



ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL

Monday, 27 July 1970

FORTY-NINTH SESSION

at 10.20 a.m.

OFFICIAL RECORDS

PALAIS DES NATIONS, GENEVA

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President: Mr. MARAMIS (Indonesia)

AGENDA ITEM 16

United Nations Conference on the Human Environment
(E/4828, E/4877, paras. 50-54; E/AC.24/L.371, E/L.1352)

1. Mr. MUSSARD (Director of the secretariat of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment) recalled that the Conference's Preparatory Committee, which had held its first meeting in March, had proposed that the Conference programme should be built around three themes: environmental aspects of human settlements; rational management of natural resources; and environmental degradation from pollution and nuisances. The Preparatory Committee had stressed the need to pay the greatest attention to the problems which arose in the developing countries and which differed from those in the industrialized countries.

2. The secretariat staffing for the Conference would be completed before the end of the year. With regard to co-operation with the specialized agencies, he thought that a true team spirit had been established among those agencies in preparing for the Conference. The *Ad Hoc* Inter-Agency Working Group had met a few weeks earlier and had invited a specialized agency to serve as the intellectual focal point for each important item in the provisional programme for the Conference. Many organizations, including FAO, UNESCO, ILO and ECE — which was at the moment preparing for a meeting of government experts on the same subject to be held in 1971 at Prague — had agreed to participate. The Conference secretariat had already approached other international organizations, in particular the non-governmental organizations such as IUCN and ICSU, which had decided to set up a scientific committee to consider questions of environment and to determine how the scientific unions might participate in preparing the Conference programme. The secretariat had also established collaboration with OECD.

3. Since the Secretary-General's report on problems of the human environment¹ had been drawn up, public opinion, authorities and scientific organizations had given increasing attention to the problems of environmental pollution.

4. The Preparatory Committee had defined in greater detail the questions related to two main areas of the programme, the rational management of natural resources and environmental degradation from pollution and nuisances, but had not succeeded in defining more precisely what the area of the environmental aspects of human settlements should include. However, the Centre for Housing, Building and Planning in the Department of Economic and Social Affairs would attempt to sub-divide that main area into a number of precise subjects. A working group was moreover to meet in October and would endeavour to complete the Conference programme. It would therefore be preferable for the Preparatory Committee to hold no further session before January 1971, since the preparatory work would not be sufficiently advanced to warrant a meeting before then.

5. A division of the Conference into two camps, namely the rational economists and the environmental ideologists, was to be avoided, and Governments should endeavour during the next two years to achieve a balance between their economic policies and the policies proposed for them by the national bodies concerned with the problems of human environment.

6. During the last meeting of the *Ad Hoc* Working Group, it had been proposed that the preparation of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment should be included in the agenda of the next meetings of the United Nations regional economic commissions. It had also been decided to ask the UNDP resident representatives to help the Governments of the countries where they were stationed to prepare the national reports requested by the Preparatory Committee, where appropriate with the help of experts on the spot.

7. Mr. CAPPELEN (Norway) recalled that the Secretary-General had suggested in his report to the Council that the second session of the Preparatory Committee should take place early in 1971 (E/4828, para. 14). That would give him the necessary time to complete the studies that had been requested and to submit his conclusions in the form of a list of items for consideration by the Conference, with an indication of priorities. According to the report of the Preparatory Committee,² that body would at its second session consider not only the Conference agenda but also

¹ E/4667.

² A/CONF.48/PC/6.

the question of possible draft conventions, recommendations and conclusions to be acted upon by the Conference.

8. His delegation felt that it would ease the General Assembly's task if the Council made certain comments and recommendations. With that in mind, informal discussions on the nature of possible comments and recommendations had begun several months previously in New York on the basis of a paper prepared by the Norwegian and Swedish delegations. Those discussions had been pursued during the present session of the Council and were reflected in a draft resolution (E/L.1352) sponsored by Argentina, Japan, Norway and Yugoslavia.

9. In operative paragraph 2 of that text, the Council reaffirmed the action-oriented character of the Conference, and in paragraph 5 the importance was stressed of taking due account of such environmental problems as were particularly acute in developing countries. Paragraphs 8, 9 and 10 concerned national reports and case studies, the basic principles to be incorporated in a declaration on the human environment and the financial implications of the Conference. Recommendations on the time and place of the second session of the Preparatory Committee and on the desirability of an informal meeting of its members in New York in September 1970 were dealt with in paragraphs 11 and 13.

10. The sponsors viewed the provisions of the draft resolution as providing a spring-board for useful dialogue between Governments and the United Nations and between Governments themselves. Dialogue of that sort was itself one of the important objectives of the international action envisaged. It would facilitate the exchange of knowledge and experience in the environmental field and thereby stimulate action at all levels. It was to be hoped that the draft resolution would be unanimously adopted by the Council.

11. Mr. de ARAÚJO CASTRO (Brazil) thought that the Council should give the Preparatory Committee some policy directives in order to ensure that the work of the Conference on the Human Environment should duly fit into the general strategy for development in the 1970s. All the efforts of the United Nations Economic and Social Council and of the specialized agencies should be geared to the promotion of economic and social development at the highest possible speed. Policies and programmes directed to the preservation of the human environment should be formulated in the light of development objectives.

12. Both Governments and public opinion were nowadays well aware of the threat that lay over some of the most highly developed regions as a result of a disordered pattern of utilization of resources and of geographical distribution of economic activities. The mistakes of the past should be avoided when planning the development of new areas and regions, but it would be dangerous to adopt a purely conservative approach to the problem.

13. Because of the structure of international trade, the Governments of the developing countries were often obliged to increase their exports of agricultural produce and

raw materials to enable them to pay the constantly rising prices of the capital equipment required for industrialization and development. The resulting soil erosion and excessive exploitation of agricultural and mineral resources constituted a danger to the rural environment. In that connexion, it was disturbing to note that the very countries which were most enthusiastic about the preservation of the environment were opposed to any proposal designed to provide a better world-wide equilibrium as between agricultural, industrial and mining activities. Instead of dwelling persistently on the "dangers of rapid industrialization", it would be better to take an interest in international measures of a preventive character that would allow the developing countries to diminish the pressures on their natural resources.

14. To date, the work of the Preparatory Committee had been concentrated chiefly on the problems and preferences of the developed countries, without taking sufficient account of the needs and conditions of the developing countries. A policy of stagnation whereby, for the sake of preservation of the environment, certain regions would become nature reserves, intended to compensate for the pollution factors existing in the developed countries, would be unacceptable.

15. The development of an environment protection policy therefore required great prudence and raised, basically, a question of priorities. The problem certainly existed, but its manifestations were still not very obvious in some societies. It was essential in the first place to meet the basic needs of mankind, sacrificing on occasion, where necessary, the optimum environmental solutions to the more pressing needs of development, particularly in the early stages of industrialization.

16. The components of the human environment were the direct result of the national economic options exercised by each Government in its sovereign power. All countries should have the right freely to exploit their own natural resources. The policy to be followed with respect to the protection of the human environment was thus within the exclusive competence of each Government and could admit of no outside interference. Consequently, his delegation observed with some concern what it regarded as an over-hasty trend to draw up conventions and other legally binding instruments while the developing countries were still at the stage of formulating their own priorities.

17. A human environment policy could have no real meaning outside the general context of development. It was to be hoped, therefore, that the future work of the Preparatory Committee would be conducted in a broader perspective so as to take full account of the socio-economic conditions and needs of the developing countries.

18. Mr. KRYLOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) believed that all States without exception should take part in the search for solutions to the problems of protecting the human environment. The USSR attached very great importance to that question, and the planned nature of its régime enabled it to deal with the problem, which involved

industry, men and nature alike, in the most harmonious possible way.

19. The protection of nature and the environment, as well as the management of environmental resources, formed an integral part of the economic, social and cultural development plans of the USSR. A number of laws had been passed to that effect, including laws on measures to avoid soil erosion, on hydrography and on the protection of Lake Baikal. Moreover, a scientific committee working in collaboration with the Academy of Sciences had been appointed to study the questions of the human environment and the rational utilization of the resources of the biosphere.

20. In order fully to resolve the problems involved at the national and international levels alike, it would be necessary to establish genuine international collaboration calling upon the resources of all countries. Questions of the protection of the environment and its rational utilization could not be separated from those of the maintenance of peace and disarmament, and the USSR was very much concerned over the water and air pollution caused by various military experiments. The USSR was in favour of the drafting of an agreement forbidding the use of the seas and oceans for military purposes; and also of the adoption of a convention to prohibit the maintenance and storage of bacteriological weapons. In that connexion, it was faithfully adhering to the provisions of the Moscow Treaty of 1963 and considered that problems of that nature should be examined within the context of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment.

21. His delegation was in favour of the provisional programme for the Conference established by the Preparatory Committee, but thought that the range of each of the major themes should not be over-expanded lest insufficient attention were given to important questions. The Conference should concentrate above all on the questions of the protection of the human environment and the management of natural resources, and not attach undue importance to problems of a scientific nature which were already being studied in detail within the specialized agencies.

22. He recalled that important work had already been achieved in the field of the human environment. A number of meetings had been held on that subject and programmes established, particularly on the initiative of ICSU. In that connexion, he wished to stress the importance of the Conference on Problems Relating to Environment, which was to be held at Prague in 1971 and in which all European States would take part. The USSR was represented in the group responsible for preparing that meeting, and a preparatory committee had also been set up inside the Soviet Union.

23. He considered the report of the Preparatory Committee as satisfactory, but thought that it did not sufficiently reflect the viewpoints expressed by some delegations during the Committee's session. For example, some delegations had requested that the Secretary-General's report on problems of the human environment³ should be

regarded as a basic document, after having been updated to take account of the various comments which had been made and the new facts which had emerged since its preparation.

24. The Conference should also have at its disposal reports from the four regional economic commissions as well as reports from the specialized agencies dealing with problems of the human environment. At the same time, the Preparatory Committee should endeavour to limit the documentation submitted, so as to enable the Conference to concentrate on the consideration of practical measures.

25. Although satisfied with the work to date, his delegation was concerned at the slow pace of the preparations for the Conference. It wished to emphasize that environmental problems were human in character and that it would continue, as it had done at the forty-seventh session of the Council and at the twenty-fourth session of the General Assembly, to insist that their universal character should be reflected in the Conference. All States, without exception, should be entitled to take part in its work; the success of the Conference depended upon respect for the principle of universality. His delegation reserved the right to revert to that question at a later date during the Council's session and in other bodies.

26. As for the financial aspects, his delegation recalled that, at the forty-seventh session of the Council and the twenty-fourth session of the General Assembly, various delegations had asked that every possible effort should be made to reduce the cost of the Conference. An expenditure of \$1,500,000 had originally been estimated, but there was now talk of increasing it to \$2,000,000. His delegation would like to hear some explanations on that subject.

27. Mr. SPENCER (Observer for Canada), speaking at the invitation of the President, said that his Government had not had time to consider the Secretary-General's report (E/4828) and that his delegation would comment upon it at the twenty-fifth session of the General Assembly.

28. Canada had been pleased to be able to take part in the first session of the Preparatory Committee and thought that, if the second session was to take place in early 1971, it would be useful to obtain a progress report from the secretariat at an informal briefing to be held in New York in September. Incidentally, in the view of his delegation, New York should remain the meeting place for the Preparatory Committee and, if the second session were held at Geneva, that should not constitute a precedent.

29. He noted with satisfaction that fruitful consultations with other bodies had taken place. The closest possible liaison should be established with the ECE secretariat, in particular, since the topic of the meeting of governmental experts to be held at Prague in 1971 had very direct and important links with the Stockholm Conference. Every care should be taken to avoid any overlap between the activities of ECE and those of the Preparatory Committee and the Stockholm Conference secretariat.

30. His delegation had noted that requests had been sent to Governments for national reports and case studies. That

³ E/4667.

procedure would be very useful but it should not detract from the importance of the Conference's role in the sphere of international co-operation and of its action-oriented and global function.

31. The Council could undoubtedly play an important co-ordinating role, particularly with respect to the activities of the specialized agencies. Considerations of co-operation and co-ordination were assuming an overriding importance at the present time. His delegation was therefore pleased that the specialized agencies had taken an active part in the first session of the Preparatory Committee and it hoped that they would continue to do so at future sessions. It welcomed the fact that the preparatory work for the Conference had formed the subject of a special meeting of the ACC Sub-Committee on Science and Technology and that the ACC had subsequently approved a proposal that an *Ad Hoc* Inter-Agency Working Group should be established.

32. Although it was desirable that the developing countries should continue to take an active part in the preparations for the Conference, it was inevitable that some environmental problems dealt with at the Conference would, at least for the time being, be of primary concern to the industrialized countries. The Conference was, however, of great importance to both developed and developing countries, and would be unique in providing a forum in which all countries could work out problems of global significance together.

33. Mr. AUGER (France) said that the preparations for the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment involved so many scientific, economic, regional and inter-governmental bodies that it was becoming difficult to find one's bearings. Moreover, the 1971 Prague Conference, which was being very well prepared, was to cover the same problems, so that it might be wondered what would be the role of the 1972 Conference.

34. In his delegation's view, that role could be important. Two camps would be present: the economists and the idealists. The Conference would have at its disposal many documents which would already have been studied; it should thus tackle frankly the problem of the conflict which existed between the purely economic aspect and the human aspect of the question. The developing countries must, of course, be able to use their resources freely, but it should not be forgotten that misuse of them could endanger the human environment.

35. The agenda of the Conference would be established in September. From that date onwards, contacts should be made. In his delegation's view, the Conference should be essentially action-oriented and should make a choice between the economic and human factors so as to prevent damage to the environment. It should base its discussions on the documents submitted to it by the secretariat, and the latter, in preparing the Conference texts, must take account of the reports to be furnished by Governments, since the Conference would have only secretariat documents before it. It was on that condition alone that the debates could produce satisfactory results.

36. Mrs. ZAEFFERER de GOYENECHÉ (Argentina) recalled that her delegation had been a member of the Preparatory Committee and that her Government's opinion was reflected in the Secretary-General's report (E/4828). At its next session, the Preparatory Committee would have to endeavour to fill in the existing gaps on the basis of the Council's comments.

37. Her Government was fully aware of the importance of the question of the human environment and was doing everything in its power to prepare for the Conference. The Norwegian delegation had introduced a draft resolution (E/L.1352) of which Argentina was a co-sponsor. That text stressed *inter alia* the need not to overload the agenda of the Conference, so that it might yield fruitful and positive results.

38. Mr. OLDS (United States of America) drew the Council's attention to the human aspects of the environmental problem, which should be given full consideration by the 1972 Conference. It was difficult to conceive of any method of solving the problem applicable on a world-wide scale, for it assumed aspects which differed from country to country according to national priorities and the local stage of development. Nevertheless, it was important to attempt a global approach to the problem, with a view to harmonizing all the actions to be undertaken to resolve highly complex issues.

39. As regards the quality of the human environment, he endorsed the comments of the Brazilian representative. The Conference should not merely aim at preserving a primitive aspect of the world, but should study how to use available techniques, tools and resources to create an environment that would be more humane, more equitable and more receptive to the creative spirit. Emphasis should be laid on that aspect of the problem.

40. To be effective, the Conference must inspire the full engagement of all participating Governments. It should not rest content merely to reflect the activities of one committee, or of a single secretariat, or even of representatives to the United Nations. The Preparatory Committee had recommended, in its report, that all participating Governments should be consulted and their recommendations taken into consideration. It was now for the Governments to accelerate that process of participation.

41. His delegation considered that the sooner the agenda of the Conference was drawn up, the sooner there would be a more equitable distribution of the work to be done. Many Governments had already begun to tackle environmental questions; they had created commissions for the purpose and had at their disposal a number of experts. It was important to determine as quickly as possible what their contributions would be, so as to avoid the duplication of effort which was bound to occur if that was not done; that course, moreover, would lead to economies. Non-governmental organizations also had a very important part to play in the matter.

42. As most representatives had emphasized, the work of the Conference should be action-oriented. The terms of reference of the Conference were very explicit on that

point. It was not simply a matter of discussing, but of taking action. For that purpose, it would be useful to strengthen internal machinery and to draw up international agreements, but any hasty action in that connexion should be avoided. The Preparatory Committee should in its final proposal take into account the recommendations of Governments.

43. He considered that not enough attention had so far been paid to the question of the implementation of the recommendations and decisions of the Conference. Further studies on that subject would be useful.

44. As regards the budget of the Conference, he considered that the question should be re-examined in order to reduce expenditure, which, according to the latest estimates, was to increase. His Government reserved its position on that matter until the establishment of the final agenda.

45. As far as documentation was concerned, more should be done to enlist the help of Governments and organizations already studying environmental problems, and every effort should be made to ensure that the documents produced were of genuine utility. Again, it was desirable not to increase the personnel of the Conference secretariat. To save money, it would perhaps also be possible to draw up a list of priorities in the United Nations Secretariat, so that work connected with the Conference should replace certain other less important activities.

46. His Government would carefully study the draft resolution on the human environment (E/L.1352), which was of particular interest to it. President Nixon had emphasized the importance of the issue and taken steps to ensure that it would be studied carefully in the United States.

47. Mr. SKATARETIKO (Yugoslavia) said that although his country was a member of the Preparatory Committee for the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, he did not believe that the convening of the Conference would by itself exert sufficient influence on Governments and public opinion. The Conference must be action-oriented if it was to obtain the results expected by the international community.

48. With that aim in view, certain negative elements must be eliminated. In particular, the Conference should not overlook some problems of human environment which were already acute in developing countries (soil erosion, deforestation, rapid urbanization and so on). In fact, developing and developed countries were facing very comparable environmental problems, even if those had to be resolved by different means. In that connexion, he feared that developing countries might have to bear a part of the cost of measures taken by developed countries to solve their environmental problems, in the shape of an increase in the prices of their imports.

49. It was generally admitted that disturbances of the human environment in any part of the world could cause enormous damage in other parts; pollution of air, water and seas already existed on a world-wide scale. It was therefore very important that the Conference should also assume a

universal character, and for that reason a number of countries, including especially the People's Republic of China, should not be excluded.

50. His delegation, which was one of the sponsors of draft resolution E/L.1352, hoped that it would be unanimously adopted.

51. Mr. ALI (International Labour Organisation) said that the International Labour Conference had at its fifty-fourth session unanimously adopted a resolution on ILO participation in the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment. In that resolution, the Conference had recalled the General Assembly's resolutions on the matter and stressed the role played by the ILO with regard to the working environment. It had also called for the selection of an ILO delegation, with tripartite representation, to the Preparatory Committee and to the Conference, and had underlined the need to associate employers' and workers' organizations in any national and international action in that field.

52. Submitting that resolution to the International Labour Conference, the Chairman of the Resolutions Committee had said that ILO participation in the Conference on the Human Environment would reflect the Organisation's desire to be fully committed to the total effort of the United Nations system in that sphere. Through the ILO, employers' and workers' organizations throughout the world would be associated with that effort and would be able to help developing countries to avoid the mistakes made by industrialized countries in the past.

53. The ILO could also contribute to the success of the Conference by making available its vast experience in the supervision of international conventions.

AGENDA ITEM 12

Development of natural resources

REPORT OF THE ECONOMIC COMMITTEE (E/4901)

54. The PRESIDENT drew the Council's attention to the draft resolution on the development of natural resources submitted by the Economic Committee in paragraph 8 (a) of its report (E/4901). He pointed out that it was at the *fiftieth* session of the Council, and not at the fifty-first, that the Committee on Natural Resources would be requested to submit its first report to the Council (operative paragraph 8); that change had been introduced with the agreement of the sponsors, to take into account on the one hand the fact that the Committee on Natural Resources was to meet in February 1971 and on the other hand the fact that the Secretary-General was also to present an interim report on the matter at the *fiftieth* session.

55. Mr. NYNEQUE (Kenya) said that his delegation was one of the sponsors of the Economic Committee's draft resolution. He recalled that the text had been adopted following far-ranging discussions and many consultations; a

wide measure of agreement had thus been achieved. Perhaps the draft could now be adopted by the Council by acclamation, it being understood that the reservations made by a number of delegations in the Economic Committee would be duly noted.

56. The PRESIDENT called on those representatives who wished to explain their delegations' vote before it was taken, to speak.

57. Mr. VIAUD (France) said that his delegation would abstain on the draft resolution, as it had already done in the Economic Committee. It considered that it was inopportune to set up another subsidiary body of the Economic and Social Council at a time when the Council was reviewing its methods of work and organization. The search for and development of natural resources should certainly have a high place in development programmes and in the United Nations Second Development Decade, but it was preferable to wait until the new machinery envisaged by the Council for the evaluation of the Decade had been set up before establishing a permanent committee on natural resources.

58. However, as it was likely that the draft resolution would be adopted, he hoped that the integration of the new body within the machinery of the Council could later be revised and, if necessary, improved in the light of the structural decisions which the Council would be taking in relation to the Second Decade.

59. Mr. BRADLEY (Argentina) recalled that his delegation had abstained in the Economic Committee in the vote on the draft resolution, because his Government had not been able to study certain amendments. Having now received instructions from his Government, his delegation would vote for the draft.

60. Mr. ALLEN (United Kingdom) said that his delegation would abstain from voting on the draft resolution, as it had done in the Economic Committee. It still considered, as he had already explained, that a new committee on natural resources did not seem necessary. Its doubts had been confirmed by the fact that the committee would be authorized to have summary records of its debates compiled, a move which went against current trends within the United Nations.

61. Mrs. ILIOUSHINA (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that her delegation would vote against the draft resolution, as it had done in the Economic Committee. The question of the development of natural resources was urgent and vital, but her delegation did not feel that the

setting-up of a new body would contribute towards solving it, as there already existed another body dealing with the matter.

At the request of the Kenyan representative, the vote on the draft resolution, appearing as paragraph 8 (a) of the report of the Economic Committee (E/4901), was taken by roll-call.

Norway, having been drawn by lot by the President, was called upon to vote first.

In favour: Norway, Pakistan, People's Republic of the Congo, Sudan, Tunisia, United States of America, Upper Volta, Yugoslavia, Argentina, Brazil, Ceylon, Chad, Ghana, Greece, India, Indonesia, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Kenya.

Against: Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, Bulgaria.

Abstaining: United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Uruguay, France.

The draft resolution was adopted by 20 votes to 2, with 3 abstentions.

62. Mr. GUELEV (Bulgaria), explaining his delegation's vote, said that it had voted against the draft resolution because it considered that it aimed at substituting a new body for an existing body capable of doing the same work.

63. The PRESIDENT then drew the Council's attention to the draft decision in paragraph 8 (b) of document E/4901.

64. The word "due" should be inserted between the words "giving" and "weight". In the English and Russian versions, the document symbol of the report of the Secretary-General should read "E/4779", and the words "Ad Hoc" should be replaced by the word "Advisory" for the name of the Advisory Committee on the Application of Science and Technology to Development.

65. That draft decision had been adopted in the Committee without a vote and therefore the President proposed that the Council should do likewise.

The draft decision was adopted.

Credentials of representatives to the forty-ninth session of the Council (E/4902)

66. The PRESIDENT drew attention to the report of the President and Vice-Presidents on the credentials of representatives to the forty-ninth session of the Council (E/4902).

The meeting rose at 12.55 p.m.