolution 1988/77, implementation of which would significantly affect the process of reinforcing the Council's role and adaptation of its structures to member States' development needs and priorities.

49. With regard to the activities of the Ad Hoc Committee of the Whole of the General Assembly on the Review and Appraisal of the United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development 1986-1990, that Committee's report had indicated clearly that African countries had implemented far-reaching economic reforms and structural adjustments. As a result, they had experienced enormous increases in unemployment, greatly reduced imports and considerably cut-back resources for social needs such as health and education. Notwithstanding those difficulties, they had reaffirmed their will to pursue the objectives of the Programme of Action. At the same time, support from the international community, while not inconsiderable, had fallen short of expectations. He appealed, therefore, for continued support through urgent measures, namely, an increase in the supply of resources to Africa, an improved international environment and an easing of the debt burden.

50. With regard to the launching of a second transportation and communications decade in Africa, he said that the objectives of the first Decade had not been attained because of a lack of resources. He urged adoption of the proposal by consensus.

51. The plight of the homeless was a cause for considerable concern and a problem destined to increase greatly over the coming decade. The international community should, therefore, accord priority to the Global Strategy for Shelter to the Year 2000.

52. Mr. MONTGOMERY (United States of America), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that his delegation deplored the use of Second Committee meetings for inflammatory political statements which diverted attention from vital work. Statements of the kind made during the previous meeting impeded the prospects for peace in the Middle East by raising the already high tensions on the West Bank. The United States believed that its relations with the State of Israel had contributed to the search for a comprehensive and lasting peace in the Middle East. If other members had relations with Israel, further progress would be made in that search.

53. Mr. ASA-EL (Israel), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that the Saudi and Syrian delegations regularly attempted to divert the Committee's attention to extraneous issues. Instead of using that forum to pursue common solutions to common problems, some delegations created dissension, politicizing the agenda to attack the State of Israel.

54. It was surprising to hear the representative of Saudi Arabia lecture others on human rights and political hypocrisy, considering the situation in that country with regard to public executions, womens' rights, censorship, the oppression of religious minorities and arbitrary detention and deportation. With regard to the suppression of rioters, however, Saudi Arabia had considerable experience. In Mecca over 1,000 people had died or been injured in a day in July 1987, for example

55. He questioned the concern expressed by the representative of Syria with regard to the plight of the Palestinian people, given the countless and well-documented acts of murder, torturo and inhumanity that that country had itself committed against the Palestinians.

56. The Syrian representative had incorrectly accused the State of Israel of burning forests and civilian properties. The arsonists in question were Palestinian extremists led by the terrorist Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). Yasser Arafat had been quoted as saying as much in July 1988, since when a great deal more property and land had been burned. More than 35 Palestinian arsonists had been caught attempting to start such fires. Claims by PLO and other extremists with regard to their so-called respect for the land could therefore be viewed in another light.

The meeting rose at 5.20 p.m.