

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL

FIFTY-EIGHTH SESSION

Summary records of the 1940th to 1952nd plenary meetings, held at Headquarters,
New York, from 8 April to 8 May 1975

1940th meeting

Tuesday, 8 April 1975, at 10.50 a.m.

President: Mr. Iqbal AKHUND (Pakistan).

E/SR.1940

Opening of the session

1. The PRESIDENT declared open the fifty-eighth session of the Economic and Social Council.

Statement by the President

2. The PRESIDENT recalled that each year the first regular session of the Economic and Social Council was traditionally devoted to a review of the activities of the Organization with particular emphasis on social and human rights questions. In that regard, the Council would have before it the report of the Commission for Social Development on its twenty-fourth session (E/5617) and a number of documents dealing with related aspects, as well as the report of the Commission on Human Rights on its thirty-first session (E/5635). For the first time the Council would perform in a substantive manner the functions assigned to it by the General Assembly in connexion with the Decade for Action to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination.

3. During the session, the Economic Committee would review the results of the World Population Conference, and the final report of the Secretary-General on World Population Year (E/5602 and Corr.1 and 2). Since the question of population had been under active consideration for a number of years and the Conference had constituted the culmination of the efforts of the international community to define the manner in which economic co-operation in that field would be pursued over the coming years, the Council would no doubt wish to reach certain general policy conclusions on the basis of the report of the Conference and of the preliminary discussion held by the Population Commission, whose report on its eighteenth session (E/5643) was before the Council.

4. The Economic Committee would also take up the item on the mid-term review and appraisal of the International Development Strategy for the Second United

Nations Development Decade (General Assembly resolution 2626 (XXV)) and the implementation of 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)). That item had been included in the agenda of the current session, in accordance with Council resolution 1911 (LVII), in which the Council had decided, in preparation for consideration by the Committee on Review and Appraisal and by the Economic and Social Council at its fifty-ninth session, to undertake at its fifty-eighth session a preliminary consideration of new commitments, changes, additions and adaptations in the International Development Strategy in the light of the Declaration and the Programme of Action. He drew the Council's attention to the fact that under that item it must also consider the question of the mobilization of public opinion, in both developing and developed countries, in support of the objectives and policies of the Second United Nations Development Decade.

5. In accordance with the arrangements made at the organizational session, the Council would discuss in plenary meeting the programme budget for 1976-1977 and the medium-term plan for 1976-1979. To that end, it had before it the report of the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination on its fifteenth session (E/5632). In that connexion, he drew the Council's attention to the note by the Bureau (E/L.1638), in which the Bureau suggested, in order to avoid conflicting conclusions, that all matters relating to that question included in the reports of subsidiary bodies should be discussed in plenary meeting. A similar proposal had been made in connexion with the calendar of meetings.

6. The Council would also continue to discuss in plenary meeting the question of the rationalization of its work, which had been on its agenda for at least five regular sessions. It would be in the interest both of the Council and of the Organization as a whole to reach a

conclusion on the item at the current session and to make the necessary internal adjustments before the seventh special session of the General Assembly, at which the system as a whole would be reviewed. The Bureau had suggested that the matter should be discussed in the first instance in an informal manner so that the members of the Council would have greater flexibility in expressing their views and so that it would be easier for them to find mutually acceptable solutions.

7. There was an exceptionally heavy programme of meetings and conferences for 1975, covering virtually every field of the Council's domain. The Council was still, as it were, in the wake of the sixth special session, and the seventh special session was beginning to loom ahead. The controversies raised by the actions and decisions taken at the sixth special session had not yet been resolved. It was the duty of the Economic and Social Council to help to resolve those differences and to reconcile the conflicting interests. It was encouraging to find that the necessity for a thorough reform of economic structures and a redressing of economic and social relations, among as well as within nations, was beginning to be accepted, even if it was not translated immediately into policy decisions. Furthermore, the political atmosphere seemed to be more conducive to the discussion and acceptance of new ideas in the economic and social fields. In that context, the Economic and Social Council, by its size and composition, was well suited to explore new ideas and promote a constructive dialogue.

AGENDA ITEM 1

Adoption of the agenda (E/5630)

The provisional agenda (E/5630) was adopted.¹

Organization of the work of the session (E/L.1638)

8. Mr. CORDOVEZ (Secretary of the Council) drew the Council's attention to a matter which had been pending since the organizational session, namely the invitation of non-governmental organizations to the World Conference of the International Women's Year. At the request of the Secretary-General, a list of the organizations which had expressed a wish to participate in the Conference had been drawn up. The list was now available to the members of the Council as document E/L.1636. A supplementary list would be issued shortly.² He also drew the Council's attention to a letter dated 1 April 1975 from the Chargé d'Affaires a.i. of Australia to the President of the Council concerning an invitation to the Conference (E/L.1640), and suggested that when delegations had familiarized themselves with the letter the question should be considered by the Council in plenary meeting.

9. Mr. MACKENZIE (United Kingdom) suggested that the Council should consider the question of the invitation of non-governmental organizations to the World Conference of the International Women's Year under agenda item 6, which concerned non-governmental organizations, at the same time as the resolution on the same topic adopted by the Commission on Human Rights at its thirty-first session.

10. Mr. MAKEYEV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) requested that, in view of the importance

of the informal consultations, their starting time and location should be indicated in the *Journal*.

11. The PRESIDENT said that, if there was no objection, he would take it that the Council approved the organization of work contained in document E/L.1638, together with the suggestion made by the representative of the United Kingdom.

It was so decided.

12. The PRESIDENT suggested that the Council should start its consideration of the item on the rationalization of its work in informal meetings and that it should set 6 p.m. on Friday, 11 April, as the deadline for the submission of draft resolutions on the item. He also suggested that on the following morning, the Council should begin its consideration of the draft revised rules of procedure and that, to facilitate the consideration of the item, it should set up for the duration of the session an informal working group open to all the members of the Council, which would examine the report submitted by the *Ad Hoc* Working Group (E/5634) and would try to arrive at a generally agreed text which could then be approved by the Council on the following Friday. If there was no objection, he would take it that the Council approved his suggestions.

It was so decided.

13. Mr. CORDOVEZ (Secretary of the Council) recalled that in its resolution 1905 (LVIII) the Council had requested the Secretary-General, with the advice of the Advisory Committee on the Application of Science and Technology to Development and after consultation with all interested agencies and bodies within the United Nations system, to make a study on: (a) the work at present being undertaken throughout the United Nations system in the field of the development and the transfer of science and technology particularly in the interests of developing countries; and (b) the feasibility of the establishment of a United Nations science and technology programme, including its form, functions and responsibilities, to assist, facilitate and ensure the application of science and technology to development, particularly that of the developing countries. That very broad study was to be submitted to the Intergovernmental Working Group of the Committee on Science and Technology for Development, which was scheduled to meet from 21 April to 2 May 1975; the study would then be transmitted to the Council at its fifty-ninth session, with the recommendations of the Intergovernmental Working Group.

14. From the beginning it had been recognized within the Secretariat, as well as by all the interested organizations, that it would be difficult to complete such a wide-ranging study within the time-limit laid down. Nevertheless, all the necessary arrangements had been made. A consultant had been recruited in 1974 and had undertaken the first stage of that study, that is, an over-all assessment of the ongoing work as well as a preliminary set of recommendations arising out of that assessment. The consultant had pointed out, however, that shortage of time had meant that consultations with the various bodies had been less thorough than was desirable, that the report was less detailed and complete than would be useful, and that a number of important questions had not been adequately treated.

15. The Secretariat had attempted to formulate its own views and recommendations on that complex question on the basis of the consultant study, and initial soundings had begun with the Advisory Committee on

¹ The agenda, as adopted at this meeting, was subsequently circulated as document E/5652.

² E/L.1636/Add.1 and 2, issued on 14 and 23 April 1975.

the Application of Science and Technology to Development and the agencies concerned; but it had proved impossible in the time available to work out thorough and comprehensive proposals which the Secretary-General might submit as a basis for intergovernmental discussion. Nevertheless, in an effort to meet the scheduled time-table, discussions had been initiated with the organizations concerned on a tentative draft report, even though it had not been considered fully satisfactory within the Secretariat itself. That process of consultation had revealed even further weaknesses in the documentation under consideration and had thrown up more ideas which warranted exploration. In consequence, the Secretary-General, on the advice of his senior colleagues and taking into account the comments received from a variety of interested organizations, had finally decided that it would be counter-productive to put forward on that important question documentation which the Secretariat did not regard as adequate. He had felt that further analysis and consideration of the many issues involved was required, as well as more extensive consultations with the many organizations active in that field. None of that could be satisfactorily accomplished either before 21 April, when the Intergovernmental Working Group was due to meet, or before the Council's summer session.

16. Members of the Council would recall that there were two other items on the agenda of the Intergovernmental Working Group: the question of convening a conference on science and technology, and the application of science and technology to solve the problems of the arid areas. The comments of the Working Group were to be submitted to the Committee on Science and Technology for Development at its spring session in 1976 and then to the Economic and Social Council. As delegations might have noticed, the documentation on the proposed conference did not contain any views or recommendations by the Secretary-General. In the time available, the only document that could be issued was the report of a group of experts on the scope and content of the conference. The Secretary-General would very much like to give his time to formulate his own views and recommendations on that question and he felt that undue haste in that respect might only serve to jeopardize results. He therefore recommended to the Council that the meeting of the Intergovernmental Working Group should be postponed. The meeting of the Group could be rescheduled in time for it to submit its conclusions to the Committee on Science and Technology for Development and the Economic and Social Council in 1976 as foreseen in the existing schedule.

17. Mr. GONZALEZ DE COSSIO (Mexico) said that he had been shocked at the announcement made by the Secretary of the Council. Mexico, which attached considerable importance to the meeting of the Intergovernmental Working Group, and particularly to the question of the establishment of a United Nations programme for science and technology, had made very careful preparations for the meeting of the Group and objected to its postponement. In any case, it was simply a matter of an informal meeting which could very well use informal documentation for its deliberations. Besides, the views expressed by the Working Group would certainly be very useful to the Secretariat.

18. Mr. MWANGAGUHUNGA (Uganda) felt that the Intergovernmental Working Group should meet

as soon as possible. If, as had been stated, the consultant's report was not satisfactory, the Working Group should consider it and comment on it, so that it could be improved in order to ensure that the proceedings of the Committee on Science and Technology for Development and the Economic and Social Council were more satisfactory in 1976.

19. Mr. DATCU (Romania) recalled that, in his opening remarks, the President had emphasized the importance of the role of consultations in the work of the Council. It was indeed the most effective method of work and enabled time to be saved. In general, the Secretariat employed that method and he was therefore surprised at the way in which the Secretary of the Council had presented the Secretary-General's recommendation. The recommendation was unacceptable to the Romanian delegation, especially as all countries had already arranged to send representatives to the meeting of the Intergovernmental Working Group.

20. Mr. MILLS (Jamaica) thought that it would be a pity to have to postpone the meeting of the Intergovernmental Working Group. The items on the Group's agenda were of the utmost urgency and countries had already made all the necessary arrangements to attend the meeting. The representative of Romania had pointed out that it would have been advisable to hold consultations. Perhaps it was not too late to hold informal consultations at the current stage, before taking a decision on the proposal put forward by the Secretary.

21. Mr. LINDENBERG SETTE (Brazil) said that he, too, was sorry that it should be necessary to postpone the meeting of the Working Group. However, it would seem unwise to convene such an important working group if the necessary documentation could not be provided for it. As the representative of Jamaica had suggested, it might be a good idea to hold consultations.

22. Mr. KITCHEN (United States of America) said that the main question was whether the Working Group would be able to draw up a satisfactory programme of work if it did not have the necessary information. He doubted it. However, if it seemed that the Working Group would not be able to perform its task during the planned session, there would be nothing to prevent it from meeting later to finish its work.

23. Mr. ROUGET (Federal Republic of Germany) said that he too regretted that the announcement had been made so late by the Secretariat. Even though the documentation was not satisfactory—and he wished to stress that the Secretariat was not responsible for that—the Working Group could nevertheless study the available documents and thus perform the task that had been entrusted to it. The meeting should therefore take place.

24. Mr. MUNGAI (Kenya) said that, in view of the importance of the questions to be considered, the reasons put forward by the Secretariat for postponing the meeting was not convincing. He supported the proposal of the representative of Jamaica that informal consultations should be held before a decision was taken.

25. Mr. MACKENZIE (United Kingdom) said that he too supported the idea of holding informal consultations, as it would be difficult to reach a consensus without them. The documents prepared for the meeting were certainly not of a very high quality; they should

therefore be examined more closely and the meeting of the Working Group would probably be very useful for that purpose. Nevertheless, the meeting would certainly be less productive than it might have been.

26. Mr. MAKEYEV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that he had read the documents in question and was not surprised at the criticisms which had been made of them. However, he wished to stress that the Secretariat was not responsible for the fact that the United Nations bodies had not provided sufficient information.

27. In the opinion of his delegation, the meeting should take place on the planned dates on the basis of the available documentation. However, if the documentation on any agenda item was insufficient, there was nothing to prevent the Working Group from meeting again later.

28. Mr. OLIVERI LOPEZ (Argentina) said that his delegation also attached the greatest importance to the agenda of the meeting and that it had therefore been very disappointed by the announcement made by the Secretary. In his opinion, it would definitely have been possible to prepare a more complete document within the time-limit. The Council was in an impasse: everyone wanted the meeting to produce positive results, but that was not possible with inadequate documentation. Furthermore, there was very little time left before the date fixed for the meeting. He therefore supported the proposal of the representative of Jamaica that informal consultations be held.

29. The PRESIDENT said that it was unfortunate that the Council, or at any rate the members of the Bureau, had not been informed earlier of the situation.

30. The members of the Council seemed on the whole to wish to postpone a decision until later. He therefore suggested that they should hold consultations between themselves before taking a decision at the next meeting.

It was so decided.

31. Mr. CORDOVEZ (Secretary of the Council) said that he wished first to apologize for having drawn the Council's attention to the matter at such a late stage. However, it would have been difficult to do otherwise because of certain practical considerations: the only time when it would have been possible to warn the Council had been during the organizational session and at that time the Secretariat still thought that it would be able to prepare the necessary documentation. Furthermore, there was a provision in the rules of procedure authorizing the Secretary-General to request the President of the Council to postpone a meeting; however, that provision did not seem to be applicable in the current situation. Finally, consultations on one of the documents in question had only ended on the preceding Friday and it was then that the Secretary-General had decided to recommend to the Council that the session of the Working Group be postponed.

32. He wished to draw the Council's attention to the fact that only 13 days remained before the date planned for the session of the Working Group and that that period was not sufficient to complete the documentation. In particular, the Secretary-General considered that further consultations should be undertaken and more information assembled before the document on institutional arrangements for science and technology was issued. Furthermore, in resolution 1897 (LVII), the Council had requested the Secretary-General to prepare and submit to the Intergovernmental Working Group a report containing his views on the scope of the proposed conference. However, the Secretary-General did not have all the necessary information to be able to give a considered opinion.

33. Having said that, he noted that the change in the date of the meeting of the Working Group would not affect the work of the Committee on Science and Technology for Development in 1976, except in respect of the question of institutional arrangements.

The meeting rose at 12 noon.

1941st meeting

Friday, 18 April 1975, at 11.05 a.m.

President: Mr. Iqbal AKHUND (Pakistan).

E/SR.1941

Revision of the agenda (E/5652)

1. The PRESIDENT said that he had received a communication dated 9 April 1975 from the Permanent Representative of Somalia to the United Nations concerning the tragic situation existing in Somalia as a result of the prolonged severe drought, which had compelled the Government of Somalia to declare a state of emergency. It was clearly the duty of the international community to take immediate action. After consultation with the delegations concerned, he was suggesting that the Council should revise item 2 of its agenda as adopted at the 1940th meeting (E/5652) to include a specific reference to Somalia in the title, which would now read: "Consideration of a system-wide attack on the drought problems in the Sudano-Saharan region, Ethiopia and Somalia".

2. If there was no objection, he would take it that the Council agreed to revise the wording of agenda item 2 as he had suggested.

The agenda, as revised, was adopted.

Review of the calendar of meetings

INTERGOVERNMENTAL WORKING GROUP OF THE COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY FOR DEVELOPMENT (E/L.1641)

3. The PRESIDENT recalled that the Council had been informed by the Secretariat at the opening meeting that it would not be possible to issue all the documentation required by the Intergovernmental Working Group of the Committee on Science and Technology for Development. On the proposal of the representative