

# ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL

## ORGANIZATIONAL SESSION FOR 1975

Summary records of the 1935th to 1939th plenary meetings, held at Headquarters, New York, on 13, 15 and 28 January 1975

### 1935th meeting

Monday, 13 January 1975, at 11.10 a.m.

*Temporary President:* Mr. Kurt WALDHEIM (Secretary-General).

*President:* Mr. Iqbal AKHUND (Pakistan).

E/SR.1935

#### *Opening of the session*

1. The SECRETARY-GENERAL declared open the organizational session of the Council for 1975 and said that he was glad to welcome members and to have the opportunity of addressing them.

2. He attached particular importance to the current session of the Council, because 1975 would be a highly significant year in the evolution of the United Nations. Given the central functions for policy formulation and co-ordination vested in the Council, its work during 1975 had a very special dimension, since it would lay down the basic guidelines of a process—culminating in the seventh special session of the General Assembly—that would have far-reaching implications for the future direction of international co-operation for development.

3. The programme of work before the Council (E/5604 and Corr.1) demonstrated the magnitude of the tasks which lay ahead. The mid-term review of the International Development Strategy for the Second United Nations Development Decade (General Assembly resolution 2626 (XXV)), the implementation of the Programme of Action on the Establishment of a New International Economic Order (Assembly resolution 3202 (S-VI)) and the preparations for the special session of the General Assembly would constitute the framework for the Council's evaluation of economic and social policies and its reappraisal of the nature and scope of the activities of the system designed to tackle some of the most critical and pressing problems facing mankind. Other items of the programme, such as those relating to population, natural resources, social development, regional co-operation, the environment, trade and industrial co-operation, would provide opportunities for Governments to give concrete and practical

expression to the objective of multilateral collaboration. The Council would also pursue the solution of acute humanitarian problems, such as those deriving from the drought in Africa and other natural disasters in Africa, Asia and Latin America, as well as the consideration of human rights questions, including action to combat racism and racial discrimination, which were fundamental to the attainment of social justice and peace.

4. He wished to renew the assurances he had given at the fifty-seventh session that the Secretariat would do all in its power to assist the Council in the discharge of its functions and responsibilities. Indeed, the tasks he had mentioned required thorough preparation and analysis, and the Secretariat was ready to contribute to the elucidation of the issues involved and to the effective organization of the Council's deliberations. He drew attention to a number of practical suggestions regarding the further rationalization of the methods of work of the Council that the Secretariat had submitted for the current session. Mr. Gabriel van Laethem would very shortly be taking up his duties as Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs and he (the Secretary-General) was sure that he would quickly establish a close and mutually rewarding working relationship with the Council.

5. Members of the Council knew that the world faced very crucial and complex economic and social problems. They had to deal with difficulties which no nation could afford to ignore and which in fact occupied much of the time and activity of the Governments of developed and developing countries alike. It was also well known that, in the main, they were global problems which required global responses. That was the new reality which gave the Council's work a special and urgent importance.

6. It was therefore right that the Council, and indeed the United Nations system as a whole, should engage in a process of constructive self-reappraisal. The forthcoming special session of the General Assembly had been called in order to consider new concepts of international co-operation and appropriate structural reforms of the system, which were essential to a rational evolution of a new world economic order. He was convinced that the Council—and the organizations of the United Nations system—would make valuable contributions to that end, precisely because, in situations such as those currently confronting the international community, innovation and imagination had their greatest opportunities and could pave the way for the greatest advances.

7. All the organizations of the United Nations system had a satisfactory record of performance and should have sufficient confidence in themselves to continue to adjust to changing needs and new circumstances. He had no doubt that the Council would take a realistic view of the true scope of the difficulties and of the measures that were called for and that, with political will and determination, it would exercise the degree of far-sighted leadership that was essential in the current context of world affairs.

### AGENDA ITEM 1

#### Election of officers

8. Mr. AKÉ (Ivory Coast) nominated Mr. Iqbal A. Akhund (Pakistan) for the office of President.

*Mr. Akhund (Pakistan) was elected President by acclamation.*

*Mr. Akhund (Pakistan) took the Chair.*

9. The PRESIDENT thanked the representative of the Ivory Coast for nominating him for the Office of President. In electing him to that office, the Council had given recognition to the modest contribution which Pakistan had made over the years to the economic and social purposes of the United Nations and to strengthening the capacity of the Council to achieve the goals set out in the Charter.

10. He noted that 1974 had been the first full working year of the enlarged Economic and Social Council, and also the year in which abrupt and far-reaching changes had begun to take place in the world economic situation. The General Assembly at its sixth special session, sensing the unprecedented nature and magnitude of those changes, had called for efforts to establish a new order of economic relations. So far as the Council was concerned, although it was now a much more representative body and its agenda was comprehensive, its proper role and function in the economic affairs of the world community remained to be precisely defined and agreed upon. For the Council, 1974 had been a period of renewed self-searching. Thanks to the tactful and patient yet firm guidance of his predecessor as President, the Council had been able to take constructive decisions on important issues such as transnational corporations (Council resolution 1913 (LVII)) and the report of the World Food Conference (decision 59 (LVII)), and had done useful preliminary work for the next special session of the General Assembly and the mid-term review and appraisal of the International Development Strategy.

11. At the fifty-seventh session of the Council, the President had expressed the hope that 1975 would

be the year of decision, and in opening the current session, the Secretary-General had reminded members that the Council's agenda for 1975 would be heavy. The General Assembly, in its resolution 3341 (XXIX), had indicated the direction in which the Council should aim in its attempts to reorganize and rationalize its work. He drew the attention of members to the report of the Secretariat (E/5604 and Corr.1), and said that the purpose of the rationalization exercise must be to make the most efficient use of the Council's time and to ensure that both delegations and their Governments were given sufficient time to study and absorb the information contained in the many documents provided for members. The Secretariat's suggestions regarding the form of the agenda for the coming year (part I, sect. A, of the report) and its recommendations regarding documentation (part I, sect. B) deserved the Council's careful consideration. The proposals regarding the pattern of meetings (part I, sect. C) were designed to make it possible for the Council to conduct its work efficiently and to enable the smaller delegations in particular to participate in and contribute to the Council's work more effectively than in the past. The purpose of enlarging the Council would not be served unless all those elected as members were able and ready to make their full and effective contribution to the Council's deliberations and decisions. The suggestion that the Council should abandon the practice of holding resumed sessions during the second half of the year, particularly when the General Assembly was in session, should be viewed in that context. It should be possible to solve any difficulties caused by the resulting changes in the general calendar of conferences, particularly with regard to the reports of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank Group as well as meetings of the Trade and Development Board, through appropriate consultations with the bodies concerned. The Council had always had the possibility of meeting in special session when circumstances so required; he suggested that, while retaining flexibility in the matter, the Council, in organizing its work for the very busy year ahead, should reduce the need for recourse to intersessional meetings to the absolute minimum.

12. Among the more important tasks facing the Council during 1975 were further action on the results of the sixth special session of the General Assembly, the World Population Conference and the World Food Conference, the mid-term review and appraisal of the International Development Strategy, and preparations for the Second General Conference of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) and the seventh special session of the General Assembly. The Council also had responsibilities in connexion with the International Women's Year and the Decade for Action to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination and other human rights questions. He suggested that the Council's work on many of those items would be facilitated by the use of informal consultations and negotiations wherever appropriate, and he expressed the hope that the Chairmen of the sessional committees concerned would take the lead in initiating such consultations without waiting for the various geographical and other groups to adopt positions.

13. The Council was now a much more representative body than it had been in the past, reflecting all trends of thought and shades of opinion, divergent interests, and countries at all stages of economic and social development. However, even after the enlarge-

ment of the Council, no particular group of States had tried to impose its views on other members of the Council. Negotiation, consultation and consensus had been employed and the expansion of the Council had, if anything, reinforced its capacity to act as a sounding-board for new ideas, a forum for the exchange of differing views and a vehicle for reconciling differences.

14. The closing debate at the twenty-ninth session of the General Assembly had gone to the heart of the question of the United Nations as an organization and as an ideal. What was the commitment of nations, so diverse in size, situation and potential, to the idea of world community? How could the sense of common endeavour, through which alone mankind might hope to resolve, in peace and progress for all, the conflicting interests of States and the competing claims of peoples, be found once again? The ills of inflation, unemployment, economic stagnation, scarcities of all kinds and, in some regions, hunger and looming famine might well be further accentuated during 1975. Despite the urgency and complexity of those problems, the principal issue of the times had been and remained the poverty, ignorance and disease which afflicted vast numbers of the world's population even while enormous resources were put to wasteful—and in the case of armaments, potentially suicidal—use. It was becoming increasingly apparent that that fundamental disparity lay at the root of the economic upheavals which threatened to disrupt what had been considered the established order of things. Members of the Council should not lose sight of reality, but they should not confuse it with the *status quo*. They must not ignore the higher reality which the United Nations had been established to serve, namely, man's search not merely for survival but for an order based on justice and reason. The questions facing the Council were concerned with the rationality of existing relationships and the existing system, with the use and abuse of the earth's material resources and of man's own fund of knowledge and skill. As the Council considered its agenda and methods of work and the world's economic future, members would do well to bear in mind those larger questions.

15. He invited the Council to proceed to the election of Vice-Presidents and suggested that, pending the revision of its rules of procedure, the Council might wish to suspend rule 20, as it had done in 1974, in order to elect four Vice-Presidents instead of three, thus enabling all the regional groups to be represented among the officers of the Council.

*It was so decided.*

16. Mr. KAUFMAN (Netherlands) nominated Mr. Donald O. Mills (Jamaica).

17. Mr. MILLS (Jamaica) nominated Mr. Ladislav Šmíd (Czechoslovakia).

18. Mr. DATCU (Romania) nominated Mr. Siméon Aké (Ivory Coast).

19. Mr. SIKIVOU (Fiji) nominated Mr. Edouard Longerstae (Belgium).

*Mr. Mills (Jamaica), Mr. Šmíd (Czechoslovakia), Mr. Aké (Ivory Coast) and Mr. Longerstae (Belgium) were elected as Vice-Presidents by acclamation.*

## AGENDA ITEM 2

### Adoption of the agenda (E/5600)

20. Mr. FASLA (Algeria) proposed that an item entitled "Measures to be taken following the earth-

quake in Pakistan" should be added to the provisional agenda (E/5600).

21. Mr. TUKAN (Jordan), Mr. BERLIS (Canada), Mr. CHANG Hsien-wu (China) and Mr. OLCAY (Turkey) supported the proposal.

22. Mr. BARCELO (Mexico) supported the Algerian proposal, and proposed that the statement made by the President should be circulated to members of the Council as a working document.

23. Mr. AMIRDZHANOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) also supported the Algerian proposal. His delegation had no objection in principle to the provisional agenda but was surprised at the wording of item 5, as the General Assembly had decided at its twenty-ninth session to invite all States and also the national liberation movements recognized by the Organization of African Unity and/or by the League of Arab States in their respective regions to participate in the Conference of the International Women's Year. The item should be entitled "Progress on the preparation for the Conference of the International Women's Year", which was the subject of the progress report of the Secretary-General on the question (E/5605).

24. Mr. KASEMSRI (Thailand) said that his delegation supported both the Algerian proposal and the Soviet amendment.

25. The PRESIDENT said that, if there was no objection, he would take it that the Council agreed to the inclusion of a new item entitled "Measures to be taken following the earthquake in Pakistan", as proposed by the representative of Algeria.

*It was so decided.*

26. The PRESIDENT, speaking as the representative of Pakistan, expressed sincere thanks for the messages of sympathy and the assistance received by his country from all parts of the world following the earthquake in Pakistan.

27. Mr. CORDOVEZ (Secretary of the Council) informed the Council that the Secretary-General had made arrangements for an oral report on United Nations assistance to Pakistan to be presented at the afternoon meeting on Wednesday, 15 January.

28. With regard to the amendment proposed by the representative of the Soviet Union, he pointed out that, although the General Assembly had indeed decided to invite States and national liberation movements to the Conference, it had taken no decision with regard to the specialized agencies and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations. Nevertheless, it had been felt that to mention such agencies and organizations specifically in the title of the item might prejudice the issue. The wording of item 5 had therefore been kept general and an annotation had been included in document E/5600.

29. Finally, he drew attention to the fact that, in accordance with a previous decision by the Council that progress reports should not constitute separate items on the agenda, the report on the preparation for the Conference of the International Women's Year was mentioned in the provisional agenda simply for information. Naturally, that did not mean that the members of the Council could not refer to the report.

*The provisional agenda (E/5600), as amended, was adopted.<sup>1</sup>*

<sup>1</sup>The agenda as adopted at this meeting was circulated as document E/5609.

30. The PRESIDENT suggested that items 3 and 4 should be considered together, in view of the close interrelationship between them. He noted in that connexion that Council resolution 1807 (LV) called for informal consultations involving the officers and members of the Council and the Secretariat concerning the formulation of agendas for the year. He therefore further suggested that the Council should first hear, at its afternoon meeting, any specific comments and proposals that members might wish to make and any clarification that might be required from the Secretariat, and that the following day should be devoted to informal consultations with a view to formulating a text which the Council would then formally consider and approve at its morning meeting on Wednesday, 15 January. As soon as the informal and formal consideration of the programme of work had been concluded, the Council would proceed to consider the other items in the order in which they were listed in document E/5600.

*It was so decided.*

### AGENDA ITEM 3

**Rationalization of the work of the Council and basic programme of work for 1975 (E/5604 and Corr.1)**

### AGENDA ITEM 4

**Actions arising out of decisions of the General Assembly at its twenty-ninth session (E/L.1618)**

31. Mr. CORDOVEZ (Secretary of the Council) said that the Secretariat, in preparing the report on rationalization of the work of the Council (E/5604 and Corr.1), had been fully aware of the importance of the question. The basic difference between the present approach to the problem and that adopted in previous years was that both General Assembly resolution 3341 (XXIX) and Economic and Social Council resolution 1907 (LVII) linked together the various factors involved, whereas decisions had hitherto been taken on them in isolation. Those factors were the agenda, documentation, the structure of subsidiary meetings, the pattern of meetings and the calendar itself.

32. Particular attention had been paid to the formulation of the Council's agenda. A new approach had been adopted, on the assumption that all the other linked factors would consequently fall into place. The Secretariat had attempted to replace the previous "mechanical" integration of items by a "substantive" integration, the purpose of which was to enable the Council to select the major issues on which to focus its attention, so as to work out policy recommendations and guidelines as called for in Council resolution 1768 (LIV). It was a basic parliamentary principle that deliberative bodies should have flexibility in organizing their work; that could be achieved by dispensing with subitems. The new method of formulating agendas would allow sessional bodies greater freedom to decide on how to deal with the questions allocated to them. It would also be possible for the Council and its sessional bodies to settle other problems such as those relating to the role of subsidiary organs and the format of their reports. If a sessional body, as a result of the new flexibility, decided not to review in detail every question discussed by subsidiary organs, then the format of those reports could be changed, and that would contribute to solving the problem of documentation.

33. Inasmuch as a substantive integration involved political and policy judgements, the suggested agenda should be considered essentially as a basis for discussion. Many alternatives could be envisaged; for instance, the subject of regional co-operation, which, following the traditional approach, constituted a separate item on the agenda, could be integrated into other items, such as the mid-term review.

34. The question of documentation had been under review for some time, and considerable improvements had been achieved. Serious problems remained however, as had been made clear by the need to postpone the opening of the organizational session for 1975. The conclusion reached by the Secretariat was that the root of the problem lay in the fact that requests for documents were made in isolation, in the absence of an over-all picture of documentation. The procedure adopted in the report (E/5604 and Corr.1) might constitute a means of providing the Council with a full picture of the documents before it. The Council could thus decide whether all the documents were necessary or whether some might be consolidated or perhaps postponed.

35. The Council might also wish to review the question of the provision of summary records for its subsidiary organs. Only some of those bodies were entitled to such records, the cost of which was very high. Other United Nations bodies had recently decided to dispense with summary records for certain meetings.

36. With regard to the question of the pattern of meetings, the report attempted to explain why the Council must seek a revision of the traditional pattern, which constituted the main thrust of resolution 1907 (LVII). The Council had attempted to continue the same pattern of meetings, despite its enlarged membership and its heavier agenda. One of the changes proposed was that arrangements should be made which would enable the Council to hold six meetings a day, so that three sessional bodies could function simultaneously and informal meetings could take place at the same time. Secondly, it was suggested that the Council should be able to hold "continuous" sessions, not unlike the Security Council. However, there were significant differences between the idea of continuous sessions as applied to the Security Council on the one hand and to the Economic and Social Council on the other. Furthermore, there might be a danger of duplication and overlapping if the system of continuous sessions was not handled very carefully. The chart in part I, section D, of the report showed that there were few times at which the Council could meet without overlapping with sessions of a subsidiary body. Any question of continuous sessions should therefore be linked to the structure of the subsidiary machinery of the Council and the calendar of meetings. A third suggestion was that the resumed sessions of the Council should be discontinued, since representatives had great difficulty in attending meetings of the Council and its sessional bodies during sessions of the General Assembly.

37. In practical terms, what was envisaged was a pattern of meetings sufficiently flexible to enable the Council to consider each matter at the most opportune time. That could be achieved by a more flexible application of rules 4 and 5 of the rules of procedure, which would have the double advantage of not delaying the consideration of special or urgent questions and not disrupting the regular pattern of meetings because of the need to consider such questions. Assuming that the

Council agreed to allocate items at its organizational session, it ought also to be possible for the plenary or one of the sessional committees to advance or postpone the consideration of an item.

38. Part II of the report (E/5604 and Corr.1) concerned the basic programme of work of the Council for 1975. It should be stressed that all the questions included in the basic programme had been taken fully into account in preparing the integrated agenda, and that the Secretariat would continue to provide the usual very complete annotations. Two proposed changes in the timing for the consideration by the Council of the questions on the agenda, upon which the Council should decide, appeared in paragraph 2 of the explanatory notes (part II, sect. C, of the report). An omission should be corrected later in that section; the list of work pro-

gramme questions integrated into item 7 for the fifty-ninth session (Trade and Development) should include question 90 (Report of the Trade and Development Board).

39. The report of the World Food Conference had not been included in item 15, because a new United Nations body had been established on the food problem and it had been assumed that the report would be considered by that body in the first instance, but the Council would have before it the two reports at its fifty-ninth session. The question of agrarian reform had been integrated into item 6 for the fifty-eighth session, but the Council might wish to consider it in the context of another item.

*The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.*

## 1936th meeting

Monday, 13 January 1975, at 3.30 p.m.

President: Mr. Iqbal AKHUND (Pakistan).

E/SR.1936

### AGENDA ITEM 3

**Rationalization of the work of the Council and basic programme of work for 1975 (continued)**  
(E/5604 and Corr.1)

### AGENDA ITEM 4

**Actions arising out of decisions of the General Assembly at its twenty-ninth session (continued)**  
(E/L.1618)

1. Mr. ARVESEN (Norway), speaking on behalf of his delegation, the delegation of Denmark and the observers for Finland, Iceland and Sweden, said that the question of rationalization of the work of the Economic and Social Council had become most urgent. Accordingly, at the twenty-ninth session of the General Assembly, the Finnish and Norwegian delegations in the Second Committee had submitted a draft resolution designed to enable the Council to discharge its functions as efficiently and responsibly as possible, particularly with regard to the many new tasks and major problems with which it would be faced in the immediate future. That initiative had led to the adoption by consensus of General Assembly resolution 3341 (XXIX). In response to that resolution and to Economic and Social Council resolution 1907 (LVII), the report of the Secretariat on rationalization of the work of the Council and the basic programme of work for 1975 (E/5604 and Corr.1) had been submitted to the Council. It contained a number of valuable proposals and suggestions which should form a good basis for concrete decisions with regard to rationalization measures to be adopted by the Council at the current organizational session. In its report, the Secretariat suggested that there were three interrelated elements of the process of rationalization: the agenda, documentation and the pattern of meetings.

2. With regard to the streamlining of the agenda, the Nordic delegations on whose behalf he was speaking

supported the idea of a substantive integration of agenda items, which, if properly done, would tend to reduce the number of general debates and, what was more important, would contribute to a better understanding and grasp of the various issues by the members of the Council, thus facilitating the Council's work in the field of co-ordination.

3. On the subject of documentation, the Nordic delegations agreed that sustained efforts should be made to reduce the number of requests for new studies and reports, and that restraint should be exercised in order to keep documentation within manageable proportions. They would welcome a decision by the Council requesting its subsidiary bodies to exercise restraint and carefully work out priorities when considering requests for new studies and reports. However, the most important proposal made in part I, section B, of the report related to the provision of summary records for some of the subsidiary bodies. In view of the fact that the production and translation of summary records continued to account for a large proportion of the output of the translation services, and bearing in mind that the work of a number of major conferences had not suffered as a result of dispensing with summary records, the Nordic delegations favoured the discontinuation of summary records for all the subsidiary bodies. That would lead to substantial savings, an improvement in the general level of efficiency and effectiveness of the Secretariat and a reduction in the already excessive number of documents which representatives had to read.

4. With reference to the pattern of meetings, the Nordic delegations agreed with the suggestions in paragraphs 26 and 27 of the report, namely, that the number of daily meetings at the regular sessions of the Council should be increased from four to six and that serious consideration should be given to the possibility of scheduling more meetings of subsidiary bodies during the second half of the year. They attached particular importance to the concept of "continuous" or intermittent sessions of the Council referred to in