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**GENERAL
ASSEMBLY**

SIXTH SPECIAL SESSION

Official Records



**2207th
PLENARY MEETING**

(Opening meeting)

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at 3 p.m.

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CONTENTS

	<i>Page</i>
Agenda item 1: Opening of the session by the Chairman of the delegation of Ecuador	1
Tribute to the memory of Mr. Georges Pompidou, President of the French Republic	1
Agenda item 2: Minute of silent prayer or meditation	1
Agenda item 3: Appointment of the Credentials Committee	1
Scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations	2
Agenda item 4: Election of the President	2
Agenda item 6: Adoption of the agenda	3
Agenda item 5: Organization of the session	3

President: Mr. Leopoldo BENITES (Ecuador).

AGENDA ITEM 1

**Opening of the session by the Chairman of the
delegation of Ecuador**

1. The TEMPORARY PRESIDENT (*interpretation from Spanish*): In accordance with rule 30 of the rules of procedure, I declare open the sixth special session of the General Assembly.

*Tribute to the memory of Mr. Georges Pompidou,
President of the French Republic*

2. The TEMPORARY PRESIDENT (*interpretation from Spanish*): Before we begin our work, I should like to express the deep sorrow felt by all the members of the General Assembly at the death of the outstanding head of the French Republic, President Georges Pompidou. May I express to the delegation of France, on behalf of the General Assembly, our deepest condolences and sympathy at the great loss the French Republic and the world have suffered.

AGENDA ITEM 2

Minute of silent prayer or meditation

3. The TEMPORARY PRESIDENT (*interpretation from Spanish*): I invite representatives to stand and observe one minute of silent prayer or meditation.

The representatives stood in silence.

AGENDA ITEM 3

Appointment of the Credentials Committee

4. The TEMPORARY PRESIDENT (*interpretation from Spanish*): Rule 28 of the rules of procedure provides that a Credentials Committee shall be appointed at the beginning of each session and that it shall consist of nine members to be appointed by the General Assembly on the proposal of the President.

5. With a view to expediting the work of the special session, and in accordance with precedents, it might be appropriate if the Credentials Committee were to consist of the same members as those appointed for the twenty-eighth regular session, namely: China, Greece, Japan, Nicaragua, Senegal, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, United Republic of Tanzania, United States of America and Uruguay. If there is no objection, I shall consider the Credentials Committee constituted accordingly.

It was so decided.

6. The TEMPORARY PRESIDENT (*interpretation from Spanish*): In this connexion may I invite the attention of the members of the General Assembly to a note verbale from the Secretary-General dated 5 March 1974 in which it was stated that, except in the case of the permanent representatives who are accredited to the General Assembly without limitation as to session, new credentials should be issued for all representatives to the special session.

The printed official records of the plenary meetings of the General Assembly are published in fascicle form, the record of each meeting being issued separately. A prefatory fascicle is issued for each session, containing a table of contents and the agenda.

*Scale of assessments for the apportionment
of the expenses of the United Nations*

7. The TEMPORARY PRESIDENT (*interpretation from Spanish*): I should like to inform the General Assembly that I have received a letter from the Secretary-General, which has been circulated as document A/9547, stating that within the terms of Article 19 of the Charter two Member States, namely, the Central African Republic and the Dominican Republic, are in arrears in the payment of their financial contributions to the United Nations.

AGENDA ITEM 4

Election of the President

8. The TEMPORARY PRESIDENT (*interpretation from Spanish*): I now invite the members of the General Assembly to proceed to the election of the President. In this connexion I call on the representative of Iran.

9. Mr. HOVEYDA (Iran): The sixth special session of the General Assembly has been called on the timely initiative of the President of Algeria [A/9541] to consider an item of vital importance to all the peoples of the world.

10. Following consultations and agreements reached with the different regional groups, I should like to propose formally that the General Assembly decide to re-elect, by acclamation for the duration of the sixth special session, opening today, the General Committee of the twenty-eighth session. This will mean that the Assembly would ask Mr. Leopoldo Benites of Ecuador to preside over the deliberations of the special session.

11. The Chairmen of the Main Committees who were elected for the twenty-eighth session will similarly be asked to serve during the present special session, it being understood, after extensive consultations, that the Chairmen of the First, Second and Fifth Committees at the twenty-eighth session, who will not be present at the special session, would be replaced respectively by Mr. Knud-Arne H. Eliassen of Denmark for the First Committee, Ambassador Médoune Fall of Senegal for the Second Committee and Ambassador Mehdi Mrani Zentar of Morocco for the Fifth Committee.

12. In addition, those Member States which served as Vice-Presidents of the twenty-eighth General Assembly would serve as Vice-Presidents of the sixth special session. Those States are: China, Czechoslovakia, Fiji, France, Ghana, Guyana, Honduras, the Netherlands, Spain, Sri Lanka, Tunisia, Uganda, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United Republic of Cameroon and the United States of America.

13. I am confident that this special session would be well served by these selections. Mr. Benites is the highly experienced diplomat, jurist and writer and a distinguished son of Latin America who directed the work of the last regular session so effectively. We are all aware of his many gifts and of his infinite patience; we have witnessed his talents on many difficult occasions. He is the logical choice to preside over this special session, not only because of established

United Nations custom, but also because of his very special merits and qualifications.

14. I also feel that the great experience of the Vice-Presidents and of the Chairmen of the Main Committees of the twenty-eighth session will greatly contribute to the success of this special session.

15. The TEMPORARY PRESIDENT (*interpretation from Spanish*): The representative of Iran has proposed that the President of the twenty-eighth session of the General Assembly be elected President of the sixth special session and that the Chairmen of the seven Main Committees of the twenty-eighth General Assembly session be elected for the duration of the sixth special session, it being understood that the Chairmen of the First, Second and Fifth Committees at the twenty-eighth session, who will not be present at the special session, would be replaced, respectively, by Mr. Knud-Arne H. Eliassen of Denmark for the First Committee; by Ambassador Médoune Fall of Senegal for the Second Committee; and by Ambassador Mehdi Mrani Zentar of Morocco for the Fifth Committee.

16. The representative of Iran has also proposed that those Member States which served as Vice-Presidents at the twenty-eighth session should serve as Vice-Presidents at the sixth special session, namely, China, Czechoslovakia, Fiji, France, Ghana, Guyana, Honduras, the Netherlands, Spain, Sri Lanka, Tunisia, Uganda, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United Republic of Cameroon and the United States of America.

17. May I take it that the General Assembly decides to approve those proposals?

It was so decided.

18. The PRESIDENT (*interpretation from Spanish*): I am extremely pleased and very grateful for the honour you have done me by electing me to preside over the sixth special session of the General Assembly, and I believe that I shall be fully reflecting the feelings of the Chairmen of the Main Committees, as well as of the representatives of States elected to fill the vice-presidencies of the Assembly if on their behalf too I express thanks to you and, more particularly, to the representative of Iran for his very generous proposal, which the Assembly was good enough to approve.

19. As far as I am concerned, it is an invariable ethical rule that any honour done me implicitly carries with it a duty that I must shoulder. The duty I shoulder now is to preside over your meetings with objectivity, impartiality and justice; and I promise to do so.

20. Without boasting, but rather by way of a grave warning, I can assure you that I deeply believe that the sixth special session of the General Assembly that we have called to order today will mark a milestone in the history of our Organization, not only because of what may be obtained from it—for we cannot hope for too much on such a broad subject in such a short time—but because as of today we will have to devise a totally new approach to international economic problems, a critical reappraisal of

the guiding principles of coexistence, and a new order of co-operation among States.

21. In the last few months we have been witnessing a phenomenon of extraordinary interest: the unexpected effect that a single economic measure has produced in the entire working of international relations.

22. First of all, this event has proved the vulnerability of power relationships, both economic and political, which are based on the idea of the dependency of producers of basic raw materials with respect to countries that are better equipped to process them. But this is all the more significant if we consider that approximately 25 developing nations possess between 80 and 90 per cent of the total reserves of basic raw materials required by the industries of the more developed countries—or, if you prefer the term, the better equipped countries. This will doubtless force us to redefine our problems so that, replacing confrontation by co-operation, we will find adequate and flexible solutions.

23. A second and inevitable consequence will be a change in the simplistic blueprints that have served to measure development. In the light of recent events, the differences in degree of development have become accentuated and these differences can no longer be pigeon-holed with arbitrary names; they will make necessary greater interdependence, a greater development of the forms of international solidarity, and a search for means that will maintain the unity of the developing world.

24. The impact of recent events on the inflationary process, on the imbalances in the balance of payments and on the rising cost of living must lead us, if we wish to avoid a catastrophe, to new approaches to the problems and to bolder and more creative solutions. As a centre for co-ordinating international co-operation, the United Nations will have to utilize to the maximum the capacities both of its own organs and of those of its specialized agencies.

25. Today we are facing the challenge of multiple and difficult problems that call for new solutions. It is hardly possible to hope that in the short time we have before us at this special session we will find those solutions, but it is to be hoped that general principles and directives will be laid down for ultimately achieving them.

26. May I express the hope that positive co-operation will take the place of confrontation, and that solidarity will replace isolationism? Surely recent events have proved the growing interdependence of States and their indissoluble links within the international community. They have also proved that solutions cannot be found through the grouping of economic forces as though on a field of battle and that, in the complex world of today, coexistence cannot be based on norms which are arbitrarily imposed. That is why the United Nations, which constitutionally is the centre for international economic and social co-ordination, will have to devise new solutions for new problems if we truly and sincerely wish to avoid a crisis with unforeseeable results. On the efforts we expend will depend whether we are today setting our feet on the road to creative co-operation that

will lead to solutions or whether we shall leave the world terrified by a total, inevitable and dramatic crisis.

AGENDA ITEM 6

Adoption of the agenda

27. The PRESIDENT (*interpretation from Spanish*): In order to expedite our work, the Assembly may wish to adopt its provisional agenda [A/9543] in plenary meeting without referring it to the General Committee. If there are no objections, I shall take it that the General Assembly agrees to this procedure.

It was so decided.

28. The PRESIDENT (*interpretation from Spanish*): I now ask the Assembly whether there is any objection to the adoption of the provisional agenda as it appears in document A/9543. If there is no objection, I shall declare the agenda adopted.

The agenda was adopted.

AGENDA ITEM 5

Organization of the session

29. Mrs. JOKA-BANGURA (Sierra Leone): I should like, on behalf of the African group of States, to propose that the General Assembly decide to establish an *ad hoc* committee of the sixth special session with a chairman, three vice-chairmen and a rapporteur and to accord its chairman, for the duration of the special session only and without in any way constituting a precedent, full rights of membership in the General Committee, including the right to vote.

30. The African group feels that, inasmuch as the *ad hoc* committee would be the only committee meeting during the special session, its chairman would deserve to be given the opportunity to participate in the work of the General Committee with full voting rights.

31. The PRESIDENT (*interpretation from Spanish*): The representative of Sierra Leone has proposed that the General Assembly establish an *ad hoc* committee of the sixth special session with a chairman, three vice-chairmen and a rapporteur and accord to its chairman, for the duration of the session and without in any way constituting a precedent, full rights of membership in the General Committee, including the right to vote. May I take it that the General Assembly approves that proposal?

It was so decided.

32. The PRESIDENT (*interpretation from Spanish*): The Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Kurt Waldheim, wishes to address the General Assembly at this time. I now call on him.

33. The SECRETARY-GENERAL: It is an honour for me to address this special session of the General Assembly, which has been convened as the result of a most timely and opportune initiative by President Houari Boumediène of

Algeria in his capacity as President in Office of the Group of Non-Aligned Countries.

34. Special sessions of the General Assembly have usually dealt with specific problems which affect world peace. The question before this sixth special session is no less directly related to the future peace of the world; yet it also reaches far beyond specific current issues. It encompasses problems which affect the lives of virtually every man, woman and child on earth. It holds vast significance for future generations. It raises the fundamental question of the kind of world economic system and social order we wish to establish and live under. It challenges us to make a series of rational and agreed choices which may be decisive in determining the quality and condition of mankind's future life on this planet.

35. It is now a commonplace that the nations of the world are interdependent and that their interdependence will inevitably and rapidly increase. The forces—economic, social and political—which have led up to this special session have been building up for many years, culminating in a variety of developments and uncertainties which affect the stability and growth capacity of the world economy and also have the most fundamental political implications. What is new is the sudden and dramatic urgency of the present situation and the acute acceleration of the historical process which has brought us face to face with a global emergency. The question arises whether this special session, animated by this high sense of urgency, can ensure that interdependence will be a positive rather than a negative force; whether it is possible to agree on the basis for a more equitable and workable global economic system, a system which takes into account not only the interests and needs of all nations but also the imperative interrelationships of the several parts of the problem—poverty, population, food, the conservation and just apportionment of natural resources, the preservation of the environment and the problems of trade and monetary systems.

36. There is a natural human tendency to look to the past in times of crisis. But today we are facing a world of accelerating change and an entirely new range of interlocking problems—political, economic and social. We cannot return to the conditions of the past. We have no option but to concentrate on the realities of the present and on the prospects for the future. And the problems now confronting national Governments and international organizations are so vast and so complex that we have to deal with them in co-operation and as a community of nations. If this is a sobering thought, it is also an inspiring one, for the very seriousness of the situation may bring about those developments in international relations which all appeals to reason and goodwill have so far been unable to achieve. The pursuit of short-term national interests by any nation or group of nations can no longer provide even a brief reprieve from the inevitable results of the present trends. The Members of this Organization therefore have to decide whether they are willing to act collectively in a manner which will ensure that the United Nations system works effectively in the long-term interests of all.

37. The perspectives of different nations or groups vary enormously. To one group of nations the rise in prices, including those of industrial products, and the shortages of

food-stuffs and fertilizers are of paramount importance. To another group the complex of problems which has come to be known as the "energy crisis" is of prime significance. To a third group of countries the rate of depletion of their raw materials and its relationship to their future development is the main preoccupation. To yet another group the present emergency represents a threat to the very lives of many of their people. On all sides there is now a constant preoccupation to protect and improve our environment.

38. These different perspectives can be freely expressed in this hall and can be considered as essential factors in the common endeavour. Differences can be expressed and taken into account here in a spirit of co-operation rather than of confrontation. The Assembly also provides a unique opportunity to put before world opinion the different concerns and points of view of the various sectors of the world community. This process of education is essential to create the kind of public understanding which alone will make it possible to evolve a new and better system of international relationships. In its Article 1, the Charter assigns to our Organization the purpose of being a centre for harmonizing the actions of nations in the attainment of common ends. This special session challenges us to a task of harmonization of unique complexity.

39. These differing perspectives will naturally lead to a vast array of problems and proposals being presented to this Assembly. While each of them will undoubtedly receive the necessary consideration, I am convinced that the interest of the world community will be served best by the Assembly giving priority to those fundamental issues which now increasingly threaten economic relations between all Member States, and which, all too easily, could lead to political disaster and intensify still further the conditions of social injustice which have always plagued this world.

40. I have no intention of suggesting to this Assembly how it should go about its business, but I should be failing in my responsibility as Secretary-General if I did not draw attention to those fundamental issues which I believe now constitute a potential threat to world peace and well-being.

41. The main theme of this Assembly is to secure the optimum use of the world's natural resources with the basic objective of securing better conditions of social justice throughout the world. Let me suggest six primary issues which demand immediate action if progress is to be made in achieving that objective.

42. The first issue is mass poverty. The single most devastating indictment of our current world civilization is the continued existence of stark, pervasive mass poverty among two thirds of the world population. Poverty permeates every phase of life in developing countries: in the malnutrition of children, in the outbreaks of diseases, in widespread unemployment, in low literacy rates, in overcrowded cities. How can we renew our determination to eradicate mass poverty?

43. The second issue is the population of the world. It is anticipated that this special session will meet for three weeks. In that time the number of human beings on this planet will increase by 4 million. The increasing population

of the world presents a constantly growing demand on our limited natural resources. How can we meet this pressure?

44. The third issue is food. Never, in recent decades, have world reserves been so frighteningly low. The production of enough food to feed, even reasonably well, people all over the world—let alone to transport and distribute it—almost certainly represents the largest single pressure on our natural resources. How can we produce more food, create the necessary reserves, and prepare contingency plans to meet global emergencies?

45. The fourth issue is energy. The world at large has suddenly realized the critical importance of energy in our daily lives. The natural resources which provide the world's energy represent one of our most valuable heritages. What can we do to conserve this most precious resource? What can we do to eliminate waste?

46. The fifth issue is military expenditure. During the three weeks of this Assembly session some \$14,000 million will have been spent on armaments. This enormous expenditure by itself represents yet another vast pressure on our natural resources. The imperative need for substantial disarmament becomes more urgent as each day passes.

47. The sixth issue is the world monetary system. An effective world monetary system is essential if our natural resources are to be used to the best advantage. The existing system is not working efficiently. It contains a most dangerous, cancer-like disease, namely, inflation. Unless inflation can be controlled, no international monetary system can work efficiently. Unless inflation can be controlled, it is futile to talk about prices. At present it is impossible for anyone to forecast what may happen in the future. I repeat, unless inflation can be controlled, it is impossible to secure the optimum use of our natural resources.

48. Each of these six problems—all directly related to our natural resources—has a direct bearing on the future peace and stability of the world. No Member State can insulate itself from their effects. And, if those problems individually were not bad enough, we must recognize that they are all interconnected, and interact on each other, and in so doing have a multiplier effect.

49. Not all the elements of the question before the Assembly are new. In fact, most of them have been considered by the international community for many years. But the sense of urgency—even of emergency—is relatively new, for the events of recent months have dramatized the dangers of drift and inaction in such a way as to alarm all Governments, even the richest and most powerful. We are moving towards a more meaningful dialogue precisely because the well-being and prosperity of all nations are now threatened. I hope that in this sense this special session will be a turning point in our history.

50. Much of the framework for a solution of the problems we face, and many of the directions which must be followed, are already indicated in previous decisions of the United Nations system. What has so far been lacking is the political will to put these decisions into effect. One of the

main aims of this session, it seems to me, must be to seek ways of strengthening and intensifying that political will.

51. Many aspects of the topic on our agenda are identified in the International Development Strategy for the Second United Nations Development Decade, adopted by the Assembly at the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Organization in 1970 [*resolution 2626 (XXV)*]. The key to our difficulties was concisely put by the General Assembly at its last session in the review and appraisal of that strategy, in which it was stated that "... the International Development Strategy remains much more a wish than a policy" [*resolution 3176 (XXVIII), para. 33*]. Let us hope that the sense of urgency imparted by recent developments may provide a new opportunity and a new momentum to convert aspirations previously expressed into active policies.

52. In the coming months there will be a sharp focus on particular aspects of the problem now before the Assembly, culminating in the special session on development and international economic co-operation which is to take place next year. This year we have the World Population Conference and the World Food Conference. Another highly important meeting will be the Third United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea. In 1975 there will be the mid-decade revision of the International Development Strategy, followed by the fourth session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development in 1976. The process of constructing an effective world-wide environmental protection system is well under way. The role of multinational corporations continues to be under active examination. Elsewhere, other vitally important aspects of the problem are being dealt with simultaneously—for example, the critically important work on a new world monetary system and the continuing negotiations within the framework of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade.

53. Thus we have an agenda for the near future which includes the principal elements required for a long-term policy. It is essential that these elements ultimately become integrated in the framework of a new international economic and social system, a system in which the role, the rights and the aspirations of the developing countries are fully recognized in practice as well as in principle, and which also takes account of the interests and preoccupations of other sectors of the world community. This special session has the opportunity to begin to develop, on the basis of all the work previously done, an over-all and global long-term policy for the future. Progress in this task would certainly give the more specialized activities I have mentioned a heightened sense of purpose and direction.

54. It is important, I believe, both for Governments and for the public at large to keep constantly in mind what can be done and what can not be done by the United Nations. The General Assembly can delineate the main elements of a global approach. It can set principles and guidelines, as our President so rightly said. It can begin to formulate a plan of action. It can define short-term emergency measures to assist those members of the world community which are especially hard hit by the present situation. It must be remembered, however, that, whatever can be agreed on here in this hall, most of the necessary executive decisions will be largely a matter for Governments, or in some cases for

more specialized international bodies. I wish to make that very clear. Only through their actions can this Assembly's decisions be translated into effective reality. The new complexity and interdependence of problems also provides the opportunity to the Economic and Social Council, under the aegis of the General Assembly, to ensure that the collective endeavours of the world community are pursued in a rational and cohesive manner.

55. This special session is a recognition of the necessity to redress the disparities that afflict our world and the contrasts between affluence and poverty, frustration and opportunity, conspicuous consumption and destitution. It recognizes the need to reconcile sovereignty over natural resources, the availability of raw materials, and the way in which they are used. It recognizes both the necessity of

conserving natural resources and of distributing them more equitably. It recognizes the burning need for greater international economic and social justice. It recognizes the role of international co-operation and organization as the lifeline to the future. Finally, it recognizes that today no one can benefit from a sterile confrontation. This Assembly affords an opportunity, a unique opportunity, provided we maintain the present sense of urgency, to lay the foundations for a world-wide economic system founded in equity and justice.

56. The PRESIDENT (*interpretation from Spanish*): I thank the Secretary-General for his statement, which was both timely and constructive.

The meeting rose at 4.10 p.m.