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President: Mr. SCHEYVEN (Belgium).

AGENDA ITEM 7

Regional co-operation:

- (a) Reports on the regional economic commissions and of the United Nations Economic and Social Office in Beirut (E/4639 and Add.1, E/4640, E/4641, E/4651 and Add.1, E/4659, E/4726; E/L.1264, E/L.1265)
- (b) Report on the meetings of the executive secretaries (E/4709; E/L.1264, E/L.1265) (*continued*)

1. Mr. ALLEN (United Kingdom) congratulated the regional economic commissions and UNESOB on their work, as revealed by their impressive reports. His country had the privilege and the responsibility of being a full or associated member of all the economic commissions. Its participation in the work of regional commissions other than ECE might appear to be a geographical anomaly; but it was not an economic anomaly, for the United Kingdom had economic interests in all parts of the world.

2. ECE was an important and useful forum for consultations between Eastern and Western Europe, in which experts could discuss economic and social matters unhindered by political considerations. Indeed, the Commission's capacity for useful work was limited only by the resources available to it. The most important item on its agenda at its last session had been the Executive Secretary's report on his proposals for restructuring the Commission (E/ECE/717), which it had endorsed unanimously in its resolution 5 (XXIV). All that remained was to implement those proposals. He welcomed in particular the suggestions made for the improved presentation of the *Economic Survey of Europe*, and was gratified that the Commission had felt able to dispense with summary records to a large extent. His country was keenly interested in the problems of pollution and intended to play its full part in ECE's discussions on the subject.

3. Several representatives had raised the question of the composition of ECE; his delegation's position on that subject remained unchanged.

4. The other regional economic commissions had submitted valuable reports, but had yet to lay out their work in accordance with the system of priorities devised by the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination at the Council's request.

5. ECLA, like ECE, had decided to dispense with or greatly reduce the preparation of summary records of its plenary meetings. It was to be hoped that ECA would follow suit at its next session, and that ECAFE would review the contrary decision that it had taken in April 1969.

6. The new institutional arrangements proposed by ECA in its resolution 188 (IX) were most interesting but, since their financial implications would have to be examined by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions and the Fifth Committee of the General Assembly, his delegation must reserve its position except for the comment that some of the recommendations appeared very costly indeed. On the general question of decentralization raised by those recommendations, it seemed unwise for the Council to forestall the findings of the UNDP Capacity Study which would be available later in the year. Consequently he felt some misgivings concerning the seven-Power draft resolution on regional co-operation (E/L.1265), although much of its content was quite unexceptionable.

7. It was to be hoped that, in the near future, ECE and ECAFE would make known their views on the recommendation of the Committee on Conferences, approved by the General Assembly in its resolution 2478 (XXIII), that United Nations bodies should consider meeting on a biennial rather than an annual basis.

8. His delegation welcomed the arrangements made by ECAFE for the members of permanent missions at Bangkok to examine the Commission's work programme before its annual session; that innovation was worthy of consideration by the other regional economic commissions.

9. Some of the resolutions recently adopted by ECLA had been accepted by the United Kingdom only as representing the views of the developing countries. If the Council endorsed those resolutions, his delegation would have to enter a similar reservation.

10. Mr. NICOL (Sierra Leone) introduced the eight-Power draft resolution on the role of the regional economic commissions and UNESOB in the Second United Nations Development Decade (E/L.1264).

11. The admirable reports of the regional economic commissions revealed that remarkable progress had been made in many fields and that equally impressive achievements were projected for the future. The Secretary-General, speaking at the opening meeting of the ninth session of ECA, had described the Commission as the United Nations window for seeing African economic and social problems through African eyes as well as in relationship to the over-all international economic structure (see E/4651, annex VI); that observation was borne out by the ECA report (E/4651 and Add.1) and the statement by the Executive Secretary of ECA (1614th meeting).

12. The African countries were well aware that the useful work carried on by the specialized agencies in their territory had a direct bearing on the social and economic advancement of the developing countries of the region. The review of the Commission's activities made at Addis Ababa at its ninth session, on the occasion of its tenth anniversary, had been marked by a general desire to move forward on all fronts. The desire to associate more Africans in the work of ECA and of the specialized agencies active in Africa was in no way inconsistent with the United Nations principle of universality or with the acknowledged shortage of skilled staff in many parts of Africa. More positive efforts could undoubtedly be made to persuade the specialized agencies and ECA to employ, and individual Governments to release, highly qualified staff to work in the African region, so that they might continue to serve their own countries indirectly while gaining experience in the service of the international organizations.

13. At its ninth session, ECA had strongly recommended decentralization and had acknowledged the urgent need for closer association with individual Governments in United Nations projects and in the frequent consultations required in connexion with them. The various countries of Africa, in an attempt to correct the man-made distortions of African geography, were coalescing into sub-regional groups for mutual co-operation; it was obvious that ECA programmes would be more effective if they were linked with such groups.

14. The developing countries appreciated the fact that steps were being taken to ensure effective co-operation between the specialized agencies and the regional economic commissions in the implementation of work programmes. The sponsors of the eight-Power draft resolution urged that a more substantial and effective decentralization of operational activities should be carried out, in accordance with numerous resolutions of the Council and of the General Assembly. The vast physical distances and poor communications in many African countries made it essential that work should be organized in smaller units than elsewhere. In his delegation's view, adoption of the draft resolution would assist the UNDP Capacity Study.

15. Mr. MOPOLO-DADET (Congo, Brazzaville) congratulated the executive secretaries of the regional econ-

omic commissions on their reports and assured them of his country's support and collaboration in the difficult and delicate tasks which lay ahead of them. One overriding idea was expressed in all those reports, namely, that the commissions needed a profound structural and functional transformation. The young countries of Africa regarded the regional economic commissions as an indispensable link between the United Nations and individual States; their views had been well expressed in the statement by the Executive Secretary of ECA.

16. The peoples of Africa wished to direct their development along their own lines. They acknowledged that considerable results had been achieved in development and that new and promising prospects were emerging, but the fact remained that the prerequisites for rapid economic development were all too often lacking. Those peoples realized that their economic backwardness was being aggravated over the years by a dramatic growth in population and that political independence, although vitally necessary, was not helping them to catch up. In the African view, it was time to replace theory and condescension by practical realities and genuine international solidarity. The African States were striving for economic autonomy and integration so as to rid the continent of adverse foreign influence; they sought to create an African market through a methodical sub-regionalization which would respect the particular characteristics of each country. They wanted co-operation, not gifts.

17. The work of the United Nations and its specialized agencies in Africa had, in the past, been too heterogeneous and unco-ordinated. United Nations operations in Africa should be regrouped through the regional co-ordinating body, namely, ECA. To that end the Commission had adopted a number of resolutions which reflected the dual concern of Africa with integration and autonomy. The chief purpose of those resolutions was to strengthen the position of the Executive Secretary of ECA both at the headquarters of the Commission and in the sub-regions, and to ensure that he would lead the secretariat in the direction which the African States wished it to take. Those States wished to be the masters of their own development policies. He was well aware that the Council had no authority to debate the financial implications of those resolutions; what the African States desired was that the Council should accept them in principle.

18. He appreciated the importance of the UNDP Capacity Study and realized that it could help to rejuvenate the United Nations system. However, he felt that the Council should provide guidelines for the study rather than simply accept its proposals. The reconstruction of the United Nations system must not be allowed to make its machinery more unwieldy than it already was; the specific purpose of the resolutions adopted at the ninth session of ECA was to lighten that machinery and render it more effective.

19. Mr. DANIELI (United Republic of Tanzania) welcomed the awareness shown by the executive secretaries of the regional economic commissions and by the Director of UNESOB that the effectiveness of those organs needed to be increased, for they were the most appropriate United Nations agencies to promote greater economic co-operation in and between their respective regions.

20. ECA had been operating under exceptionally difficult conditions, as was shown by the "Survey of economic conditions in Africa in recent years" (E/CN.14/435). The details of the proposed changes in the institutional machinery of ECA were given in the Commission's report. It was possible, however, that the African States' motives for adopting resolutions to that end were less evident. ECA had been established in 1958 and, throughout the past decade, the interests of the majority of its present member States had been represented by foreign, non-African Powers. Contact between ECA and its member States had remained limited or, at any rate, physically remote. For that reason, and because its resources were inadequate, ECA had not been able to carry out its work effectively. A number of representatives had expressed reservations concerning the financial implications of the ECA resolutions. At the outset of the Second United Nations Development Decade, that attitude was most disturbing. If the decade was to be successful, the primary institutions of development must have adequate resources.

21. The purpose of the seven-Power draft resolution on regional co-operation, of which his delegation was a sponsor, was to secure more rational co-ordination between ECA and the competent organizations of the United Nations system, and extra funds to enable ECA fully to carry out its functions. He hoped that the Council would adopt it unanimously.

22. Mr. AHMED (Sudan), recalling how ECE had been adapted since its establishment to the changing conditions in Europe, said that the time had come to adapt ECA to Africa's present-day needs. He therefore fully endorsed the reorganization proposed in the resolutions adopted at ECA's ninth session. Over the past ten years ECA had made commendable efforts to meet the needs and aspirations of African States; it now needed to be strengthened so that it might play a still greater role in the continent's economic development. It had hitherto concentrated on studies designed to give clear understanding of development processes in Africa and to indicate how obstacles to concerted action could be overcome. It had identified Africa's problems and had laid the foundations for African co-operation. The time had come for it to take practical action to promote economic development.

23. By endorsing the resolutions adopted at ECA's ninth session, especially resolutions 187 (IX), 188 (IX), 190 (IX) and 191 (IX), the Council would enable ECA to take such action. The proposed reorganization would involve no changes in the Commission's terms of reference, no departure from accepted United Nations practice and

procedure, and no increase in the Commission's workload, but would enable it to deal more efficiently with the problems of African countries. The proposed new timetable of meetings would provide fuller opportunities for contacts between experts, specialist staff and the representatives of Governments and other organizations. The emphasis would be on harmonization and co-ordination; decentralization would replace domination by a single body. The principle of decentralization had long since been accepted in the United Nations and was recognized in a number of resolutions which the General Assembly and the Council had adopted after careful consideration of apprehensions expressed by the Secretariat concerning the possibility of encroachment on the prerogatives of the Secretary-General. The regional economic commissions were trying to secure more effective decentralization of United Nations activities in their regions in order to ensure that those familiar with local conditions and needs could play a more prominent role in the formulation and implementation of projects and operational programmes. They were seeking, not the transfer of the Secretary-General's prerogatives to the executive secretaries, but the voluntary delegation of certain powers and the redistribution of responsibility for the sake of greater efficiency. Such matters as staff recruitment, financial administration and the issue of contracts for Special Fund projects would remain the responsibility of the United Nations Secretariat.

24. Mr. ZVEZDIN (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that ECE's long-term programme of work would enable it to play a more effective role in promoting economic co-operation among all European countries and in removing obstacles to trade between countries with different economic and social systems. Such co-operation was at present hindered by the discriminatory trade policies pursued by some Western European countries and their closed economic groupings, and by the exclusion of the German Democratic Republic from the Commission's activities. Full economic, scientific and technical co-operation among European countries would create a favourable climate for the elimination of political tension; it might then be possible to halt the arms race and reduce military expenditure, with considerable benefit to economic and social progress. The USSR would continue to help ECE to promote such co-operation among all European countries, and was in favour of the European conference on problems of security and co-operation proposed by the Warsaw Treaty countries.

25. The Council should support ECAFE's efforts to promote regional economic co-operation, for ECAFE was the only international organization able to work out and apply the principles of regional economic development in Asia and the Far East. The ECAFE secretariat had provided useful assistance in connexion with planning and industrialization. However, economic development prospects in that region largely depended on the restoration of normal political conditions. Cessation of the war waged by the United States in Viet-Nam would have a very favourable effect. The establishment of a collective secur-

ity system in Asia would also help to promote stability, co-operation and regional economic development, and he hoped that his country's suggestions on the subject would be widely supported by countries in that region. ECAFE should give more assistance in specialized training and prospecting for natural resources. It seemed necessary to establish a second co-ordinating committee for exploration of the continental shelf of countries bordering on the Indian Ocean. ECAFE's assistance should be concentrated mainly on projects concerned with the development of key industries, agriculture, technical and administrative training, prospecting for and development of natural resources, and economic, scientific and technical co-operation.

26. ECA had rightly given prominence to industrialization, water resources development, modernization of agriculture, regional trade and economic, scientific and technical co-operation. It had worked out useful principles for regional and sub-regional division of labour. However, the creation of sub-regional economic communities in northern, western, central and eastern Africa involved complex problems and should be undertaken gradually, with full consideration for the national interests of participating countries. The ECA secretariat should make a more effective contribution to the development of agriculture and forestry in African countries which, although possessing vast areas of productive land, still imported foodstuffs on a large scale. The Commission should also help African countries to reduce the quantities of natural resources exported without adequate remuneration. The success of ECA's long-term programme of work would depend on the co-ordination of its efforts with national plans and development programmes, the reforms effected in African countries, the creation of a viable public sector, and the measures taken to counteract the discriminatory trade policies of Western economic groupings.

27. ECLA had wisely concentrated its attention on research, planning, industrial development, foreign trade and economic integration. The Commission's secretariat would do well to prepare a long-term plan of economic and social research. He was glad to note that Latin American countries were trying to strengthen their national economies, speed up their development, check the exploitation of their natural resources by foreign capital, obtain equitable terms of trade and promote economic co-operation based on the principle of equality. Those countries recognized the need for drastic economic and social reforms and were understandably concerned to ensure that foreign assistance was not used as a means of interfering in their domestic affairs. The USSR welcomed ECLA resolution 291 (XIII) asking the Commission's secretariat to study ways of expanding trade between Latin American and socialist countries.

28. A major obstacle to international economic co-operation in the Middle East was Israel's continued policy of provocation and refusal to comply with the Security

Council's resolutions on the liquidation of the consequences of the aggression against Arab countries.

29. The Council should devote more attention to regional economic co-operation and should give the regional economic commissions a more effective role in promoting such co-operation. However, the activities of the regional commissions should be co-ordinated more closely with those of the specialized agencies and other United Nations bodies active in the economic and social fields. As to the proposals made in the reports of the regional economic commissions and UNESOB, his delegation believed that, in view of their financial implications, final decisions on such matters should be deferred until the next session of the General Assembly; in his country's opinion, the United Nations budget should not be increased.

30. Mr. AL-ANSARI (Kuwait) hoped that UNESOB, having now submitted a report to the Council, would continue to do so annually; that would help to preserve it from the semi-oblivion to which it had hitherto been consigned. The Arab countries were working out plans for a common market and a customs union, rationalizing their national development plans and making progress with industrialization. However, their governmental machinery was cumbersome and they needed assistance to simplify administrative procedures and eliminate redundancy. UNESOB could also help them to develop energy resources at the national and regional levels, to use natural gas for power production, to improve their transport and communications systems, and to tap ground-water resources.

31. UNESOB had already provided useful assistance. However, its staff had not increased since 1966, despite the fact that it was now regarded as the Middle Eastern outpost of the United Nations, of UNCTAD and of UNIDO, and would have to act as the rallying point of the region's preparations for the Second Development Decade. That would not be possible with present staff and resources, which must therefore be increased. UNESOB should, for instance, be put in a position to convene annual regional conferences of UNDP resident representatives and representatives of Arab Governments on economic and social development topics, with special reference to Development Decade targets. The Middle East, in fact, needed a fully-fledged regional economic commission.

32. Mr. BOHIADI (Chad) said that the material resources and methods of ECA were totally inadequate for tackling the immense problems facing African countries. Reforms were needed if ECA was to play its rightful part in resolving those problems. At its ninth session, the Commission had called for more decentralization of operational activities; the reorganization of the structure and functions of the secretariat; the institution of sub-regional offices to serve large economic areas of co-ordinated investment and to advise Governments on objectives for general planning and public administration in the Second Development Decade; and closer co-operation with organ-

izations of the United Nations family and with specifically African organizations.

33. He had been surprised to hear representatives maintain that, in view of the financial implications of those proposals, their consideration should be deferred until the next session of the General Assembly. He did not share the French representative's view (1616th meeting) that the proposals would impede the functioning of the Commission without increasing its efficacy, and would involve heavy expenditure. The intention of the proposals had been precisely the opposite. The United Nations Secretariat was of course entitled to exercise control, including financial control, over the regional economic commissions in such matters as the harmonization of their activities with those of outside organizations. He failed to see why the French representative, having admitted that the United Nations family of organizations should avoid excessive centralization, should be apprehensive about accepting the conclusions of ECA's ninth session, which were in no way revolutionary.

34. He appealed to the delegations which had expressed similar doubts to reconsider their position, so that an acceptable solution might be found to ECA's problems. The Commission's proposals were wholly consistent with the objectives of the Second Development Decade, and no member of the Preparatory Committee for the Second United Nations Development Decade had voiced any apprehension about the financial implications of any component of the global strategy. All that was needed at present was to agree on the general direction to be taken in the regional economic commissions' future activities under the development strategy. In that respect, the opinions expressed by the delegations of Argentina (1612th meeting) and Uruguay (1613th meeting) and the observer for Chile (1613th meeting) were consistent with the conclusions reached at ECA's ninth session. His delegation would reject any argument advanced to dissuade the Council from adopting the two draft resolutions just submitted.

35. Mr. OLDS (United States of America) said that the reports submitted by the regional economic commissions showed their desire to turn from theory to action. The various regions they represented, although equal in importance, differed in nature and were confronted by different problems; the United States welcomed the efforts made by the commissions to encourage the development of each region along the lines appropriate to it. The reports paid commendable attention to the problems of reorganization and reconstruction with a view to synthesizing activities into a concerted programme, and brought out the difficulty of moving from agreement on abstract principles to specific action by Governments. They showed that the commissions were sensitive to the human aspects of planning and development, in other words, that they were aware of the need for competent manpower and of the need to involve the population as a whole in the development process.

36. A general effort was being made to improve the quality of human life. ECE was preparing for a conference on problems of the environment, while the other commissions were studying population problems. Those problems raised delicate considerations from the human and cultural standpoints, but his delegation believed that regional and national attitudes could be successfully reconciled in a comprehensive global approach to the subject.

37. His delegation agreed with the view that a more intensive process of decentralization was needed during the Second Development Decade; the vitality of the regional economic commissions showed how effectively they could be used to transform over-all policy into action at the regional level. However, decentralization would be effective only if adequate safeguards were provided against duplication and proliferation of activities. A regional approach to the strategy for the Second Development Decade was admittedly essential, but a balance must be struck between decentralized operational activities and centralized policy planning, which in its turn required the widest possible participation. There should be careful co-ordination with UNIDO, UNCTAD and UNESCO, and the other specialized agencies which were already active in the various regions. ECE was already co-operating closely with UNESCO; the other regional commissions would do well to follow that example, which would aid them in their efforts to adapt to their own purposes techniques available in the more developed countries and also to develop indigenous techniques. For example, the use of scientific prediction as an instrument of long-term planning, as described in the ECE report (E/4641), could serve, with suitable adaptation, as a model for other regions.

38. ECAFE was performing extremely valuable work in the Mekong delta, with beneficial effects on the political as well as on the economic situation in the area. Its concentration on population problems and on the development of manpower was also extremely useful.

39. The Executive Secretary of ECA had drawn attention (1614th meeting) to the need for reorganization, for quality of content in planning and for attention to educational innovations and to the problems of the less developed countries of the continent; he had provided a useful reminder that the success of development should be measured not only in quantitative terms but also in terms of greater freedom for the population to participate in the attainment of its objectives. His delegation hoped that the expanded role of ECA in the programming of technical assistance, referred to in paragraph 3 of the seven-Power draft resolution, would not impair the central role of UNDP in that area. It also hoped that it was true that, as stated in the CEA report, the Africanization of the ECA secretariat would not offend the principle of universality of recruitment of the United Nations staff by the Secretary-General and would not affect the level of efficiency of the staff.

40. The ECLA report (E/4639 and Add.1) gave a perceptive analysis of the problems involved in achieving an equal distribution of wealth, in widening the range of employment opportunities, in diversifying trade, in increasing autonomy in trade and aid, and in providing purchasing power and self-direction for Latin America. His delegation sympathized with all those aims; it welcomed the Commission's decisions to hold meetings of the Governing Council of the Latin American Institute for Economic and Social Planning once instead of twice a year, and to dispense with the meetings of the Committee of the Whole in even years.

41. His delegation also welcomed the attention drawn in the ECE report (E/4641) to the danger of premature simplification of complex problems; the Commission's resolution 4 (XXIV) on simplification and standardization of documents and procedures in international trade; and the efforts of ECE to resolve the critical problems of trade between Eastern and Western Europe. In the latter endeavour the Commission could make a special contribution by increasing understanding between different political and economic systems. The Commission's experience in reorganizing and streamlining its structure and programme and in scientific and technological co-operation could also benefit the other regional commissions.

42. UNESOB had a special role to play in a critically vulnerable area of the world; his delegation hoped that special attention would be paid to the possibility that economic and social co-operation in the Middle East might help to resolve its problems.

43. His delegation had not yet had time to study in detail the financial implications of the two draft resolutions before the Council or those of the recommendations of the regional economic commissions (E/4726). It hoped that, within the limits of the resources available, the Secretary-General would attach due importance to the activities of the regional commissions.

44. Mr. SHERIF (Libya) said that the reports of the regional economic commissions and UNESOB reflected their progressive achievements, which contributed to the decentralization of United Nations development activities.

45. Over the ten years since the establishment of ECA, the Commission's secretariat had made satisfactory progress in identifying Africa's problems and in paving the way for economic co-operation on that continent. The ECA report gave a full account of such activities as sub-regional economic co-operation, trade development, money and finance, industrial development and small-scale industries, agriculture and natural resources development, improvement of statistical services, manpower development, public administration, and training and research institutions. The studies and investigations carried out by ECA on those subjects had laid the foundations of a future plan of action for the economic and social benefit of Africa as a whole.

46. At its ninth session, ECA had concluded that the time had come to move from theoretical studies to practical action for development, in which ECA would play a central part. It had drawn the attention of member States to the need for self-reliance, for multinational and sub-regional co-operation, and for individual and collective support for the programme of work and priorities assigned to the ECA secretariat. It had expressed the consensus among the member States that the motivation for development must be generated within Africa; and it had recognized that it must improve its relations and co-operation with the Economic and Social Commission of OAU with a view to accelerating the development of the region.

47. His delegation would welcome an opportunity for the Council to discuss the draft resolution submitted by ECA (E/4651, part IV). It supported the eight-Power draft resolution.

48. Mr. POPOV (Bulgaria) said that the importance of the regional economic commissions as organizers of multi-lateral economic co-operation on a regional basis was continually increasing; they contributed to the economic development of the countries in their respective regions, and to the establishment of good relations among those countries. His delegation shared the view that the Council should increase their role in regional economic co-operation.

49. The activities of ECE over the past twenty years had demonstrated the need for broad co-operation on a basis of equality between European countries with different economic and social systems. At its twenty-fourth session, ECE had reviewed its organizational structure and methods of work on the basis of proposals submitted by the Executive Secretary; as a result, its activities would be improved in the traditional fields of co-operation and extended to new fields. For the first time in its history, ECE had adopted a long-term programme which gave prominence to scientific and technological co-operation, long-term economic planning and East-West trade.

50. Bulgaria was particularly interested in the first and last of those subjects. Important aspects of scientific and technological co-operation were theoretical research into forecasting and long-term planning, the application of technical progress to economic growth, the development of statistical standards, the exchange of information and documentation, and the establishment of joint programmes. In the field of East-West trade, the Commission sought to create an atmosphere propitious to the removal of political, commercial, administrative and other obstacles to trade among its members.

51. The Bulgarian Government particularly welcomed the plenary sessions of ECE, at which Government representatives exchanged views on its activities and adopted decisions on its future objectives. ECE was extremely valuable as the only organ for economic and technical

co-operation among European countries with different economic and social systems.

52. His delegation considered that the German Democratic Republic, a developed country maintaining diplomatic relations with countries in all parts of the world,

should be admitted to membership of ECE in order to bring its economic and scientific potential to bear on the complicated problems of European and international economic co-operation.

The meeting rose at 5.55 p.m.