



Economic and Social Council

Provisional

23 March 2013

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Organizational session for 2013

Provisional summary record of the 4th meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Friday, 15 February 2013, at 3.40 p.m.

President: Mr. Osorio..... (Colombia)

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

Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters (*continued*) (E/2013/2; E/2013/L.1 and E/2013/L.2)

Basic programme of work of the Council (E/2013/1 and E/2013/L.1)

1. **The President** drew attention to the provisional agenda for the organizational session of the Council for 2013 (E/2013/2); the proposed basic programme of work for the Council for 2013 and 2014 (E/2013/1); the draft decisions submitted by the President of the Council and members of the Bureau (E/2013/L.1), and the draft decision submitted by Canada (E/2013/L.2).

Draft decision I: Proposed date of the special high-level meeting of the Economic and Social Council with the Bretton Woods institutions, the World Trade Organization and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development

2. **The President** recalled that following consultations with both the Financing for Development Office of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the representatives of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, the Bureau had recommended that the special high-level meeting should be held at United Nations Headquarters on 22 April 2013.

3. **Mr. Schuldt** (Ecuador) said that his delegation would have no objection to that date for the meeting. However, the goal of strengthening the Council and of allowing delegations to meet with representatives of those institutions would be better served with a two-day meeting.

4. **The President** said that maximum use would be made of the time on 22 April and a continuation would be ensured through linkage with the meetings on debt, to be held on 23 April. Agreement had been reached to allow for the partnership event to be held on 24 April. With the support of the Secretariat, he would make every effort to ensure that participation would be at the highest possible level.

5. *Draft decision I was adopted.*

Draft decision II: Proposed date of the meeting of the Economic and Social Council on external debt sustainability and development

6. **The President** said that following consultations with the Secretariat, the Bureau had recommended that the meeting should be held at United Nations Headquarters on 23 April 2013.

7. *Draft decision II was adopted.*

Draft decision III: Proposed date of the meeting of the Economic and Social Council on international cooperation in tax matters

8. **The President** said that following additional consultations with the Secretariat, the Bureau had recommended that the meeting should be held at United Nations Headquarters on 29 May 2013.

9. *Draft decision III was adopted.*

Draft decision IV: Provisional agenda for the substantive session of 2013 of the Economic and Social Council

10. *Draft decision IV was adopted.*

Draft decision V: Basic programme of work of the Economic and Social Council for 2014

11. *Draft decision V was adopted.*

Draft decision VI: Working arrangements for the substantive session of 2013 of the Economic and Social Council

12. *Draft decision VI was adopted.*

Draft decision VII: Operational activities segment of the 2013 substantive session of the Economic and Social Council

13. *Draft decision VII was adopted.*

Draft decision VIII: Theme for the humanitarian affairs segment of the 2013 substantive session of the Economic and Social Council

14. *Draft decision VIII was adopted.*

Draft decision IX: Economic and Social Council event to discuss the issue of the transition from relief to development

15. *Draft decision IX was adopted.*

Draft decision X: Theme for the item on regional cooperation of the 2013 substantive session of the Economic and Social Council

16. *Draft decision X was adopted.*

Appointment of an additional member of the Ad Hoc Advisory Group on Haiti (E/2013/L.2)

17. **The President** took it that the Council wished to adopt the draft decision, which contained no programme budget implications.

18. *Draft decision E/2013/L.2 was adopted.*

19. **Mr. Husain** (Canada) sought clarification regarding the suggested distribution of responsibilities for the July 2013 substantive session, raised at the Council's second meeting held on 12 February. He asked whether the President's suggestions had been made for information only or if they constituted a recommendation to the Council on the allocation of those roles.

20. **The President** recalled that he had informed the Council of the division of responsibilities for the respective segments among the members of the Bureau. At that meeting there had been no comments, and it was his understanding that the division of responsibilities he had submitted had been accepted by the Council.

21. **Mr. Husain** (Canada), said that his Government could not accept the distribution as presented on 12 February and expressed its profound disappointment at the proposal to give the Sudan responsibility for the humanitarian segment. The actions of the Government of the Sudan had led to devastating humanitarian situations in Darfur, as well as in South Kordofan and Blue Nile states. The Sudan continued to show utter disregard for the well-being of its own citizens by denying humanitarian access to conflict-afflicted populations and harassing and intimidating international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) attempting to provide life-saving assistance. Those realities led his Government to question its ability to take a leadership role on humanitarian issues; it thus strongly objected to the distribution of responsibilities. It continued to call on the Government of the Sudan to permit full, safe and unhindered humanitarian access to all communities in need of assistance throughout the country. Canada valued highly the work of the United Nations and the Economic and Social Council and

remained committed to constructive engagement on international economic and social issues and cooperation with all Members States to ensure that their collective efforts translated into positive outcomes for all.

22. **Ms. Cousens** (United States of America) said that her Government appreciated the efforts of the President and of the Bureau to assign a division of responsibilities for the July substantive session that would allow the Council to undertake the substantial and important work on its agenda. However, her delegation shared the concerns expressed by the representative of Canada at the President's recommendation to make the Sudan responsible for the humanitarian segment. The Sudan had a long track record of impeding or blocking humanitarian assistance to its own people. For the previous 18 months, the Sudan had stymied efforts by the United Nations, the Arab League and the African Union to negotiate a viable access framework for delivery of humanitarian aid to South Kordofan and Blue Nile states and had obstructed the African Union-United Nations peacekeeping operation in Darfur. The Government of the Sudan must allow immediate and unhindered humanitarian access to all communities in need of assistance in those areas and must further begin negotiations with the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) to reach agreement on a full cessation of hostilities. The Sudan was also subject to United Nations sanctions which it had repeatedly ignored. Various United Nations bodies had documented Sudanese violations of humanitarian and human rights law, including in the 2012 annual report of the United Nations panel of experts for the Sudan. Her Government therefore believed that it was an inappropriate choice that would reflect poorly on the Council at precisely the time when there were rising expectations for its performance on critical economic, social and humanitarian issues. The United States attached real value to the issues on the Council's agenda and to its growing responsibilities and remained deeply committed to close collaboration with all its partners in the United Nations to achieve a better, safer and more prosperous world for all.

23. It was the understanding of her Government that, in accordance with rule 18 of the rules of procedure, the President recommended to the Council a division of labour. It therefore asked the President to consider reserving judgement on the issue until there had been

further consultations, in the light of the concerns raised.

24. **Mr. Osman** (Sudan) said that the Sudan had been nominated for the post of Vice-President by the African Group, comprised of 53 countries. His delegation had pledged to adhere to the guidance and policy adopted by the Bureau.

25. Concerning the unfounded allegations that the Sudan impeded the channelling of humanitarian assistance to the needy people in South Kordofan and Blue Nile, he declared that it was ready at any moment to ensure the smooth delivery of humanitarian assistance to the two states. However, it was the rebel movement known as the Sudan People's Liberation Movement — Northern Sector which impeded the delivery of aid. During a recent meeting with a representative of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), he had been told that one of the rebel leaders who had met with representatives of OCHA in New York had said that his movement was impeding the delivery of assistance mainly because it did not have any confidence in the Arab League and the African Union. The Sudan was ready, at any moment, to coordinate and cooperate with the United Nations, as it did with the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) and with all other agencies. It was the rebel movement and those who supported and encouraged it to escalate the military actions in those states which had led to the deterioration of the humanitarian situation.

26. No ruling of the President of the Council regarding the distribution of assignments among the Vice-Presidents had been challenged since 1993. The members of the Council were equal and sovereign States and no country should prevent another from performing a duty assigned to it by any entity of the United Nations. He rejected categorically the allegations of Canada and the United States of America. Those delegations were free to register their reservations, but the Economic and Social Council must not become another Security Council, with powers of veto.

27. **Mr. Avramović** (Observer for the European Union) shared some of the concerns raised and considered it important to have broad consensus on the division of responsibilities among the segments. His

delegation supported the proposal to defer the decision on the allocation of responsibilities within the Bureau.

28. **Mr. Alemu** (Ethiopia) said that the President should take into account the practice and tradition regarding his responsibilities. It was critical for the Council to have transparency in its operations and working methods. Although it must be taken into account that the African Group had endorsed the Sudan, its delegation would not have undue influence over decisions. With respect to the objectives that the United States and Canada would wish to promote on the ground, the cooperation of the Sudan was critical.

29. **The President** said that it was clear that his recommendation regarding distribution of responsibilities did not enjoy consensus. He pointed out that the distribution of responsibilities was a matter of practice to facilitate the work of the President, not a written rule. He therefore proposed that the decision should be deferred so that further consultations could be held. In the meantime, he would strive, together with his colleagues in the Bureau, to find a satisfactory formula.

30. **Mr. Rodríguez Hernández** (Cuba) said that, from the point of view of procedure, his delegation was concerned by the situation that had arisen. Regardless of the concerns delegations might have at the decision proposed by the President, which his Government considered highly hypocritical, out of respect for his authority the decision should be adopted as proposed. The Council had earlier seen how a delegation could object to a decision without preventing that decision from being adopted. The same process should be followed out of respect for the President's authority and his decision.

31. In the Council and in all other intergovernmental bodies of the United Nations, all countries enjoyed equal representation. As the representative of the Sudan had said, his regional group had endorsed him, and that was the most important thing to consider.

32. **The President** said that he was grateful for the suggestion but reiterated that he did not feel the atmosphere was conducive to a decision by the Council on the matter. He would therefore defer it and continue consultations.

33. **Mr. Elkaraksy** (Observer for Egypt) said that the Sudan had been chosen by the African Group to represent it on the Bureau and hence had the full

confidence of the Group; the Council should go along with the recommendations of the President in terms of the distribution of the different segments.

34. **Mr. Moulton** (South Africa) said that his delegation shared the concerns expressed about the procedure and the normal practice in the Council and emphasized that the Vice-Presidents were indeed appointed by regional groups and served as representatives of those constituencies, not in their national capacities.

35. **Mr. Oguntuyi** (Nigeria) said that the decision to nominate the Sudan had been taken by the group of African States and his delegation believed that it should be respected. A precedent should not be created where such decisions were sanctioned by other groups.

36. **The President** said that the right of each group to designate a Vice-President was not being challenged but rather his recommendation regarding the responsibilities assigned to the four Vice-Presidents in the different segments of the Council's substantive session.

37. **Mr. Vasiliev** (Russian Federation) asked the President to clarify whether he planned to defer the decision until the resumed organizational session on 25 April. He assumed that the recommendation had been coordinated with all of the Vice-Presidents, including the representatives of the Eastern European Group, the Western European and other States Group, the African Group and the Latin American Group.

38. **The President** said that he would first hold consultations to try to find a solution to the assignment of the segments and continue to seek an agreement, together with the members of the Council. If a solution was found before the resumed organizational session, a special session could be held. Deliberations had of course been held among the members of the Bureau; the recommendation submitted was the only solution arrived at.

39. **Mr. Wang Qun** (China) said that China had always respected the decisions of all United Nations regional bodies. Therefore, China welcomed the decision that the Sudan would be the Vice-President for the African Group. China was of the view that the division of responsibilities within the Bureau of the Council should be the result of consultations and decisions of the President and Vice-Presidents. China fully respected the decision of the President to invite

the representative of the Sudan to be the coordinator of the humanitarian affairs segment.

40. It was regrettable that there were differences within the Bureau and he hoped that a decision would be made soon on the matter.

41. **Ms. Carayanides** (Observer for Australia) said that her delegation did not seek to challenge the decision of the African Group, but it remained uneasy about the specific issue of the allocation of responsibilities. Her delegation strongly supported further consultation on the matter.

42. **Mr. Pescheux** (France) associated himself with the statement by the European Union and, in his national capacity, said that there were two different issues: the representation of the African Group by the Sudan, which no one had called into question, and the matter of the division of responsibility for segments of the substantive session. Those issues were quite different in nature and the way in which the regional groups appointed their representatives had not been called into question. As far as the division of responsibilities was concerned, his delegation's interpretation of the rules of procedure was that the decision was the Council's, upon the recommendation of the President, under rule 18.2. His delegation therefore welcomed the President's intention to continue his consultations.

43. **Mr. Escalona** (Observer for the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) said that, out of respect for the President, his delegation agreed to the request to defer the decision for consultations. However, it was unacceptable for a precedent to be set by that action. No member of the Council could assume the mantle of champion of humanitarian affairs. When a regional group chose a representative, it considered its appointee to be capable of assuming any responsibility, and that choice must be respected.

The meeting rose at 4.35 p.m.