



SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 15th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. NAVAJAS-MOGRO (Bolivia)

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

ORGANIZATION OF WORK

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Distr. GENERAL
A/C.2/43/SR.15
18 October 1988

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 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, 460, 463, 544, 587, 671, 688 and 695; A/C.2/43/4; A/C.2/43/L.2-4)

1. Mr. AL-FAIHANI (Bahrain) said that it was a propitious sign that the Economic and Social Council had taken steps during 1988 to improve its functioning in order better to cope with the requirements of international economic and social policies, as was shown by the fact that it had managed to adopt a number of consensus resolutions on economic development. The Council nevertheless continued to encounter difficulties because of widespread doubt as to the effectiveness of multilateral action, which prevented it from addressing international economic and social crises in the ideal manner.
2. The functioning of the Council could be further improved by the search for new ideas on priority issues in the economic and social sectors. It must scrutinize closely the work of the regional commissions, ensure better co-ordination of operational activities for development and endeavour to devise solutions to those economic and social development issues of concern to mankind as a whole. Particular attention should be paid to the problems of the least developed countries and the island developing countries, and the specific needs of those countries should be met by commissioning studies of their problems and ensuring the provision of assistance by the industrially advanced countries, international organizations and multilateral development finance institutions.
3. The reports of the Secretary-General on assistance to the Palestinian people (A/43/367 and Corr.1 and 2) and Israeli economic practices in the occupied Palestinian and other Arab territories (A/43/432) were of particular importance given that the Palestinian uprising had entered its eleventh month. The Israeli occupation authorities were methodically expropriating land, extending their control over water resources, expelling the Arab inhabitants, establishing new settlements and endeavouring to alter the Arab character of the territories. Since 1967, Israel had taken over more than 52 per cent of all land in the West Bank and more than 40 per cent of that in the Gaza Strip. The occupation authorities refused to allow the export of Palestinian goods, flooded the Palestinian market with Israeli products, refused to issue licences for new Palestinian industrial establishments, imposed exorbitant taxes on existing industries, refused to permit the building of a port in the Gaza Strip that would allow Palestinian products direct access to external markets, and continued their discriminatory practices in the fields of employment and wages. The situation with respect to trade union rights for Arab workers had further deteriorated, and violations of the human rights and fundamental freedoms of the Palestinians had continued. Israeli practices in the Syrian Arab Golan had been no different from those in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.
4. All of the relevant United Nations resolutions and international instruments had affirmed the unlawful nature of economic activities carried out in occupied territory by the occupying Power, since such activities deprived the peoples in question of their basic right to control and exploit their natural resources. They

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(Mr. Al-Faihani, Bahrain)

were also a blatant violation of article 16 of the Charter of Economic Rights and Duties of States. The Secretary-General should therefore prepare a thorough study of the impact of the economic practices of the Israeli occupation authorities.

5. His delegation urged all States and all organs of the United Nations system, in co-operation with the Palestine Liberation Organization, to increase their assistance to the Palestinian people, in order to enable that people to develop its economy. The international community should make every effort to ensure that the Palestinian people exercised sovereignty over its natural resources and should adopt the measures necessary to compel Israel to desist from its current economic practices.

6. Mr. VALLENILLA (Venezuela) said that the Economic and Social Council's second regular session of 1988 had been marked by a general feeling that the Council had not been discharging its functions under the Charter in an effective or efficient manner. Thus the agreement reached at that session on resolution 1988/77, entitled "Revitalization of the Economic and Social Council", was particularly welcome. The measures set out in that resolution should be taken as soon as possible; their implementation would also serve to enhance the credibility and effectiveness of multilateral negotiation mechanisms.

7. The debate at the second regular session on the international development strategy for the fourth United Nations development decade and the resolution adopted on that subject, as well as the decision on reactivation of economic growth and development in developing countries were also indicative of the new desire for reform within the United Nations. The two decisions should in fact be viewed as being complementary, rather than contradictory.

8. In short, the report of the Economic and Social Council reflected the need for change at more than just the structural level and for the need for an ongoing search for solutions in areas requiring the international community's urgent attention. The work done by the Council at its second regular session provided a basis for the identification of measures at the current session of the General Assembly.

9. Mr. MOHIUDDIN (Bangladesh) said it was unfortunate that the work done earlier by the Council's Special Commission on the In-depth Study of the United Nations Intergovernmental Structure and Functions in the Economic and Social Fields had not come to fruition. It was therefore to be hoped that the proposals contained in Economic and Social Council resolution 1988/77, particularly those concerning co-ordination, would be fully implemented.

10. Food and agricultural issues must continue to be the focus of global attention and the problems of the developing countries in that area dealt with in a comprehensive manner. He urged all States participating in the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) to ensure that the third replenishment of the Fund was made in a timely fashion so that IFAD could continue to help developing countries increase food production and alleviate rural poverty.

(Mr. Mohiuddin, Bangladesh)

11. The question of the net transfer of resources from developing to developed countries, taken up in Economic and Social Council decision 1988/160, was another issue of concern to developing countries. The alarming increase in that phenomenon must be addressed by urgent action.

12. His delegation attached particular importance to the adoption of the code of conduct on transnational corporations. Although several issues relating to the code had yet to be resolved, it was to be hoped that the early reconvening of a special session of the Commission on Transnational Corporations would yield further progress.

13. World economic problems were complex and interrelated and could not be solved by individual countries or small groups of countries. His delegation therefore endorsed the proposal by the Group of 77 to convene a special session of the General Assembly at a high level to consider the reactivation of economic growth and development in developing countries. His delegation also fully endorsed the Council's decision to include Mozambique in the list of least developed countries.

14. Mr. BABINGTON (Australia) said that the most recent session of the Economic and Social Council gave cause for optimism, since it appeared that the Council was carrying out its functions of co-ordinating, monitoring and setting policy in the economic and social sectors more fully.

15. Australia was deeply concerned about the consequences of acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) and thus welcomed the Council's adoption by consensus of a resolution supporting the efforts of the United Nations, and the World Health Organization in particular, to combat that disease. A continuing multilateral response to the AIDS tragedy was clearly warranted, given the pandemic's profound economic and social implications.

16. His delegation had been encouraged by the Council's willingness to proceed with the reform of the intergovernmental machinery in the economic and social fields. The Council's adoption of resolution 1988/77 represented a step forward in that regard, as did its decision to hold joint meetings of the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination and the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination. He was nevertheless concerned that no wide-ranging or comprehensive package of reform in the social and economic sectors of the United Nations had emerged. Reform efforts should not be shelved merely because of the recent improvement in the Organization's financial position - appraisal and reform activities should be integral and permanent features of United Nations operations. The system must be able to shed or modify outmoded structures and functions if it was to remain efficient.

17. United Nations reform efforts should build on the foundations laid by the Special Commission of the Economic and Social Council on the In-depth Study of the United Nations Intergovernmental Structure and Function in the Economic and Social Fields and should result in prompt decisions on specific measures. The subsidiary bodies of the Council and their relationships to it and to the rest of the United Nations system should be studied critically with a view to reducing waste,

(Mr. Babington, Australia)

duplication and overlap. Careful consideration should be given to the recommendation to establish a high-level expert body whose membership, preferably limited, would be chosen on the basis of the principle of equitable geographical distribution. Such a group would be likely to produce useful recommendations regarding reform.

18. Mr. PAYTON (New Zealand) said that one of the Committee's most important tasks was the revitalization of the United Nations in the economic and social fields. Economic and Social Council resolution 1988/77 ought to help the Committee move forward in that area and promote the revitalization of the Council itself in a number of ways.

19. For example, much could be done to rationalize the Council's work in the area of policy formulation. The proposal to hold annual discussions on major policy themes was welcome in that regard, although the topics should not be so broad or general as to diffuse the debate. The review of economic and social policy must involve the specialized agencies and the regional economic commissions as partners, rather than as rivals. In fact, the Council had not devoted adequate attention to regional co-operation issues, a shortcoming which should be rectified with the implementation of resolution 1988/77.

20. A constraint facing many delegations at major sessions of United Nations bodies was the sheer volume of information to be absorbed. The large volume of documentation led his delegation to favour a rationalizing of the functions of subsidiary bodies, and, where possible, a merging of such bodies. Delegations should exercise more self-discipline when requesting reports from the Secretariat, which in turn must demonstrate a flair for innovation in the presentation of the many documents it was asked to produce.

21. The Council must have a greatly enhanced role in the setting of overall priorities and policy guidelines for operational activities for development, a role which it had failed to fulfil during the second regular session of 1988.

22. In view of the frustration which had marked the Council's organizational session for 1988, resolution 1988/77 ought to provide welcome guidance in the rationalization of the Council's working methods. His delegation would support all proposals to that end and attached particular importance to an action-oriented programme of work.

23. The idea of a separate and identifiable Secretariat support structure for the Council was appealing, but such a unit must be created through a reordering of existing arrangements and a reworking of priorities. Informal contacts should be made between delegations and the Secretariat before any proposals regarding such a structure were set out in the Secretary-General's report to the Council in 1989. His delegation favoured strengthening the office of the Director-General for Development and International Economic Co-operation, but believed that the Director-General's role was clearly spelt out in General Assembly resolution 32/197. The linking of the Director-General's office with the Department of International Economic and Social Affairs had been proposed; however the role of

(Mr. Payton, New Zealand)

that office, while complementary to the Department's role, was different from it. He suggested that an informal briefing should be held at which Committee members could exchange views on that subject with the Secretariat.

24. He urged the General Assembly to adopt the guidelines for international decades in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1988/63, and expressed his delegation's full support for Council decision 1988/153, which recommended the inclusion of Mozambique in the list of least developed countries. Finally, his delegation would need to learn much more about 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 in developing countries before it could support such a proposal.

25. Mr. AL-KHATANY (Saudi Arabia), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, recalled that, at the thirteenth meeting, the representative of the Zionist racist entity had once again attacked the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in connection with matters outside the scope of the Committee's mandate. When the representative of Saudi Arabia had spoken at the 12th meeting under agenda item 12, he had simply affirmed the contents of the Secretary-General's report on Israeli economic practices in the occupied Palestinian and other Arab territories (A/43/432), the study referred to in paragraph 4 of that document, which had been submitted to the Trade and Development Board in September 1988, and the reports of other relevant bodies.

26. His delegation had hoped that, for once, the representative of Israel would have taken a more realistic approach by responding to - or even refuting - the contents of those reports. Perhaps he might have invited a United Nations fact-finding mission to come observe the situation in the occupied Arab territories. Instead, he had, as always, twisted right into wrong and vice versa. He had not hesitated to comment on the manner in which Saudi Arabia followed the precepts of Islam, a subject on which Muslims needed no instruction from Zionists. In fact, the failure of the representative of Israel to address the information provided in the documents before the Committee was tantamount to an acknowledgement of their accuracy.

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27. The CHAIRMAN drew attention to document A/C.2/43/L.9, which contained a letter dated 12 October 1988 from the President of the General Assembly transmitting a letter from the Chairman of the Fifth Committee to the Chairman of the Second Committee. By that letter, the Second Committee was invited to express its views on the relevant chapters of the revisions to the medium-term plan for the period 1984-1989 (extended to 1991) and on the note by the Secretary-General containing the draft introduction to the medium-term plan for the period 1992-1997, and to communicate its views to the Fifth Committee not later than the first week of November 1988.

(The Chairman)

28. He suggested that the Committee should allocate one meeting for the consideration of that matter during the week of 24-28 October.

29. It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 4.05 p.m.