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*Chairman:* Mr. Bohdan LEWANDOWSKI  
(Poland).

## AGENDA ITEM 38

Population growth and economic development (A/4849,  
A/5059, A/5222, A/C.2/L.657 and Add.1, A/C.2/L.657/  
Rev.1) (continued)

1. Mr. HAKIM (Lebanon), exercising his right of reply, wished to make it clear to the representative of Syria that the Lebanese delegation was not opposed to family studies, but the limited funds available for technical assistance should not be used for mass propaganda in favour of family planning. Those funds should be employed rather for general education and vocational training.

2. He reminded the representative of Pakistan that the population problem must be considered over the long term. For example, if a country reduced its population now, it might be faced with a disastrous labour shortage in twenty years' time. The under-developed countries needed a young population which could be trained to operate the machines necessary in an industrial society. Any funds available should be spent on the promotion of economic growth rather than on family planning.

3. An inquiry of the kind recommended in the seventh amendment of the four Powers (A/C.2/L.709) was necessary before technical assistance could be given in the complex field of population growth. Such a study should be conducted without preconceived ideas. Few of the under-developed countries were suffering from over-population; their problem was economic growth. The countries of Western Europe and North America had succeeded in attaining high living standards in spite of the rapid increase in their population.

4. Mr. ARKADYEV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) observed that the efforts made by certain representatives to portray absolute increases in population as a basic threat were ill-founded. During the imperialist era there had been relative over-population in the capitalist countries. It was part of capitalist policy to maintain a reservoir of unemployed manpower, which resulted in considerable suffering among small businessmen and the working classes. It was ironic that in the developed countries there were still millions of unemployed and many enterprises working at low capacity, while two thirds of the world were undernourished.

5. Neo-Malthusian theories merely obscured the real issues. Modern economists realized that population growth was no real obstacle to economic development. For example, India had doubled its population in twenty-five years but that had not prevented it from industrializing. Economic development depended on many other factors besides the size of the population.

6. The socialist method of production offered a solution to the problem. The USSR was not concerned with its high birth-rate and its growing population. It considered that its best capital asset was its manpower. It had no unemployment. The Soviet Union and the other socialist countries drew up their plans so as to meet the needs of their growing populations by increased production. In that way the material and cultural standards of the people were maintained.

7. The representative of Pakistan had contended that development in the USSR had been facilitated by the abundance of natural resources. But those same resources had been in existence under the czars. It was only during the Soviet régime that scientific, cultural and technical progress had been achieved.

8. While the socialist countries were scoring remarkable successes in production, much more could be done towards widening man's knowledge of food resources. For example, the food potential of the sea was still largely unknown. Other methods of increasing food production were to eliminate the pests which destroyed so many crops and to cultivate the immense tracts of land which lay undeveloped throughout the world. Improved agricultural techniques and the massive use of fertilizer could also help. All those methods should be used to cope with the problem of population growth. It was wrong to concentrate on a policy of family reduction. For that reason, his delegation would abstain in the vote on the draft resolution (A/C.2/L.657 and Add.1) and the amendments (A/C.2/L.709).

9. Mr. TEZEL (Turkey) thought that the draft resolution was realistic and practical. Its sponsors had no intention of provoking a quarrel concerning the relationship between population growth and economic development. Nor did they wish to enter into a religious or moral controversy. All they sought was further information about a complex problem. The representatives of India, Tunisia and the United Arab Republic had already stressed the difficulties they faced as a result of rapid demographic growth. Turkey was confronted with the same problems. Between 1955 and 1960, its population had risen by 16 per cent, a factor which must be taken into account in any plans to raise the national income.

10. Governments were, of course, free to apply whatever measures they thought fit to cope with the problems of population. If they wanted technical assistance for that purpose, there seemed no good reason for withholding it. The Tunisian representative had already made it clear that no one was suggesting the use of

United Nations funds to promote birth control. Indeed, many of the opponents of the draft resolution seemed to be reading between the lines rather than studying the text itself. Turkey certainly had no intention of introducing birth control programmes or of trying to limit the size of families.

11. Mr. CVOROVIC (Yugoslavia) pointed out that incontestably there was a link between economic development and demographic policy. In most of the world, living standards were not rising because the accelerated growth of the population was not accompanied by adequate economic development. As a result, real per caput incomes were stagnating. Two solutions had been proposed: to limit population growth with the help of technical assistance, or to concentrate solely on economic development. In fact, neither of those extremes would provide the real answer. The basic economic structures of the under-developed countries must be transformed so as to bring about those sociological and cultural changes which would favour family planning. His delegation would support any proposal which recommended the provision of technical assistance for family planning in close relationship with economic development. Each dollar spent on family planning should be matched by a much larger counterpart investment in economic progress.

12. Mr. GARDNER (United States of America) thought that the subject of population growth and its relationship to economic development was of great importance to the United Nations for, while it had taken hundreds of thousands of years to reach a total world population of 1,500 million, that number had doubled in the past sixty years and would double again by the end of the present century. Thus, not only was the world's population growing in absolute numbers, but the rate of growth was also rising at an extraordinary pace.

13. The United States agreed with the sponsors of the draft resolution that the impact of population growth on economic development and vice versa was a subject which deserved increased attention. In his Government's opinion, progress toward the high aims of Articles 55 and 56 of the United Nations Charter could not be measured merely in terms of increases in gross national product, for the object of economic development was the welfare and dignity of the individual human being. The United Nations must therefore concern itself with population trends. Those considerations applied to all nations.

14. His country, which had abundant natural resources and a high level of living, recognized the importance of the population factor in its economic and social development efforts, and the local, state and federal authorities were all devoting attention to population trends as part of their planning for the improvement of individual welfare. Rapid population growth in the United States involved three factors which were common to other countries of the world: large-scale internal migration; a concentration of population in the urban areas; and a need for more government services, such as schools, highways and hospitals and for more jobs. It was therefore important to study and analyse population growth at every level of economic development. The total population of the United States was growing at about 1.7 per cent a year, somewhat below the world average.

15. While population trends were clearly important for high-income countries of advanced economic development, they were even more significant for coun-

tries at an earlier stage of development for two reasons. First, the rate of population growth in many of the less developed countries was much higher. About 80 per cent of the growth in world population over the last decade had taken place in the less developed areas and the highest rate of growth would continue to occur in those areas. While the effect of improved medical and public health services had come gradually in the developed countries, in the developing countries those services had developed very recently, rapidly and decisively. In the developed countries, improved health services had kept pace with industrialization and rapidly rising living levels, which had tended to reduce the birth-rate and slow down the rate of population growth; but in the developing countries, the effects of modern medicine and public health methods had been felt before industrialization and rising living levels had reduced the rate of population growth. Thus, there was little prospect that the factors which had lowered the rate of population growth in developed regions would take effect in the developing countries in the immediate future.

16. Secondly, a less developed country with a subsistence economy would be able to afford little or nothing to improve its social infra-structure. Therefore, for such countries, the problem of population growth was one of finding sufficient savings, after meeting the needs of current consumption, to ensure a tolerable rate of progress towards modernization and higher levels of living. If the goals of the United Nations Development Decade were to be met, the developing countries would have to increase their savings and investments from 9 to 15 per cent, a formidable task. Even if those goals were achieved, prospective population growth would greatly diminish the effect of over-all increases in income on individual levels of welfare.

17. The conclusion seemed inescapable that, if present population trends continued, it might be virtually impossible in some of the less developed countries, even with maximum external assistance and maximum self-help, to achieve a rate of economic growth corresponding to the rate of improvement in individual living levels which the country sought to attain.

18. His Government's policy in that connexion consisted of six points. First, the United States was concerned about the social consequences of its own population trends and was devoting attention to them. Secondly, it wished to know more, and help others to know more, about population trends in the less developed countries, where present levels of population growth might constitute a major obstacle to economic and social development. Thirdly, it would oppose any effort to dictate to any country the means to be employed in dealing with its population problems. Fourthly, it believed that obstacles should not be placed in the way of other Governments which sought solutions to their population problems and would help other countries, upon their request, in their search for information and assistance on ways and means of dealing with those problems. Fifthly, it believed there was a great need for additional knowledge on such population matters as the size and composition of existing populations, future population trends, and alternative methods of family planning. Sixthly, it believed that the United Nations and its affiliated agencies could play a significant role in demographic affairs. It had actively supported the demographic work of the United Nations

in the past and hoped that its valuable efforts would be substantially expanded in the future.

19. In the latter regard, his country believed that Member States should be able to obtain from the United Nations and its agencies the assistance they needed and requested to deal with their population problems. The United Nations should concentrate on three areas: first, on encouraging and assisting Member States to obtain information; secondly, on training nationals for demographic work; and thirdly, on promoting full discussion of population problems. With regard to the first, it was high time to consider whether the resources devoted to the subject in the Secretariat were adequate to meet the needs. In addition, the demographic staff of the regional economic commissions should be strengthened. With regard to the second, more should be done to train nationals of Member States in demographic matters with a view to the preparation of soundly based economic plans. With regard to the third, his Government would continue to play an active part in the work of the Population Commission and the regional economic commissions and looked forward to future population conferences.

20. The United States considered the draft resolution before the Committee to be in the main consistent with those views and would accordingly support it.

21. Mr. DIMBU (Romania) agreed that population growth and economic development were interdependent. Economic development was a complex process conditioned by many factors, of which population was one. In that connexion, it was interesting to recall that, while the countries of Western Europe had experienced a rapid rate of population growth during their transition from feudalism to capitalism, that growth had tapered off as they had become industrialized and urbanized. Two conclusions could be drawn from that fact: first, rapid population growth was a necessary condition for rapid economic development; and, secondly, there were spontaneous regulatory mechanisms in developed economies which reduced their rate of population growth to a normal level. Population could not be considered merely as a "consumer" element and therefore a negative influence on investment potential, for it was also a factor of production, namely labour. Clearly, therefore, population was one of the most important and positive factors of economic development, if rationally used.

22. The draft resolution before the Committee was based on the theory that mankind was faced with the dangers of the insurmountable gap between "limited" production capabilities and "uncontrolled" population growth. That theory had been disproved by history itself. His delegation believed that equitable production relationships would enable man to achieve a balance between food production and population growth and would create an abundance of natural wealth for all. The statement that the possibilities of agriculture were limited was unscientific; great technical advances had been made, but their benefits should be shared by all.

23. The Swedish representative's statement that the famine from which two thirds of mankind was suffering was due to over-population was a fact, but not an explanation; the reason was that the majority of those peoples had been suffering exploitation for centuries. Undue emphasis on the problem of population growth merely diverted attention from the real causes of economic backwardness without offering any solution. The United Nations could help the countries of Asia

and Africa in solving their problems of economic and social development by helping them to eradicate the consequences of their colonial past. The transformation of those countries could be greatly accelerated by the early utilization of part of the financial and material resources released by general and complete disarmament.

24. For those reasons, his delegation would be unable to vote for the draft resolution.

25. Mr. TEMBOURY (Spain) said that, in all the resolutions which the General Assembly had adopted at its seventeenth session in connexion with economic development, there had been a single common denominator, namely, that economic development should serve mankind and raise the level of living of all human beings. The draft resolution before the Committee had inverted that relationship and would make man subservient to economic development. Since the tremendous advances made by contemporary medicine were designed to combat death, his delegation could not accept the proposition that birth control should be used to combat life. If birth control were to be admitted, it would be only a matter of time before such monstrous practices as abortion, "mercy" killing and the destruction of the old were accepted.

26. No study so far made confirmed the fears concerning the dangers of a population explosion which underlay the draft resolution. Those fears were based on suppositions and extrapolations into the distant future. The neo-Malthusians claimed that the world's resources would be inadequate for its future population, but, as the Soviet Union representative had said, the opposite was the case. He wondered how it was possible for the General Assembly to discuss simultaneously the danger to future generations of atomic radiation and the need for controlling population growth. He agreed with the Irish and Argentine representatives that the draft resolution involved moral, ethical and religious considerations which could not be ignored.

27. While his delegation could support a proposal that the Population Commission should continue its work in order to reach scientific conclusions, that Governments should be asked for their views and that a study should be made of the correlation between population growth and economic development, it could not agree to contribute funds for certain technical assistance activities which many countries regarded as repugnant. For those reasons, his delegation had co-sponsored the amendments in document A/C.2/L.709.

28. Mr. YAKER (Algeria) considered population growth to be one of the most important problems confronting the under-developed countries in their efforts to achieve economic development. If the developing countries could not meet all the demands of accelerated economic development, they must resort to the reduction of their rate of population growth. As stated in paragraph 13 of the Cairo Declaration of Developing Countries (A/5162), countries that suffered from the pressure of population on resources available should accelerate their rate of economic development, and in the meantime take appropriate legitimate measures to deal with their population problems.

29. While he realized that the draft resolution before the Committee involved important economic, social, moral and religious aspects, that did not imply that the United Nations was not competent to study the matter. The problem existed and was urgent in many countries, and the United Nations was in duty bound to help in

finding a solution. The second, third, fourth and sixth preambular paragraphs recognized the interrelationship between population growth and economic development and the need for each Government to determine its own policy. As was clear from the eighth preambular paragraph, technical assistance funds were being asked only for the evaluation, analysis and utilization of data on population trends.

30. The draft resolution merely asked the United Nations and its specialized agencies to analyse basic statistical data and to provide technical assistance for such activities at the request of Governments. It therefore safeguarded the right of each Government to adopt its own approach to the problem. Controversy might legitimately arise if the draft resolution attempted to advocate specific means of limiting population growth, but all that was proposed was that the problem should be studied. The specialized agencies, particularly UNESCO and WHO, could provide much useful data in that connexion.

31. For those reasons, his delegation would support the draft resolution and some of the amendments.

32. Mr. CARANICAS (Greece) emphasized the magnitude of the population explosion which was expected to result in a world population of some 6,200 million by the year 2000. The present rate of population growth—1.8 per cent per annum—did not appear large, but its cumulative effect was staggering. The most vital aspect of such growth, however, was the relationship between it and the expansion of world food production. According to FAO statistics, the world's food production had increased by only 1 per cent during the period 1960-1961, while its population had grown by 1.6 per cent. The situation was grave from a world viewpoint, but it was particularly alarming for certain areas such as India, where the anticipated population of 480 million in 1966 would be faced with a 28 million ton shortage of food grains; for the Colombo Plan countries, whose population had expanded by 25 per cent between 1950 and 1960; for the United Arab Republic, where the Government had found it necessary to advise the people on methods of birth control; and for continental China, where, notwithstanding the anti-Malthusian bias of Marxism, birth control campaigns were being undertaken.

33. A large population could not be described as either good or bad per se. The important question was whether all the members of a large population could obtain food, clothing and shelter and live happy lives. The Lebanese representative had opposed the idea of allocating United Nations technical assistance funds to publicize population control methods, on the ground that \$1 spent from such funds could be better used to help countries make use of technological advances in order to increase their production. However, owing to a population growth of 84 million, the effect of the \$4,200 million in foreign aid provided to India over a ten-year period had been merely to increase the per caput income of that country by exactly \$1 annually. The expenditure of \$1 per caput on education in population control appeared worth while, in view of the negligible rise in per caput income produced by conventional technical assistance. He suggested that, for most of the developing countries, the cost of meeting the needs of a rapidly expanding population could not be covered from national resources. The additional resources required could only be provided by the developed countries, and what the latter could grant in

aid would be sufficient only to keep the problem from becoming worse.

34. The Irish representative had emphasized that over-population was essentially a regional problem and had suggested that disposing of surpluses of primary commodities was helping over-populated developing nations. That, however, was poor consolation to the inhabitants of the countries concerned, because of their extremely low standard of living. While the uneven distribution of population throughout the world appeared to suggest that the transfer of inhabitants from overcrowded areas was desirable, such measures were too costly, could not be regarded as humane and were completely unrealistic.

35. The Population Commission had emphasized that it was the responsibility of every Government to determine its own demographic policy and that view had been clearly reaffirmed in the draft resolution. However, no country could formulate any policy on the subject unless it was informed, and it was clearly the role of the United Nations to assist Governments in informing themselves should they so desire. That had been the essential aim of the sponsors of the draft resolution. Some of those who had opposed its adoption appeared to object to the provision of United Nations technical assistance in that field to countries requesting it. However, it should be borne in mind that technical assistance funds were indivisible and it would be an unorthodox interpretation of the rights and obligations of Member States to permit them to deny the use for particular purposes of their contribution to a common fund. An analogy might well be drawn between the position of countries choosing the form of aid for which they desired their contribution to be used and that of countries which refused to contribute to the cost of maintaining United Nations forces for specific purposes.

36. The fears voiced by Malthus in 1791 concerning the effect of population growth had suddenly become real to many countries. The experience gained in a number of developed nations had indicated, however, that demographic growth could be curbed by various methods. In many of the countries where such growth presented a problem, those methods were either unknown or too costly. If, therefore, the latter countries sought from the United Nations information concerning such methods or the means of acquiring them, their request should not be denied.

37. There were already signs that the gravity of the population problem confronting the world was altering the attitudes of those who had previously been firmly opposed to population control: a demographic centre had been opened at Cairo, a group of Roman Catholic prelates had asked the Church, during the recent Ecumenical Council, to consider problems of world hunger and growing population, and there were indications of an increasing awareness and sense of responsibility on the part of all countries. Some representatives had asserted that hasty action by the Committee would be undesirable. He shared that view and considered that the action the sponsors proposed in the draft resolution could in no way be described as precipitate or drastic, since it involved only studies and the provision of information only at the request of interested Governments.

38. Mr. AYARI (Tunisia), introducing a revised version of the draft resolution (A/C.2/L.657/Rev.1) on behalf of the sponsors, said that what appeared to

divide the supporters and the opponents of the original draft was not a difference of religious or ethical attitude but a difference based on scientific considerations. Those supporting the draft considered it necessary, in studying possible solutions to the problems of economic development, to take into account the basic variable of population, a variable which they believed could be controlled. Those opposing it contended that it neither could nor should be controlled. All those who were concerned with the problem of promoting economic growth would have to recognize the existence of that difference in approach, which was of a practical and not of a philosophic nature. The issue was therefore not a moral one; it involved the choice of one of two methods of dealing with a basic problem.

39. The sponsors of the draft resolution had incorporated in their revised text several of the four-Power amendments (A/C.2/L.709). In the second preambular paragraph of the revised text, the phrase "policies aiming at promoting limitation or growth of population" had been added to the wording proposed in the first four-Power amendment. While synonymous with the expression "population policy" used in the original draft, it was somewhat more explicit, and the new wording as a whole emphasized the dynamic character of the relationship between economic and social development and such policies. The sponsors preferred to retain the expression "national policies" in the sixth preambular paragraph. The first part of the fourth four-Power amendment had been accepted, but not the latter part. The sponsors deemed it preferable to reflect the Population Commission's view and felt that the paragraph should refer not only to demographic research, but also to more positive action. They regarded the fifth four-Power amendment as unnecessary since the point it made appeared to be adequately covered in their draft.

40. With regard to the operative part, the sixth amendment had been accepted, as had the seventh, with some minor changes. The sponsors had not seen their way to accept the eighth amendment, as they attached particular importance to the role of the regional economic commissions in any population studies. They could also not agree to the deletion of operative paragraph 5 of the original draft, which they regarded as the heart of the resolution, and had slightly modified the original operative paragraph 4.

41. He hoped that the spirit of co-operation which the sponsors had shown in accepting many of the amendments proposed would result in wide support for the revised draft.

42. Mr. BRILLANTES (Philippines) said that all delegations seemed to agree that the item fell within the terms of reference of the Second Committee. What remained unclear, however, was whether the Committee was concerned with population and economic development or with the economic aspects of birth control. His delegation felt that the draft resolution would have the effect of asking the General Assembly to state, first, that there were too many persons on earth and too many births; secondly, that the present population did not have enough to eat; and, thirdly, that it was the duty of the United Nations to devise some means of population control.

43. Unlike the other items which the Committee had studied, the subject involved religious and moral considerations which had been touched upon by the sponsors themselves. While the sponsors had assured the Committee that every country must determine its own population policy and respect "family self-determination", they had warned the under-developed countries that, unless they limited their population, they would forgo their economic progress.

44. If it was true, as the sponsors said, that nothing in the draft resolution would detract from the State's authority to decide its population policy for itself, he wondered why they had stated, in operative paragraph 4, that studies were to be intensified regardless of whether or not the country concerned requested such studies. That paragraph should specify that no studies would be undertaken in the absence of such a request. He hoped that the sponsors would clarify that point, which also applied to paragraph 4 of the original version. He would also welcome a clarification of the meaning of the words "as well as other aspects" in operative paragraph 6 of the revised text.

45. His delegation was not opposed to a study of population trends *per se*, but its final position on the draft resolution would be determined by the answers to his questions.

The meeting rose at 6.25 p.m.