



ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL

Forty-eighth Session
OFFICIAL RECORDS

Monday, 30 March 1970,
at 10.55 a.m.

NEW YORK

President: Mr. J. B. P. MARAMIS (Indonesia).

It was so decided.

*Request for the inclusion of an additional item
in the agenda of the forty-eighth session*

1. Mr. SHAHI (Pakistan) said that, in accordance with rule 17 of the rules of procedure, his delegation would like to propose that a new item concerning the natural disaster which had just struck Turkey should be added to the agenda of the current session of the Council. On the night of 28 March 1970 a severe earthquake had occurred in western Turkey, causing the deaths of at least 600 people. The final death toll was expected to exceed 1,000. The Government of Turkey was taking urgent action to provide relief for the stricken area, and had appealed for assistance. His delegation wished to express its sincere condolences to the people and Government of Turkey and, at an appropriate stage, to submit a draft resolution similar to previous resolutions relating to natural disasters.

2. Mr. DRISS (Tunisia), Mr. CARANICAS (Greece), Mr. TARABANOV (Bulgaria), Mr. BLAU (United States of America), Mr. KITI (Kenya), Mr. SAM (Ghana), Mr. OSMAN (Sudan), Mr. HAMBRO (Norway), Mr. HAMAMOTO (Japan), Mr. BRADLEY (Argentina), Mr. ARAUJO CASTRO (Brazil), Mr. DE SOTO (Peru), Mr. DUBEY (India), Mr. ZAKHAROV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics), Mr. BRECKENRIDGE (Ceylon), Mr. PRAGUE (France), Miss DARLING (United Kingdom), Mr. SKATARETIKO (Yugoslavia), Mr. MARTOHADINEGORO (Indonesia), Mr. CREMIN (Ireland), Mr. ABDELMOUTI (Chad) and Mr. FRANZI (Italy) supported the proposal made by the representative of Pakistan and expressed their sympathy for the people and Government of Turkey.

3. The PRESIDENT said that if he heard no objections he would take it that the Council was unanimous in its desire to add to the agenda of its current session a new item entitled "Assistance to Turkey in connexion with the earthquake in Kutahya Province" and that it wished to discuss the item at an early date.

It was so decided.

AGENDA ITEM 2

Development of natural resources:

(a) Report of the *Ad Hoc* Committee on the Survey Programme for the Development of Natural Resources (E/4797, E/4801 and Add.1);

(b) Natural resources satellites (E/4779 and Corr.1-3)

4. The PRESIDENT suggested that, since items (a) and (b) dealt with separate aspects of the development of natural resources, the Council should consider them consecutively.

5. The PRESIDENT drew attention to the reports in documents E/4797 and E/4801 and Add.1.

6. Mr. BARNEA (Director, Resources and Transport Division), recalling the background of the item, said that the *Ad Hoc* Committee in its report (E/4797) had recommended to the Council that UNDP should take over the financing of the survey programme and that the Council should consider the possibility of reassessing the Committee's terms of reference. It had been pointed out by UNDP that, if a project was financed by UNDP funds, control would be exercised by the Governing Council. The Committee had also requested the Secretary-General to submit to the Council more information on measures for rationalizing the activities of the United Nations in the field of natural resources. In response, the Secretary-General had submitted tentative terms of reference of the Committee on Natural Resources in the annex to document E/4801/Add.1. Since the Council would now have to consider the recommendations of the *Ad Hoc* Committee, it might be an appropriate time to review the work of the United Nations in the field of natural resources.

7. All United Nations activities in that area were performed by the Resources and Transport Division and the regional economic commissions. One of the most important of the Division's activities was its mineral exploration programme, which had become operational some ten years ago. There was a common misconception that the period between the beginning of prospecting and production was a comparatively brief one. In the past that time span might have been as short as three or four years but now, when there was little or no indication of mineral deposits at surface, the period might be considerably longer. However, the fact that the development of mineral resources was usually a time-consuming process did not mean that it should not be given a high priority in economic programmes. Today, the effective application of technology, which had become highly sophisticated, required a much longer period of time than ever before. Since the Division had a vast amount of technological expertise available to it, there was a strong case for expanding its activities. Even in the short time during which it had been in operation, it could boast of several achievements, which had been financed in almost equal proportions by UNDP and the developing countries. The survey projects undertaken had resulted in the discovery of important mineral resources, many of which were now being exploited. The discovery of copper deposits in Mexico had lent support to the theory that a belt of such deposits extended from Alaska to Chile. Deposits had subsequently been discovered in Panama and Ecuador, and it was believed that in a few years every country along that geographical line would find copper. The survey programme had also revealed the existence of

valuable copper deposits in Iran, Malaysia, Senegal and Upper Volta, iron ore in Chile, coking coal in Pakistan, bauxite in the British Solomon Islands, marble and limestone in Togo—a country situated in a part of the world that was seriously deficient in limestone—and manganese oxide in Upper Volta.

8. Those discoveries had led in some countries to an increased influx of capital. Known investment commitments attributable to the results of the survey programme amounted to nearly \$6 million, and future investment would, of course, be much greater. A conservative figure for the estimated gross value of minerals discovered to date under UNDP-financed projects was over \$11.5 thousand million, and when figures for Panama, Ecuador and Argentina became available that estimate might well double, while the figure for 1975 might be considerably higher still.

9. Other types of projects undertaken by the Division included groundwater surveys in Madagascar and Upper Volta, resulting in the identification of groundwater resources which promised to contribute significantly to the improvement of living conditions.

10. The work of the Division had produced other important benefits which could not be priced, such as the training of personnel, the accumulation of a vast fund of experience which would provide guidance for mineral exploration in all parts of the developing world, and the revision of mining codes, which in several cases had been carried out by United Nations personnel. The founding of institutes and the granting of fellowships were an important contribution to the long-term development of some countries.

11. At the same time the United Nations was offering guidance in the application of modern technology. Geothermal energy was a case in point; that resource was little understood by most countries, with the result that until recently Governments and UNDP had been reluctant to support geothermal energy projects. Since the recent development of other uses for steam, however, the economics of geothermal energy projects had become exceedingly attractive. Now that the World Bank was giving such projects greater support, a more positive attitude on the part of UNDP could be detected. With the co-operation of the Italian Government, the first international symposium on geothermal energy was to be held in Italy in September 1970, and it was believed that within a few years the great significance of that form of energy would be recognized by many developing countries. Another source of energy which to date had not received much support was oil shale. During the previous year the first international symposium on oil shale, organized by the United Nations, had been held in the USSR, where a power plant was already operating on that fuel. Research was also being carried out on the fuel cell, which promised to be of great value in village electrification, a pre-condition for rapid development in rural areas. In connexion with electrification, the United Nations could be justly proud of having succeeded in persuading two countries to set up a joint electricity board.

12. It was clear that the Organization was making an important contribution to the development of natural

resources in developing countries. The Secretary-General felt that there was definitely a need for an intergovernmental body to provide leadership and guidance with respect to national resources, for the field was one which was expanding rapidly in scope and complexity.

13. It was to be hoped that the Council would give due consideration to the important issues raised by the Secretary-General's report.

14. Mr. ARAUJO CASTRO (Brazil) said natural resources inevitably played a highly significant role in any comprehensive approach to development policy because their availability and the possibility of combining them in a rational way with a view to production planning constituted a major asset for any developed country—a fact stressed during the recent debate in the Preparatory Committee for the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment. In that Committee, his delegation had stressed that the problems of the human environment resulted essentially from an imperfect combination of natural resources in the production process owing to an imperfect geographical distribution of economic activities. When dealing with those problems the main concern should be to identify their real cause, with a view to assuring a more rational and balanced combination of agricultural, extractive and industrial activities in each economic region, rather than merely to correct their most obvious consequences, such as air and water pollution. In the Preparatory Committee many representatives had stressed that any programme or measure devised primarily to protect the human environment might be more destructive than constructive if it stifled economic and social development. The developing countries could not and would not accept any policy that might result in slowing their industrial growth, but they were fully aware of the need to achieve both the maximum and the most rational utilization of their natural resources.

15. The importance which his Government attributed to that optimum utilization of natural resources was clearly reflected in both its regional planning and its encouragement of such specific measures as the multipurpose utilization of water resources in accordance with scientific and technical standards. Similar developments taking place in other Latin American countries offered examples of excellent international co-operation in the field of natural resources, whether through bilateral arrangements, multinational projects or regional activities such as those carried on by the Organization of American States.

16. It was only natural, therefore, that his delegation should attach great importance to the questions raised by the Secretary-General in his report (E/4801) and (E/4779 and Corr.1-3). The difficulties experienced by the United Nations in carrying out the survey programme for the development of natural resources were indicative of a need for an intergovernmental technical body which would advise the Council and enable it to discharge its functions in the field of natural resources more satisfactorily. In its report (E/4797), the *Ad Hoc* Committee had expressed doubts as to its competence to take decisions on the merits of the proposal made by the Secretary-General in the report (E/4801); his delegation felt that those doubts were justified because it believed that what was needed was a

complete reappraisal of activities with a view to the formulation of broader, more precise and more integrated programmes. Such a reappraisal should make it possible for United Nations operations in the field of natural resources to take their proper place in the general context of policies for the Second Development Decade and should at the same time bring them fully into conformity with the express wishes of Governments. His delegation agreed that United Nations programmes and activities in the field of natural resources must be substantially strengthened as part of the general effort to promote international co-operation for economic and social development, but it also felt that, in matters as closely connected with economic planning as those programmes and activities were in the developing countries, it was essential that all potential international action should correspond to the express wishes of the Governments concerned with regard to both content and priority. The picture of developments—and frustrations—presented in the report (E/4801) was ample justification for such a reappraisal and for a strengthening of the United Nations programmes in the field of natural resources, provided all planned action was approved by the Government concerned. That report also argued in favour of a more integrated approach to the whole question of natural resources, with particular emphasis on its economic and technical aspects, and of more careful advance planning of its operational and financial aspects. In reading the report, he could not escape the feeling that the commendable efforts made by the Secretariat to implement Council resolutions 1218 (XLII) and 1287 (XLIII) had been at least partially foiled by a lack of comprehensive directives and adequate planning of financial support. The Council, and the functional committee proposed by the Secretary-General, if established, should work out more precise guidelines for the reformulation of the United Nations work programme in the field of natural resources. Even now, it should be possible to agree upon certain basic criteria, such as the accessibility of resources and the economic feasibility of their exploitation, certain practical directives, such as the utilization of appropriate methods of research, and certain objectives, such as the training of national personnel and the practical applicability of results.

17. Moreover, when planning programmes and activities, necessary safeguards should be devised to prevent any overlap with regional efforts or any adverse effect on such efforts. It must be recognized that it was impossible to formulate any uniform solution in view of the ecological, political, social and economic differences among the various regions of the world.

18. His delegation was of the opinion that the Council should be able to take action along the main lines proposed by the Secretary-General in his report (E/4801). If the Council felt that the time had come to establish a new committee on natural resources after evaluating the financial implications of such a measure, his delegation would be willing, possibly in a working group, to help prepare a draft resolution to that end. The proposals made to strengthen the Secretariat machinery in the field of natural resources or to extend the purview of the Committee on Science and Technology to include natural resources could not provide a valid substitute for a functional committee, because what was needed was governmental guidance and that could be provided only by an intergovernmental technical body.

Reinforcement of the Secretariat machinery might be a consequence of the Council's approval of programmes, but it could not in itself correct any existing deficiencies. He therefore favoured the establishment of a substantive committee at the earliest possible date.

19. With regard to the report on natural resources satellites (E/4779 and Corr.1-3), his delegation attached great importance to the possibility of applying space and satellite technology to obtain a better knowledge of earth resources. That was a new field of special significance to countries which, like Brazil, were devoting great efforts to bringing vast expanses of their territory into production. While the possible applications of ERSAT technology were as yet somewhat distant, because methods were still being developed, fruitful work could already be done with a view to assuring the smooth and rapid adaptation of ERSAT technology as soon as it became feasible. It was not too early to explore some concepts, such as participation by the developing countries, or to adopt some principles, such as the principle of full respect for the sovereign decisions of participating countries in defining programmes and priorities. Although the preservation of the national security of each country was a paramount concern, he could not anticipate that the problem of applying satellite technology to prospecting for earth resources would be an insoluble one. That was a field in which the United Nations had a role to play in order to prevent the emergence of yet another technological gap between the developing and the developed countries. The better knowledge of the world's resources was indeed of common interest to all nations. He therefore hoped that the proposals made by the Secretary-General could be adopted by developing and developed countries alike, as a sign of confidence in the progress of mankind.

20. Mr. FRANZI (Italy) observed that his country, although generally considered a developed one, was poor in natural resources and had problems that were virtually opposite to those of Brazil. His delegation had given its views on the Survey Programme in the *Ad Hoc* Committee and would not therefore repeat them now. The statement made by the Director of the Resources and Transport Division seemed to indicate that the Division's activities were predominantly directed towards discovering and developing mineral resources; however, in his view, the United Nations was uniquely qualified to stimulate and initiate infrastructure activities—particularly in the field of water and energy resources development—because it was in those areas that countries found it most difficult to obtain foreign assistance. Noting that insufficient use was being made of the consultants in the fields of mineral, water and energy resources, he said that the Secretariat should make an extra effort in those fields.

21. While he was well aware of the difficulties that had beset the Division, he felt that it should be strengthened because of its high degree of expertise and the increasing number of projects for which it was the executing agency.

22. In view of the difficult problem of financing, he questioned the advisability of setting up the intergovernmental committee referred to in paragraph 50 of document E/4801, and he would like to hear the views of other members of the Council and of the members of the

Committee on Programme and Co-ordination on that subject. The machinery of the *Ad Hoc* Committee seemed to be adequate to deal with existing needs and if the Secretary-General felt that that Committee could be reconvened, his delegation would be prepared to support a proposal to that effect both in the Council and elsewhere.

23. The report of the Secretary-General (E/4779 and Corr.1-3) was particularly interesting because it gave the Council a glimpse into the future by describing the potential contribution which satellites could make to the discovery of natural resources. He commended the Secretariat for studying the problem before it became urgent; that was a field which the United Nations should enter before it was too late, and his delegation would support any such initiatives. The question of natural resources satellites involved both international and national aspects. It was in the international aspect that the United Nations must play the role of an initiator; action in the national sector must take account of national sovereignty and the effort in that field must be to persuade countries of the usefulness of international action.

24. Before his delegation could consider the establishment of a United Nations body to deal with the problem, it wished to know the fate of the proposal to establish an intergovernmental committee on natural resources. The development of natural resources satellites was only a part of the larger question, and would be more pertinent to the end of the Second Development Decade than to its beginning. However that might be, any new body would have to take account of both the international and the national aspects of the question. His delegation would await with interest the results of an analysis of the financial aspects of the establishment of such a body. It was prepared to take part in the work of any technical organs which might lay the basis for action by the United Nations in that field.

25. Mr. BRADLEY (Argentina) said that his country, which had abundant agricultural and animal resources, also

had a wide range of less well-known mineral and water resources. He cited in that connexion two projects which the United Nations had carried out in Argentina, one relating to the discovery of copper resources in the eastern *Cordillera*, where no mineral resources had been thought to exist, and the other relating to the development of oil resources with international capital and assistance from the specialized agencies. Argentina also operated an electric plant using Argentine uranium as a fuel. His delegation appreciated the enormous efforts being made by the Division in spite of its small staff and limited financial resources. He stressed the importance of the development of water resources because of its effect on agriculture and even on the development of mineral resources. At a time when the world was exhausting its reserve of natural resources, the United Nations would have a particularly important role to play in relation to the exploitation of natural resources and the direction of policy in that field.

26. With reference to the proposal in paragraph 50 of document E/4801 to the effect that the functions of the *Ad Hoc* Committee should be transferred to an intergovernmental committee under the jurisdiction of the Council, he observed that there were many precedents for such a step. However, he felt that the Council should not act hastily or prematurely on the matter. It should consider carefully how the new body would fit in with existing intergovernmental bodies and the relevant organs of the specialized agencies, as well as a possible new General Assembly committee on science and technology. Of the many facets of the problem which must be studied perhaps the most important was the problem of cost. His delegation was in favour of placing greater emphasis on the problem of natural resources and giving Governments more control of the work done by the Secretariat in that field, but it could not support the establishment of an intergovernmental committee until its doubts had been resolved.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.