

1943rd meeting

Tuesday, 22 April 1975, at 3.25 p.m.

President: Mr. Iqbal AKHUND (Pakistan).

E/SR.1943

AGENDA ITEM 3

Programme budget for 1976-1977 and medium-term plan for 1976-1979 (continued) (E/5612, E/5613 and Corr.1-4, E/5614, E/5632; E/5643, chap. I, draft resolution III; E/5660, E/5661, E/L.1642, 1643)

1. Mr. SANDERS (United States of America) said that the Secretariat was to be commended for having produced a medium-term plan (E/5614) which was a vast improvement over the previous plan submitted. It had responded to the recommendations of the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination (CPC) concerning the need to envisage future requirements and to co-ordinate interrelated activities, and had satisfactorily implemented General Assembly resolution 3199 (XXVIII). However, it deserved more guidance from Member States than the Council or CPC had been able to provide.

2. The medium-term plan would facilitate the work of the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) and other bodies engaged in evaluating activities in the economic and social fields, and he therefore hoped that the Working Group on United Nations Programme and Budget Machinery would agree on recommendations which would make the plan a more useful tool.

3. The projected increase in the cost of the plan, from \$207 million for 1974-1975 to \$264 million for 1975-1976, or 27.4 per cent, represented an estimate, much of which would go to cover inflation costs. His delegation was opposed to the system of predicting inflation costs and basing the budget on the resulting figures; it preferred to have those costs dealt with in a supplementary budget and considered that only then could the full costs be estimated and considered in the proper context.

4. His delegation was also concerned about the 498 new jobs which were to be created according to the plan. That proposal was being made at a time when the United States was retrenching in both personnel and costs, and it would prefer that instead of creating new posts, strenuous efforts should be made to increase productivity and redeploy personnel.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Berlis (Canada) took the Chair.

5. Mr. HJORTH-NIELSEN (Denmark) also commended the Secretariat for the medium-term plan, in particular, the improvement in the quality of information and analysis and the innovative concepts it reflected. It represented a major contribution to a proper system of planning in the United Nations. However, some parts of the plan gave the impression that the Secretary-General took a passive view of his responsibility to meet requests of legislative and supervisory bodies.

6. The Council's experience in budgetary and financial planning pointed to the need for a subsidiary body which would review the programme budget and the

medium-term plan before it came before the plenary meeting, because only on the basis of an in-depth analysis of those documents could the Council be placed in a position to discharge its responsibility properly. It was clear from the report of CPC on its fifteenth session (E/5632) that it had been seriously hampered in performing that function by lack of time; it should meet for one or two months each year if it was to do its work properly. Moreover, the programme budget and the medium-term plan should be considered in alternate years. That would enable the subsidiary body dealing with financing to begin the process of harmonizing the budgets and programmes for all parts of the United Nations system and result in more unified programming.

7. He wished to comment on the three basic concepts underlying the medium-term plan, as outlined by the Secretary-General (E/5614): the type of commitment it represented; the optimal degree of decentralization for its preparation, adoption and execution; and the selection of criteria for determining priorities within the plan.

8. With regard to the first concept, he pointed out that the value of the planning exercise depended on the political willingness of Member States to implement the decisions they adopted in the Council or the General Assembly. On the question of decentralization, the preparation of a good medium-term plan and its implementation was complicated by the structure of the United Nations and gave rise to a tendency to create a superstructure for those purposes. However, the United Nations system had been deliberately created as a functionally decentralized system and the only effective approach was necessarily the pragmatic one, namely co-ordination of the activities of all its components. To that end, the role of CPC should be strengthened and the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination (ACC) should be encouraged to continue the practice of creating interagency working groups to establish common definition of all activities and distribute them among the competent bodies. The concept of a "lead" agency in implementing the medium-term plan might prove advantageous. With regard to the establishment of priorities, his delegation endorsed the view of CPC that the methodology proposed for planning growth and priorities would help to rationalize decision-making on economic and social programmes, and could accept the incremental approach whereby priorities evolved from the actual allocations of reserves over time. The fact that little progress had been achieved in establishing an effective technique for setting priorities should not deter the Council from continuing the search for such a method. The concept of cost-effectiveness should be further developed, for example, for a clearer insight into the work of the United Nations system.

9. Mr. MACRAE (United Kingdom), introducing the amendments submitted by his delegation (E/L.1642) to draft resolution III, concerning the work programme

in the field of population, which the Population Commission at its eighteenth session (E/5643) had recommended for adoption by the Council in the light of the results of the World Population Conference, said that the amendments were the result of informal consultations held in the Economic Committee.

10. The two paragraphs suggested by his delegation to replace the third preambular paragraph of the draft resolution were aimed at drawing attention to all the provisions of General Assembly resolution 3344 (XXIX) and updating the original text by mentioning that the note by the Secretary-General (E/5644) on ways and means of strengthening the over-all capacity of the relevant units of the Secretariat had already been considered.

11. The new paragraph 4 (b) suggested by the United Kingdom stemmed from paragraph 11 of General Assembly resolution 3344 (XXIX), under which the Preparatory Committee had been specifically designated as the machinery for implementing the provisions of that paragraph.

12. The amplification of paragraph 5 and the two additional operative paragraphs proposed by the United Kingdom were intended to spell out how over-all co-ordination on population questions throughout the United Nations system could be strengthened. In effect, they called upon each of the organs dealing with some aspect of population questions to incorporate in their annual reports to the Council a special section indicating how they proposed to implement the World Population Plan of Action, and requested a synthesized report annually so that the Council could see what was happening on population issues throughout the system and provide proper guidance.

13. Mr. BRITO (Brazil) prefaced his remarks by emphasizing that the programme budget and medium-term plan required detailed consideration and evaluation as well as the active participation of the Secretariat officials whose programmes were being examined. The lack of time to perform that task properly, both in CPC and in the Council, impeded a thorough substantive review and seriously hampered the Council's ability to provide the guidance expected of it. In the circumstances, CPC was to be commended on its efforts.

14. The 3 to 4 per cent level of growth in the regular budget for economic and social activities projected in the medium-term plan for the biennium represented a significant departure from the trend of the past two decades. Since the requirements of international co-operation had certainly not diminished, there was reason to be concerned that the reduced level meant that limitations were being placed on the requirements of programmes, resulting in a situation of sufficient gravity to engage the Council's full attention. Indeed, recent decisions in the context of the new international economic order called for a larger effort of co-operation for development, and the restraint placed on the resources allocated for that purpose could severely limit that undertaking.

15. Turning to the reformulated programme Science and Technology (E/5661), he pointed out that both the revised and the previous formulations of the programme indicated a large measure of confusion concerning the distribution of functions in science and technology between the central organ, namely the United Nations Committee on Science and Technology for Development, and the sectoral bodies, such as the

specialized agencies, and between the Committee and the Office for Science and Technology at Headquarters. Thus, while the agencies conducted programmes on aspects relating to science and technology and their application in the specific sector of their competence, the task of the Office for Science and Technology at Headquarters and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) was rather to deal with the administration and management-planning-aspects of science and technology. The reformulated proposals did not clearly reflect or define that distribution of functions and the Council should be especially concerned because they implied a risk of massive duplication of effort within the United Nations system.

16. The Council should not take it for granted that the role of the Committee on Science and Technology for Development, which it had created to serve as an umbrella development organ to oversee related activities throughout the United Nations system, was necessarily or automatically directly linked with the Office for Science and Technology at Headquarters. For example, there was a working group established by the Committee to deal with arid zones, but it was examining the question on the basis of the work of an interagency task force headed by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). To avoid duplication, the Secretary-General should not be obligated to have the Office for Science and Technology prepare all reports of the Committee: it was significant that the Committee's report on its second session had been prepared largely by the Centre for Natural Resources, Energy and Transport.

17. The establishment of priorities in the field of science and technology was a question for Governments at the national level; indeed, priorities differed even among developing countries, depending on their stage and level of development. Reviewing the objectives of the medium-term plan (E/5661), he observed that objective 1.2, mobilization of public opinion in relation to the World and Regional Plans, should not be among the programmes of the Headquarters Office; it should be co-ordinated by the Centre for Economic and Social Information, which had a specific function to mobilize public opinion for science, housing, the environment and so on. Objective 1.3, strengthening national scientific and technological capacity, was exclusively a task for UNESCO, in which it had been engaged for many years; it was not clear how the Office could advance that work. Objective 1.4, implementation of research, was also a task for the specialized agencies because it dealt sectorally with the World Plan of Action; participation by the Office would duplicate the agencies' work.

18. Under medium-term objective 2, UNESCO was the correct focal point for the achievement of objective 2.1 and the Headquarters Office should merely co-operate with the agency. With regard to objective 2.2, it was doubtful that there could be a unified science and technology policy for the United Nations system, and there was no need for a group of experts to formulate such a policy; the Committee on Science and Technology for Development was perfectly capable of performing that task.

19. Under objective 3.1, international technological information system, the legislative basis cited (Economic and Social Council resolution 1902 (LVII)) had merely asked for a feasibility study to be considered by the Committee on Science and Technology

for Development; it had not authorized the establishment of a technological information system. The reference should be corrected.

20. Objective 4.1 should not be a separate programme of the Office for Science and Technology. UNIDO was competent to do studies on equipment design; UNCTAD might assume responsibility for studies in civil engineering—it had done work on harbours and ports; and the Centre for Natural Resources, Energy and Transport could do the work on roads. The research referred to in objective 4.2 was already being carried out by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP); he would hesitate to approve it as part of the programme of the Office for Science and Technology, particularly in view of the limited resources available to that Office.

21. The first item under objective 5.1 did not seem feasible and should be deleted.

22. Under the heading, "Substantive support for technical co-operation activities", one of the functions of the Office for Science and Technology would be to evaluate candidates for appointments to scientific and technological posts within the United Nations. Unless he misunderstood the proposal, that would mean that the Office would, for example, evaluate a candidate recruited by the Centre for Natural Resources, Energy and Transport or candidates selected by every division or section for appointment in the field of science and technology. That was palpably both undesirable and impracticable.

23. Turning to the revised programmes on population questions (E/5660), he drew attention to medium-term objective 4.7, under which the Population Division would prepare guidelines for the implementation of national population policy for developing countries. The request for such guidelines should come from interested countries in the first place; then the Secretariat could provide assistance. Moreover, the guidelines should be prepared for developed countries as well; they, too, had to cope with population problems.

Mr. Aké (Ivory Coast) took the Chair.

24. Mr. STANDKE (Director, Office for Science and Technology), replying to the comments of the representative of Brazil, said that, because the Intergovernmental Working Group of the Committee on Science and Technology for Development was meeting at the same time as the Council, he was attempting to attend both meetings and had consequently been present only for the latter half of the statement made by the representative of Brazil. If need be, he would provide a more complete reply at a future meeting.

25. He personally believed that there was no opposition between the views expressed by the representative of Brazil regarding the programme on Science and Technology and his own personal views. The Office for Science and Technology did not yet have a coherent programme and was really feeling its way at present. He hoped that the Office would be able to submit to the Council at its sixtieth session a coherent programme for its future work. He was himself a newcomer to the Secretariat and agreed that there were obstacles to be overcome in the Office, one of which was the existing budgetary limitations.

26. The Office had held consultations with more than 40 Governments and he had been gratified by the high level of interest accorded by all Governments

to the field of science and technology in general, and in particular to the question of institutional arrangements on which the Secretary-General was preparing a report. He was confident that proposals for a programme would be made at the third session of the Committee on Science and Technology for Development. For the time being, he assured the Council that the Office was making every effort to ensure that no overlapping with other programmes in the United Nations system occurred.

27. Mr. BRITO (Brazil) said that, while he had made both general and specific comments, the Director of the Office for Science and Technology had referred only to his general comments. In his statement, he (Mr. Brito) had attempted to demonstrate the existence of duplication in a number of areas and to draw the necessary distinction between the functions of the Office for Science and Technology and the Committee on Science and Technology for Development. His intention in so doing had not been to diminish, but rather to enhance, the importance of the Office for Science and Technology.

28. Mr. ALGARD (Norway) said that his Government attached the greatest importance to planning, which it regarded as instrumental in promoting economic and social progress. Norway's experience had indicated that balanced economic growth was best ensured by a system of planning in which the Government assumed primary responsibility for the equitable distribution of the fruits of economic growth.

29. His delegation welcomed the ambitions of the United Nations to play an important role in the establishment of a new international economic order under which greater social justice would prevail. Planning at the international level was necessary for the achievement of that goal. There were, however, tremendous difficulties involved in planning for a world of sovereign, independent States with different social systems. The first medium-term plan submitted to the Council had reflected such difficulties to such an extent that there had been doubts as to whether it was of any value at all.

30. The second medium-term plan represented a significant step forward, embodying improvements in methodology and in setting priorities, for which the Secretariat deserved credit. His delegation believed that the Council was moving towards a system of planning which could assist the international community in attaining the goals laid down in the various policy decisions of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council. Further elaboration of the plan would also assist the Council in co-ordinating United Nations activities, a responsibility vested in it by the Charter of the United Nations.

31. It was the established practice to consider and adopt the medium-term plan and the programme budget simultaneously. It was, however, appropriate to discuss whether that procedure should be continued. His delegation believed that by alternating its consideration of the plan and the programme budget the Council would be able to devote more time to both. Particularly in the field of setting priorities, it seemed logical and useful to consider and adopt the plan first, so that the bodies involved would have a clear set of guidelines for drawing up their budgets. Such a procedure, if adopted, would give a constructive role to the Council in the preparation of the budget itself.

32. In paragraph 4 of its resolution 3199 (XXVIII), the General Assembly requested the Economic and Social Council to indicate clearly the order of priorities in the economic, social and human rights fields to be reflected by the Secretary-General in his medium-term plan for 1976-1979. Paragraph 5 requested the Secretary-General to put special emphasis in the future on the preparation of the medium-term plan and to ensure that the plan was presented by programme rather than by organizational unit. The Council, in its resolution 1910 (LVII), had stressed the importance of establishing an effective system of priorities and had indicated a set of useful criteria which might be applied.

33. His delegation was particularly pleased to note that in the medium-term plan (E/5614) the Secretariat had for the first time presented a clear and integrated picture of all United Nations activities based on the total programme approach rather than on the purely organizational approach. That document also provided a very clear picture of programme growth tendencies in the United Nations system, thus raising the question of programme growth planning and priorities. The discussion of criteria as contained in chapter 4, paragraph 29, of the plan, was especially relevant and comprehensive. His delegation was in general agreement with four of the five criteria suggested by the Secretariat, namely effectiveness, political considerations, opportunity and specificity. The most significant of those criteria was effectiveness. The Council should be very reluctant to give priority to a programme which could not attain its objective. However, it should be realized that it would be very difficult to devise a system for the objective measurement of programme effectiveness in the near future. The criterion of political considerations should take into account both the political importance attached to a programme by the legislative bodies of the United Nations system and the degree of consensus existing within those bodies with respect to such programmes. It would be difficult to apply that criterion in view of a number of important questions of principle involved.

34. It should be borne in mind that priorities were not irrevocable and should be reviewed, as indeed they were every two years under the rolling plan system. The Council's main concern should be to avoid fragmentation of activities and the squandering of resources. The medium-term plan would at least assist in taking stock of the whole situation with regard to programme co-ordination.

35. In that connexion, his delegation wished to emphasize the importance of adequate preparation prior to the Council's taking a decision. The work of the Council would be greatly facilitated by the preparatory work of an organ dealing with review and evaluation of programmes and budgets, including the medium-term plan. As matters stood, there was a lack of any instrument for systematic programme evaluation. His delegation would therefore welcome any proposals for a set of criteria for programme evaluation from the Secretariat and hoped that the Working Group on United Nations Programme and Budget Machinery would look closely into that matter.

36. His delegation endorsed the views expressed by the representative of the Netherlands concerning a closer working relationship between either a new advisory committee or a reoriented CPC, on the one hand, and the Advisory Committee on Administrative and

Budgetary Questions (ACABQ), on the other, from an early stage of programme budget consideration. His delegation also believed that the functions of ACABQ and CPC in preparing decisions for the Council, particularly in the field of priorities and programme evaluation, were complementary.

37. Mrs. DERRÉ (France) said that her delegation had already acknowledged in CPC that the second medium-term plan represented a marked improvement over the previous plan and thanked the Secretariat for its work in drawing it up. She wished, however, to comment on a number of issues concerning which the Secretariat was awaiting the decision of the Council, in particular the question of criteria for the setting of priorities.

38. Her delegation was in agreement with the first four of the criteria proposed in chapter 4, paragraph 29 of the medium-term plan (E/5614). The fifth criterion, namely the staff workload "ratio", was unacceptable to her delegation. In that connexion, if a particular section of the Secretariat had too large a staff, it was sufficient to reassign redundant staff members to other duties. Her delegation would also suggest the addition of a sixth criterion, namely the existence of extrabudgetary resources.

39. The critical analysis of the programme on Science and Technology (E/5661) made by the representative of Brazil left little to say on that subject. With regard to medium-term objective 1.1, her delegation wondered if it might not be advisable to wait until after the holding of the planned conference on science and technology before taking action on the updating of the World Plan of Action. With regard to medium-term objective 2.2, her delegation had already expressed concern in CPC regarding the implications of a unified policy for science and technology. Since, as the Director of the Office for Science and Technology had pointed out, boundaries in that area were extremely fluid, her delegation wondered what the precise scope of that paragraph was.

40. Her delegation regretted that the informal group established by the Council to examine the machinery for programming and co-ordination had not met as planned. The question had, therefore, been considered outside the framework of the Council by a working group established by the General Assembly, which was more influenced by budgetary considerations than programming considerations.

41. Her delegation believed that adequate bodies already existed for the formulation of a medium-term plan in accordance with the expressed wishes of the General Assembly and for drawing up a programme budget to implement the plan. CPC was the competent legislative body in that respect. Its broad terms of reference included sufficient powers to draw up plans of action and to ensure co-ordination of the activities of the entire system. It must be recognized, however, that in recent years CPC had failed to satisfy anyone. Chief among the causes of its almost total failure were the conditions in which it had been obliged to work. For example, the previous session of CPC had been allotted only one week to consider a medium-term plan of more than 500 pages and a programme budget of almost equal length. Moreover, the relevant documents had been made available only two weeks before the opening of the session. Thus, from the very start, CPC had suffered from the double handicap of insuf-

ficient time for delegations to study the documents and request instructions from their Governments, and insufficient time for its deliberations. Despite such limitations, CPC had managed to make a number of pertinent comments and serious criticisms of the medium-term plan and programme budget. It had been too late by that time, however, to reformulate any of the programmes, since it was necessary to submit them to the Council within two weeks. Thus the comments of CPC had been merely annexed to the unchanged programmes and transmitted to the Economic and Social Council. The Council, in turn, had endorsed the comments of CPC. The Secretariat had taken note of the Council's decisions, observing, however, that it was too late to make any changes since the programme budget had to be submitted to ACABQ without delay if the General Assembly was to have the documents and the comments of ACABQ in time for its own deliberations. It was clear that such conditions and methods of work had to be changed.

42. As suggested by the Secretariat, the medium-term plan should be drawn up in the year prior to preparation of the programme budget, and not in the same year, as was the current practice. CPC, whether its name was changed or not, should remain an inter-governmental body of a political character. Her delegation could not agree to entrusting the task of translating the political wishes of the General Assembly into action to a group of experts acting independently of any Government. It went without saying that CPC should keep abreast of all activities of the entire United Nations system. It should no longer consider the medium-term plan after it had been drawn up by the Secretariat, but rather should collaborate closely with the Secretariat at the very beginning of the year in drawing up the plan. It should ensure that the plan accurately reflected the provisions of the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and the Council. It would assist the Secretariat in the establishment of priorities and could deal with matters often neglected by other legislative bodies such as identifying outmoded programmes and the marginal activities of the Secretariat.

43. CPC would also ensure the co-ordination of activities within the United Nations so as to avoid overlapping. With the benefit of such assistance from CPC, the Secretariat would then be able to draw up a first draft of the medium-term plan to be considered by the Economic and Social Council either at its spring or summer session. The Secretariat would thus have sufficient time to draw up the definitive plan to be submitted to the General Assembly at the end of the year.

44. The following year, the plan would be translated into a programme budget. CPC would consider the programme budget in a brief session in order to determine whether it corresponded to the medium-term plan and could, at its own discretion, consult with ACABQ on any particular matter. The programme budget together with the comments of CPC would then be transmitted to the Economic and Social Council. Finally, ACABQ, whose work had been deemed satisfactory by all delegations, could comment on the programme budget and forward it, with its comments, to the Fifth Committee of the General Assembly.

45. By following the suggestions she had just outlined, it would be possible to preserve intact the institutional framework for consideration of the medium-term plan and programme budget.

46. Thus far, she had only addressed herself to the question of the medium-term plan and programme budget, leaving aside the question of co-ordination. That did not indicate that her delegation attached less importance to the question of co-ordination. As the representative of Norway had just recalled, the primary responsibility for co-ordinating the activities of the specialized agencies had been vested in the Council by the Charter. Nevertheless, her delegation wanted to keep separate, at least for the time being, the question of co-ordination, on the one hand, and on the other, the question of the preparation of the medium-term plan. A number of delegations had advocated that CPC should consider detailed programmes of all the specialized agencies at the same time as the medium-term plan. That would entail consideration of approximately 10,000 pages of documentation and it would be impossible for CPC, already beset with a mass of documents, to deal with that additional task. Moreover, a competent body, ACC, already existed for that purpose. It would, in the view of her delegation, be better for CPC, in the year when the programme budget was not considered, to select for study a specific problem of co-ordination, for example, activities in the field of desertification. In so doing, CPC would have ample time to consider all the activities of the United Nations system in the area it chose. Past experience had proved that, by spreading itself too thin, CPC had produced unsatisfactory results.

47. The revitalization of CPC would significantly enhance the role of the Economic and Social Council. While the General Assembly was the ideal setting for the great political debates in which new currents of thought could be aired, as the example of the debate on the new international economic order had demonstrated the previous year, there was still a need for a political and administrative body to translate such ideas into reality. The Economic and Social Council was, in the opinion of her delegation, the most appropriate body for that purpose.

48. Mr. KEMAL (Pakistan), commending the Secretariat for the improvement in the quality of information and analysis provided in the medium-term plan (E/5614), said that the purpose of medium-term planning was the implementation within a relatively short and clearly defined span of time of the long-term objectives of the United Nations. Those objectives, stated at an abstract level, were to be found in documents such as the International Development Strategy for the Second United Nations Development Decade (General Assembly resolution 2626 (XXV)) and the Declaration and the Programme of Action on the Establishment of a New International Economic Order (General Assembly resolutions 3201 (S-VI) and 3202 (S-VI)). The planning process within the framework of such universally accepted guidelines should not ignore the financial, political and economic constraints that prevented the speedy attainment of the objectives.

49. Two closely linked trends, rapid developments in the global economic situation and pressures for structural change generated within the United Nations system, had a considerable impact on medium-term planning. The proliferation of organizations within the United Nations system disrupted the process of medium-term planning; including the 12 operational programmes, 5 regional commissions, 15 specialized agencies and other intergovernmental committees and *ad hoc* groups, approximately 167 organizations were ac-

tive in the economic and social field alone, and a corollary of that development was an unprecedented level of conference activity. As the medium-term plan indicated, almost every new meeting or conference set new objectives, usually without indicating which of the current objectives had become obsolete and should be abandoned, which led to an unlimited multiplication of objectives. While it would be unwise under normal circumstances to put any kind of mechanical restraint on conference activities or on the orderly emergence of essential institutions to deal with new problems, those trends, if carried to the extreme, negated the principles of proper planning. He believed there was a need for an orderly reform of the existing practices in planning, particularly medium-term planning, within the United Nations.

50. Structural reorganization within the United Nations system was also necessary to enable delegations to determine priorities and to take an integrated and multidisciplinary approach to the complex problems of international development and economic co-operation. At its twenty-ninth session the General Assembly had established a Working Group on United Nations Programme and Budget Machinery to suggest reforms of intergovernmental machinery for the formulation and review of programmes and budgets, and he was confident that the group would give serious consideration to the question of revitalizing CPC to enable it to carry out functions for the Economic and Social Council similar to those which ACABQ performed for the Fifth Committee. CPC should have sufficient time to carry out its co-ordinating and advisory functions, and its composition should be such that its members were able to devote the necessary time to their work. Strengthening CPC would also enhance the role of the Economic and Social Council.

51. As a time-table for considering the budget and the plan, the suggestion by the Secretary-General that they should be considered in alternate years seemed acceptable; CPC could consider the plan while ACABQ could examine the programme budget, both of which would then be considered by the Economic and Social Council and the Fifth Committee in alternate years. However, he believed that CPC should continue to consider both the plan and the budget. The alternate-year proposal would give Governments time to scrutinize the priorities selected by the Secretary-General. The only disadvantage of the proposal was that the medium-term plan would have to be formulated one year earlier than at present, which would further increase the time-lag between formulation and implementation; the adverse consequences would, however, be considerably alleviated by the advantages of the rolling plan principle.

52. Determining priorities was ultimately the responsibility of the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly. Functional commissions should restrict themselves to recommending priorities within their own respective fields, as the Economic and Social Council had the over-all co-ordinating role. The Secretary-General had explained in the medium-term plan the methods he had used in selecting priorities, methods which were a refined and improved version of the incremental approach. However, a different approach, the thematic approach, might be useful in facilitating a broader view for certain crucial problems, especially those susceptible of multisectoral treatment. In that connexion, he requested further information for UNESCO

on its use of the multisectoral approach. The incremental approach used might distort the real priorities and not reflect accurately major concerns, while under the thematic approach, intergovernmental bodies would decide on priorities for general themes, such as human settlements or the development of natural resources. Since the highest intergovernmental bodies had indicated their concerns, particularly in the International Development Strategy and the Programme of Action on the Establishment of a New International Economic Order, to the Secretary-General, the latter should show that the medium-term plan and the programme budget were in accordance with those concerns and indicate how the objectives were being realized in concrete terms.

53. Proceeding to the question of the methodology of the budget within the medium-term plan, he said that the plan as presented was not a true programme budget and did not reflect a genuine horizontal approach as requested in General Assembly resolution 3199 (XXVIII). The presentation of the medium-term plan, based on the old organizational units, made apparent the duplication of work between different units, such as the regional commissions. If co-ordination within the United Nations system was so hard to achieve, the specialized agencies could hardly be expected to agree that the United Nations should play a central co-ordinating role. He therefore suggested that the Secretary-General should try to employ a true programme budget for at least one or two activities, for example, developments in natural resources, in order to pave the way for further methodological advances. Although it involved difficulties, such a presentation would facilitate the task of the Secretary-General and of members of the Council and the General Assembly in the long run.

54. Mr. DE HEMPTINNE (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization), said he saw great merit in some of the medium-term objectives and specific activities, listed in document E/5661, but had serious reservations concerning others. UNESCO was the only agency constitutionally entrusted with responsibility for science and technology, including planning, research and information, although several other agencies did have important responsibilities for certain scientific and related activities. Because of the decentralization of responsibility for science and technology, UNESCO had always given its support to the Advisory Committee on the Application of Science and Technology to Development (ACAST), established in 1963, the Committee on Science and Technology for Development, established in the early 1970s, and the ACC Subcommittee on Science and Technology. It also shared the philosophy of the Economic and Social Council as reflected in its resolution 1826 (LV) concerning centralization of responsibility for science and technology. In general, he believed that two principles were paramount: executors of programmes should be involved in their formulation; and the Secretariat unit servicing the policy-making organs should not have an executive or operational role but should simply carry out the studies requested of it.

55. Referring specifically to the medium-term objectives in document E/5661, he said that objective 1 was of paramount importance. Objective 1.2 was the responsibility of the Office for Science and Technology. In connexion with objective 1.3, he stressed the importance of developing national scientific capacity;

UNESCO provided assistance to 40 countries, and 22 members of UNESCO had established some national organ for scientific and technological policy. The legislative authority for objective 1.3, however, was the same as that for objective 1.1, and he felt that the two should be combined. Objective 1.4 concerning implementation of research was also based on Economic and Social Council resolution 1900 (LVII), and should be combined with objectives 1.1 and 1.3. Objective 2 on a science and technology policy was a matter for the Office for Science and Technology. As had been pointed out, however, objective 2.1 referred to the responsibility of UNESCO in that field. In connexion with objective 2.2, he agreed with the representative of Brazil that assistance should be sought from other interested United Nations offices, but suggested that ACAST and the Committee on Science and Technology for Development should also be consulted. He did not feel it was the responsibility of the Office for Science and Technology to develop scientific and technological information systems; UNESCO had established an information system in 1972, with support from 82 Governments. Accordingly, he felt objective 3.1 should not be included in the programme of work of the Office for Science and Technology. Objective 5 was one of the main responsibilities of UNESCO, which was carrying out studies and holding conferences and seminars on that subject; accordingly, he did not feel it was an appropriate matter for the Office for Science and Technology. The legislative authority for objective 5.2 was paragraph 111 (b) of the report of the Committee on Science and Technology for Development concerning a study of systems analysis for development. He had discussed all the points he had mentioned with the Director of the Office for Science and Technology, and trusted that the objectives would be modified accordingly.

56. Mr. BRITO (Brazil), commenting on the amendments proposed by the United Kingdom (E/L.1642) to draft resolution III entitled "Work programme in the field of population" (E/5643), said that he had no difficulty with the first amendment. He could not accept the second amendment, since he did not feel that draft resolution III merited special attention. With regard to the third amendment, he accepted the addition to operative paragraph 5. He proposed that the new operative paragraph 6 should be expanded by inserting after the words "Population Plan of Action" the words "and therefore contribute to the implementation of the Programme of Action on the Establishment of a New International Economic Order". In connexion with new paragraph 7, he said that a report on activities was made to the Economic and Social Council every two years and if a short presentation of programmes on science and technology had been submitted with the draft budget, instances of overlapping would have been immediately obvious. Analytical summaries of the activities of specialized agencies were submitted, but it was difficult to consider them in connexion with the draft budget. He would prefer a cross-sectional report on themes being studied and a general decision rather than one that related exclusively to population matters. If that approach was not acceptable, he proposed that the new paragraph 7 should be amended by replacing the word "annually" by "every two years" and by inserting after the words "to assist it" the words "in the evaluation of the programme budget in the population field", the rest of the sentence being deleted.

57. Mr. TABAH (Director, Population Division), responding to comments by the representative of Brazil, said he agreed that developed as well as developing countries were faced by population problems. The intention was not to impose guidelines but to make guidelines available to Governments which would then use them as they saw fit.

58. Mr. LAVAU (Director, Budget Division) took note of the consensus which seemed to have appeared about the suggestion made in the foreword to the medium-term plan that the latter document and the programme budget should be submitted to the legislative organs in alternate years so that the programme budget could be considered after the plan. The procedure would help the Secretariat to take more account of government wishes.

59. Comments had been made concerning the proposed methodology for establishing priorities. He took note of the reservations expressed by the representatives of Denmark and Pakistan; the latter had said he would prefer a thematic approach. The Secretary-General felt the method proposed in the medium-term plan was easier to apply, but it was still a proposal and would not be applied until the third plan. Efforts would be made to take account of the comments made by the representative of Pakistan in elaborating a method for determining priorities.

60. The representative of Pakistan had criticized the co-ordination of programmes in the medium-term plan, saying that programmes were juxtaposed rather than harmonized and had referred to the regional economic commissions. In response, he said that the co-ordinating task of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs as between Headquarters and the regional commissions was a very difficult one; it would be easier if Headquarters could dictate to the commissions, but that approach was not in accordance with the wishes of Member States, and the commissions had a certain autonomy. Section V of the programme budget dealing with both Headquarters and the regional commissions reflected a compromise over decentralization.

61. Responding to the suggestions made by the representative of France for a future methodology for the medium-term plan and programme budget, he said that he would welcome any improvements. He welcomed the suggestion that the Secretariat and CPC should work together on a first version of the medium-term plan, the only difficulty being that it might prove awkward for CPC to criticize the plan, its own work, when it was submitted for consideration.

62. The United States representative had expressed reservations about the principles of the concept of full budgeting. However, because of inflation and price increases and also because of the fact that contributions were paid annually on the basis of biennial appropriations, it would probably not be possible, without making some provision for inflation in the proposed programme budget, to wait until the next session of the General Assembly to request supplementary estimates, and some remedy had to be found.

63. Replying to comments by the representative of Brazil concerning the real growth in the budget, which was lower than in the past, he pointed out that the 3 per cent increase was an initial proposal in which the Secretary-General felt that it was his responsibility to observe moderation. But that increase would probably

be higher once actual expenditure and revised and supplementary estimates were taken into account.

64. Mrs. DERRÉ (France) said that if CPC participated in the preparation of the medium-term plan it

would be a joint document of the Secretariat and CPC and would be submitted to the Economic and Social Council for consideration, not to CPC.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.

1944th meeting

Thursday, 24 April 1975, at 3.35 p.m.

President: Mr. Iqbal AKHUND (Pakistan).

E/SR.1944

Organization of work

1. The PRESIDENT suggested that Monday, 28 April 1975, be set as the deadline for the submission of draft resolutions under item 2, concerning a system-wide attack on the drought problems, under item 3, on the programme budget, and under item 4, on the rationalization of the work of the Council, and that the Council should consider the draft resolutions submitted under items 3 and 4 on Tuesday, 29 April. It was suggested that 29 April be set as the deadline for the submission of nominations for elections, which would be held on Thursday, 1 May. On Wednesday, 3 April, the informal consultations relating to the rules of procedure should be pursued throughout the day. On 1 May, the Council would take up any pending questions under items 3 and 4, the reports of the Economic Committee and the elections. On 2 May, the Council would complete its discussion of item 2 and the reports of the Social Committee.

2. Mr. G. A. SMIRNOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that as 1 May was International Labour Day, he proposed that no meetings should be held that day.

3. Mr. BRITO (Brazil) said that, while he appreciated the efforts to speed up the work of the Council in order to complete the session early, he supported the proposal of the representative of the Soviet Union.

4. In view of the fact that the Council was awaiting information from the Secretary-General concerning the programme budget on science and technology, he would appreciate it if the draft resolution on that subject could be submitted on Monday.

5. The PRESIDENT said that in view of the above remarks, he would take it, if he heard no objection, that the Council agreed to his suggestions on the understanding that Tuesday would be the deadline for the submission of draft resolutions on item 3; that no meeting would be held on 1 May, International Labour Day; and that the Council would meet on 2 May instead, when it would consider the items it would have considered on 1 May plus, time permitting, item 2.

It was so decided.

AGENDA ITEM 6

Non-governmental organizations (E/5631 and Corr.1, E/5635, chap. I, draft resolution II; E/L.1636 and Add.1 and 2, E/L.1640 and 1644, E/NGO/31)

6. The President drew the attention of the Council to chapter I of the report of the Committee on Non-

Governmental Organizations (E/5631 and Corr.1), to draft resolution II contained in chapter I of the report of the Commission on Human Rights on its thirty-first session (E/5635) and the amendments thereto (E/L.1644), and to decision 67 (ORG-75) taken by the Council at its organizational session, requesting the Secretary-General to submit to its fifty-eighth session the list of non-governmental organizations which might be invited to the World Conference of the International Women's Year, to be held in Mexico City from 23 June to 4 July 1975. In response to that request, the Council had before it a note by the Secretariat (E/L.1636 and Add.1 and 2). In accordance with the decision of the Council, the question would be discussed under item 6 at the same time as the letter dated 1 April 1975 from the Chargé d'Affaires a.i. of Australia to the President of the Council (E/L.1640).

It was so decided.

REPORT OF THE COUNCIL COMMITTEE ON NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS (E/5631 AND CORR.1)

7. Mr. WU Miao-fa (China) said that, consistent with earlier statements, his delegation was opposed to the Economic and Social Council's establishing or maintaining consultative relations with non-governmental organizations which still comprised elements of the Chiang Kai-shék clique. It was three years since the General Assembly had adopted resolution 2758 (XXVI) and the maintenance of a situation suggesting that there were two Chinas was intolerable. He called on the Council to implement General Assembly resolution 2758 (XXVI) and to sever relations with non-governmental organizations in which elements of the Chiang Kai-shek clique participated.

8. Mr. KAUFMANN (Netherlands) welcomed the studies outlined in the report of the Committee (E/5631 and Corr.1) for strengthening the relationship between the United Nations and non-governmental organizations. His delegation had repeatedly stressed the importance of the role of non-governmental organizations in the work of the United Nations, and the relationship between those organizations and the United Nations could be further developed in the light of the experience of the last 30 years. Consultative status had primarily been sought by non-governmental organizations because of their interest in promoting the ideas and ideals of the United Nations. However, there was an increasing concern on their part also about the wide range of issues facing the international community.