



UNITED NATIONS

GENERAL  
ASSEMBLY



Distr.  
GENERAL

A/C.2/34/5  
8 October 1979

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

Thirty-fourth session  
SECOND COMMITTEE  
Agenda item 55

DEVELOPMENT AND INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION

Letter dated 4 October 1979 from the Permanent Representative of  
Sweden to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to refer to the statement that was issued by the participants in the United Nations symposium on interrelations among resources, environment, population and development, held in Stockholm 6-10 August 1979. The symposium which was hosted by the Government of Sweden was co-chaired by H.E. Mr. Hans Blix, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Sweden and Mr. K. Dadzie, Director-General for Development and International Economic Co-operation. It brought together a group of participants with great concern for and involvement in today's manifold and urgent issues of economic and social development of the developing countries. The list of participants appears at the end of the statement.

The participants point out that the world community has increasingly been concerned with the manifold problems of development. Although not all the underlying intricacies of the complex development process are fully understood as yet, the world's perceptions of its numerous facets and the intimate links permeating them are becoming sharper. Analyses of and policy prescriptions for these problems have emerged at a time when the world community is engaged in the urgent and comprehensive task of establishing a new international economic order conducive to accelerating the economic and social progress of the developing countries.

The report thus deals with a number of issues of direct relevance to the work of the United Nations under several items of the agenda of the General Assembly, in particular item 55. Accordingly I wish to request that the statement which is annexed hereto be circulated as an official document of the General Assembly under item 55 of the agenda.

(Signed) Anders THUNBORG  
Ambassador  
Permanent Representative of Sweden  
to the United Nations

79-25444

9 p.

/...

AnnexSTATEMENT OF THE UNITED NATIONS SYMPOSIUM ON INTERRELATIONS  
AMONG RESOURCES, ENVIRONMENT, POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT,  
STOCKHOLM, 6-10 AUGUST 1979

1. Increasingly, in recent years, the world community has been concerned with the manifold problems of development. Although not all the underlying intricacies of the complex development process are fully understood as yet, the world's perceptions of its numerous facets and the intimate links permeating them are becoming sharper. Analyses of and policy prescriptions for these problems have emerged at a time when the world community is engaged in the urgent and comprehensive task of establishing a new international economic order conducive to accelerating the economic and social progress of the developing countries.
2. From intense international discussions has come the realization that development problems need to be tackled not separately but in an interrelated manner so as to yield realistic policy conclusions for action. We feel gratified and encouraged by the initiative of the Government of Sweden in convening, under the auspices of the United Nations, this Symposium on Interrelations Among Resources, Environment, Population and Development at Stockholm from 6 to 10 August 1979. In the present statement, we have set out our comments and views based on our deliberations at the Symposium. Although we may not necessarily have identical opinions on every point, the statement reflects our consensus on general trends and policy implications concerning the interrelated issues discussed by us.\* A report on the Symposium, to be prepared by the United Nations Secretariat, will be issued separately.

Interrelations: some examples

3. Interrelations among resources, environment, population and development are evident in numerous processes in the complex socio-economic, technological and ecological systems of which modern society is composed. Some of these are as follows. Rapid population and economic growth stimulate the demand for scarce resources and intensify resource use that leads to, among others, environmental degradation and diminished resource productivity. Loss of land and increased poverty related to population pressures will lead not only to a reduction of the resource base but also to further environmental degradation. Migration flows from mostly rural areas of poor countries to the largest urban areas may create new ecological disruptions and social imbalances. An understanding of these flows and the interactions between rural and urban sectors is not complete without concurrent appreciation of the determinants and consequences, at both national and international levels, of industrialization.

---

\* The views expressed in the statement are those of the participants in their personal capacities and not necessarily those of the Governments or the organizations with which they are associated. The names and titles of the participants are listed at the end of the statement.

4. A specific example is provided by fuelwood, which is the principal source of energy in many developing countries. The effect of rapid population increase and inadequate development of other sources of energy is to intensify the demand for wood, widen the gap between demand and supply and leave more intensive wood cutting as the only alternative for the poor. Given the localized character of wood supply, intensive wood cutting exerts concentrated pressure on tree cover and other woody vegetation that leads to deforestation and therefore decline in agricultural productivity through landslides, flooding, soil erosion and even desertification.

5. Negative effects are not necessarily inherent in interrelations. A simple example of positive impact is provided by the process through which human development by education and training leads to improved use of natural resources and to higher productivity. It also contributes to declines in fertility and to diminished population pressure.

6. A greater understanding of such interactions would help to identify points of leverage for the acceptance and application of appropriate policies, thereby making patterns of resource use, consumption and population growth and distribution more apparent. Continuing research is needed to enhance our understanding, but policy action should not await the outcome of new research.

7. We touch on some aspects of the interactions among resources, environment, population and development in the following four sections under the headings of carrying capacity, human development, disparities and life styles, and resource use. Development is also closely interrelated with trade, monetary and financial questions, a subject which was not within the purview of the Symposium but which was referred to in connexion with the requirements of a more equitable and rational economic order. With this in mind, a new impetus to a North-South dialogue, covering all the critical issues of international economic co-operation, has become more urgent than ever.

#### Carrying capacity

8. The concept of carrying capacity connotes the potentiality to support growing populations at increasing standards of living. Although we are still unable to establish where "outer limits" are, we note with concern that certain patterns of production and consumption are straining carrying capacity globally, regionally and nationally.

9. A dramatic instance of this danger is the potential long-term effect of man's activities on climate. The World Climate Conference, held in February 1979, has pointed out that, as a consequence of continued combustion of fossil fuels and possibly also deforestation throughout the world, the amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere is increasing by about 4 per cent every 10 years. Should this trend accelerate or even continue, a gradual warming of the lower atmosphere might occur which could lead to changes in temperature and rainfall patterns globally with highly important implications for many aspects of the world economy, including agriculture and the production of energy.

10. We believe that carrying capacity is not a static but a dynamic concept. It can be improved or expanded by the adoption of development strategies encompassing interrelated sets of goals and measures, by advance of technology and by sound management and equitable use of resources.
11. A new and encouraging development has been a broad acceptance of the relevance of population issues in development policy. For the first time in the post-war period, the rate of growth of world population has started to decline, although the number of people added annually to the world's population is still likely to be more than the present figure of 80 million.
12. Instances of international migration are often symptoms of differential population pressure. The potentialities of voluntary international migration to alleviate such pressure on resources, environment and development remain untapped due to political and other factors.
13. Availability of resources can be enhanced and expanded with advance in technology and by sound management of resources. In the long run, resources are not given but determined by human activity. There are plenty of potential resources available. In particular, consideration and realization of the potential benefits of the development of renewable sources of energy are urgent.
14. In agriculture it appears necessary to define and promote a third agricultural revolution, following that of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, which was based essentially on natural and biological inputs, and that of the twentieth century, which was based on abundant and cheap energy. The techniques of this new revolution should be adapted to each environment, but they would all have in common that they would be based to a much greater extent on renewable inputs, such as natural nitrogen-fixing, more effective utilization of photosynthesis, plants and animal breeding, the association of crops with forestry and aquaculture.
15. We attach great importance to the intensification of international co-operation for global management of resources. This must be fully in keeping with the principle of the exercise of permanent national sovereignty over natural resources. It is necessary to develop a system for monitoring and helping in the management of these resources on a rational basis. Such a system must provide for the developing countries to acquire an equitable share in the world use of natural resources. For this purpose, an adequate international policy should include norms and commitments; it should accord special treatment to the development needs in the distribution of supplies.

#### Human development

16. Human development must be viewed in a wide perspective. Man is both an agent of development and the object of development.
17. Man is not distinct from nature but is one component of a total system. Any other view of man's relationship with nature would be arrogant and likely to reduce

carrying capacity of the earth. Learning is a process to equip man to understand and respect this relationship. However, learning can be effective only if there is an improvement in social and living conditions of the poor.

18. The capacity of mankind to manage resources properly depends primarily on technology and economic and social structures. However, education, formal and informal learning, development of skills, training and communication are equally important. The post-war reconstruction of European countries was possible in a relatively short period because they still had the major ingredients of human-resource structure. Once trained, man sustains himself more easily and is apt to earn his own living.

19. There are interlinks between human development and social conditions. Declines in mortality and fertility due to improvement in education and primary health care have been demonstrated. It has also been demonstrated that appropriate human-settlement policies promote more balanced geographical distribution of population and economic activities. Improved capabilities of people help them to achieve better participation and to anticipate future change. The irreplaceable human capacity and function of problems-solving is enhanced, and value systems are enriched and more closely integrated. Equality between men and women is an integral element of human development.

#### Disparities and life styles

20. The question of consumption patterns and life styles provides one of the most basic sources of conflict in the world today. It is a critical manifestation of stratification in the world, both internationally and domestically. It fuels a major confrontation in the world, with the developed countries wanting to maintain and indeed enhance - the standard of living attained by them, and the developing countries seeking to achieve tolerable living standards for their people.

21. Three aspects of growing conflict are involved. The first is the global structure of relations between resources and human beings in which a minority of countries has, in pursuit of a wasteful style of life, pre-empted a large part of the world's resources. The second aspect is the spread of the same style of life to the dominant strata of the third world which has accentuated divisions within and among these societies. The third aspect arises out of the first two and takes the form of a growing conflict over the access, distribution and control over the world's resources for maintaining and raising standards of consumption of the industrialized world and of the privileged strata of developing countries.

22. The issue of equity, thus, is central to our consideration of population, resources, environment and development. It is clear that basic change in the North, accompanied by fundamental modification in international relations, is critical for over-all structural change in the world. Indeed, such change is a prerequisite for stable and sustainable human development and economic progress of developing countries since this process involves competition for the resources that have been in large part appropriated by developed countries.

23. New patterns of consumption and development are urgently needed in both the North and the South - patterns that are less wasteful, environmentally sound and socially responsible. For the reasons adduced earlier, major responsibility rests in this regard on developed countries. New patterns should help to alleviate the ailments that affluence has brought in its wake.

24. If change in life styles in developed countries is to contribute to mitigating world poverty, it must be organically linked with measures for establishing the New International Economic Order. As an integral part of, and simultaneously with, changes in life styles in developed countries, there should be a fundamental restructuring of international economic relations. The aim should be to remove the present inequities and imbalances, to ensure full and effective participation of developing countries in international decision-making and, through energetic deliberate steps, to enlarge substantially the transfer of resources to them and to organize the flow of those resources on a more assured and automatic basis.

25. In this connexion, we note with deep concern the present unfavourable climate of international development co-operation. It is a tragic irony of our times that, while the interdependence inherent in the world economy is becoming a fact of life, co-operation among nations has suffered a setback and is being retarded. There has developed a wide gap between what appears to be manageable on the basis of scientific and technological considerations and what is acceptable at the intergovernmental level. Mass communications media, activities of transnational corporations and other features of international relations cause developing countries to adopt patterns, strategies and methods of development which are not necessarily appropriate to meet their genuine needs. Changes in developed countries are taking place irrespective of international requirements and objectives, with the result that their impact is quite often unproductive and invariably less than optimal. Steps must, therefore, be taken to forge a global movement aimed at reasserting the development priority. The contribution of like-minded countries (both developed and developing), the United Nations system, non-governmental organizations and various social groups should be dovetailed into a vigorous thrust for bringing about a just world society.

#### Resource use

26. The development capability of nations depends on their potentiality for utilizing natural resources which in turn is determined by their ability to apply technology. Many countries are rich in natural resources but are still underdeveloped because they do not yet possess the capability to apply technology to transform such resources. This is largely due to constraints imposed by social, economic, power and institutional structures both within and among nations.

27. The availability of cheap energy has led to the development of energy-intensive technologies, to changes in the patterns of consumption and, through wasteful use, to the deterioration in environment. These tendencies have been accentuated by population growth and the disparities in levels of living between the North and the South.

28. The energy problem affects in more than one way the interrelations among

resources, environment and development. In the short run, strict conservation measures are necessary in all countries, particularly developed countries. In the medium term, improvements in technological efficiency and development and application of new technologies in energy production and use are needed. In the long run, increasing utilization of new and renewable sources of energy is required.

29. These will, above all, call for massive efforts of international co-operation for undertaking appropriate research and development activities, for providing developing countries access to the latest knowledge and technologies and for mobilizing resources in order to increase investment in this sector substantially. International co-operation in the field of energy will be an essential element of the New International Economic Order. It is particularly important that new measures of co-operation and mutual assistance among developing countries in this field should be undertaken. The urgent adoption and implementation of such measures has become indispensable for maintaining unity and cohesion among developing countries which is crucial for the success of their role in the establishment of the New International Economic Order and for strengthening their collective self-reliance.

30. Rational utilization of natural resources is essential for the expansion of agriculture, and will remain a major issue for many years to come. The application of science and technology should be coupled with the wide appreciation of time-tested traditional conservation and recycling practices, particularly in developing countries. This is an imperative in the face of rapid change and increasing population densities. The use of the seas for both new and additional resources, to maintain equitable life support for all peoples of the earth, is a joint responsibility of both developed and developing countries. To miss the opportunity of international action for wisely monitoring and equitably distributing the bounties of the seas is an affront to the declared basic principles affirmed by Member States of the United Nations.

31. The repercussions of the prevailing patterns of production and consumption on the future supply of both renewable and non-renewable resources are not only a direct result of the increasing use of these resources but will depend also on the impact of environmental changes. Such changes in environment affecting the future supply are, for example, the accumulation of chemical wastes and residues in the soil resulting from overapplication of inorganic fertilizer and the dumping of chemical wastes deforestation and soil erosion due to excessive felling of trees, and the possible changes in climate induced by a decrease in the forest cover and the accumulation of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. These environmental changes can lead to contractions in the supply of arable land and reductions in the productivity of land.

32. Disarmament measures are of crucial importance for the development of human and material resources and for the improvement of the quality of life, for the promotion of the accelerated development of the developing countries and for the establishment of a system of international relations based on equity and justice.

33. Nuclear arms constitute a direct threat to human survival, to the environment and to the development process. The possibility of nuclear war is increasing because of the continuing build-up of stockpiles and growing sophistication of both strategic and tactical nuclear weapons.

34. In order to reverse the present ominous trend in armament expenditures, presently approaching 450 billion dollars per year, the following circumstances seem particularly important to bear in mind. First, there is in the present era an increasing vulnerability of national economies arising from new interdependencies in the international system. The tendency in the leading military Powers to pursue certain national-security interests with military means is dangerous. Secondly, the still prevailing East-West tensions play a significant role in legitimating the ongoing arms race between the super-Powers. A de-escalation of these tensions seem to be necessary to lessen the dangers inherent in the present situation. This would also make it possible for the industrialized countries to engage more constructively in the North-South dialogue and also to free resources - which are now directed to potentially destructive ends - for constructive purposes of development.

Maria AUGUSTINOVICS, Head, Division of Mathematical Methods, Department of Long-term Planning, National Planning Office, Hungary

Helen BENITEZ, Assemblywoman, Philippines

Hans BLIX, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Sweden (Co-Chairman)

G. Arthur BROWN, Deputy Administrator, United Nations Development Programme

K. K. S. DADZIE, Director-General for Development and International Economic Co-operation, United Nations (Co-Chairman)

Philippe DE SFYRIS, Director, Project on the Future, United Nations Institute for Training and Research (Rapporteur)

Muchkund DUBFY, Joint Secretary, Ministry of External Affairs, India

Paul-Marc HENRY, Centre de la Recherche pour le developpement, France

A. E. JAMAL, Minister for Communications and Transport, United Republic of Tanzania

Mohamed KASSAS, Professor of Plant Ecology, Botany Department, Cairo University, Egypt

Rajni KOTHARI, Chairman, Indian Council for Social Science Research, India

LI Chaobo, Vice-Minister of the State Capital Construction Commission and Director of the Leading Group for Environmental Protection under the State Council, China

Y. Abdel MAGEED, Minister of Irrigation, Sudan

/...



A/C.2/34/5

English

Annex

Page 8

P. J. MEADE, Consultant on meteorological problems, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

Ernst MICHAŃEK, Special Adviser, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Sweden

Aurelio PECCEI, Chairman, ITALCONSULT, Italy

Manuel PEREZ-GUERRERO, Adviser to the President, Venezuela

Raul PREBISCH, Director, CEPAL Review, Economic Commission for Latin America, United Nations

A. RAMACHANDRAM, Executive Director, United Nations Centre for Human Settlements

Jean RIPERT, Under-Secretary-General for International Economic and Social Affairs, United Nations

Ignacy SACHS, Director, International Research Centre on Environment and Development, France

Rafael SALAS, Executive Director, United Nations Fund for Population Activities

Edouard SAOUMA, Director-General, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

Alfred SAUVY, Conseiller technique, Institut national d'études démographiques, France

Janez STANOVIK, Executive Secretary, Economic Commission for Europe, United Nations

Inga THORSSON, Under-Secretary of State, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Sweden

Mostafa K. TOLBA, Executive Director, United Nations Environment Programme.

\*\*\*\*\*