



ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL

Resumed Forty-eighth Session
OFFICIAL RECORDS

Wednesday, 20 May 1970,
at 11.5 a.m.

NEW YORK

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

AGENDA ITEM 10

Transport questions (continued):

- (a) Review of the activities of the United Nations system of organizations in the transport field (E/4794 and Add.1; E/4795 and Add.1-4; E/4846/Add.4)
- (b) Transport of dangerous goods (E/4783; E/L.1315, E/L.1316)
- (c) Question of convening a United Nations meeting on containerization (E/4796 and Add.1 and 2, E/4846/Add.4)

1. Mr. CREMIN (Ireland) said that although his delegation was not opposed, in principle, to the establishment of a United Nations centre for transport development, it was not fully convinced of the need for such a centre. A number of organizations were already dealing with various aspects of transport, and to avoid any possibility of duplication, the first requirement was to define the terms of reference of the centre more clearly. The financial implications also needed more detailed study. According to document E/4795/Add.1, the initial costs of the centre would amount to about \$500,000 *per annum*, but that was no more than a provisional estimate which did not include even the training activities for which the centre might become responsible. In any event, if the centre was to be as important as was proposed, it should have a sound financial basis and not rely on voluntary contributions, as was suggested in paragraph 5 of that document.

2. Since the information given about the activities to be entrusted to the centre was so inadequate, it might be best to refer the question back to the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination before taking a decision.

3. He considered that the draft resolution on the transport of dangerous goods submitted by Norway and the United Kingdom (E/L.1315) was a step in the right direction, without prejudice to the USSR amendment, which the Council should also examine. He also supported the convening of a United Nations meeting on containerization.

4. Mr. BARNEA (Director, Resources and Transport Division) said that insufficient attention had been given during the discussion to the contemporary technological resolution. He drew attention to paragraph 2 of Council resolution 1372 (XLV) in which the Secretary-General was invited to prepare a report on the major transport problems of developing countries in the context of their economic and social development and to make special reference to the latest technological developments and their impact on the programmes and activities of the organizations of the United Nations system. The Economic and Social Council

had at the same session approved a division of responsibilities in the shipping field, under which the United Nations was to be responsible for coastal and inland transport and UNCTAD for ocean-going transport. Because of the rapid development of technology, a division along such lines had become entirely outmoded. It was also vital to reach an agreement on the standardization of container transport. The various sectors of the transport industry should work in co-operation with one another if the most economic results were to be achieved. In an era of revolutionary technological advance, the practice of giving the developing countries only fragmentary information on new technologies could not be allowed to continue. One radical solution was to establish a new specialized agency for transport, but that was impossible. What was essential, however, was to achieve some degree of integration and keep the developing countries informed of technological developments, and those were precisely the functions envisaged for the centre. There was also a need for feasibility studies of both existing and new technologies so that Governments and investment institutions might have a complete picture of the transport situation and thus take their decisions with full knowledge of the facts.

5. The centre was an agent of integration and, unlike the Division as it stood, should not be restricted in its activities. He considered it essential that the United Nations meeting on containerization should not be postponed beyond 1972.

6. Mr. SVELIEV (Inter-Governmental Maritime Consultative Organization) said that IMCO was engaged in the preparation of a document setting out the minimum acceptable safety requirements for the handling and transportation of containers in the marine environment. The technical body of IMCO which was responsible for the preparation of the document expected to be able to submit a draft text early in 1971. At its twenty-fourth session, the Council of IMCO had decided that it would be premature for IMCO to hold a conference on container traffic in 1971. If, however, the Economic and Social Council decided to organize such a conference in 1972, the Council of IMCO would recommend that the forthcoming IMCO Assembly should provide the resources required for IMCO's participation in the conference. At the same session, the Council of IMCO had also had an exchange of views on the legal instruments required to deal with the administrative, technical and legal problems of container transport.

7. Speaking of the transport of dangerous goods, he said that since 1961 close co-operation had been maintained between the Maritime Safety Committee and the United Nations Committee of Experts on the Transport of Dangerous Goods. The International Maritime Dangerous Goods Code had been based very firmly on the recommendations of the United Nations experts, and IMCO was awaiting the recommendations of the Committee of Experts and the

Group of Experts on Explosives to complete the volume of the Code which dealt with explosives. The Group of Rapporteurs on the Packing of Dangerous Goods had also made considerable progress in developing recommendations for the specifications of various types of packages, together with details of the test criteria to which packages should be subjected in order to ensure that they met safety standards for transport. Those specifications were being carefully studied by IMCO with a view to their incorporation into the International Maritime Dangerous Goods Code. Furthermore, IMCO had proposed numerous amendments to the United Nations list of dangerous substances.

8. IMCO had already done considerable work on the question of portable tanks intended for the carriage of dangerous goods with a view to including in the Code provisions for the construction of portable tanks for such goods in maritime transport.

9. Mr. MALINOVSKY (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development) said that UNCTAD was in favour of the meeting on containerization. It was important that universal standards should be adopted for, for example, the size of containers, if the interests of some countries were not to be harmed. UNCTAD would prepare a report on the economic aspects of container transport.

10. With regard to the proposed centre for transport development, he pointed out that, whereas the Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs had stated that efforts would be made to reduce duplication and overlapping to the minimum, the Director of the Resources and Transport Division had said that the centre's activities should not be restricted. Further explanations therefore seemed to be required.

11. Mr. DE SEYNES (Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs), speaking of possible duplication and overlapping, said that the function of the centre had already been worked out in principle in consultation with the agencies concerned. The principle was that of introducing the necessary minimum of integration in a sphere in which fragmentation was a source of weakness and confusion for Governments. The centre would, in fact, be an integrated information system devoted to transport design, transport planning methods and the impact of new technologies on transport policy and on individual countries' transport projects. The proposed integrated system for collecting, cataloguing, analysing and disseminating information could be of use not only to Governments, but also to all organizations concerned with transport. In order to avoid duplication, the information and evaluation programmes would have to be re-examined, either before or after the centre was established, with all the parties concerned. Those programmes might undergo certain changes if it was felt that the centre was better equipped to do what had previously been handled by some other body. To say that duplication should be avoided did not mean that the centre would have a purely residual function. The purpose was to ensure that information was organized in the most rational fashion possible, with arrangements for consultation among the bodies concerned.

12. Mr. OUEDRAOGO (Upper Volta) said that he saw little value in holding an international meeting of ministers

responsible for transport. Such a meeting might be useful at the regional level, in which case the problems discussed would necessarily be of a more practical nature and more familiar.

13. As for the possible establishment of a centre for transport development, he did not think that, in the form in which it was contemplated, it could help developing countries to solve their transport problems which were concerned primarily with financing a modicum of infrastructure. For the developing countries to be concerned about the newest technological advances in transport, which were still at the experimental stage, might be putting the cart before the horse. The proposal might be referred to the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination and reconsidered by the Economic and Social Council at its forty-ninth session.

14. Mr. BRADLEY (Argentina) said that his delegation had declared its support of a meeting on containerization on the understanding that such a meeting would not deal with the legal aspects of that mode of transport.

15. Mr. MARTOHADINEGORO (Indonesia) described the essential function of transport, the need for it, and its political, social and cultural role, both nationally and internationally. In an archipelago country, such as Indonesia, transport and communications were absolute necessities, and for that reason were ranked second in his Government's order of priorities. Roads and ports were being rehabilitated, and inland and ocean shipping developed, since the transport system still did not meet the needs of the population and the economy. For that reason, his delegation attached great importance to the question under consideration and wished to make special mention of the high quality of the reports submitted to the Council. His delegation endorsed the observations made in the last sentence of paragraph 31 of the report on transport questions (E/4795), although it realized that the decisions required had to be based on more extensive research and experimentation. His delegation also endorsed the observations in paragraphs 44 and 45 to the effect that many of the problems to be dealt with were economic and political, rather than technical. With regard to the centre for transport development, his delegation felt that the matter should be reconsidered by the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination. He doubted whether there was any immediate benefit to be derived from a meeting of ministers responsible for transport. It might be advisable to consider first the possibility of expert meetings at the regional level.

16. Mr. AYOUB (Tunisia) said he wished to point out that the development of transport depended on two factors: financial resources and technical personnel. His country was well aware of the importance of transport for the African continent and of the problems which arose in transportation; that was why it had been co-operating for the past three years with Algeria, Niger and Mali in carrying out a study of a trans-Sahara road. The fact that flow of trade in Africa had not developed to a greater extent during the past decade was due to a lack of adequate transport, which in turn was partly caused by natural barriers. His delegation was especially appreciative of the report on transport questions (E/4795 and Add.1-4), although it dealt with

problems which would probably not confront the developing countries for a number of years. The report referred to a possible study on transport needs in relation to urbanization and he asked whether the Centre for Housing, Building and Planning had been consulted on the subject.

17. His delegation was not yet able to express its final opinion on the proposed centre for transport development, but it felt that the Council should solicit information from the Administrative Management Service and the Office of Legal Affairs before taking a decision. His delegation would also like to know why the proposed centre for transport development had not been mentioned in the questionnaire sent to the specialized agencies, and would welcome clarification as to the fate of the project to establish a world transport centre in North America, which had been the subject of a document prepared for the Economic and Social Council's forty-fifth session.¹

18. His delegation supported, in principle, the convening of a meeting of ministers responsible for transport; careful preparations should be made for it, however, at subregional and subsequent regional meetings, which would show whether it was necessary to convene a conference at the world level.

19. His delegation unreservedly supported the meeting on containerization, but wondered whether the conference and the meeting could not be held at the same time.

20. His delegation also supported the draft resolution submitted by Norway and the United Kingdom (E/L.1315) and found the amendment proposed by the Soviet Union (E/L.1316) acceptable.

21. Mr. TODOROV (Bulgaria) said that his country attached great importance to the development of transport and to international co-operation in transport matters, since, while each State was responsible for developing its own transport, some problems could be resolved only if States made a concerted effort. However, a study of the terms of reference for the proposed centre revealed that only a limited number of problems relating to advances in transport technology were not being dealt with by the specialized agencies of the United Nations. The issue was one within the competence of the Advisory Committee on the Application of Science and Technology to Development. It was questionable whether the question of establishing a centre for transport development should be considered before a decision was made on establishing a United Nations organ for science and technology. His delegation doubted whether a centre for transport development would be useful to the developing countries. The logic of the conclusions of the report did not favour its establishment: if it was the paucity of resources that was jeopardizing the economic growth of the developing countries, why establish new United Nations bodies? How could they help the developing countries to overcome their financial difficulties? There was nothing to prevent the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination from considering the question at its sixth session, but it might be best to give the Secretariat more time to consult the

agencies concerned and improve the terms of reference of the proposed centre.

22. His delegation supported the conclusions of the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination on the meeting of ministers responsible for transport and the meeting on containerization (E/4846/Add.4).

23. Mr. CARANICAS (Greece) said that modern transport technology strengthened the position of the industrialized countries in international trade and increased their advantages over the less developed countries, thus widening the gap between their respective growth rates. Only the United Nations could redress the imbalance, at least with regard to transport and international trade. It was therefore essential that the United Nations should consider in depth the development of transport and transport requirements in order to assist the developing nations to improve their transport facilities. That task was in line with the aims of the Second United Nations Development Decade: if economic activity was to be expanded, it was essential to transfer to the developing countries the technological innovations which would help them to resolve their transport problems. In that connexion, he wished to point out that the work accomplished by the United Nations Secretariat, UNCTAD, IMCO, ICAO and other United Nations bodies had been very valuable and had already produced tangible results with regard to maritime transport, port facilities, road transport and air communications.

24. It was regrettable to note that United Nations bodies sometimes held views which differed from those of the Secretary-General, particularly with respect to the proposed centre for transport development. He agreed with some of the preceding speakers that the centre would play a useful role, but before any decision was taken the difficulties should be ironed out, the disagreements resolved and the centre's terms of reference defined. The Council might therefore postpone consideration of the item until it had more information at its disposal.

25. His delegation supported the proposal that a United Nations meeting on containerization should be convened in 1972, especially since IMCO found that date suitable. The Tunisian representative had suggested that the meeting should be combined with the proposed meeting of ministers responsible for transport, but he himself felt that the meeting on containerization should be a meeting of experts rather than of ministers since it would be dealing with a highly technical subject.

26. His delegation intended to comment at a later stage on the draft resolution on the transport of dangerous goods, as well as on the amendment proposed by the delegation of the USSR.

27. Mr. KITI (Kenya) said that history had demonstrated the importance of transport, since it had been the countries with highly developed means of transport, such as a powerful fleet, which had tended to dominate the others. The developing countries now had to deal with a complex problem, since they had to adapt the methods of transport inherited from the colonizers. Planning was extremely important for that purpose, and the main need of the developing countries was for financial resources and skilled labour.

¹ See *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, Forty-fifth Session, Annexes*, agenda item 23, document E/4509, para. 27.

28. His Government supported the proposed centre for transport development, which, according to its terms of reference, would play a very useful role in collecting and disseminating information for the benefit of the developing countries. He, too, felt that the centre's terms of reference should be defined, if only to allay the fears of some individuals. The risk that the activities of the centre and those of some specialized agencies and United Nations bodies might overlap was a real one, but the problem could be solved through consultations and it was encouraging to note that all the specialized agencies had stated that they would co-operate with the centre if the Council decided to establish it. Contrary to what the representative of the USSR had said, the various modes of transport could not be dealt with separately; in fact, all transport activities should be integrated. Although he agreed that it would be advisable for the Council to wait until it had held further consultations before taking a decision, he was firmly opposed to the idea of entrusting taking a decision on the matter to the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination. The role of the Committee was to define the centre's terms of reference and to give advice, but it was for the Council to take a final decision.

29. His delegation supported the convening of a meeting on containerization in which as many countries as possible

should participate. The meeting would have to take into account the special needs of the developing countries, for which the question of transport raised not only technical problems, but also economic and even political problems, since they had to consider the needs of part of the local labour force and their trade unions were very powerful. He therefore hoped that the agenda of the meeting would include not only technical questions but also questions relating to the utilization of labour and political and economic questions. His Government would have preferred the meeting to be held in 1971, since the developing countries would continue to fall behind during the preparations for it. In any case, he urged that the meeting should be convened no later than 1972.

30. His delegation had some doubts as to the usefulness of a meeting of ministers responsible for transport, but it would abide by the views of the majority. It felt that it might perhaps be preferable to hold meetings at the regional level first in order to solve any local problems.

31. Finally, his delegation would support both the draft resolution on the transport of dangerous goods and the amendment submitted by the delegation of the USSR.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.