

UNITED NATIONS
General Assembly

FORTY-FOURTH SESSION

Official Records

SECOND COMMITTEE
17th meeting
held on
Friday, 20 October 1989
at 3 p.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 17th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. GHEZAL (Tunisia)

later: Mr. DOLJINTSEREN (Mongolia)

CONTENTS

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

This record is subject to correction.
Corrections should be sent up to the signature of a member of the delegation concerned
within one week of the date of publication to the Chief of the Official Records Editing Section, Room DC2 750,
2 United Nations Plaza, and incorporated in a copy of the record.

Corrections will be issued after the end of the session, in a separate corrigendum for each Committee.

Distr. GENERAL
A/C.2/44/SR.17
26 October 1989

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 12: REPORT OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL (continued) (A/44/3, 139, 206 and Corr.1 and Add.1, 217, 229, 235, 255, 264, 273, 274 and Add.1, 276-278, 284, 315, 338, 340, 355, 361, 376, 379, 401, 486 and 598; A/C.2/44/L.3)

1. Mr. DINU (Romania) commended the efforts made to implement Economic and Social Council resolution 1988/77, which the General Assembly had endorsed in its decision 43/432. Efforts to enhance and streamline the Council in order to make the United Nations more responsive to development challenges must continue. The in-depth discussions on structural changes and imbalances in the world economy and their impact on international co-operation for development which had been held during the Council's second regular session of 1989 afforded an example of the proper use of the Council as the central forum for the discussion of global economic and social issues and the formulation of policy recommendations thereon.
2. The Economic and Social Council must carry out its mandate under the Charter with a greater sense of purpose. Reports from specialized agencies should be dealt with more thoroughly, and should be submitted by all organizations in the United Nations system, including the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. The involvement of all agencies would lead to balanced approaches to world economic problems that would benefit all States, particularly developing ones.
3. The unprecedented phenomenon of the net transfer of resources from developing to developed countries showed no signs of abating. Nevertheless, it appeared that the international community was slowly reaching a common understanding of the problem, as evidenced by Economic and Social Council resolution 1989/112. He welcomed the inclusion of a chapter on that subject in the World Economic Survey 1989, and also the oral report which the Assistant Secretary-General for Development Research and Policy Analysis had presented at the Committee's 15th meeting. It was, however, the political aspect of the problem that mattered most to his delegation. In that connection, the general debate in plenary meetings of the General Assembly and in the Second Committee had conclusively shown that the rise in the net transfer of resources from developing countries was essentially the consequence of those countries' indebtedness, aggravated by the longest and most serious economic recession they had ever experienced. A common understanding of the political significance of the problem must therefore be reached.
4. He welcomed the report of the Secretary-General on international economic security (A/44/217) and agreed with the conclusions contained in it to the effect that international economic insecurity was on the rise, that countries' economic potential was being tapped for political purposes and that many key agreements designed to regulate international economic relations had been blatantly disregarded. His delegation was particularly concerned by the growing number of attempts to impose on the economies of developing countries so-called "free market" mechanisms, as well as structural changes that ran counter to their traditions or specific situations. Such negative trends showed how weaker economies were directly affected by fluctuations in the world economy. He therefore welcomed the

/...

(Mr. Dinu, Romania)

adoption by the Economic and Social Council of resolution 1989/111, which called for a comprehensive analysis of ways and means of strengthening multilateral co-operation in international economic relations.

5. Mr. MARTIN (United Kingdom) endorsed the statement made by the representative of France on behalf of the States members of the European Community.

6. With respect to the revitalization of the Economic and Social Council, he welcomed the adoption by the Council of resolution 1989/114 as a useful step towards enhancing the Organization's effectiveness in dealing with economic and social issues. Yet much remained to be done, for many regarded the Council and its work as a largely irrelevant anachronism. If that situation remained unchanged, the real work in the social and economic fields would continue to be done elsewhere. The economic and social machinery of the United Nations had come into being because many of the Organization's founders had believed that the League of Nations had dealt inadequately with economic and social issues.

7. While the time had come for decisive action to make the Council an effective forum for dealing with economic and social issues, revitalization of the Council was only part of the wider restructuring of the inter-governmental machinery to be undertaken in the economic and social fields. His delegation looked forward to discussing the Secretary-General's proposals in that regard at the Council's next organizational session and attached particular importance to the manner in which the Council organized its work. As economic and social questions could not be compartmentalized in the contemporary world, the Council's current sessional arrangements needed substantial modification. In fact, nothing less than a complete overhaul of the existing machinery would suffice. His delegation viewed such an effort as cost-neutral, but believed it would enable the Council and its subsidiary bodies to cope with the challenges of the 1990s.

8. On the subject of acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS), he expressed full support for the efforts of WHO to eradicate that terrible disease. His delegation hoped that the General Assembly would once again adopt by consensus a resolution which reaffirmed the global commitment to the fight against AIDS and mapped out areas in which the United Nations could take a lead.

9. The Government of the United Kingdom had developed a comprehensive strategy to fight the AIDS pandemic. A key component of the strategy was public education, with emphasis on communicating messages about high-risk behaviour. In the area of public health, allocations to federal health authorities had doubled over the previous year's commitments for such programmes as blood screening, monitoring the spread of infection, developing guidelines to prevent transmission, etc. Another major component consisted of research into vaccines and treatments. Social services were also being developed for persons infected with human immunodeficiency virus (HIV). Finally, the programme had a strong international component, as reflected in the hosting by the United Kingdom in 1988 of a world summit of health ministers on AIDS prevention. In addition, his Government had committed significant resources for AIDS programmes in Africa and the Caribbean.

/...

(Mr. Martin, United Kingdom)

10. He welcomed the fact that, by year's end, national AIDS programmes would exist in every country of the world. AIDS was a global problem which must be met with a common response, and while the subject of AIDS might ultimately be considered by the Committee on a biennial basis, the topic should be included in its agenda again in 1990.

11. Mr. BOECK (Austria) commended the work done by the World Health Organization as the director and co-ordinator of global efforts to combat AIDS. Austria's strategy for the prevention and control of AIDS was being implemented in accordance with WHO recommendations and guidelines, with particular emphasis placed on information and education campaigns aimed at preventing discrimination against persons infected with the disease as well as providing medical information. Austria also sought to involve private organizations in the counselling and care of infected persons.

12. Austria had hosted a number of international meetings on the topic of AIDS and would represent the European region on the preparatory committee for an international conference on AIDS service organizations to be held in 1990. The principal activities for World AIDS Day would also be observed later in the year at Vienna.

13. His delegation attached great importance to United Nations resolutions pertaining to AIDS and hoped that another resolution on the subject would be adopted by consensus during the current session of the General Assembly stressing the importance of a co-ordinated response to AIDS by the United Nations system and of the prevention of discrimination against AIDS victims.

14. Mr. PAYTON (New Zealand) said that although the Economic and Social Council had enjoyed its share of successes in recent years, it had many shortcomings as well. At present, the Council did not live up to the expectations placed in it by the founders of the United Nations, who had intended it to play a crucial role, on behalf of the General Assembly, in the economic and social fields. The Council ought to be a respected, multifaceted organ with responsibility for innovation, analysis and effective monitoring of its subsidiary bodies. Unfortunately, it was not held in particularly high esteem, a situation for which all States Members of the United Nations must take responsibility. The Council must therefore be forced to focus in an innovative and relevant way on the priority needs of Member States at the outset of the 1990s rather than remain locked into inappropriate agendas, procedures and practices.

15. He did not wish to appear unduly pessimistic; Member States had made a considerable effort to assess the performance of the Organization in the economic and social spheres, culminating in the adoption by the Economic and Social Council of resolution 1988/77. While the expectations raised by that resolution were as yet unfulfilled, the general interest in revitalization had been kept alive in Council resolution 1989/114. Effective implementation of both resolutions would do much to bring the Council back into the mainstream of the United Nations system, a goal to which his delegation was fully committed.

(Mr. Payton, New Zealand)

16. The dramatic increase in international interest in environmental questions, and especially in the relationship between the environment and sustainable development, offered the Council an opportunity to demonstrate its relevance, as a forum for a broader debate on the political realities underlying that relationship. All delegations must ensure that the Council made an ongoing contribution to global environmental issues in the years ahead.

17. While the Council's consideration of environmental issues at its most recent session could be counted one of its successes, the same could not be said for its discussion of operational activities for development. Like many others, his delegation had been frustrated that the documentation provided in connection with the triennial policy review had been incomplete. Moreover, he was disappointed that the Council had not taken up the challenge facing it but had chosen to defer the matter to the Second Committee, whose agenda was already quite heavy. His delegation had long advocated making one of the Council's subsidiary bodies solely responsible for considering operational activities.

18. Lastly, he suggested that the similarity of so many Economic and Social Council resolutions over the years made a questionable contribution to the vitality and relevance of the United Nations system.

19. Mr. AL-FAIHANI (Bahrain) said that the Secretary-General's reports on Israeli trade practices in the occupied Palestinian territories (A/44/277) and on Israeli financial and trade practices in the occupied Syrian Arab Golan (A/44/338) coincided with Israel's escalation of its repressive and restrictive policies and the twenty-second month of the Palestinian intifadah. Israeli restrictions in the occupied Arab territories had led to unfavourable patterns and rates of trade. The Israeli authorities, in an intensification of their ongoing efforts since 1967 to undermine the Palestinian economy and destroy the identity of the Palestinian people, were attempting to impose an economic blockade in order to break the intifadah, imposing heavy taxes and duties on Palestinian products, impeding the freedom of movement, and using all means, including the refusal of building and employment permits for Palestinian businesses, to incorporate the Palestinian economy within the Israeli economy. The Palestinian people had responded boldly by refusing to work in Israel, boycotting Israeli products and withholding taxes.

20. Restrictions imposed on the marketing of agricultural produce had impeded rationalization and the satisfaction of domestic and foreign demand, leading to a considerable fall-off in exports, and the expansion and intensification of Palestinian agriculture was also impeded by the confiscation of Palestinian lands. The occupying authorities allowed Palestinians to use only one seventh of the water resources, keeping the rest for Israeli settlers. Unemployment had increased, and 40 per cent of the Palestinian work-force was compelled to work for Israeli employers, often for ludicrously low wages, thus further weakening the Palestinian economy. Israeli commercial and financial practices were identical in the Golan, where the financial and commercial sectors had been forcibly incorporated into the Israeli economy.

/...

(Mr. Al-Faihani, Bahrain)

21. Economic activities which deprived indigenous peoples of the enjoyment of their economic and natural resources in blatant violation of article 16 of the Charter of Economic Rights and Duties of States and of other international instruments. The Secretary-General should continue to present reports on living conditions in the occupied territories, and a comprehensive in-depth study should be conducted of the effects of Israeli practices on the economy of the occupied territories and of the impact of the illegal settlements. Israeli practices before and during the intifadah should be compared and brought to the attention of the international community.
22. The international community and the specialized agencies of the United Nations must provide all necessary support to the Palestinian people, in close co-operation with the Palestine Liberation Organization, that people's sole legitimate representative, to develop the national economy and train qualified managerial staff. He urged all countries, especially the EEC, to open their markets on preferential terms to Palestinian products and thus help the Palestinian economy achieve self-sufficiency.
23. As long as the Israeli occupation remained in place, the Palestinian people could not enjoy their economic resources. A just and lasting peace could only be achieved on the basis of social justice and equitable economic conditions. The intifadah was the inevitable historical response to the Israeli occupation, which prevented the Palestinian people using its resources in accordance with its national aspirations. The intifadah and the response to it gave the lie to all the claims of a "liberal occupation", which had supposedly raised the living standards of the Palestinians. Such claims made a mockery of the true economic, social and humanitarian conditions endured by the Palestinian people over the years of the occupation.
24. Mr. BEN SADIO (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) expressed regret that the report of the Economic and Social Council, the conclusions of which his delegation supported, had not been distributed earlier.
25. He stressed the importance of Economic and Social Council resolution 1988/77 on the revitalization of the Council. The past decade had been one of world economic decline, and the coming decade would pose enormous economic and social challenges, which would no doubt enhance the importance of the Council's role in improving multilateral co-operation. Political stability and well-being were necessary for peaceful and friendly relations among nations. However, that could not be achieved without a new international economic order.
26. The recent political détente, especially between the two super-Powers, had not been accompanied by corresponding economic progress in the developing world, which had experienced a grave recession resulting in social and political unrest, violence and increased migration. International co-operation was required to solve the external debt problem, break economic blockades, free assets and lift restrictions on trade and finance.

(Mr. Ben Sadiq, Libyan Arab
Jamahiriya)

27. Environment degradation imperilled mankind and hampered development efforts. The developing countries, which had not contributed to pollution, were particularly seriously affected. The industrial countries should provide financial and technological assistance to the developing countries to protect their environment, which had been adversely affected by nuclear and chemical testing, depletion of the ozone layer, water pollution and drought.

28. The international development strategy for the fourth United Nations development decade should contain realistic programmes to speed up development in the developing countries, improve the environment, eliminate poverty and hunger, transfer technology to the developing countries and develop human resources, which were essential to the elimination of poverty and the promotion of economic development. He stressed the importance of United Nations expertise for structural adjustment programmes and supported the African Alternative Framework to Structural Adjustment Programmes for Socio-Economic Recovery and Transformation adopted by the Conference of Ministers of the Economic Commission for Africa in April 1989.

29. Recalling Economic and Social Council resolution 1987/70 on the proclamation of the 1990s as the Second Industrial Development Decade for Africa, he urged the United Nations to assist in the preparation of the programme for that Decade.

30. It was regrettable that the Economic and Social Council had not been able to devote sufficient attention to the implementation of the Plan of Action to Combat Desertification. Desertification was a major factor in poor agricultural yields in many African countries, adversely affecting their economies and giving rise to poverty and hunger.

31. Mr. FISHER (Australia) said that effective and co-ordinated international action was needed to combat AIDS. The resolutions adopted by consensus in the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council over the past three years had given much-needed prominence to that terrible disease. To eliminate the AIDS virus, and to minimize its personal and social impact, the Australian Government had announced, in August 1989, a four-year \$A 319 million national AIDS strategy, covering education, prevention, treatment, care and counselling, access and participation, and research and international co-operation. In the latter category, Australia was allocating \$A 3.4 million, which would be used mainly to assist the World Health Organization's global programme on AIDS, for study grants and other assistance to countries in the region around Australia, and for the holding of an international conference in Canberra in 1990 in collaboration with WHO.

32. His delegation noted with satisfaction that at its second regular session, the Economic and Social Council had been able to adopt by consensus a comprehensive resolution which emphasized the importance of trade factors in agricultural development. The problem of world food production at present was more in its distribution than in its level. The world now had the capacity to feed itself, but 10 to 15 per cent of its population was undernourished - the hungry went without

/...

(Mr. Fisher, Australia)

because they lacked access to land and agriculture inputs or the ability to buy food. The fundamental problem of the undernourished was their poverty. Many aspects of poverty were closely related to the development of agriculture, which was still the basic industry of mankind and represented the best means of sustaining development.

33. In order for agricultural production to be increased in developing countries, priority must be given to integrated rural development programmes aimed at improving irrigation and draining systems, soil conservation, farm-to-market transport, land tenure practices and access to electricity, education and agricultural extension services. Market-oriented farm-price and exchange-rate policies should be pursued. In support of such projects, the developed world must reduce protectionist barriers to imports of agricultural products, liberalize its agricultural support policies and adjust the structure of its own agricultural production in order to establish a fair and market-oriented agricultural trading system which would be in the interest of developed and developing countries alike. Currently, the structure of agricultural protectionism not only harmed non-subsidizing agricultural exporters such as most developing countries, but its total costs to those pursuing protectionist policies were also enormous. The Uruguay Round of the GATT multilateral trade negotiations represented the best opportunity to tackle those destructive distortions, and Australia, along with its developed and developing partners in the Cairns Group of fair-trading nations in agriculture, was continuing to strive to seek a constructive resolution of the problems of agricultural trade.

34. Encouraging advances had been made during 1989 with regard to the revitalization of the Economic and Social Council. Useful elements in Council resolution 1989/114 included the move towards basing future work on a multi-year programme, arranging future deliberations around major policy themes and measures to improve documentation. Important as those points undoubtedly were, however, care must be taken not to lose sight of the larger issue of improving the overall performance of the economic and social machinery of the United Nations. Members should first ask themselves what that machinery's objectives should be, and then set about tailoring the organizational structure to meet them. In so doing, they should explore the linkages of the Council with the Second and Third Committees of the General Assembly, as well as with the subsidiary bodies, UNCTAD and the various regional and functional commissions. Unless such a broad appraisal was undertaken, with the aim of constructing a package of changes, the incremental approach as applied so far might not appreciably advance system-wide effectiveness nor assure proper co-ordination and the elimination of overlapping or duplication. The agenda of organizational change should now be based not on cost-cutting but on achieving results - and any savings generated, whether human or financial, should be reinvested in priority areas.

35. Mr. HILLEL (Israel) said that the problems of rural and agricultural development would continue to dominate development policies until and beyond the year 2000. Accelerated population growth rates implied an increasing demand for food, and with it a growing concern for raising the productivity of the natural

(Mr. Hillel, Israel)

resource base. The bulk of the needed food would have to be produced in the least developed countries themselves. In order to improve living standards in rural areas through proper agricultural development, it would be necessary to improve rainfed agriculture and to introduce intensive irrigated agriculture and stockraising, oriented towards commercial markets. A parallel development of services and industry would be required in order to absorb the surplus agricultural manpower. The obstacles encountered in agricultural development, such as limited land and water resources, could be surmounted through the introduction of innovative solutions to old problems. Israel had achieved a transformation from a primitive agriculture to a highly sophisticated one within a span of two to three generations. It was now sharing its experience with many developing countries.

36. Nowhere was the concern for sufficient food supplies greater than in the arid and semi-arid areas that covered major portions of Africa, where hundreds of thousands of hectares had already undergone desertification, and thousands more reached the point of no return every year. Israel had developed technologies that enabled plants and trees to thrive in desert conditions, and had devised methods to cultivate mature trees and forests in arid regions. Similarly, methods of agro-forestry, the growing of food crops among trees, were applied extensively. That system was very suitable for developing countries, especially in Africa, since it yielded frequent crops all year round. Israel had developed several successful methods of arid land afforestation in the Negev Desert that could be applied to any region with limited water supply.

37. More than two decades of international agricultural co-operation with over 80 countries spanning four continents showed that Israel's contribution, small as it might be, was nevertheless significant. His delegation hoped that Israel's experience could be shared throughout the region, where peace would soon pave the way for regional co-operation.

38. Miss TROYA (Ecuador) said that her delegation regretted the delay in distribution of the report of the Economic and Social Council, which made it difficult for members to discuss it in depth.

39. With regard to the question of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction, she said that her country was particularly vulnerable to natural disasters, several of which had seriously affected its economic and social development. Her Government had welcomed with special interest the recommendations contained in General Assembly resolution 42/169 and, with the support of the Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator (UNDRO), had carried out a variety of programmes aimed at preparing the population for natural disasters.

40. Natural disasters were a regional problem which could and often should be resolved at the regional level. Because of its interest in regional co-operation, Ecuador had offered to serve as the site of the regional training centre which, under the auspices of the United Nations, through UNDRO, would be responsible for implementing the recommendations contained in the various resolutions on the Decade. Several of the countries represented at the seminars on disaster relief

/...

(Miss Troya, Ecuador)

held, with Ecuador's active participation, in Costa Rica and Cuba, had welcomed that offer. In addition, international emergency assistance agencies such as UNDRO and the United States AID/OFDA had expressed the political will to co-operate in setting up the centre.

41. Any policy or action aimed at preventing or reducing the impact of natural disasters should allow for different approaches to be taken in supplying relief for rural and urban areas and for areas having different geographical characteristics. It was important that delivery systems should cover the entire population, especially children and those living in rural areas, those with low levels of schooling, the elderly and the handicapped.

42. Ecuador's National Development Plan assigned high priority to the development of tourism. Its goals included increasing the supply of goods for the sector, generating new jobs, reorienting internal migration, and training. Ecuador hoped to receive international co-operation from governmental and non-governmental organizations in its efforts to meet those objectives. Her country had always borne in mind the importance of environmental conservation in its policy on tourism, as evidenced by the efforts of official and private institutions in connection with the Galapagos Islands and other national parks. It also attached special importance to facilitating tourism for the lower-income population. To ensure implementation of Ecuador's policy on tourism, a Tourism Promotion Fund had been created, with State and private participation. Although the Fund was increased every year, however, it was not able to meet all the needs in that area.

43. Referring to the progress report on the World Decade for Cultural Development (A/44/284, E/1989/109), she said that the strengthening of its national culture was a fundamental element of Ecuador's development strategy. Cultural identity would be strengthened in so far as economic, political, social and cultural rights of indigenous nationalities were recognized and support was offered to other social groups, such as workers, craftsmen, the informal urban population, women's organizations and youth organizations. International cultural co-operation was an important means of guarding against the twofold danger of countries withdrawing into themselves or engaging in cultural aggression. In that regard, her Government greatly appreciated the assistance provided by UNESCO in the preservation and reconstruction of the colonial section of Quito, especially after the earthquake of March 1987.

44. Ms. ARMSTRONG (Canada) said that although some positive results had been achieved at the most recent session of the Economic and Social Council, consideration of many issues had been deferred, mainly because documentation had been either very late in appearing or had not been available. If the Council's effectiveness was to be enhanced, its documentation must be useful and timely, and its format must highlight conclusions and key concepts.

45. There appeared to be some progress towards consensus in the Council regarding the length of the general debate, greater co-ordination of work, and the organization of the plenary and sessional committees. Where the proposals for in-depth discussions of major policy themes in a multi-year programme were

/...

(Ms. Armstrong, Canada)

concerned, it was difficult to make further progress in the absence of the Secretary-General's report on the intergovernmental structure and functions in the economic and social fields. It was to be hoped that the report would be made available shortly, giving delegations an opportunity to consider how subsidiary bodies could perform their functions more effectively and how resources could be better managed, in particular by conferring greater authority on the Office of the Director-General for Development and International Economic Co-operation.

46. A number of new issues, such as the interrelationship between economic and social factors for development, had been discussed at the Council's summer session, and there had been a very fruitful exchange with the heads of the regional economic commissions, IMF and the World Bank. If better utilized, such exchanges would provide an excellent opportunity to enhance the quality of the Council's deliberations on such important international economic issues as external debt, sound economic policies and structural adjustment, financial flows, socio-economic development, and trade.

47. There had also been a constructive consideration of environmental topics, and of the 1992 conference on environment and development. Although certain questions regarding the theme, scope and goals of the conference remained to be resolved, the Council's session had, it was to be hoped, paved the way for consensus on the conference at the current session of the General Assembly.

48. The question of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction had also been discussed in some detail in the Council. Recent earthquakes and hurricanes pointed up the urgency of issues involved, and her delegation looked forward to working with others in fostering co-operation and defining the role of the United Nations in that area. It would be helpful if the Secretary-General's reports were more specific with regard to what that role might be.

49. Other important action by the Council included the adoption of resolution 1989/88 on food and agriculture, the exchange of views on themes and priorities for the 1990 special session on growth and development and the new international development strategy, which augured well for a coherent approach to key development themes in the coming decade, and the adoption of six resolutions on population, which signalled the Council's growing appreciation of population as a vital factor in development.

50. The consideration of operational activities for development had however been disappointing. When it became evident at the organizational session that not all the documentation would be ready for the summer session, the preoccupation with the Council's theoretical role had taken precedence over common sense. Much time had been lost before consideration of the triennial comprehensive policy review was ultimately deferred until the forty-fourth session of the General Assembly, and it was also a matter for regret that a modest resolution which in no way pre-empted the triennial policy review could not have been assessed on its merits. However, her delegation remained hopeful that it would prove possible to negotiate a comprehensive consensus resolution, based on a single text, at the current session of the Committee.

(Ms. Armstrong, Canada)

51. At the Council's summer session, her delegation had co-ordinated two resolutions which would come before the Committee: the first related to the effective mobilization and integration of women in development, while the second concerned AIDS. Her delegation's earlier statement on women and development had stressed the importance it attached to that issue. The United Nations should be encouraged to enhance its research and analysis of women and development, and to ensure system-wide co-ordination in the implementation of the relevant programmes. That commitment should also be seen as part of a broader programme to implement the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies. With regard to AIDS, the United Nations, through WHO, had played a major role in tackling that fatal disease, not only in terms of medicine and science, but also through education. New trends in the spread of AIDS had been emerging in the past year: women and children were becoming more vulnerable to the disease, and the untimely death of young adults had created economic crises in some regions which depended on their productive labour. The protection of the fundamental human rights' and dignity of persons infected with HIV continued to be of increasing concern to many countries, particularly in view of the complex issues of privacy and non-discrimination which were involved. International scientific co-operation to prevent or control the disease was important, as were efforts to ensure that medication was made experimentally available and economically accessible as soon as possible. Her delegation wished to reaffirm the leading role of WHO in co-ordinating the international response to the pandemic, and to express its support for ongoing efforts to involve other United Nations agencies and programmes, in addition to non-governmental organizations, research institutions and the private sector in that endeavour.

52. Mr. TRAORE (Mali) said that his delegation supported the structural reforms aimed at strengthening multilateralism by enhancing the effectiveness of the Economic and Social Council. While the importance of programming and co-ordination procedures must be stressed, and the five recommendations drawn up in accordance with General Assembly resolution 32/197 on restructuring of the economic and social sectors of the United Nations system assessed on their own merits, his delegation believed that the status quo should be maintained where the Council was concerned. At the same time the Council should be backed up by an executive body responsible for pre-programming, monitoring and co-ordination, for which provision could be made from existing Secretariat units. Responsibility for the executive body could be assigned to the Director-General and Development and International Economic Co-operation, who would report to the Secretary-General.

53. His delegation considered that it should become established practice to hold an annual or biennial meeting between the Secretary-General and the heads of regional organizations and the other principal organizations of the United Nations system, including the financial and trade organizations, to discuss administrative, economic and technical issues with a view to enhancing co-ordination within the system as a whole.

54. While the deliberations of the Economic and Social Council reflected the humanitarian objectives of the Charter of the United Nations, those discussions did not always produce concrete results. The unjust international economic order was

(Mr. Traore, Mali)

the root cause of many of the ills affecting mankind, but attention was too often paid to the symptoms rather than the underlying causes of those ills. He agreed with the view expressed by the representative of Malaysia on behalf of the Group of 77 that the industrialized countries and the developing countries should engage in a constructive dialogue on global economic problems, focusing on such issues as world trade, monetary and financial questions, development financing, indebtedness, science, technology, human resources and the transfer of technology, adequate food supplies and the protection of the environment and climate which formed part of the common heritage of mankind.

55. In an increasingly interdependent world, the serious problems caused in third world countries by the imbalance in international economic relations would soon pose a threat to international security. Although the United Nations had tried to draw attention to those issues through its development decades, it was to be feared that little interest had been generated over the years. A thorough critical appraisal of the previous Development Decades and the one now drawing to a close was therefore required, including recommendations for the repetition of activities, where necessary, to ensure attainment of their objectives.

56. His delegation welcomed the efforts made during the first Transport and Communications Decade in Africa, and the fact that there was to be a follow-up Decade in the period 1991-2000. The sector constituted one of the most important aspects of the Lagos Plan of Action, since Africa's poor transport and communications infrastructure continued to hinder both regional and international economic integration.

57. Among the many other adverse factors confronting the least developed countries in particular, mention should be made of the debt burden; the difficulties caused by structural adjustment, which involved radical changes in policy without guaranteeing economic recovery; reduced or negative resource flows; climatic disturbances, including the threat of desertification; the global decline in commodity prices; and plagues of migratory pests. All those challenges must be met with substantial scientific, technical, material and human resources.

58. In the longer term, increasingly coherent and co-ordinated action would be required in order to bridge the gap between North and South. In particular, development programmes must be oriented towards investment, and investors and enterprises encouraged to make technology available, especially in the manufacturing sector, in a true spirit of North-South partnership. At the same time, the activities of non-governmental organizations must be supported in order to promote micro-projects at local level and thus mitigate the effects of the economic crisis and of restructuring on the most vulnerable elements of the population.

The meeting rose at 5.15 p.m.