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Chairman: Mr. Richard M. AKWEI (Ghana).

AGENDA ITEM 46

Increase in the production and use of edible protein: report of the Secretary-General (continued) (A/7203/Add.1, chap. IV; A/7350, A/C.2/L.1023, E/4592 and Add.1-3, Add.3/Corr.1 and Add.4)

1. Mr. GARCIA PINTOS (Uruguay) said that, while the main purpose of the Charter of the United Nations was to save humanity from destruction by war, it was equally important to protect it from starvation. Hunger must be eliminated altogether and the protein problem could not be discussed in isolation. It was impossible to be complacent when 100,000 people were dying of starvation every day, 300 million children were seriously under-nourished, and 56 per cent of the world's population was suffering from hunger, while in other parts of the world there was over-production of food which could not be used because of defects in the distribution system.

2. Malthus's equation had been rendered obsolete by modern technology, since sufficient food for one man could now be produced from 35 square metres of land and since 30,000 million men could theoretically be supported at the same level of living as that of the developed countries. The immediate need was to triple current food supplies, to increase animal protein consumption by 900 per cent and general food consumption by 1 1/2 to 2 per cent.

3. The problem had been correctly diagnosed by United Nations bodies and good work on the subject had been done by FAO. The production of unconventional protein foods was recommended in the Secretary-General's report on the protein problem (E/4592 and Add.1-3, Add.3/Corr.1 and Add.4) and there was now a draft resolution (A/C.2/L.1023) before the Committee.

4. Uruguay was a major producer of protein-rich food and had a high per capita protein consumption. It was therefore in a good position to assist other countries. New farming techniques had enabled it to achieve a tenfold increase in meat production and, together with Argentina and Brazil, it could make a major contribution to the world's meat and fish requirements. Uruguay produced its own fertilizers and progress was being made in the industrial production of protein from nitrogen. In order to provide such assistance, however, improvements would have to take place in the Uruguayan economy. Since 1962 output had risen by 4 per cent and consumption by 25 per cent and Uruguay needed to increase output in order to be able to purchase equipment and machinery. The existing trade system did not help its exports and, as the Government of New Zealand had said in its reply to the Secretary-General's questionnaire, which was contained in the annex to his report on the protein problem, fairer trading conditions had to be obtained in order that markets might be available at reasonable prices for an increasing quantity of production (see E/4592, para. 70).

5. Uruguay and its neighbours were already promoting increased fertilization, irrigation schemes, forest conservation, protein preservation, new growing techniques and the expansion and industrialization of fisheries. But to make real progress, the marketing system needed to be strengthened and the distortion of crop prices avoided. The sea was a rich source of protein but could not be exploited unless there was an improvement in the economy.

6. The establishment of a global policy for the distribution of food-stuffs would undoubtedly play an important part in the battle against hunger and should therefore be a priority item on the agenda for the second Development Decade.

7. Mr. CHRISTIANSEN (Norway) said that his delegation had always stressed the urgency of the protein problem and the necessity of solving it by greater and better co-ordinated national efforts.

8. Under the International Biological Programme, Norway had been carrying out research into protein production from ordinary food plants. It was hoped to determine the influence of the growth factor on the quantity and quality of protein and experiments would be made with plants in various climates and conditions.

9. With a view to increasing the supply of protein from marine sources, efforts were being made to improve the Norwegian fishing industry by means of oceanographic and hydrographic research and improved catching techniques. Easier credit facilities and other incentives were being used to stimulate the

industry. Norway was also taking an active part in the work of FAO, WHO and other international bodies.

10. His delegation agreed with the conclusions and recommendations in paragraphs 12 to 39 of the Secretary-General's report (E/4592), namely, that greater international efforts, stronger political support and multidisciplinary approach were vital. As emphasized by the Advisory Committee on the Application of Science and Technology to Development, the expanded WHO/FAO/UNICEF Protein Advisory Group would play an increasingly important role in advising United Nations bodies, shaping their policies and promoting co-operation among scientists (see E/4592/Add.2).

11. His delegation approved of the specific proposals of the WHO/FAO/UNICEF Protein Advisory Group (see E/4592/Add.1), particularly the proposal to stimulate demand for fish and to develop safe and acceptable fish protein concentrates for human consumption, and fully supported the view that the world protein crisis could be averted only by the action taken by the developing countries with international assistance and that food and nutrition problems could not be separated from the population problem. The protein requirements of pregnant women, nursing mothers and children should receive special attention.

12. His delegation appreciated the efforts of Canada and India in preparing draft resolution A/C.2/L.1023 which it would be happy to co-sponsor.

13. Mr. AHMED (Pakistan) outlined the background to the protein problem and the steps taken since the 1950s. The current crisis was largely due to the population explosion and, in the next decade many young people were likely to experience serious malnutrition.

14. The Advisory Committee on the Application of Science and Technology to Development had set up a small group to study the problem and had produced a most useful report entitled *Feeding the Expanding World Population: international action to avert the impending protein crisis (E/4343/Rev.1)*,^{1/} which was a good example of how to identify a problem, establish policy objectives, and make specific proposals. The Advisory Committee had said exactly what action should be taken by the United Nations and Member States. Given the magnitude of the problem, the financial implications were not unreasonable.

15. Unfortunately, there had been some reluctance to take the action necessary for implementing the Advisory Committee's recommendations when the matter had been considered by the Second Committee during the twenty-second session of the General Assembly. It had been argued that there was no point in preparing a draft resolution until it was known precisely what Governments and United Nations bodies were doing. In spite of the urgency of the problem and the fact that a report (E/4343/Rev.1), prepared by highly qualified people and quite capable of being acted on, had been submitted to the Committee, the resolution adopted (General Assembly resolution 2319 (XXII)) had been no more than a technical one, requesting Governments to supply information. Their replies had been received and published (see E/4592, chap. II), together with the comments of the WHO/FAO/UNICEF

Protein Advisory Group (E/4592/Add.1), the Advisory Committee on the Application of Science and Technology (E/4592/Add.2), WHO (E/4592/Add.3 and Corr.1) and FAO (E/4592/Add.4). In view of the lack of time available in which to prepare the report, it was highly informative and rightly called for more positive action by Governments. The Protein Advisory Group was now in a better position to advise the agencies responsible for implementing protein development projects whether under the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) or the regular programme of technical assistance.

16. His delegation welcomed the achievements of FAO and WHO, and, since an inter-disciplinary approach was most important, it thought that the Industrial Development Board should consider, at its next session, how the secretariat of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization could take a more active part in solving the problem.

17. The main responsibility lay with individual countries, whose Governments should develop an integrated approach. Pakistan had established a special body to investigate the protein problem, which all Governments should treat as top priority. As always, the solution of the problem required financial and technical assistance from national and international sources, but the requisite funds were not always forthcoming.

18. Pakistan would have to rely on conventional sources for some time, while the eating habits of the population were changed through educational campaigns. National efforts of that kind could benefit from United Nations case studies, which could help to identify gaps and serve as models for other developing countries.

19. Even if it was not possible for the United Nations to implement the Advisory Committee's recommendations in full, it could at least become a focal point for mobilizing international awareness of the problem and be a clearing-house for information of use to the developing countries. It could also help to mobilize private and public resources in the developed countries, assist in bilateral programmes and ensure that work done in the developed countries could be put to use in the developing countries. By keeping interest in the problem alive, it would enable rapid action to be taken when the time came.

20. There should be a gradual but steady intensification of United Nations activities, with the emphasis on evaluation studies to ensure that the failures and achievements of current work on protein were taken into account in future.

21. Mr. OHIN (Togo) said that the population explosion created a very serious food problem: by the year 2,000 the world population would have more than doubled and the tragedy was that the increase was much more rapid in the developing countries, whose population would have risen by that year from the present two thirds to four fifths of the world total. Moreover, food production was not keeping pace with population growth: in 1966 it had been virtually the same as in 1965, whereas the world population had increased by about 65 million. The food surpluses of the industrial countries were now almost exhausted.

^{1/} United Nations publication, Sales No.: E.68.XIII.2.

22. The problem was one of quality as well as quantity, and, in particular, the lack of sufficient protein in the diet of pregnant women and young children could have incalculable results. It was a tragic paradox that, at a time when mankind had conquered the atom and outer space, 300 million children were suffering from malnutrition that jeopardized their physical and mental development. Total world production of edible protein amounted to some 80 million tons a year, which would allow for an average per capita consumption of 25.18 kg, but unfortunately 70 per cent of the total was consumed by the industrial countries with only a third of the world's population. The developing countries were not in a position to make full use of modern scientific methods to solve their food problem. Nor could family planning alone be expected to do so. There must be intensified development of existing resources and efforts to find new sources of food.

23. Traditional sources of protein were unfortunately too costly for the great majority of the undernourished masses; hence there must be an expansion in the production and an improvement in the quality of animal and vegetable protein for human consumption. Fish must not be overlooked as a valuable source of food.

24. The developing countries lost 25 per cent of their crops every year through the ravages of birds, insects, rodents and moulds and 9 million tons of protein could be salvaged by effectively controlling grain pests. The waste must be reduced, but it had been estimated that within the next ten years several million dollars would be needed to improve the storage and transport of food.

25. Useful work was being done in producing high-protein cereals and edible oil-seeds, and in producing food from oil-seed residues. Oil-seeds were also used, in addition to grains and legumes, to produce protein concentrates. The total annual output of oil-seeds represented almost 20 million tons of protein. Fish flour was becoming increasingly acceptable as a food item, and it was now possible to obtain such a flour with a protein content of up to 85 per cent. Some of the protein concentrates were being used in the developing countries as a basis for special food supplements.

26. One promising non-conventional source of protein was seaweed; it was already used for human consumption in Japan, and a seaweed in the marshes of Chad, found suitable for both animal and human consumption, was palatable, gave promise of high yield, and had a high protein and vitamin content.

27. But all such efforts to increase the supply of protein would be ineffective unless distribution was improved and the people were better informed about the principles of nutrition. The developing countries exported large quantities of oil-seeds, representing close to 40 million tons of protein for human consumption, to the industrial countries where they were used either as fertilizer or animal food. Modern technology could transform those materials into valuable, palatable and cheap foods and thus reduce malnutrition in the developing countries which resulted in an infant mortality rate that was twenty to fifty times that of the developed countries.

28. It was also incredible that nearly 4 million out of a total of 6 million tons of food products made from skimmed milk were used for animal feed and, although much of the 2 million tons of powdered milk produced came from fluid milk, which would be difficult to distribute to the human beings who needed it, nearly half was used for animal feed, mainly in western Europe, apparently for economic reasons.

29. Hence, it was clear that nature's supply of protein was bountiful. What was needed was the rational exploitation of those resources for the benefit of mankind through swift and concerted action by Governments and the international community as a whole. The report of the Advisory Committee on the Application of Science and Technology to Development regarding the impending protein crisis (E/4343/Rev.1) emphasized that there was little time to lose. Individual action by the poor and rich nations must constitute the main contribution; that had been agreed by the West African Conference on child nutrition, held at Dakar in March 1968. Technical and other external aid could be highly useful, but it was essentially temporary, and measures must be taken to ensure that programmes were continued after such aid had ceased. Governments could explore the possibility of promoting new food industries through tax incentives, subsidies and market guarantees. Nutrition bureaux should be established and there should be an extensive exchange of information among the various countries.

30. Togo was deeply concerned with the problem and in October 1968 an interministerial working meeting, attended by representative of the United Nations and FAO, had been held at Lomé. Togo intended to make an effective contribution at both the national and regional levels. Its policy had been laid down by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Togo in his statement to the General Assembly on 25 October 1968 (see 1706th plenary meeting, para. 20), and it had been one of the sponsors of General Assembly resolution 2319 (XXII) calling for an increase in the production and use of edible protein. His Government was ready to participate in any action designed to solve the protein crisis and would therefore support draft resolution A/C.2/L.1023.

31. Mr. TERNO (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that the Secretary-General's report (E/4592 and Add.1-3, Add.3/Corr.1 and Add.4) provided a useful survey of the work being done in many countries to solve the protein problem. The Soviet Union supported the comprehensive approach referred to in paragraph 33 of the report.

32. There were three different aspects of the problem to be considered. In the first place, in many developing countries the people did not eat enough and suffered from malnutrition or protein deficiency. Secondly, in some countries the population as a whole received sufficient food, although it was not properly used according to the tenets of modern science. Lastly, successful results had been obtained in the developed countries with new agricultural techniques, new crops and the development of synthetic protein and should be made available through the international agencies.

33. Food production was made difficult for the developing countries by the prevailing inequitable trade system. Those countries needed to diversify their food production and concentrate on high-protein products. The main means of overcoming their problem was a radical change in their social and economic systems. Their principal goal must be to increase production of their traditional foods and to ensure its proper distribution.

34. Improving the quality of food, in respect of calories, proteins, and vitamins, offered a broad field of action for WHO, which should co-operate with the competent authorities in the various countries and with UNICEF and the other specialized agencies concerned. The United Nations should use the existing organizations to collect information on the protein problem and consult with the specialized agencies on appropriate measures.

35. The problems involved in providing the population with high-quality food, improving agricultural yields, and developing the corresponding branches of industry, science and technology had been discussed by the Plenum of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in October 1968. Considerable advances were being made in the Soviet Union in boosting the production of protein of vegetable and animal origin, improving yields, extending the areas of cultivation, and increasing the livestock population. The aim was to improve the protein content of wheat by up to 3 per cent, of maize by up to 17 per cent, and of potatoes by up to 3 per cent. Protein-enriched foods were being used for feeding animals in order to increase the protein content of meats and meat products. Methods of using fish and invertebrates as a source of food were being improved in order to prevent protein loss. Research institutes were experimenting with various genetically improved strains of high protein content. Edible soya flour containing 50 per cent protein had been developed and bakery products were being improved by the addition of fish meal. Use was also being made of various types of timber waste and vegetable waste to produce protein concentrates. Industrial enterprises had been established to produce protein yeasts from culture for fodder; research was also under way on the use of proteins obtained from petroleum, and of bacterial proteins, for fodder. Tests had shown that such fodder was harmless, biologically valuable, cheap and of high quality. The Soviet Union would continue to make its experience available through the existing agencies and organizations.

36. Mr. TOBON VILLEGAS (Colombia) supported the suggestion, made by Brazil at the 1232nd meeting, that a new paragraph should be added to draft resolution A/C.3/L.1023 asking international financial institutions to give special attention to food production projects aimed at increasing the use of edible protein in the developing countries.

37. Mr. BRADLEY (Argentina) regretted that so little space had been given in the Secretary-General's report on the protein problem (E/4592 and Add.1-3, Add.3/Corr.1 and Add.4) to the information transmitted by Governments in their replies to the questionnaire (see E/4592, chap. II). His Government had sent in a lengthy reply and much of it had been omitted;

he presumed the same was true of the replies from other Governments. He hoped that the practice would not be continued and that, if delegations wished to see the original replies, the Secretariat would make suitable arrangements.

38. Turning to the comments of the WHO/FAO/UNICEF Protein Advisory Group, he said that the recommendations contained in the three paragraphs in section VI (see E/4592/Add.1), provided sound guidelines for future action and that the draft resolution before the Committee (A/C.2/L.1023) was actually a more confused version of those paragraphs.

39. Argentina believed that the protein problem should not be considered separately from the question of hunger; there should be a joint study on food covering both aspects, with particular emphasis on natural sources of protein. There were regions where natural and cheap protein could be produced if capital was available and markets now closed to the countries concerned were opened; suitable studies could reveal those possibilities and would be highly relevant to the food problem and programmes.

40. Too much emphasis was given to protein, at the expense of the vitamins and minerals that were equally important in a balanced diet; there should be a report on the lack of those items too, especially in the developing countries.

41. While preferring the working paper originally submitted by Canada to the Economic and Social Council,^{2/} Argentina would nevertheless support the draft resolution.

42. Mr. ULAYA (Malawi) said that the protein problem was linked to world food production as a whole. Efforts should be made to continue the progress made in the past year-and-a-half. There was no lack of protein but equitable distribution was required to solve a problem which affected the physical and intellectual development of future generations. National, regional and international bodies should not only ensure an abundant supply of protein but also educate the public to use what was available, bearing in mind the custom of some groups to eschew certain proteins on moral or religious grounds. Particular attention should be given to the needs of children and of pregnant and nursing mothers. Political, economic, educational and social action was needed. If a fraction of the efforts to reach the moon were directed to closing the protein gap, the position would be vastly improved.

43. The protein problem was complex and required an interdisciplinary and systematic approach with well-planned co-ordination at the national, regional and international level. Efforts to close the protein gap would benefit the world as a whole and action to meet the needs of children would help to equip them for running the world of the future. The matter should be considered as one of the most important activities for the second Development Decade.

44. His delegation welcomed the activities of FAO, UNICEF and WHO in that sector. The problem would be solved only if Governments and international organizations accorded it high priority. It must be ap-

^{2/} See *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, Resumed Forty-fifth Session, Annexes*, agenda item 4, document E/L.1239.

proached as a problem not only of total availability but also of distribution among areas, socio-economic groups and even members of the same family.

45. Mr. DECASTIAUX (Belgium) said that two contradictory concepts had emerged: while some had maintained that the present machinery was out of date, others had emphasized its continued usefulness. The documents before the Committee showed that the specialized agencies considered themselves capable of meeting the new demands of the problem. On the other hand, the Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs had stated at the 1230th meeting that it was a global problem requiring further action, such as basic research and market studies, which must be co-ordinated and systematized. The experts of the specialized agencies were in the best position to know the effects of protein malnutrition. His delegation was satisfied with the efforts they had made so far and confident that they would continue to work effectively, thus making it unnecessary to set up new bodies. He agreed with the Italian representative that some readaptation would be required at the national level and that studies should be carried out for the beginning of the second Development Decade.

46. His delegation supported draft resolution A/C.2/L.1023 on the whole, but might wish to introduce some minor drafting amendments later.

Mr. Muzik (Czechoslovakia), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

47. Mr. WOODWARD (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations) said that the item covered a broad, technical and specialized area. The production and use of edible protein was a complex activity falling clearly within FAO's competence, even though it was related to a number of activities of particular concern to UNICEF and WHO. The point had repeatedly been made that, for the foreseeable future, agriculture and fisheries must be the primary sources of increased protein production, which could not be divorced from agricultural development as a whole. FAO's work on the subject was not limited to the execution of UNDP projects, which largely served to complement its regular programme: it was also engaged in other protein activities under the Freedom from Hunger Campaign, its trust funds and the World Food Programme. A similar situation no doubt existed with regard to the other agencies concerned in the work of the Protein Advisory Group.

48. He recalled the statement by the FAO representative in the Economic and Social Council^{3/} concerning the nature and extent of FAO's work on proteins, the functions of the WHO/FAO/UNICEF Protein Advisory Group and the comments by the Director-General of FAO (E/4592/Add.4). The representative of WHO had also drawn attention to his Director-General's views (see E/4592/Add.3 and Corr.1) and had discussed the history and work of the Protein Advisory Group, the availability of information and other issues. The FAO representative had later stated that his Director-General would no doubt wish to consider and comment upon the far-reaching proposals made, and had ap-

pealed for an opportunity to consult FAO headquarters before decisions of substance were taken.

49. The material before the Committee unfortunately failed to provide all the background information. FAO and the other agencies most closely concerned needed no awakening to the problem. The former Director-General of FAO had probably done more than anyone else to mobilize world public opinion and organize activities to the extent of his powers, as the World Food Congress held in Washington, D.C. in June 1963 and the Freedom from Hunger Campaign bore witness. In his budget for the 1968-1969 biennium, that Director-General had included a section for the promotion of protein-rich foods as an urgent necessity and had expressed his intention of establishing special units to work closely with other competent bodies. FAO, UNICEF and WHO, through the Protein Advisory Group, had given increased momentum to their activities.

50. The various reports on the subject and the comments made in the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly had shown the importance of stepping up national and international efforts. The international agencies primarily concerned had been mobilizing their joint efforts to the limit of the human and financial resources made available by Governments. The co-ordinating, advisory and service mechanism of the WHO/FAO/UNICEF Protein Advisory Group and its secretariat had been enlarged and its resources increased by the three sponsoring agencies. The members of the Group for 1968 and 1969 were people of special competence representing a wide range of disciplines; their comments (E/4592/Add.1) on the Secretary-General's report provided a concise frame of reference and priorities for action at the national and international levels and a blueprint for action by FAO, UNICEF, WHO and other competent organizations.

51. The five priorities set by the Director-General of FAO (expansion of the use of high-yielding varieties of cereals, action to close the protein gap, the war against food waste, the mobilization of human resources in rural areas and the encouragement of foreign exchange conservation and export earnings) had a significant role to play in solving the protein problem and illustrated its close alignment to general agricultural development and the expansion of food supplies. The FAO Indicative World Plan for Agricultural Development, designed to indicate priorities for national and international action, would undoubtedly enable Governments to reach decisions on policy and would serve as a basic component of the second Development Decade.

52. Consideration of the protein problem inevitably led back to the availability of international and national resources and the effectiveness of national action. The Director-General welcomed appropriate resolutions adopted by the General Assembly to mobilize opinion and resources, particularly those made available to the competent specialized agencies, and also United Nations action for joint periodic assessment in conjunction with those agencies.

53. FAO's misgivings concerning some of the draft proposals made in the Council derived, firstly, from their conflict with the principle of avoiding duplica-

^{3/} *Ibid.*, Resumed Forty-fifth Session, 1569th meeting.

tion, proliferation of effort and diffusion of resources and, secondly, from the doubt that any action could be fully effective if it was divorced from the specialized activities of the agencies primarily concerned.

54. FAO would no doubt welcome the substance of draft resolution A/C.2/L.1023 and co-operate in its implementation if it was adopted. It was gratifying that the international action proposed was linked with the existing activities of the agencies directly involved. The draft resolution was timely in its emphasis on the urgency of the problem and the need for policy action by Member States and in seeking to enlist world interest and support.

55. FAO would welcome an opportunity for more frequent and meaningful consultation to enable it to assist the General Assembly in reaching considered judgements.

56. Dr. COIGNEY (World Health Organization) recalled his statement in the Economic and Social Council^{4/} concerning the observations by the Director-General of WHO (E/4592/Add.3 and Corr.1). Bearing in mind that the nutrition problem could be solved only through an interdisciplinary approach, WHO had welcomed the interest shown by the other specialized agencies in the protein problem and the activities in which they were engaged. WHO was working in particularly close collaboration with FAO, whose responsibilities covered the production and distribution of food-stuffs, while WHO was essentially concerned with preventive action through better nutrition.

57. Protein-calorie malnutrition remained the chief deficiency disease in the developing countries. It was distressing that, in a world in which science and technology were making giant strides, hundreds of millions of children were still afflicted with hunger and disease. Protein-calorie malnutrition, particularly in the form of kwashiorkor and marasmus, affected from 1 to 9 per cent of children up to five years and contributed largely to the high mortality in that age-group. Apart from the direct effects of such malnutrition, its benign forms, which were widespread among children in developing countries, encouraged development of communicable diseases. Most deaths from measles, whooping-cough and diarrhoea were associated in some degree with it. A large part of the adult population also suffered from protein and calorie deficiencies which considerably reduced their working capacity and productivity.

58. While centring its efforts on the prevention and treatment of nutritional disorders, WHO was endeavouring, in close collaboration with FAO, UNESCO and UNICEF, to raise the nutritional level of the developing countries through applied nutrition programmes, instruction on nutrition in universities, and nutrition seminars. It was assisting in personnel training, the establishment of nutrition services or institutes, surveys, rehabilitation centres and the organization of a nutrition programme for execution by health centres, particularly those concerned with maternal and child health.

59. In collaboration with FAO and UNICEF, WHO was also taking part in formulating and encouraging

programmes for the production of new, low-cost, protein-rich food mixtures for use as supplementary or weaning foods in regions where animal proteins were insufficient to maintain a satisfactory nutritional level. Several composite foods had been tested in Algeria, Taiwan, Ethiopia and India, and trial centres had also been designated in Chile and Guatemala.

60. WHO was engaged, jointly with FAO and UNICEF, in over sixty co-ordinated programmes of applied nutrition being undertaken by national bodies responsible for agriculture, education, community development and public health.

61. The observations of the Director-General of WHO (E/4592/Add.3 and Corr.1) on the Secretary-General's report clearly set forth the role which WHO expected to play in that sector. WHO was prepared to intensify its efforts, but they must be backed up by increased governmental support.

62. WHO shared the FAO representative's views and was ready to co-operate in implementing the draft resolution. He welcomed the comments by delegations on the desirability of making full use of the existing machinery.

AGENDA ITEM 47

Outflow of trained professional and technical personnel at all levels from the developing to the developed countries, its causes, its consequences and practical remedies for the problems resulting from it (A/7203, chap. X, sect. B; A/7294)

63. Mr. MARSH (Jamaica) said that the Secretary-General's report on the outflow of trained personnel from developing countries (A/7294) provided a good basis for the Committee's work. Its main emphasis was on the economic and social conditions in the countries of emigration and the immigration policies of the receiving countries, but some attention needed to be given to political factors, in order to determine whether they discouraged skilled personnel from remaining in their countries of origin.

64. The subject was complex and it had not yet been possible to present, in simple tabular form, a comparison of the skills required in different countries. The first step should therefore be to provide Member States with a standard system for recording migration statistics.

65. The cost to the developing countries of the so-called brain drain also needed study. Although there was often a reverse flow of talent, the brain drain could be a serious loss to a low-income country. In order to achieve a net gain in the flow of talent, the developing countries would have to offer better incentives than those of the developed countries and the cost of that, when added to the cost of training emigrants, was very high. He therefore suggested that the developed countries, which were receiving skilled immigrants from the developing countries, might also recruit unskilled personnel and train them to do the work that was needed.

66. The problem was part of manpower planning as a whole, since a higher output of trained personnel in the developing countries would not necessarily offset the losses through emigration, unless their social and

^{4/} *Ibid.*

economic development also improved. That point should be considered when planning the second Development Decade.

67. More publicity must be given to the development programmes of the developing countries to assist them in utilizing their highly qualified personnel. There was also a need to inform high school graduates of probable future demand in various trades and professions.

68. A remedy must be found for the lack of communication between developing countries, some of which had surplus personnel who could be usefully recruited by others. His delegation therefore commended the efforts being made to persuade foreign contractors engaged in major infrastructural projects to recruit professional and highly trained staff who were natives of particular developing countries, but in fact employed elsewhere.

69. The report rightly emphasized the human rights aspect, by quoting from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The frustration and irritation of qualified personnel, often caused by incompetent supervisors, was one of the causes of the brain drain. The reminder that the Charter of the United Nations and the basic instruments of the United Nations laid down that there should be fundamental respect for the rights of individuals was therefore most timely.

70. Mr. ASANTE (Ghana) said that the Secretary-General's report (A/7294) confirmed what was already known about the brain drain, corrected false notions and revealed the real nature of the problem. It was not a new phenomenon, but its scale had increased in recent years. It was not confined to the developing countries—Canada, Norway, the Netherlands and Greece also suffered—and except possibly in South America, there were no signs that it would decrease (*ibid.*, para. 4). The time had come to take action, not to initiate further studies. In any case, as the problem varied from one country to another, it would have to be solved at the national level. The developed countries knew how to keep out undesirables; they should also be able to refrain from enticing to their shores those who were more needed in their own countries. However, the main responsibility lay with the developing countries and they must act.

71. In Ghana the problem was particularly acute in respect of doctors and engineers. A conversation he had had with a Ghanaian doctor working in the United States had shown that the motive was not more money, but the fact that the lack of paramedical staff in Ghana made the practice of medicine more difficult there. But doctors who left should realize that it was their duty to help to train the paramedical staff needed.

72. Another problem derived from the fact that once a man reached a certain high position, such as the director of a hospital, in a developed country, it was not easy to fit him into the medical structure in his own country if he wished to return.

73. Further global studies would not be useful, but country studies were needed and the United Nations

might assist the developing countries in preparing them. It was interesting to note from paragraph 51 of the Secretary-General's report (A/7294) that Japan had a low rate of professional migration, despite comparatively low salary levels. It would be interesting to hear the delegation of Japan regarding that matter.

74. With respect to measures taken to halt the brain drain, he observed that, as indicated in chapter VIII of the report (*ibid.*, para. 108), Argentina relaxed import taxes for returning professionals and India had established a scientific pool, which showed that bold steps were needed. Ghana had agreed to pay the passage of returning doctors and gave them advances to enable them to buy cars and other items. Some steps to check the immigration of professionals from other countries were being taken by the United Kingdom and the United States (*ibid.*, paras. 110 and 111), and a useful role was being played by the United Nations International Centre for Theoretical Physics at Trieste (*ibid.*, para. 109). Emigrant professionals should be told that, if they did not return, their country would remain backward and they would never be really respected abroad. Public funds were spent on education on the understanding that there would be a return from the outlay and the country concerned had a right to demand the return. Possibly, passport restrictions should be introduced, and legal action taken to enforce contracts entered into before a grant was awarded.

75. Paragraphs 16 to 19 of the report referred to the human rights aspect of the problem, which introduced an unnecessary element of confusion into the discussion. Freedom could never be absolute; it must recognize certain duties to society. Nevertheless, there might sometimes be factors in the developing countries that made professional life unattractive—nepotism, class barriers, and rigid bureaucratic machinery. They must all go if the brain drain was to be halted.

76. It must be recognized that the emigration of professional staff was not always wholly undesirable. Those concerned might be so disgruntled as to be of little use; or they might be one of the small band of geniuses who had to migrate to find the environment they needed for their great talents. Some of the Nobel Prize winners in the United States were examples of the latter category.

77. Mr. COX (Sierra Leone) agreed with the representative of Ghana that the movement of qualified persons from one part of the world to another could represent a world gain. Such migrations took place between developed countries and from developed to developing countries, and there was no reason why there should not be a two-way traffic. People decided to migrate because they thought they would be happier in the country to which they were going and better able to fulfil their aspirations. If they could not be retained because of the stage of development or lack of resources in their country of origin, it could not legitimately be called a brain drain problem if they felt themselves compelled to leave. By doing so they benefited both the country to which they migrated and the prestige of their own by demonstrating national talent.

The human rights aspect must be borne in mind. It must also be remembered that the staffs of the international organizations consisted of migrants. He might

wish to comment in greater detail when he had an opportunity to prepare a written statement.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.