United Nations E/2015/SR.55

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
9 October 2015

Original: English

2015 session
21 July 2014-22 July 2015
Fourth coordination and management meeting

Summary record of the 55th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday, 22 July 2015, at 3 p.m.

President: Mr. Oh Joon (Vice-President) . . . . . (Republic of Korea)

Contents

15-12381 (E)

In the absence of Mr. Sajdik (Austria), Mr. Oh Joon (Republic of Korea), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Economic and environmental questions (*continued*)

(f) Population and development (E/2015/25)

1. **Ms. Frankinet** (Observer for Belgium), Chair of the Commission on Population and Development at its forty-eighth session, introducing the report of the Commission (E/2015/25), said that the theme of the session had been "Realizing the future we want: integrating population issues into sustainable development, including in the post-2015 development agenda". She drew the Council's attention to two decisions adopted by the Commission, as well as to her summary of the discussions on the proposed outcome document addressing the theme of the session. While extensive informal discussions on a wide range of issues had produced broad agreement at the session, persistent divergences on a small number of contentious issues had prevented the adoption of a draft resolution by consensus. The Commission had, however, taken an important step towards preventing future stalemates by recommending that the Council should adopt a decision mandating the Commission to review the functioning of its methods of work during its forty-ninth session.

2. **Ms. Almeida Watanabe Patriota** (Brazil) said it was unfortunate that the Commission had been unable to adopt a draft resolution by consensus, despite several good-faith attempts by the Chair and the facilitator to draft compromise texts that would bridge the gaps. Member States should reflect on ways in which the Commission's methods of work could be improved, in order to increase the margin for substantive outcomes that captured clear majority views on the critical issues before its members. Silence on such important matters should not be an option. While the mechanism for adopting the Commission's draft resolutions by consensus was not an element of its methods of work per se, it had a profound impact on the likelihood of an outcome being achieved at each session, and thus on the credibility and relevance of the Commission's work. There were no rules preventing the Commission from taking decisions in different ways; all practical and legitimate options should be seriously considered. Alternatives included submitting the outcome of the Commission's best negotiation efforts to a vote when consensus proved unattainable, allowing dissenting delegations to formulate reservations, and biannualizing consideration of the substantive resolution in order to give Member States more time to find common ground.

Action on recommendations contained in the report of the Commission on Population and Development on its forty-eighth session (E/2015/25)

3. **The President** drew attention to the draft decisions contained in chapter I, section A, of the report.

Draft decision: Report of the Commission on Population and Development on its forty-eighth session and provisional agenda for its forty-ninth session

Draft decision: Future organization and methods of work of the Commission on Population and Development

4. *The draft decisions were adopted.*

(h) International cooperation in tax matters (*continued*) (E/2015/L.9)

Draft resolution E/2015/L.9: Committee of Experts on International Cooperation in Tax Matters

5. **The President** said it was his understanding that delegations needed more time to conclude informal discussions on the draft resolution. He therefore suggested that the Council should convene one more meeting of the coordination and management meeting the following day, in order to take action on the draft resolution.

6. *It was so decided.*

(i) Cartography

7. **Mr. Schweinfest** (Director of the Statistics Division, Department of Economic and Social Affairs) said that no reports had been submitted for adoption by the Council at its 2015 session.

8. The United Nations Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management would be providing the Council with a comprehensive review of all aspects of its work and operations in April 2016. Preparations for that review would be made at its annual session, to be held from 5-7 August 2015, which would provide a good opportunity for dialogue between the Council members and the Committee.

9. Geospatial information could be useful for sustainable development, including with regard to providing access to disaggregated data, understanding the distribution of vulnerable population groups and organizing the delivery of services to various populations; exact geospatial information was also indispensable for humanitarian assistance. The Committee was therefore preparing a proposal on how geospatial information could contribute to the sustainable development agenda. It was also developing standards and norms to ensure the global interoperability of geospatial information systems and was working on strengthening national capacity in the area of geospatial information management. At its forthcoming session, the Committee would make a number of proposals on how to streamline the Council's subsidiary machinery in the area of geospatial information management.

10. The Council might wish to consider changing the name of the sub-item "Cartography" to "Geospatial information" in order to reflect the far-reaching changes that had occurred in that field.

(k) United Nations Forum on Forests (E/2015/42)

11. **Mr. Gustafik** (Secretary of the Council) said that the phrase "on trends and challenges in achieving the global objectives on forests in the ECE region" should replace the phrase "on progress towards global objectives on forests and challenges for the region" in chapter V, paragraph 28, and chapter XI, section A, paragraph 88, of the report of the United Nations Forum on Forests on its eleventh session (E/2015/42).

Draft resolution: International arrangement on forests beyond 2015

12. **The President** drew attention to the draft resolution entitled "International arrangement on forests beyond 2015", contained in chapter I, section B, of the report of the United Nations Forum on Forests on its eleventh session (E/2015/42).

13. **Mr. Gustafik** (Secretary of the Council) said that, before delivering a statement on programme budget implications in accordance with rule 31 of the rules of procedure, he wished to clarify that that statement corrected and superseded the one informally circulated on 16 July 2015, which had been revised to exclude a post covered by extrabudgetary resources. The revised statement had not been made available to all Council members until 12 noon that day, so some delegations might not have had a chance to review it.

14. Should the draft resolution be adopted, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs would require additional post and non-post resources estimated at $1,738,300, comprising $1,338,300 from the regular budget, for which amount no provision had been made under section 9, Economic and social affairs, of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2016-2017, and $400,000 from extrabudgetary resources. It was estimated that four additional posts, one at the P-4 level, two at the P-3 level, including one to provide substantive support for the broadened scope of the work of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, and one GS-6 post to support the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network, would be required, amounting to $1,141,900. The non-post requirements, estimated at $596,400, would be required for consultants, expert groups, travel, general operating expenses, supplies and materials, and furniture and equipment and, except for $400,000 required for two expert groups, would be covered under the regular budget. An additional amount of $242,400 would be required under section 29D, Office of Central Support Services, including for alteration and rental of premises. The adoption of the draft resolution would not give rise to any additional meetings or documentation workload for the Department of General Assembly and Conference Management.

15. **Mr. Reynolds** (United States of America) said that there was no justification for the last-minute release of the statement of programme budget implications. His delegation could not endorse a budget statement that delegations had not had time to review. With respect to the contents of the statement, Member States, in negotiating the draft resolution, had specifically rejected language requiring any additional posts to be funded from the regular budget, and the majority of the functions mentioned in paragraph 17 had been established by earlier resolutions. While his delegation supported the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network, a new post for the Network was not justified unless it could be funded from new extrabudgetary resources. Furthermore, paragraphs 36 and 37 were intended to align the work of the Forum with the post-2015 development agenda and the work of the high-level political forum on sustainable development, not to increase the size of the United Nations system. His delegation therefore called for the

statement of programme budget implications to be corrected immediately by deleting paragraph 5 and revising paragraphs 4, 6, 12 and 13 in consequence.

16. **Mr. Beviglia Zampetti** (Observer for the European Union) said that the figures contained in the statement of programme budget implications were only estimates and did not prejudge the Secretary-General's submission of the proposed budget for the biennium 2016-2017 to the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions and the Fifth Committee, which should also consider financing through redeployment of existing resources. The estimates could not be considered as requirements and should not be perceived as having been endorsed by Member States. Given the need for increased budget transparency, it was unfortunate that no information had been made available until two working days previously, despite requests from numerous delegations and the fact that the text of the draft resolution had been adopted on 15 May 2015. The statement reflected neither the spirit of the compromise text nor the original estimates based on the zero draft provided to delegations at the time of its adoption. Most, if not all, of the tasks associated with the additional posts were already performed under the Forum secretariat's existing mandate and could be covered by reallocating existing resources. Furthermore, the proposal for a new post to support the Collaborative Partnership on Forests ignored paragraphs 23 and 24 of the draft resolution, which referred to funding the Partnership from extrabudgetary resources, as well as the calls for efficiency and effectiveness. Moreover, important documents such as the strategic plan for the international arrangement on forests or the quadrennial programme of work should be drafted by experienced staff members, rather than by consultants. Lastly, from a procedural point of view, additional posts relating to the post-2015 development agenda should not be considered before the agenda had been adopted.

17. The European Union supported the request made by the representative of the United States of America for the Secretariat to revise the statement of programme budget implications. It also asked the Secretariat to refrain in the future from publishing the Forum's report on its website before the Bureau of the Forum had had a chance to review and contribute to it.

18. **Mr. Mikami** (Japan) said that his delegation was shocked to be informed at such a late stage of substantial programme budget implications associated with the draft resolution, including requirements for consultants, equipment and central support services, which had not been mentioned during the negotiations. It was not convinced of the need for additional staff, especially since there appeared to have been no attempt to reallocate resources within the Department of Economic and Social Affairs. He therefore requested immediate revision of the statement of programme budget implications in accordance with the proposal made by the United States, so that the draft resolution could be adopted before the end of the coordination and management meeting.

19. **Mr. Malawane** (South Africa), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the Group reiterated its support for immediate implementation of the outcomes of the eleventh session of the United Nations Forum on Forests and objected to any action that could defer the Council's adoption of the draft resolution, which had been adopted by consensus at the eleventh session of the Forum. There was no reason to be surprised by the revised statement of programme budget implications, which contained substantially lower estimates than those presented to the Forum in May 2015. Deferment would not only delay implementation of the Forum's mandates but would also delay consideration of the budget implications by the only bodies mandated to do so, namely, the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions and the Fifth Committee. The statement of programme budget implications was for technical information only and was not subject to negotiation by the Council. For those reasons, the Group did not support either revising the statement or postponing adoption of the draft resolution.

20. **Ms. Vermont** (Switzerland) said that her delegation had welcomed the decision to renew the international arrangement on forests at the eleventh session of the Forum on 15 May 2015. During the negotiations, her delegation had always emphasized that the secretariat must work within existing resources. The revised statement of programme budget implications had shaken her delegation's confidence in the Forum secretariat. The statement did not accurately reflect the decisions taken at the eleventh session of the Forum. It was unacceptable to establish new posts to perform tasks that, in some cases, had been carried by the Forum secretariat for more than ten years. Neither was it acceptable for the Forum secretariat to continue to rely on consultants to draft the official

documents of the Forum. She joined the delegations of the United States of America and the European Union in requesting the Forum secretariat to implement the requested revision of the statement of programme budget implications by 8 a.m. the following day. The Council could then consider taking action on the draft resolution at the additional meeting of the 2015 coordination and management meeting to be convened.

21. Statements of programme budget implications should be issued six weeks before action was scheduled to be taken on a given draft resolution, in order to allow time for informal consultations.

22. **Mr. Henderson** (Australia), speaking also on behalf of Canada and New Zealand, said that the three delegations remained concerned at the Secretariat's lack of transparency regarding how it developed cost estimates and what it would accomplish with additional resources. They urged it to engage with all Member States on draft resolutions early, often and openly in order to avoid budget-related problems, which were recurrent and pervasive. They therefore supported the proposal of the United States.

23. **Mr. dos Santos** (Brazil) said that his delegation expected sufficient human and financial resources to be mobilized to ensure full implementation of the draft resolution, which would create additional work for the secretariat. Budgetary matters were the purview of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions and the Fifth Committee. The delegations expressing concerns were either represented on the Advisory Committee or could find willing advocates there, and all were represented on the Fifth Committee, which would take the final decision. His delegation appealed to Member States to adopt the draft resolution and to allow the budgetary decisions to be made in due course according to United Nations rules and procedures.

24. **Mr. Momeni** (Observer for the Islamic Republic of Iran) said that his delegation agreed with the representative of Brazil that budgetary matters should not be discussed in the Council. The draft resolution was a true negotiated outcome, agreed by all Member States and observer States, and should be adopted. The estimates given represented the minimum staff and resource requirements for an important and ambitious agenda spanning 15 years, which required stable resources funded from the regular budget.

25. **Ms. Bibalou** (Observer for Gabon) said that her delegation joined with those calling for immediate adoption of the draft resolution. The Member States had been aware of possible budget implications when the draft resolution had been negotiated. Budgetary issues were a matter of concern to all and should be considered in the appropriate forums.

26. **Mr. Osman Sid Ahmed Mohammed Ali** (Sudan) agreed that budgetary matters were the sole purview of the Advisory Committee and the Fifth Committee and called for the adoption of the draft resolution by consensus. The Forum secretariat should have the human and financial resources it required to carry out its mandate.

27. **Mr. Gustafik** (Secretary of the Council) said that, owing to the Forum's last-minute adoption of the draft resolution, which had been contained in an informal paper, the Secretariat had been unable to provide a statement of programme budget implications based on the draft resolution as adopted; the statement delivered at that time had been based on an earlier version of the draft resolution. While he understood the frustration of delegations at having received the revised statement so close to the time of the meeting, the Secretary-General was not required to provide the text of statements of programme budget implications before they were delivered. Such statements were prepared not by the individual secretariats, but by the Office of Programme Planning, Budget and Accounts. Furthermore, since the statement had already been delivered, it could no longer be changed. The contents of the statement would be reflected in the revised estimates submitted to the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions and the Fifth Committee. It should be noted that the Council could not take action on statements of programme budget implications. The only bodies with authority to act in budgetary matters were the Advisory Committee and the Fifth Committee.

28. After a discussion in which **Ms. Vermont** (Switzerland), **Mr. Malawane** (South Africa), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, **Mr. dos Santos** (Brazil), **Mr. Beviglia Zampetti** (Observer for the European Union) and **Ms. Cavelier Adarve** (Colombia) took part, **the President** invited the Council to take action on the draft resolution.

29. *The draft resolution was adopted*.

Draft decision: Ministerial declaration of the high-level segment of the eleventh session of the United Nations Forum on Forests on the international arrangement on "The forests we want: beyond 2015"

30. **The President** invited the Council to take action on the draft decision entitled "Ministerial declaration of the high-level segment of the eleventh session of the United Nations Forum on Forests on the international arrangement on 'The forests we want: beyond 2015'", contained in chapter I, section A, of the report of the United Nations Forum on Forests on its eleventh session (E/2015/42).

31. *The draft decision was adopted.*

32. **The President** said he took it that the Council wished to take note of the report of the United Nations Forum on Forests on its eleventh session (E/2015/42).

33. *It was so decided.*

Coordination, programme and other questions (*continued*)

(h) Calendar of conferences and meetings in the economic, social and related fields (E/2015/85; E/2015/L.8)

34. **The President**, recalling that the Council, in its resolution 2013/13, had decided to consider at a later date the necessity of reviewing its provisional biennial calendar of conferences and meetings in the economic, social and related fields in the light of the then ongoing intergovernmental consultations on the further strengthening of the Council, which had ultimately resulted in the adoption of General Assembly resolution 68/1 and the Council's transition to a July-to-July cycle, said that the Council would be in a better position to consider the need to conduct such a review after the post-2015 development agenda and the outcome document of the third International Conference on Financing for Development had been adopted in September 2015. The matter would therefore be brought to the attention of the Bureau of the 2016 session of the Council. He took it that the Council wished to approve the provisional calendar of conferences and meetings in the economic, social and related fields for 2016 and 2017 (E/2015/L.8).

35. *It was so decided.*

Implementation of and follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits (*continued*)

(b) Review and coordination of the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011-2020 (*continued*) (E/2015/L.23)

Draft resolution E/2015/L.23: Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011-2020

36. **The President** said it was his understanding that delegations needed more time to conclude informal discussions on the draft resolution. He took it that the Council wished to postpone action on the draft resolution to the additional meeting of the 2015 coordination and management meeting that was to be convened the following day.

37. *It was so decided.*

Economic and environmental questions (*continued*)

(d) Human settlements (*continued*) (E/2015/L.17)

Draft resolution E/2015/L.17: Human settlements

38. **The President** said that the draft resolution had no programme budget implications.

39. **Mr. Malawane** (South Africa) said that paragraph 3 of the draft resolution should be revised to read "Encourages Member States and observers to continue to give appropriate consideration to the role of urbanization in sustainable development and to ensure policy coherence in the implementation of the post-2015 development agenda, including by promoting the active participation of relevant stakeholders, including local authorities". In paragraph 4, the phrase "and observers" should be inserted after "Member States", and in paragraph 5, the phrase "where appropriate, in order to promote coordination to minimize duplication of effort" should replace all of the text following the words "major global issues".

40. *Draft resolution E/2015/L.17, as orally revised, was adopted.*

The meeting rose at 5.20 p.m.