



ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL

Forty-eighth Session
OFFICIAL RECORDS

Tuesday, 13 January 1970,
at 3 p.m.

NEW YORK

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

AGENDA ITEM 9

Basic programme of work of the Council in 1970 and consideration of the provisional agenda for the forty-eighth session (E/L.1293, E/L.1296)

1. The PRESIDENT, introducing the draft programme prepared by the Secretary-General (E/L.1293), said that section I contained the provisional draft agendas for the forty-eighth and the forty-ninth session of the Council. He drew the Council's attention to the recommendation of the Preparatory Committee for the Twenty-Fifth Anniversary of the United Nations in paragraph 4. The Council should also take a decision on the Secretary-General's proposals in paragraphs 7 to 10 regarding the organization of the work of the forty-ninth session.

2. The Council also had before it a note by the Secretary-General (E/L.1296) containing a list of documents for the forty-eighth session and the anticipated date of their distribution.

3. Mr. MOJSOV (Yugoslavia) supported the Preparatory Committee's suggestion that a formal celebration of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the United Nations, presided over by the Secretary-General, might be held at the opening of the forty-ninth session of the Council at Geneva, and that Ministers for Foreign Affairs and Ministers of cabinet rank of Governments of Member States might take part in the session.

4. With regard to paragraph 6 of the introduction to the draft programme, the Council and specialized agencies should play a more active part in the decolonization process.

5. Furthermore, since the year 1970 marked the beginning of the Second United Nations Development Decade, the discussion on the world economic situation might usefully be focused on the development strategy, as the Secretary-General suggested.

6. Since the agenda for the 1970 sessions was very heavy, the Council should avoid postponing items from one session to another; and, for the sake of efficiency and in order to avoid duplication, items dealing with related questions might be grouped together.

7. Mr. VIAUD (France) agreed with the Yugoslav representative. His Government attached great importance to the possibility of organizing ministerial meetings during the Council's forty-ninth session. He therefore welcomed the suggestions made by the Secretary-General.

8. The Council should come to a tentative agreement regarding the practical arrangements for those meetings; the first two or three days of the forty-ninth session of the Council would be an appropriate time; the Secretary-General's suggestions regarding the topic that the Ministers would discuss seemed excellent, since 1970 would be celebrated as International Education Year and also marked the beginning of the Second Development Decade.

9. It would be helpful if the Council were to take a decision on the matter at the current session, since the Secretariat and national civil services should be given several months to prepare for the debates. The Council might request the Secretary-General to organize the meetings and to report to it at its forty-eighth session regarding the measures which had been taken or were proposed for the purpose.

10. He had no objection to the recommendations of the Preparatory Committee for celebrating the twenty-fifth anniversary of the United Nations.

11. Mr. TARABANOV (Bulgaria) said he was in favour of organizing ministerial meetings and of giving greater importance to the forty-ninth session of the Council. However, since the decision to send Ministers rested with each Government and since the Council was master of its own procedure at each of its sessions, it could hardly enter into binding commitments for the forty-ninth session. It was meeting to decide on the agenda and not to fix every detail of its methods of work. His delegation would not be averse to considering specific questions but, at its forty-ninth session, the Council would be free to take another decision.

12. Mr. ARAUJO CASTRO (Brazil) supported the Secretary-General's suggestions in paragraphs 4 and 7 of the draft programme (E/L.1293). He pointed out that, if the Council endorsed the proposed agenda, it would remain provisional until it was formally adopted by the Council at its forty-ninth session.

13. In any event, if delegations were to be headed by Ministers, it would be helpful if the Council were to inform Governments of the questions which would probably be considered, in order to guide them in choosing the Ministers to take part in the meetings.

14. Mr. ALLEN (United Kingdom) recalled that for several years a Minister had represented his country at the opening meetings of the Council. However, he could not promise that a Cabinet Minister would attend the opening meeting of the forty-ninth session. He supported the Secretary-General's proposal that the general discussion should be limited to a few important issues.

15. Mr. BRADLEY (Argentina) was not opposed to the suggestions relating to the celebration of the twenty-fifth

anniversary of the United Nations. However, 9 July was the day on which Argentina celebrated its independence with official and diplomatic ceremonies. That particular problem might be solved by the appointment of an ambassador extraordinary. He shared the views expressed by the Brazilian representative regarding the agendas for the forty-eighth and forty-ninth sessions.

16. Mr. NAITO (Japan) supported the views expressed by the Brazilian and Argentine representatives. The time available at the Council's forty-ninth session should be devoted to a limited number of topics.

17. Mr. LOBANOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said he was not opposed to the introductory paragraphs to the draft programme. The Council had met to decide on the items which were to be provisionally included in the agendas for the forty-eighth and forty-ninth sessions. However, it was trying to go further and determine an order of priority, although it was for the Council to decide at each session on the appropriate order of items. It should not go against established practice and precedents; it should confine itself at present to bringing the Secretary-General's opinion to the attention of Member States.

18. Furthermore, he had not received the document under discussion until the end of the preceding week, which was far from the six-week interval laid down in the rules of procedure. Consequently he had not received instructions from his Government regarding the important political questions raised in the introduction which needed careful study. His delegation would prefer to consider the introductory paragraphs at a later stage.

19. Mr. FRANZI (Italy) recalled that the French representative had said that the topic of the ministerial meetings should be known in advance. Indeed, the Council could not wait for consideration of the provisional agenda for the forty-ninth session to be concluded at the resumed forty-eighth session in May before informing Governments that it wished to invite Ministers for Foreign Affairs to the session in July. Furthermore, while stating that the question should be considered carefully, the Soviet Union representative was unable to commit himself at the present stage. The Italian delegation felt that, even if it did not take a decision, the Council should at least make a recommendation in principle, in order to give Governments some guidance.

20. In his opinion, there would be two kinds of meetings: on the one hand, there would be the celebration of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the United Nations, presided over by the Secretary-General, which, although important, would be a formal meeting; and, on the other hand, there would be the subsequent ministerial meetings which would last two or three days.

21. Italy was prepared to send a Cabinet Minister to take part in the debates on development strategy; he suggested that the agenda for the forty-ninth session should be altered to include a new item 2 entitled "Formal celebration of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the United Nations", which would be the first item to be taken up on the morning of 6 July.

22. Mr. CARANICAS (Greece) indicated that he had had some doubts as to the usefulness of celebrating the twenty-fifth anniversary of the United Nations at Geneva and then in New York, as there was perhaps a risk that the first celebration would eclipse the second. With regard to the rank of the Ministers who would be present, it would certainly be possible to find a flexible arrangement satisfactory to all Governments. The problem had already arisen in the past and Ministers were in fact coming to the summer sessions of the Council; the recommendation in paragraph 4 of document E/L.1293 should therefore serve to enhance the occasion. However, it was surprising that in the same paragraph the non-governmental organizations based at Geneva were singled out from the rest, whereas the latter enjoyed the same status and were able to contribute quite as much to the work of the Council.

23. In paragraph 7, the Secretary-General suggested that the Council should confine its general discussion to one or two topics. However, the fact that the Council normally devoted one third of its time to that discussion, as pointed out in paragraph 8, was proof of its importance. The year 1970 was likely to be a crucial one in the economic field and it would be unwise not to review the world economic situation. Obviously development strategy itself covered a large number of topics; but it should be placed in a broader context. In any event, International Education Year probably did not qualify as one of the topics on which the general discussion would be focused.

24. He wondered why it was proposed in paragraph 11 that the Council should not return to specific consideration of the report of UNESCO and of FAO (E/4458). Other specialized agencies which were contributing to the preparations for the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment were in the same situation.

25. Mr. OLDS (United States of America) said that it was helpful, before discussing the programme of work for 1970, to recall the basic functions of the Council. They were at three levels: important decisions of principle, information and co-ordination. With regard to information, every year the Council had before it a large number of reports on which it spent much time; perhaps it would be better if it concentrated more on certain major questions of the greatest interest to the United Nations bodies. With regard to its co-ordination function, the Council was too often concerned with procedural and administrative matters, whereas it ought to focus its attention on the general orientation of the agencies which it had to co-ordinate. It would also perhaps be useful for it to contemplate its work over a longer period and not just session by session; it would thus gain in flexibility.

26. As far as the celebration of the twenty-fifth anniversary was concerned, arrangements should be made in advance, since it would be regrettable if Ministers were to travel to Geneva to take part in meetings of minor interest. The fact that, in document E/L.1293, the Secretary-General had drawn attention to the role of the specialized agencies and non-governmental organizations whose contribution was of the greatest importance for the celebration was to be welcomed.

27. Mr. OUEDRAOGO (Upper Volta) said that he had no substantive objections to the recommendation mentioned

in paragraph 4 of document E/L.1293; however, not every country would be able to send a Minister to Geneva and for that reason the recommendation could not be considered as binding on Governments.

28. Mr. SEN (India) supported the proposals submitted in paragraph 4 of document E/L.1293; as a member of the Preparatory Committee, India had participated in drawing up the recommendation. Moreover, it had always sent a Cabinet Minister to the meetings of the Council at Geneva. It was obvious that the forty-ninth session ought to assume a special character and focus attention on the work of the Council. Like the Greek representative, Mr. Sen had doubts about dispensing with the general discussion on the world economic situation. That discussion and the consideration of the development strategy could be taken together, as had been done in the Second Committee. In any event, if emphasis was to be given to a particular topic, such as International Education Year, the Council could only consider it on the basis of a report by the Secretary-General. More attention should also be given to the question of the human environment, mentioned in paragraph 11, which could perhaps be discussed separately.

29. Mr. ARAUJO CASTRO (Brazil) said that, under rule 9 of the rules of procedure, the Council should have established its programme of work for 1970 during the previous session. He supported the proposal made by the Secretary-General in paragraph 7 of document E/L.1293. It would be preferable to dispense with the general discussion which normally took up more than one third of the time available to the Council and had helped to give a certain impression of immobility. With regard to the celebration of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the United Nations, the Council should show, first and foremost, that it was aware of the major issues, such as economic development, which were of concern to the modern world; that would be the best way of marking the anniversary.

30. Mr. SHAHI (Pakistan) said that he had no difficulty in accepting all the recommendations of the Secretary-General, which were flexible enough to satisfy all delegations. More particularly, as far as the celebration of the twenty-fifth anniversary was concerned, the recommendations in paragraph 9 of the draft programme seemed perfectly feasible. Ministers ought to be informed in advance about the programme of the Council's meetings. They could hardly be expected to go to Geneva if they could not stay there a few days in order to take part in a discussion on a given subject. It would therefore be useful to draw up a list of speakers as soon as possible.

31. The Secretary-General recommended that the Council should concentrate on the topic of international development strategy. That did not mean that the review of the world economic situation should be omitted; the intention was merely to avoid the long speeches which were a normal feature of the opening of the Council's session. It would obviously be difficult to discuss the strategy without placing it in its global context.

32. Mr. DE SEYNES (Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs) said that he wished first of all to assure the Council that the Secretariat had in no way wished to suggest any change in the constitutional rules

governing the Council's procedure. The draft programme contained only suggestions, and the reason that the Secretariat had made them was that the issue had already been dealt with by the Preparatory Committee for the Twenty-Fifth Anniversary of the United Nations and had already even been raised in the Council.

33. Furthermore, it appeared that some confusion had arisen between the celebration of the twenty-fifth anniversary, on the one hand, and the work of the Council, on the other; the two questions were separate. It was logical that on the occasion of the celebration of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the United Nations, Ministers should wish to discuss the current major issues of the Organization as a whole, without restricting themselves to problems of social and economic development. It had been suggested that the anniversary should be celebrated at Geneva in order to enable both "poles" of the United Nations—the New York Headquarters and the Geneva Office—to take part in the celebration.

34. With respect to the suggestion that some sessions should be held at the ministerial level, the Preparatory Committee indicated in its report that the intention was to enhance the prestige of the event, but its reasoning was not quite complete. The problem was one connected with the very functioning of United Nations bodies, and also arose in all international organizations, of whatever kind: at a given moment the need arose to organize meetings at the ministerial level with a view to making contact with the leaders responsible for decisions at the national level and enabling them, by such direct experience, to become better acquainted with the role and work of the Council, and with major current problems. That was the real objective of the recommendation.

35. In view of the confusion surrounding that subject, the suggestion made by the representative of France that the Secretariat should draft an explanatory note on the possible organization of ministerial meetings was excellent.

36. As for the remarks made by the representative of Greece concerning the subject to be debated during those meetings, he was in full agreement with the interpretation given by the representative of Pakistan. There was no question of omitting from the discussion comments on the *World Economic Survey*, for example; it had merely been felt that it would be useful to concentrate the discussion on two items which would be of particular importance at the time the meetings were held. However, the topics chosen were so comprehensive that they would provide a framework in which all the delegations could express their views on those problems of particular interest to them.

37. It should be borne in mind that the *World Economic Survey*, published annually, comprised two parts: a study of the current over-all economic situation at the time under consideration and a study of one particular aspect of long-term economic development.

38. With regard to the study of the over-all economic situation, it made sense for the Council in the same way as the Department of Economic and Social Affairs to keep abreast of current economic trends, but admittedly the Council had never had much influence in that respect, since

its members were usually in close touch with their Ministries of Foreign Affairs, whereas other Ministries assumed the greatest responsibility for questions involving the economic situation.

39. The other part of the *Survey*, however, was of much greater use, since it covered the very extensive problems of development strategy. It was hoped that when that strategy was implemented, the Council would assume broader functions in the areas of analysis, assessment and co-ordination, and that its role would be more specific than had so far been possible. It should then be easier for it to reach those leaders who were at the core of the decision-making process, but it would be advisable to make those leaders aware immediately of the possibility of such a development, which would mean that governmental bodies would have to take certain decisions in that connexion in years to come.

40. Finally, he wished to raise the matter of the usefulness of general discussion as it was presently conceived. Each year, many delegations asked what could be done to enliven the Council sessions and make them more effective. Their dissatisfaction was understandable in view of the fact that twenty-seven delegations and ten or so directors or representatives of specialized agencies and five or six representatives of non-governmental organizations took part in those discussions, which took up a large portion of the time at the Council's disposal and were inconclusive. Those delegations had expressed a desire to organize matters in a way that would yield greater results and would be more in keeping with the ideas of the Organization's founders and the authors of its Charter. It might perhaps be appropriate, at the start of a new decade, to think about those questions of reorganization, which should be viewed in as broad a context as possible.

41. Mr. LOBANOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) thanked the Under-Secretary-General for the explanations he had just given the Council. The matter of the general discussion was, however, something on which the Soviet delegation wished to express its views. The Under-Secretary-General had begun by giving an excellent description of the scope and importance of the general discussions, which enabled the Council to direct its work to the practical solution of concrete problems, a fact to which twenty-five years' experience attested and which had, with reason, been noted by several delegations, among them the Pakistan and Greek delegations. The process of economic development was constantly changing, and the various concrete items on the Council's agendas could not possibly be considered in the abstract. However, Mr. de Seynes had reached the opposite conclusion and had agreed with the statement in paragraph 8 of the draft programme prepared by the Secretary-General (E/L.1293) that it was questionable whether the general discussion as at present conceived had fulfilled the expectations of the Council expressed in its resolution 1156 (XLI). The Soviet delegation vigorously opposed that statement. For twenty-five years the Council's work had been of great significance, which was entirely due to the general discussions which enabled it to give a more positive direction to its activities. It might perhaps be said that the general discussions were not effective enough, that they did not constitute a perfect approach or that more advantage could have been drawn

from them, but their intrinsic usefulness could not be denied, and it was impossible to acquiesce in the view expressed by the Under-Secretary-General and in paragraph 8 of the draft programme, which was inconsistent with the facts. If the Council should do away with the general discussion, it would, of its own accord, have deprived itself of a particularly useful tool which had stood the test of time.

42. Mr. DRISS (Tunisia) proposed that the question of the ministerial meetings and the topic of their debate should be considered at the forty-eighth session of the Council in March and April. Accordingly, an item dealing with the celebration of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the United Nations should be added to the provisional agenda. In that way, delegations could inform their Governments of the possibility of holding such meetings, and, after the Council took a formal decision in that regard, Governments would still have three months to make their arrangements. He felt that that proposal should win the support of all the Council members.

43. Mr. VIAUD (France) supported the proposal made by the representative of Tunisia, since it involved no categorical decision and was in no way binding upon the Governments as to the level of their representation or the topic of the debate. The Council would take a final decision when it met again in March. However, the Secretariat should in the meantime draft a note on the way in which those meetings could be organized in case the Council should finally decide to hold them.

44. Furthermore, his delegation had approved the suggestion made to the Council with regard to the organization of ministerial meetings not merely because they would lend greater importance to the celebration of the Organization's twenty-fifth anniversary, as the Under-Secretary-General had pointed out, or draw the attention of Governments to the Council's activities. Those were very worthy objectives, but there was another one, which was to give the representatives of the developing countries an opportunity to discuss their problems directly with the representatives of the more developed countries and thereby to affect public opinion in those countries, which had not been made sufficiently aware of development problems. It did not really matter very much whether those meetings dealt with the international development strategy, the world economic situation or general economic and social problems. All those subjects were conducive to a much-needed exchange of views—a confrontation, so to speak—in the interest of international co-operation. Everyone knew how much importance France attached to the task of aiding the developing countries; that was why it was ready to play as large a part as it possibly could in those meetings. The meetings would, however, not yield results unless the developing countries participated fully in them too and described the problems with which they were grappling.

45. The PRESIDENT said that, if there were no objections, the decision on paragraph 4 and paragraphs 7 to 10 of the draft programme would be taken when the Council met again in March/April. Therefore, a new item entitled "Proposals regarding the agenda for the forty-ninth session of the Council and preparations for the celebration of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the United Nations" would

appear on the agenda of the forty-eighth session. Moreover, it was agreed that the Secretary-General would be requested to prepare an explanatory note along the lines indicated by the French representative. If there were no objections, he would consider that the Council had taken note of the other paragraphs of the draft programme.

It was so decided.

46. The PRESIDENT invited the Council to consider the proposed list of agenda items for the forty-eighth and forty-ninth sessions contained in the draft work programme.

47. Mr. ALLEN (United Kingdom) pointed out first of all, regarding the forty-eighth session in March/April, that it had been proposed that the Council should review the reports of certain of its subsidiary organs, namely, the *Ad Hoc* Committee on the Survey Programme for the Development of Natural Resources, the report of the Population Commission and the report of the Committee on Housing, Building and Planning (items 2(a), 4 and 5 of the provisional agenda). He wished to point out to the Council that, in accordance with paragraph 3 of its resolution 1367 (XLV), those reports were to be transmitted to it through the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination. Whereas the reports of the Population Commission and of the Committee on Housing, Building and Planning could be handled in that manner, the report of the *Ad Hoc* Committee on the Survey Programme for the Development of Natural Resources could not, because that Committee would not meet until February, i.e. after the session of the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination. Therefore, item 2(a) concerning the examination of the latter report might be deleted from the provisional agenda.

48. There was a different type of problem with regard to item 3, "Development of Tourism". Under sub-item (a) the Council was to consider a report on the celebration of the International Tourist Year, which took place in 1967. Many new developments had taken place since then, in particular the adoption of General Assembly resolution 2529 (XXIV), and it might be asked whether there was still any point in the Council's examining the report. Even more serious doubts must be entertained about sub-item (b), "Implementation of the recommendations of the United Nations Conference on International Travel and Tourism", since that conference had been held as long ago as 1963. If, however, the Council decided to retain those two items, it should only devote a minimum of time to them. Sub-item (c), "Review of the programmes and activities of the United Nations system of organizations for the development of tourism" might be taken up at the same time as item 19 of the provisional agenda for the forty-ninth session, "Co-operation and relationships between the United Nations and the International Union of Official Travel Organizations".

49. On the other hand, during its forty-eighth session in March/April, the Council could examine item 5 of the provisional agenda for the resumed session, devoted to the question of narcotic drugs. The Commission on Narcotic Drugs was at present meeting at Geneva and it would

probably be able to make its report available to CPC for its January-February session.

50. As for the resumed forty-eighth session, it should be pointed out that, according to the explanatory note on item 8 (a), "Review of the activities of the United Nations system of organizations in the transport field", the report the Secretary-General had prepared on that subject would be studied by CPC in April-May. Therefore, it hardly seemed possible that the Council would be able to receive the comments of CPC in time for its resumed forty-eighth session, and it would be preferable to postpone that item until 1971.

51. Moreover, he proposed that item 7, "The role of the co-operative movement in economic and social development", should be examined at the same time as item 3 of the provisional agenda for the forty-ninth session, "Second United Nations Development Decade", since the co-operative movement in fact constituted one of the aspects of the planning of the Second Development Decade.

52. For the resumed forty-eighth session, allowance should also be made for the fact that the reports of the subsidiary organs (Commission for Social Development, Commission on Human Rights, Commission on the Status of Women) and, possibly, the report of the *Ad Hoc* Group of Experts on infringements of trade-union rights, would be submitted to the Council through CPC.

53. The provisional agenda of the forty-ninth session was obviously too heavy. The Council should ascertain now whether consideration of some questions could not be deferred until the following year. There were five items his delegation considered the most important for that session: item 3, "Second United Nations Development Decade", item 8, "Reports of the Governing Council of the United Nations Development Programme", item 15, "Questions relating to science and technology", item 19, "Co-operation and relationships between the United Nations and the International Union of Official Travel Organizations", and item 25, "Development and co-ordination of the activities of the organizations within the United Nations system".

54. It was perhaps unnecessary to examine item 11, entitled "Evaluation of programmes of technical co-operation"; it could be considered as having been covered by *A Study of the Capacity of the United Nations Development System*.¹

55. Mr. VIAUD (France) asked for some clarification from the Secretariat regarding the division of the agenda items between the forty-eighth and the resumed forty-eighth session. In 1969 he had had the impression that, when the Council had decided to divide its session into two parts, it had planned to deal with all the basically economic items in one group and all the basically social questions in another group, so as not to oblige delegations to send two categories of experts to each part of the session. Apparently, those considerations had not been taken into account. Perhaps the Secretariat had had to comply with certain imperatives of which the Council was unaware, but some clarification in that regard would be welcome.

¹ United Nations publication, Sales No.: E.70.I.10.

56. In any case, the work of delegations would be easier if it were possible to postpone items 4, 5 and 6 of the provisional agenda for the forty-eighth session until the resumed session, for those were essentially social questions, and to examine at the forty-eighth session in March/April,

if possible, items 6, 7, 8 and 9 of the provisional agenda for the resumed session.

The meeting rose at 5.35 p.m.