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*President: Mr. Manuel PÉREZ GUERRERO (Venezuela).*

AGENDA ITEM 2

Multilateral food aid:

- (a) Programme of studies called for in General Assembly resolution 2096 (XX) (E/4538 and Corr.1, E/4602)
- (b) Report of the Intergovernmental Committee of the World Food Programme (E/4541)

1. Mr. WOODWARD (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations) said that, since the summer session of the Economic and Social Council, the second joint report on multilateral food aid by the Secretary-General and the Director-General of FAO (E/4538 and Corr.1) had been discussed by the FAO Committee on Commodity Problems at its forty-third session and by the FAO council at its fifty-first session. The first report<sup>1/</sup> had discussed the magnitude of food gaps and examined the implications of developing countries' food problems on national and international policies. In considering means for increasing multilateral food aid, the Economic and Social Council had expressed its preference for making use of existing institutions. The second report submitted, for the consideration of Governments, definite proposals and suggestions for dealing with the situation in the event that multilateral food aid was considerably increased. In his contribution to the report, the Director-General of FAO had taken account not only of previous discussions in the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly but also of the wishes expressed by the FAO Conference, the FAO Council and its Committee on Commodity Problems. Those bodies had asked for a more exhaustive discussion of the relationships between food aid and other types of aid. Governments had requested that the role of the various organs of the United Nations system, particularly in the co-ordination of food aid,

should be more clearly defined. Institutional arrangements were thus an important feature of the report.

2. The method adopted derived from a straightforward logic, based on several premises. First, the need for food aid on a large scale would continue for some years at least and subsequently more emphasis might be placed on emergency relief and the supply of protein foods. Secondly, surplus stocks would no longer constitute a constant source of food aid. Hence, planned production for food aid would become necessary, as was already the case for wheat. However, in many aid-giving countries there was a built-in tendency for food supplies to press continually upon commercial demand. Food aid machinery should be able to take advantage of existing surpluses. It was necessary, therefore, to regard food aid as a specialized form of aid, by insisting less on disposing of surpluses than on satisfying the needs of developing countries. Despite the weakness inherent in any system of aid in kind, food aid should aim at the greatest possible efficiency in development. The report therefore dealt with the planning of supplies for food aid. As the Economic and Social Council had advocated in its report the previous year<sup>2/</sup> continuing appraisal was needed. That was why the Director-General of FAO had proposed supplementing long-term projections by an annual review of the medium-term outlook. The FAO Committee on Commodity Problems had agreed to the initiation of regular medium-term reviews on an experimental basis.

3. A new approach to large-scale emergency relief seemed to be called for. It might be necessary to ensure that a minimum level of global food security was planned in order to prevent widespread crop failures from resulting in famine and seriously disrupting economic growth. In order to achieve a reduction and a satisfactory sharing of the costs of carrying necessary reserves, Governments, mainly of the developed countries, could co-operate in an emergency relief consortium. Drawings on the stocks of the consortium could subsequently be replenished by supplies from the exporting countries, the sharing of costs being discussed in each case. The Director-General of FAO had already established an early warning system for food shortages which should make it possible to foresee serious shortages several months in advance. He drew attention to the fact that the funds available to the Director-General of FAO for emergency purposes under the World Food Programme were already virtually exhausted. Several requests had had to be turned down and efforts were being made to resort to other sources of financing and supply. If the Governments were interested in such a solution, specific proposals could be made for

<sup>1/</sup> Documents E/4352 (see Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, Forty-third Session, Annexes, agenda item 13) and E/4352/Add.1 (mimeographed).

<sup>2/</sup> Ibid.

an arrangement to yield international food security based on national stocks.

4. Government decisions concerning production and financing and the international implications thereof would determine the size of future food aid operations. The international framework for those decisions could be provided by regular and systematic appraisals of forward estimates of needs by inter-governmental bodies, such as the commodity study groups or other suitable organs of FAO.

5. As to institutional arrangements, the food aim of the United Nations system was the World Food Programme. The Secretary-General and the Director-General of FAO regarded the existing constitution and functions of the Intergovernmental Committee of the World Food Programme as appropriate, even if the programme were to be expanded. A substantial expansion in resources and activities would necessitate only some changes in the Programme's current procedures. The report emphasized the fact that food aid was only one of the policies designed to promote development. It could give better results if it were combined with other forms of aid, and the Programme had already instituted regular procedures for co-operation which could be strengthened and extended to other bodies, particularly international and regional financing institutions.

6. The World Food Programme was authorized to use its cash resources to make purchases from the food-exporting developing countries in order to enable those countries to participate more in assistance activities. The main problem was that of increasing cash resources. The International Grains Arrangement 1967<sup>3/</sup> provided for the financing of purchases of limited quantities of food grains from developing countries.

7. The main contribution of the United Nations system to co-ordination of all food aid, bilateral and multilateral, must come from services of information and consultation which, in the matter under discussion, would be largely provided by FAO. The general studies made by FAO seemed adequate and he hoped that the Economic and Social Council would be able to obtain useful information from them.

8. Mr. VERCELES (Philippines) said that he was impressed by FAO's information and consultation activities. The report of the Secretary-General on multilateral food aid (E/4538 and Corr.1) supplied useful information.

9. His delegation considered that it would be advisable to allow the World Food Programme to administer non-food aid by providing, for example, fertilizers and other factors of agricultural production. The report seemed to indicate that the World Food Programme would not be competent to administer supplementary aid of that type. His delegation considered that the World Food Programme should be given that authority and would even take action in that direction if necessary. The problem was all the more important because the recent introduction of high-yield varieties of grains created a greater need for fertilizers, pesticides and storage facilities.

<sup>3/</sup> See International Wheat Conference, 1967 (United Nations publication, Sales No.: E.68.II.D.5).

10. Resolution 9 (II) of UNCTAD<sup>4/</sup> should be the main guide-line for food aid. The adoption of the Declaration on the world food problem was a positive achievement but it should now be implemented.

11. Mr. ABE (Japan) said that, while essential, short-term food aid was no substitute for long-term solutions. The food problems of the densely populated countries could not be solved unless they were dealt with within an over-all economic context. Considerable national efforts were necessary in order to step up farm production, as was shown by many studies of international organizations. The Secretary-General's report on multilateral food aid (*ibid.*) approached the problem from two angles. Firstly, assistance must be given to those countries unable to meet their own needs and, secondly, efforts must be made to bring food production and needs into balance. The possibilities for increasing food production were much greater than was commonly supposed, if developing countries were determined to do that, and Governments had to be encouraged to assign an important place to agricultural development in their economic policies in order to meet their needs, at least of staple foods. The resultant savings would enable them to import capital goods.

12. The report rightly stressed that that indispensable effort should be made within the wider framework of general economic development, which called *inter alia* for action in administration, institutional arrangements and social policy. Those intensified self-help efforts for agricultural development and international assistance corresponding to domestic efforts should be stressed. Japan had already increased its aid for the agricultural development of developing countries in the form of fertilizers, pesticides, agricultural equipment and seeds. In addition, it was making a contribution that would amount in all to \$100 million to a special fund for agricultural development administered by the Asian Development Bank. It was also actively participating in the ECAFE Technological Co-operation Centre for Agriculture and South-East Asian Fisheries Development Centre. Such aids would be extended to other regions if requested.

13. Although itself a net importer of food products, Japan was contributing to the World Food Programme. He emphasized that the co-operation of all the international agencies was required to solve the world food problem, with FAO playing the main role.

14. Mr. RICHTER (International Federation of Agricultural Producers), speaking at the invitation of the President, said that his Federation had always been one of the keenest supporters of food aid in general, and of the World Food Programme in particular. The joint report (*ibid.*) was a helpful effort to work out the practical measures needed to clarify the problems and prospects of food aid and thus determine future needs and, in part, the future itself. The International Federation of Agricultural Producers was committed to the idea of economic assistance, including food aid, and was anxious to contribute to its progress. Two points in the report should be further pursued, while

<sup>4/</sup> See Proceedings of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, Second Session, vol. I and Corr.1 and Add.1, Report and Annexes (United Nations publication, Sales No.: E.68.II.D.14), p. 28.

two other points called for modified approaches and additional study. First, the report emphasized that, despite the great progress achieved with new varieties of wheat, rice and maize, developing countries could not be expected to rid themselves of their food problem in the very near future. Many requirements would have to be met before the potentials of the new varieties of grains could be exploited on a large scale. Various factors were involved, such as the modernization of farming methods, and, indirectly, investments in transport. Consequently that well-judged warning against over-optimism was most commendable.

15. Secondly, he strongly supported the suggestion that short-term and medium-term projections should be made of world food needs, and used in the international co-ordination of production and stockholding, including emergency food reserves. The Federation had long advocated such measures, and an annual report on the world agricultural outlook would be most desirable.

16. On the other hand, he had some doubts about the view expressed in the report that food aid saved the receiving country part of its international buying power which would otherwise be used for commercial imports of foods. The transfer under an aid programme of a given resource was not intended to obviate the need for commercial imports of that resource by the country receiving the aid; if the aid was in the form of food, the primary aim was additional consumption in the recipient country, since food aid was designed to relieve a food deficiency. That was the basis on which FAO had formulated its principles of surplus disposal,<sup>5/</sup> which provided that exports on special terms should not result in harmful interference with normal patterns of agricultural production and trade.

17. With respect to the estimate of need for food aid in 1975, future United Nations/FAO projections might perhaps be confined to estimating the total food gap of the developing countries to be filled by imports, without indicating how much might be commercial trade and how much aid. Such a course would avoid the kind of criticism occasionally made of the estimates in the report. If it was not possible for the secretariats concerned to give global figures, and separate projections of commercial imports were unavoidable, those projections must be based on data as carefully analysed as those used in other parts of the report.

18. Mr. ROUAMBA (Upper Volta) said that the documents provided contained substantial and coherent material of great use to delegations. However, in view of the great importance of the subject, it was regrettable that the Council had so little time to study it and to make specific proposals. Furthermore, the aims and principles of the World Food Programme, its complexity, its relatively autonomous thinking and its modus operandi called for very detailed study by the Council. Consequently there was reason for wondering how the Council could make useful suggestions at the present stage in the light of the information available to it. The Programme was working satis-

factorily and receiving large-scale assistance. Some Governments had recently asked it to consider structural reforms that might have implications as far as some provisions of resolutions already adopted by the General Assembly were concerned. Furthermore, the Council had before it paragraphs 60 to 63 of the report of the thirteenth session of the Intergovernmental Committee of the Programme,<sup>6/</sup> a series of proposals relating to the inclusion of non-food items in World Food Programme resources and those proposals would entail the amendment of some basic General Assembly resolutions, in particular resolution 1714 (XVI).

19. In any case, the delegation of Upper Volta was doubtful, in view of the scope and complexity of the subject, whether the Council would be able in the little time available to undertake any useful discussions, and he thought it might be better to break off the discussion at the present preliminary stage, in order to permit consultations, and resume it later. That solution was particularly desirable since the fourteenth session of the Intergovernmental Committee was to open in Rome the following week. It would end on 14 November, before the Council concluded its discussions, and some decisions taken at that session might introduce new elements. A further reason for breaking off the debate and resuming it later, if necessary, was that Mr. McNamara would be presenting to the Council the report of IBRD and much of that report dealt with agricultural and food aid problems.

20. In Upper Volta, 90 per cent of the population were peasants and his country was especially aware of the World Food Programme's activities as it had been the beneficiary of some very important programmes of that body. As to the programme of studies called for in General Assembly resolution 2096 (XX), he doubted whether the Council had sufficient information available to it to do anything more than endorse the report (*ibid.*) which had been prepared with the assistance of some highly competent bodies, including IBRD, UNCTAD, IMF, FAO, and the World Food Programme, particularly with respect to the institutional provisions.

21. Mr. DE SEYNES (Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs) congratulated the representative of FAO on his excellent introduction of the report of the Intergovernmental Committee of the World Food Programme<sup>6/</sup> and fully endorsed his comments.

22. World food aid was a subject that fell within the competence of the United Nations, and more particularly that of the Economic and Social Council. The problem was one of organization at the world level: it would probably continue to be a problem, since national agricultural and food policies would not be harmonized spontaneously, and it was one of the very problems for which the Economic and Social Council had been specifically established. There were many reasons for that. First, there were the irrational criteria underlying agricultural policies almost everywhere. Again, there was a problem of forecasting, that could also be described as a medium-term or long-term warning or

<sup>5/</sup> Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, Commodity Policy Studies No.10: Functions of a World Food Reserve—Scope and Limitations (Rome, 1956), appendix III.

<sup>6/</sup> See Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, Sixth Annual Report of the United Nations/FAO Intergovernmental Committee of the World Food Programme; transmitted to the Economic and Social Council by a note of the Secretary-General (E/4541).



alarm system, which was so necessary for the adjustment of those policies. Secondly, the problem had a highly humanitarian aspect. The world was becoming more and more aware that hunger was a scandal in an age of technical progress. Rather widespread ignorance of biological needs and nutritional deficiencies only compounded the difficulties. There was the need to overcome recurring crises. Lastly, for many years world food policy had included separate aid schemes that had to be combined in a global strategy. It had been rather disturbing to see the Council indulging in delaying tactics and holding back when asked to consider world food policy in detail. Three years had passed since the matter had been brought to the Council's attention, and there had not yet been a thorough discussion of the subject. Fortunately, the United Nations had established a most fruitful form of co-operation with FAO, IBRD, the ILO and other specialized agencies, which had proved that it was possible to arrive at common conclusions.

23. World markets for agricultural products were now better balanced. The period of "unwanted surpluses" had apparently passed. However, the balance was a precarious one, especially for the exporting countries, whose reserves had increased for the second year running. Reserves of cereals did not yet give grounds for concern, but the situation with regard to dairy products, for example, was already very serious. The temptation to revert to the thinking of the age of unwanted surpluses, when policies of food aid had been influenced by the circumstances of the countries with surpluses rather than by the requirements of the needy countries, must be resisted.

24. There had been great optimism following the discovery of certain varieties of cereal which had produced spectacular results. It would be advisable, however, to treat them with considerable caution. It was not yet known whether those varieties could be used in all types of soil or whether the appropriate soils covered a large area of cultivable land. There was the further problem of acclimatizing those varieties, whose use would have to be accompanied by a revision of agricultural, economic and social programmes. It was also known that there were still storage and distribution difficulties, which meant that it was not certain that food needs would actually be met, even if production increased.

25. It was encouraging that efforts were being made in small governmental committees to balance the markets, but as their decisions affected the entire world the problem should be tackled and recommendations made by a United Nations organ. The principles on which the World Food Programme was organized should be reviewed. The best justification for the Programme's existence was undoubtedly the need to eliminate nutritional deficiencies. Appropriate solutions had to be found for each specific case. For example, in seeking to make up chronic calorie deficiencies, free distribution of food was not the only possible course; better use could also be made of commercial channels. In seeking to improve diets, efforts would only be effective if they were accompanied by intensive educational programmes.

26. Finally, the loans made under the World Food Programme should be more closely integrated with

the over-all aid programme of the United Nations, so that the distributive justice of an autonomous body could be seen in broader perspective.

27. With regard to the suggestion of the Philippines representative that the machinery of the World Food Programme should be used to organize aid in kind other than food, the Secretary-General and the Director-General of FAO were in complete agreement on that point. However, there had been some opposition within the Intergovernmental Committee and the question was being studied further.

28. Dr. COIGNEY (World Health Organization) said that WHO had welcomed the recommendation of the thirteenth session of the Intergovernmental Committee of the World Food Programme to the effect that the aid provided by the World Food Programme for special food aid projects should be strengthened and expanded. That should make it possible to attack famine and under-nourishment among vulnerable groups of the population more directly. The World Food Programme had started a study of ways of using large quantities of cereals and other foodstuffs in projects undertaken under its mandate. WHO was participating in that study, especially in relation to the role that could be played by health authorities in planning food aid under projects or programmes for vulnerable groups. WHO was also interested in the possibility of setting up local projects which would permit the production of cheap protein-rich foodstuffs. It had already recruited a consultant who would go to the various regional offices, inspect certain projects on the spot and make recommendations on ways of profiting to the full from the new possibilities. WHO hoped to increase still further its participation in the activities and projects of the World Food Programme in the field of health.

29. Mr. MARTIN WITKOWSKI (France) said that he would restrict his remarks to sub-paragraph (b) of the item before the Council, since he felt that it was impossible to deal with the whole problem in such a limited time. He considered that a detailed study could not be made of the question during the present session.

30. His delegation had studied the report of the Intergovernmental Committee on its twelfth and thirteenth sessions. At the thirteenth session, the Committee had had before it a fairly ambitious set of proposals aimed at expanding the scale of the World Food Programme and at modifying its procedures. Those proposals were based on three assumptions, namely, that there would be a marked increase in the resources available to the Programme for 1969-1970, that the Programme would receive substantial quantities of cereals under the Food Aid Convention<sup>2/</sup> signed in connexion with the Geneva tariff negotiations, and that the Programme would receive special offers of food products. It had to be recognized that some of those assumptions had not proved correct. The January 1968 Pledging Conference had offered no promise of a marked increase in resources, which for the next two years would amount to \$65 million. Moreover, although some signatories of the Convention had channelled their food aid through

<sup>2/</sup> See International Wheat Conference, 1967 (United Nations publication, Sales No.: E.68.II.D.5).

the Programme, their contributions were still limited. In view of those considerations, it would be premature to revise the procedures followed by the Programme, which was still in an experimental stage and not yet capable of assessing the effects of its aid or of carrying out projects on the basis of sufficiently precise criteria of efficiency.

31. In conclusion, he stressed the need for close co-ordination between the World Food Programme, UNDP and UNICEF.

32. Mr. VARCHAVER (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) was encouraged by the progress achieved, in multilateral food aid, as illustrated by the report of the World Food Programme's Intergovernmental Committee on its twelfth and thirteenth sessions.

33. UNESCO, which felt that the World Food Programme had a particularly useful role to play as a source of investment in slow-maturing projects such as those contributing to the development of human resources, considered that a large share of the additional resources recently made available to the Programme should be invested in projects for school and university feeding, literacy campaigns and youth projects.

34. Food aid could help in educational development by improving the nutritional level and hence the health and mental alertness of the pupils, thus leading to

better academic results and an increased yield on educational expenditure.

35. In conclusion, he welcomed the fact that an objective of recent education projects of the World Food Programme had been to reinvest the savings which Governments had been able to effect because of food aid projects in educational items, particularly the creation of fellowships, educational buildings, and the purchase of teaching materials.

Consideration of the agenda and organization of work  
(concluded)\* (E/L.1236)

36. The CHAIRMAN stated that, in accordance with the intention he had expressed at the 1562nd meeting, he had consulted the Chairman of the Second Committee and conveyed to him the Council's views on the question of edible protein. He therefore proposed that the question should not be taken up during the first series of meetings but should be postponed until one of the meetings scheduled for 19 and 20 November. That arrangement would enable interested delegations to study the question and, if necessary, obtain the necessary instructions from their Governments.

*It was so decided.*

*The meeting rose at 12.55 p.m.*

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\*Resumed from the 1562nd meeting.