



ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL

Forty-eighth Session
OFFICIAL RECORDS

Tuesday, 31 March 1970,
at 3.25 p.m.

NEW YORK

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

AGENDA ITEM 2

Development of natural resources (continued):

(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)

1. Mr. BRADLEY (Argentina) said that the Secretary-General's report on natural resources satellites (E/4779 and Corr.1-3), was most interesting, remarkably well documented and highly technical, perhaps even too technical for the members of the Council to be able fully to appreciate its merits and accord it the thorough consideration it deserved.

2. The Argentine Government, believing that natural resources were of primary importance for a country's development and that their rational exploitation might offer a solution to the problem of the general development of the developing countries, took a keen interest in all modern techniques which could facilitate the survey and development of natural resources. Remote sensing by satellite, which was now in general use in some fields, meteorology, in particular, unquestionably had a vast potential and should make it possible to discover hitherto unsuspected natural resources. The new technique had certain advantages over the conventional techniques currently used for surveying natural resources, especially from the standpoint of cost and accuracy. However, as the Secretary-General had said in his report, natural resources satellites were still at the research and development stage and represented no more than a potentially important, additional tool for the survey, development and management of natural resources. In the circumstances, they could not—at least at present—replace conventional techniques, in particular aerial photography, which had the advantage of being already within the reach of all countries and was used in many UNDP projects. He mentioned in that connexion that his country had requested UNDP assistance for a project for surveying natural resources by aerial photography. The execution of the project had been entrusted to a Canadian enterprise, and UNDP had provided experts who had assisted in the interpretation of the data obtained. That survey had produced some very interesting results, which would make it possible to develop the resources of a large area in the north-eastern part of the country.

3. In view of the importance of the question, his delegation felt that the Council should ask the Secretary-General to continue to study it, with the assistance of an *ad hoc* panel of experts. In conclusion, he drew the Council's attention to the need to develop a spirit of co-operation in

that field so that advanced techniques of remote sensing by satellite, which were at present used by only a few countries, might contribute to the progress of the less-developed countries, having due regard to the principle of sovereignty and subject to the authorization of the countries concerned.

4. Mr. DUBEY (India) commended the initiative of the Secretary-General in bringing to the attention of the Council the problems, promises and challenges of the use of earth satellites for the development of natural resources. He had mandate to do so both under Economic and Social Council resolution 1426 (XLVI) and General Assembly resolution 2600 (XXIV). That was a very useful step, which would go a long way towards bringing the Council's work more closely into conformity with present developments.

5. In his view, the annex to the Secretary-General's report centered, broadly speaking, on four main themes, namely, promises, caution, preparation and co-operation. The earth-orbiting satellites opened new vistas for the development of natural resources. The unique capabilities for such satellites for global resources survey were brought out in paragraph 21 of the annex to the Secretary-General's report. However, the potentials in that field should be viewed with caution. The results were not too near at hand, and not too certain either. Any exaggeration of the possibilities could result in the creation of unnecessary suspicion. That emphasized the importance of full information and open access to data relating to developments of resource satellites. Moreover, the practical limitations were likely to be more economic and political than technological. That underlined the need for the adoption of a multi-disciplinary approach. As regards preparation, it was essential to develop the basic capabilities of the developing countries to participate in future programmes. That would require enhancement of their competence in using conventional tools. Arrangements would have to be made for the training of technicians and the building of infrastructure for processing and interpreting data. Developing countries by themselves, in spite of their best efforts, would not be able to achieve these purposes because of the high cost involved and the need for the transfer of proper technology. That underscored the importance of international co-operation. During the next few years, the specialized agencies concerned and international organizations would have an important role to play. However, the role of the Economic and Social Council was of vital importance because only the Council could give the necessary socio-economic dimension to the consideration of the question.

6. He supported the suggestion in paragraph 8 of the Secretary-General's report that a small *ad hoc* panel of experts should be convened with the task of refining and elaborating the tentative recommendations made in the report. He felt that the economic and social aspects of

those recommendations were especially important and should be dealt with separately. No other body was better qualified than the Council to oversee the consideration of those questions, and in that area there was not the slightest risk of any overlap with the work of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space.

7. He agreed with the United States representative that the recommendations in the report were extremely important and should be considered by an international body within the United Nations. However, unlike the United States representative, he felt that now was the time to prepare the international community for action in that area, with a view to supplementing the efforts undertaken at the national and other levels, even though the operational phase was till far off. The proposed panel of experts might, for example, concern itself with the infrastructure problems of the developing countries in order to enable them to benefit from the data to be made available, the question of the resources needed by these countries, and similar matters.

8. At the national level, India had carried out detailed systems analysis on the peaceful uses of space technology in various fields. The analysis had shown that satellites offered tremendous possibilities for the development of natural resources in India because of the country's size and the remoteness of some areas, which precluded the use of conventional methods. India had co-operated in that field with several countries, in particular with the United Kingdom, France, the USSR and Japan. India was also a member of the International Telecommunications Satellite Consortium (INTELSAT).

9. Mr. ZAKHAROV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that science was assuming an ever-growing role in daily life and in itself constituted an industrial force. That development was in accordance with the ideas of Lenin, and the Soviet Government was endeavouring to enable the international community to benefit from the fruits of its research on a great number of present-day problems which, by their very nature, concerned many countries: outer space, the use of the sea-bed and the ocean floor, the human environment, food, energy resources, etc. It had intensified its scientific and technical co-operation with the socialist countries in a spirit of fraternal mutual aid. It was also co-operating with capitalist countries, such as Italy, France, the United Kingdom, Japan and Sweden. Finally, the Soviet Government was making its experience in the scientific field available to a large number of developing countries with a view to enabling them, thanks to that disinterested assistance, to strengthen their economic independence.

10. His delegation considered that the report of the Secretary-General, especially the chapter concerning the role the United Nations could play in that field, contained many statements which were not really justified, and even some contradictions. For example, it was stated in paragraph 6 that the time had definitely come to prepare internationally for the new era, whereas it had been stated almost immediately before that sentence that the work on resources satellites was in the research and development stage and not operational. In addition, the report showed that an operational phase in which a large number of countries would participate in activities involving the use of

natural resources satellites was not likely to be reached until the 1980s, at the earliest.

11. In the present state of affairs, it seemed premature to involve the United Nations in practical activities in that field. Moreover, it was possible that even in the 1980s satellites would not be used to survey natural resources. Again, the launching of satellites was at the present time well beyond the financial resources of the great majority of countries, which, in addition, did not have the required technicians. The conventional methods, such as aerial photography, were much less expensive and co-operation in that field could more readily be anticipated. The United Nations, with its modest resources, could hardly undertake a preliminary programme even the consequences of which were still unknown.

12. The question of national sovereignty was dealt with in paragraph 85 of the report, and, in that connexion, open access to data obtained by satellites on natural resources was recommended. His delegation was certainly not opposed to studying the question of satellites within the framework of existing bodies; however, that was a question which, in addition to scientific and technical problems, raised important legal problems, especially with regard to national sovereignty. The Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space could deal with the majority of those questions. His delegation, therefore, could not support the recommendation that a new body should be set up to study the uses of satellites, nor could it support the establishment of a special fund. A new body dealing with the initial planning, consultation and training activities would be expensive and would be of doubtful practical effectiveness. The question of the use of satellites should be referred to the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space and some of its aspects could also be studied by other bodies, such as the Committee on the Application of Science and Technology to Development.

13. Mr. ALLEN (United Kingdom) thought that some passages of the report of the Secretary-General on the use of natural resources satellites seemed too optimistic, especially with regard to the advantages which that new technique would have over the present techniques.

14. Two points in the report were particularly striking, namely, the considerable costs of any satellite system and the time which would be required for the development of such a system. With regard to the first point, it would be necessary to weigh very carefully the costs and advantages of a system using satellites in comparison with the conventional systems. As to the question of the time required, it should be pointed out that no results could be expected from that system during the Second United Nations Development Decade. Therefore, on the basis of those two factors—cost and time—it seemed that the question of the utilization of natural resources satellites could not be the Council's main consensus at the present session. However, it was possible to begin considering the role which the United Nations could play in that field.

15. The annex to the report contained a very interesting recapitulation of the methods of remote sensing and telemetry, but it also contained a number of recommendations which were, in his opinion, premature. In that regard,

he shared the misgivings expressed by the representative of the USSR. His country was not opposed to setting up a panel of experts, but it wished to stress the importance of avoiding any duplication of work. He had in mind in that connexion the work of such bodies as the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination and the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space. That was a consideration which would have to be taken into account when the terms of reference of a panel of experts were being determined.

16. Mr. VIAUD (France) said that the international community was faced with a series of scientific and technical problems and that co-operation among States was required if they were to be solved. Such was the case, for example, with the peaceful use of outer space, the study of the sea-bed and ocean floor, the development of the resources of the sea and the problems of the human environment. Often, they were more than national, or even regional, problems and the United Nations, in fact, provided the only suitable political and legal framework for their solution. Action by the Organization in the field of natural resources satellites therefore seemed appropriate.

17. It appeared from paragraph 8 of the report that the Secretariat was inclined to regard the recommendations contained in the study annexed thereto as tentative. Those recommendations could be classified in three categories. Three of them aimed at the possible establishment of an office responsible for the application of resources satellites. His country, like the Soviet Union and the United Kingdom, considered such a course to be unnecessary at the present time, for it did not meet any concrete need and it might lead to duplication of the work of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space. Next, there were six recommendations on the subject of contemporary technology. In his view, those recommendations were contrived, since the technology in question could develop considerably in the years to come. Lastly, five recommendations related to the training of specialists in the development of natural resources. There again, not enough progress had yet been made in natural resources satellites to be able to define a specific training programme. Consequently, the proposals contained in the report of the Secretary-General did not seem to have any truly contemporary basis. Because it was a new and difficult subject, the Secretariat was proposing that the recommendations should be considered in greater depth, by establishing an *ad hoc* panel of experts.

18. It was easy to state that United Nations action was needed in the field of natural resources satellites, but such action met with immediate restrictions and limitations at the technical, administrative, political and institutional levels. It would be necessary, for example, to study the precise purpose for which the satellites could be used, to consider the methods to be employed for the central storage and the use of the data collected, to determine who would be responsible for natural resources development, for whose benefit it would be done. In fact, the problem of extending the competence of the Organization to new scientific and technical fields which were beyond the capability of the present members of the Secretariat and of delegations concerned the very evolution of the United Nations. It should therefore be weighed before even taking a decision on convening an *ad hoc* panel of experts, which could study the question of satellites only from the

technical and not the political, legal and institutional viewpoints.

19. His country was prepared to admit that an international organization might have a role to play in that field in the future and, in that respect, it shared the view of the United Kingdom. However, certain conditions should be set for future debates. If it was acknowledged that the United Nations had a role in the use of natural resources satellites, it must be that of giving a new shape to international co-operation. Such a concept precluded, in particular, any monopoly of the means employed for using the new techniques, as well as any subordination of those techniques to specific political interests. Again, the Economic and Social Council should not give priority to the study of scientific questions which might cause the problem of economic and social development to be overlooked. France also felt it was very important to ensure that natural resources development benefited all countries, whether developed or developing. Lastly, if the Economic and Social Council was to submit proposals to the General Assembly, they should not involve an excessive broadening of the responsibilities of the Assembly or a reduced role for the Economic and Social Council.

20. It therefore seemed that the question had not yet been adequately studied and that further examination was required. If the Economic and Social Council refrained for the moment from taking a decision on that point the reason was that it was not yet in a position to assess all the implications of the problem and its consequences. It should take up the subject again at its forty-ninth session and, if possible, draw a clear distinction between the technical aspects of the problem, which concerned the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, and the economic aspects, which were of more concern to the Council and the bodies attached to it. With the documentation now available, it was not possible to draw that distinction satisfactorily, and the Secretariat should supply additional information on the subject. His delegation, in agreement with a number of earlier speakers, concluded that the establishment of an *ad hoc* panel of experts at the present session would be premature. Moreover, the technical aspects of the problem must give way for the moment to other aspects of a political, economic and institutional nature, which were more urgent for the Council.

21. Mr. DUBEY (India) observed that the members of the Council seemed to be in agreement on a number of points: the United States representative had said that many of the recommendations were relevant; the United Kingdom representative had acknowledged that the United Nations should engage in preparatory activities in that field and had not been opposed to the establishment of an *ad hoc* panel of experts. The representative of France had also stated that it was necessary for the Organization to take action in that field. Nevertheless, he had been unable to accept the relatively modest proposal made by the Secretary-General in his report to establish an *ad hoc* panel of experts which would be responsible for studying not the problem itself, but merely the conclusions and recommendations contained in the report.

22. The representatives of the USSR and France had said that some of the recommendations made in the report were

of dubious validity. However, the establishment of an *ad hoc* panel of experts would not prejudice the validity of those recommendations, for the panel would also have the task of examining their merits. Some representatives had said that institutional arrangements should be contemplated—for example, the establishment of an intergovernmental body. He agreed with them, but he failed to see how the establishment of an *ad hoc* panel of experts would preclude making arrangements of an institutional nature at a later date.

23. He urged the representatives of the United States, the USSR and France to accept the establishment of the panel of experts, which would in no sense mean that they were making a value judgement on the recommendations in the report. His delegation, in co-operation with others, was ready to submit a draft resolution on that subject.

24. Mr. BARNEA (Director, Resources and Transport Division) observed that the question of natural resources satellites provided the Economic and Social Council, for the first time, with an opportunity to study a new technique with widespread applications. It was both a challenge and a great opportunity. A thorough analysis of the problem would show that it was a new field in which every country could make a contribution. Satellites were already in use in the fields of meteorology and telecommunications. Now it only remained to find out whether the necessary photographic and geophysical equipment could be developed in order to use them for the study of natural resources. Many years of experimentation would still be necessary in that regard. As for the question of cost, it was not yet possible to provide a specific answer, except perhaps in the case of mapping, which would be very expensive if conventional methods were used. The technique was new and would require many years of preparation, adjustment and co-operation; the United Nations was the only Organization which was in a position to undertake such activities.

25. As for the role of the Economic and Social Council, the Secretary-General had pointed out in paragraph 4 of the report that it was not a question of competing with the efforts of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, but rather of complementing them. The Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space was not concerned with natural resources and therefore could not really make a contribution in that field. Since the United Nations could not afford substantial outlays at the present stage, the Secretary-General had proposed a modest beginning, which involved the setting up of a group of experts or a technical committee which might assist the Economic and Social Council by carefully analysing the question of natural resources satellites and indicating what further steps should be taken.

26. Mr. VIAUD (France) said his delegation's view that the establishment of a group of experts was premature or untimely had not been prompted by irrational fear. In dealing with such an important problem, the Governments themselves, and not the Secretary-General, should decide what type of body should be set up and who should represent them on that body. The problem could be solved and progress could be made without creating a group of experts.

AGENDA ITEM 7

Report of the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination (E/4787)

27. The PRESIDENT invited the Council to examine the report of the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination (CPC) on its fourth session (E/4787). The Committee's conclusions and recommendations were summarized in paragraph 10 of that document. Paragraph 8 contained the Committee's provisional agenda for its fifth session, while paragraph 9 contained the provisional agenda for its sixth session, subject to further review during its fifth session.

28. He drew the Council's attention to paragraphs 39 to 45 of the report, regarding the development of tourism. At its 1657th meeting the Council had referred the matter to the Economic Committee. The Economic Committee, in its report (E/4810), had recommended to the Council that it should defer consideration of the question until it had considered, at its forty-ninth session, the report to be prepared pursuant to operative paragraph 6 of General Assembly resolution 2529 (XXIV).

29. Mr. BLAU (United States of America) pointed out that CPC had met in particularly difficult circumstances. It had been the first committee to meet after the reorganization of the Council's calendar of meetings, and a number of practical problems had arisen. For example, many of the documents which the Committee was to study were either unavailable or relatively old. It had therefore considered only a few questions. Nevertheless, its examination of certain items had been very fruitful and should prove very useful to the Council when those items came up for its consideration.

30. The Committee had examined the report of the Joint Inspection Unit on documentation and its conclusions were set forth in chapter IV, paragraph 15, of document E/4787. Although the Council had decided, at its organizational meetings, to examine that question at its forty-ninth session, he wished, at the outset, to express his support for the conclusion that the six-week rule should be respected whenever possible and should be taken into account when the schedule of meetings was prepared, and that the Secretariat should be requested to observe it more strictly.

31. The Committee had also examined the question of the preparations for the joint meetings of CPC and the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination, which were to be held just before the opening of the Council's summer session. The Committee had concluded that a certain number of items could be inscribed on the agenda of the joint meetings but had considered that it was still too early to make a definite decision in that regard. One of the most important items which should be taken up at those meetings was the preparations for the Second United Nations Development Decade from the point of view of co-ordination. The CPC might also request the ACC to inscribe on the agenda of the joint meetings some of the questions which had been raised in *A Study of the Capacity of the United Nations Development System*,¹ particularly those regarding co-ordination machinery, which were more

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

within the sphere of competence of the Economic and Social Council than of the Governing Council of the UNDP. When the system of joint meetings had been established, it had been suggested that consideration might be given at those meetings to some of the more important items on the agenda of the following session of the Council. Since, at its forty-ninth session, the Council would be called upon to discuss the role of the ACC and the recommendation which had been made in the Capacity Study in that connexion, it would appear appropriate to include the question in the agenda for the joint meetings. The Council was not required to take action on this agenda.

32. The CPC had also studied the report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions on general co-ordination matters. In general, the report had been favourably received by the Committee, which had also recommended that in future its report on the work programme of the United Nations should be transmitted not only to the Second and Third Committees but also to the Fifth Committee, when it was considering the regular budget and the planning estimates. That was a very useful suggestion and his delegation hoped that, when the time came for the Council to take a decision on the matter, it would approve that recommendation and transmit it to the General Assembly. His delegation, which was a member of

the General Committee of the General Assembly, would support it without reservation.

33. The CPC had also examined the work programme of the United Nations Economic and Social Office in Beirut. The Council would probably consider that part of the report of the CPC at its forty-ninth session, in the context of its examination of regional activities.

34. The Committee had decided to postpone until its sixth session, which would be held after the resumed forty-eighth session of the Council, the examination of the question of whether the co-ordination of oceanographic activities should be studied in the light of a brief note which the Secretariat had been requested to prepare on that subject.

35. In conclusion, he said that, generally speaking, the Committee would undertake, at its fifth session, an over-all examination of the United Nations work programme, as the Council would be taking up that question at its resumed forty-eighth session. The sixth session would then be devoted to questions of co-ordination, including the report of the ACC, which would be before the Council at its forty-ninth session.

The meeting rose at 5.25 p.m.