

UNITED NATIONS
DEVELOPMENT
PROGRAMME



UNDP

Distr.
GENERAL
DP/SR.698
20 June 1980

ENGLISH
Original: FRENCH

GOVERNING COUNCIL

Twenty-seventh session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 698th MEETING

held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Thursday, 19 June 1980, at 10 a.m.

President:

Mr. POPESCU

(Romania)

CONTENTS

Other funds and programmes (continued)

- (a) United Nations Fund for Population Activities
 - (iii) Request for approval authority
 - (vi) An evaluation report on selected UNFPA projects
 - (vii) The future role of UNFPA

This record is subject to correction.

Participants wishing to make corrections should submit them in writing to the Official Records Editing Section, room E.6108, Palais des Nations, Geneva, within one week of receiving the record in their working language.

Corrections to the records of the meetings of the Governing Council at this session will be consolidated in a single corrigendum to be issued shortly after the end of the session.

The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

OTHER FUNDS AND PROGRAMMES (agenda item 7) (continued)

(a) UNITED NATIONS FUND FOR POPULATION ACTIVITIES

(iii) REQUEST FOR APPROVAL AUTHORITY (DP/482)

1. Miss SUTHERLAND (Canada) said that although the Council had hitherto always accepted without question the approval authority requested by the Executive Director, her delegation could not accept the request made in the current year (DP/482). If contributions did not grow at the expected rate, if at the same time the implementation ratio increased significantly, and if there was a high level of contractual commitments, programme planning would be effectively frozen in the second and third years and cash flow problems would be caused in 1981-1982. Her delegation would welcome further information on a number of points. The work plan submitted in the Executive Director's report (DP/464) and the approval authority requested were based on the assumption that resources in 1981 would be 25 per cent higher than in 1980; that was not realistic and overlooked the fact that it was only thanks to the undisbursed balance of the previous year that it had been possible to meet the shortfall in 1980. In addition, many donors had clearly opted for a policy of fiscal restraint, and such an increase in resources could not be guaranteed. Unless the Executive Director could provide evidence that those estimates were attainable, it would be necessary to assume a more realistic growth rate of 10 to 11 per cent and to reduce the approval authority accordingly. The representative of Switzerland had proposed during the general debate that a draft resolution should be prepared along those lines, and the representative of the Federal Republic of Germany had suggested that it might be considered by the Budgetary and Finance Committee at the same time as the resolution on staffing.

2. She would also like to know whether the implementation ratio would remain at 85 per cent. Under the approval authority requested, if that rate exceeded 90 per cent, there would be cash flow problems in future years.

3. With regard to contractual commitments, she wished to know whether they could exceed previous approval authorities. The figures were not very clear in that regard, and her delegation would be grateful if the secretariat could in future submit a table of contractual commitments for the period covered by the work plan and for the preceding year. Were the expected expenditures firm commitments? What percentage should or could be deferred if resources were insufficient? Furthermore, how should the choices be made? That, too, was a question of priorities which perhaps called for a review of existing policy.

4. Referring to reserves, she asked whether there were any funds over and above the operational reserve of \$20 million. Her delegation had already requested an explanation of the large reserves of some programmes, which were, perhaps, a luxury when resources were scarce. In that connexion, she thanked the Assistant Executive Director, who had made valiant efforts to reply at short notice to the questions raised.

5. Many of the projects and programmes which the Council had approved the previous day would extend beyond 1985 and even further if it was decided to stretch rather than reduce them if resources proved insufficient. How would that affect table 6 in document DP/464, which concerned pending requests and on which her delegation had already requested additional information? In her delegation's opinion, instead of increasing the approval authority to allow the Fund some flexibility in the event of additional resources becoming available, a mechanism should rather be devised to protect the Fund and its programmes if the contrary proved to be the case.

6. Mr. BENEDICK (United States of America) said that his delegation supported the request for approval authority submitted by the Executive Director of UNFPA (DP/482), since it confirmed the steady increase in commitments under the projects and served as a pointer to donor countries regarding the need to meet increased requirements. In any event, the Fund could not approve projects going beyond the available resources nor could commitments exceed the amount of the contributions actually paid. Approval of the request therefore, represented no serious danger from the standpoint of financial responsibility, but on the other hand, drew the attention of the international community to the importance of the programme and acted as a stimulus to the Fund's staff and to potential donors.

7. His delegation supported the net additional approval authority of \$90 million requested for 1981. The authority requested for the second and third years of the work plan depended on the decision to be taken by the Council concerning the review of the financial system adopted in 1973. It must be said that there had since been a considerable change in the volume and nature of the Fund's commitments. About 60 multi-year programmes were currently under way, absorbing an increasing proportion of the programme's total budget. The Council had encouraged that trend, but it was clear that UNFPA now required an additional approval authority for the second and third years of such programmes, and a change in the existing procedure was therefore warranted. The Executive Director's recommendation nevertheless went a little too far. Unforeseen requirements could always arise, which could not be met unless the Fund had sufficient flexibility to divert resources for that purpose. Under the recommendation before the Council, there would be a margin of only about 10 per cent between the second year and the first, which was much too small. His delegation therefore proposed a compromise solution, namely, that for the second year, the approval authority would be equal to two thirds of the amount authorized for the first year and for the third year, to one-half of the authority for the first.

8. Mr. ABELIN (Observer for Sweden) said that the question of the approval authority had two aspects: the amount in absolute figures, and its distribution among the various years. His delegation would like the absolute amount to be reduced on the basis of more realistic estimates of the resources that would be available to the Fund in future years. For 1980, it could, for example, be calculated as follows: the available allocations, i.e. \$124 million, plus 10 per cent plus \$8 million corresponding to the unallocated resources at the beginning of the period; that gave a reasonable total of about \$145 million. With regard to the distribution of the approval authority, he did not think that the current system, under which one-half of the authority authorized for the first year was approved for the second year, and one-quarter of that authority for the third year - detracted from the flexibility of operations, and he was in favour of its maintenance.

9. Mr. SALAS (Executive Director, United Nations Fund for Population Activities) agreed that the Fund should have some flexibility and that it might perhaps not be possible to attain the target of a 25 per cent increase in contributions. He suggested that the question of the request for approval authority should be referred to the Budgetary and Finance Committee for consideration of the various proposals which had just been made.

(vi) AN EVALUATION REPORT ON SELECTED UNFPA PROJECTS (DP/493)

10. Miss SUTHERLAND (Canada) warmly commended UNFPA on the quality of the evaluations submitted to the Council. She hoped that even greater emphasis would be placed on the work of the Office of Evaluation. She had taken note with satisfaction of the reply given by the Assistant Executive Director concerning the integration of the evaluation in programmes, but she would also like to know whether the Office of Evaluation participated in staff training and whether the preparation of projects and the instructions given to field staff were co-ordinated. She would be glad if, in future, more information could be given on evaluation in project reports and during the Council's consideration of items relating to UNFPA.

11. Mr. ABELIN (Observer for Sweden) said that since any undertaking involved difficulties, it was pointless to try to conceal them; they should rather be confronted frankly. That was what the Executive Director had done in his report on evaluation of UNFPA projects (DP/493) and, in that regard, the document was very reassuring. He attached great importance to the quantitative evaluation of programmes and projects; he strongly urged UNFPA to continue its work in that field and, in particular, to complete without delay the six large-scale evaluations now under way.

12. Miss SKETCHLEY (United Kingdom) said that she had read with much interest the report of the Executive Director on evaluation of UNFPA projects, but she would have liked it to be more detailed. She had therefore been glad to learn that the report on the evaluation of the national family planning programme of Mauritius would be circulated shortly. She would also like to have more information on the other two programmes which had been evaluated. In addition, she would like to know when the final reports on the other six large-scale evaluations referred to in paragraph 4 of document DP/493 would be available.

13. It was clear from the report of the Executive Director that the results of the three evaluations which had been carried out were hardly encouraging. First, with regard to UNFPA assistance for regional population activities in Africa, the report of the evaluation mission was critical and, apart from the African Census Programme, ECA had made little impact in the countries visited. As to the national programme of Mauritius, the planned integration of maternal and child health and family planning services had been only partially achieved. Lastly, it had not been possible to evaluate the research projects seriously, since in most cases the variables studied or the methodology applied had not been specified, and the requests concerning those projects had provided insufficient information for determining whether there was duplication between research topics or whether any areas of investigation were being neglected. The research findings had apparently not been disseminated, as they should have been.

14. The Executive Director, however, was to be highly commended for his candid presentation of the problems encountered. It was all the more commendable since in some other organizations the difficulties and problems which arose were often concealed. It

was particularly encouraging that account would be taken of the evaluation results in the implementation of the programmes. It should also be noted that nearly all the recommendations made in the three evaluations had been accepted and were beginning to be applied. It was after all the primary purpose of evaluation to appraise a programme's effectiveness with a view to rectifying shortcomings and obtaining the best possible results. It was therefore to be hoped that evaluation activities would be continued and extended to all large-scale UNFPA projects.

15. Mr. BENEDICK (United States of America) associated himself with all those delegations that had commended the Executive Director for the frank description of problems, given in his report on evaluation of UNFPA projects. The candour with which he had set out the shortcomings observed in project implementation was proof of his determination to correct them. UNFPA should be encouraged to carry out similar evaluations of its other major projects, but timeliness was essential if those evaluations were to be useful. UNFPA should therefore consider procedures that could shorten the evaluation process without affecting the quality of the results.

16. Referring to the section of document DP/493 dealing with the evaluation of research projects, he said that, in his opinion, the shortcomings noted were due in large part to staffing constraints. Since that situation was likely to continue, the Fund should consider establishing an international advisory board to assist in the review of research proposals. The board could draw its criteria for the identification of priority research activities from the findings of the International Review Group on Social Science Research in Population and Development.

17. Mrs. PHAN THI MINH (Observer for Viet Nam), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that she categorically rejected the tendentious allegations made against her country by the representative of China. At the previous meeting, she had merely analysed the demographic situation in Viet Nam and her sole purpose in referring to the cessation of Chinese aid and the Sino-Vietnamese war had been to stress the additional difficulties which they had caused for her country. Although those were concrete and undeniable facts, the representative of China had used them as an excuse for strong criticism of the Vietnamese delegation. Such an attitude curiously resembled the position taken by Chinese leaders in February 1979 when, on the pretext of alleged acts of provocation on the Sino-Vietnamese frontier, they had launched a war of aggression causing much loss of life and enormous material damage in the six northern provinces of Viet Nam, which had been spared by the previous conflicts. Was it reasonable to claim that Viet Nam, which was emerging from long years of warfare drained of its life blood, could afford the luxury of provoking its powerful neighbour?

18. Whatever course future events might take, the Vietnamese people would never forget the assistance which it had received from the Chinese people during its fight for liberation. Experience had, however, shown that the Chinese leaders had sought to use that assistance to dominate Viet Nam. At the end of 1978, while Viet Nam was suffering from the worst floods in its history, China had suddenly suspended its assistance and in a little over a month had withdrawn all its experts, who had taken with them all the technical documents that had been prepared.

19. Where the problem of Kampuchea was concerned, Viet Nam had assisted the people of that country three times since the Second World War by helping them to fight successively against colonialism, imperialism and expansionism. Even today, despite its own difficulties, Viet Nam was helping the Kampuchean people to recover from the acts of genocide committed against it under the Pol Pot régime. Her delegation therefore strongly hoped that the Kampuchean people would soon benefit from a UNFPA programme.

20. Mr. WANG (China) said that, at the 697th meeting, the observer for Viet Nam had already slandered his country. She had just renewed her attacks in the Council, but her arguments could deceive no one: to represent Viet Nam as an unfortunate country was to conceal the fact that it was oppressing Chinese expatriates, that it had expelled from its territory many people who had become refugees and that it had inflicted considerable losses on China and other countries. Its troops had violated the Chinese border on several occasions and harassed the population. Pursuing a policy of hegemony, Viet Nam had launched a campaign against Kampuchea; it had occupied vast territories in that country, massacred the population and caused famine. All that was known to the entire world: the facts were too cogent to be concealed by any form of language.

(vii) THE FUTURE ROLE OF UNFPA

21. Mr. GILIE (Assistant Executive Director, United Nations Fund for Population Activities) thanked the delegations which had commented on the activities of UNFPA. They would certainly provide the Fund with guidance in its activities during the coming months. He wished to reply to a certain number of questions raised in the discussion.

22. There had, first, been unanimous praise for the evaluation of UNFPA projects; several delegations had welcomed the frankness shown in that evaluation. Credit for the quality of the evaluation work was due to the Fund's Office of Evaluation. It had been suggested that the experience thus gained should be shared with other organizations; the Fund was already participating in inter-agency discussions on that matter. There had recently been a visit from the Joint Inspection Unit and the inspectors had described UNFPA's evaluation methodology as unique. Several delegations had expressed the hope that the scope of the evaluation should be further expanded; the representative of Cuba had wished it to cover research activities and the representative of the United States, extended projects. The Swiss delegation had asked that the reactions of the people affected by the Fund's activities should be included in the evaluation; that would certainly be useful, but raised questions of methodology. In any case, the recipient countries were closely associated with the evaluation and no problem had yet been encountered in that respect. The representatives of Canada and the Federal Republic of Germany had expressed surprise that the Executive Director had not asked for additional staff for the 1981 evaluation; the reason was that the staff responsible for the evaluation, which was admittedly small, received extensive support from consultants; the Fund had also encountered some difficulties in recruitment. The hope had also been expressed that less time should be spent on evaluation; an effort would be made to do so. The hope expressed by the representative of Canada that the question of evaluation should be considered at every session had also been noted. With reference to a question raised by the United Kingdom delegation, the next set of evaluation reports would be available in the course of the year and could be considered at the next session of the Governing Council.

23. Secondly, with respect to policy, he assured the Council that the desire, expressed in particular by the representatives of Cuba, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom, for greater emphasis on core programmes, especially maternal and child health and family planning, would be taken into account. The representative of the Federal Republic of Germany had asked for increased resources to be allocated to special programmes. The representative of Switzerland had urged that more attention should be given to the involvement of women. On the other hand, the United Kingdom delegation had questioned the advisability of diverting scarce resources to support of activities relating to the status of women, although at the preceding session, on 20 June 1979, UNFPA's concern for the role of women in development had been endorsed by the United Kingdom Government. The Fund considered that the involvement of women was an area in which there was room for expanded effort. In that connexion, he referred to the recommendations of the Plan of Action of the World Population Conference and the Colombo Declaration on Population and Development. With reference to the comments by the representatives of Senegal and Brazil, the question of internal migration and the spatial distribution of the population had been discussed two years earlier, and UNFPA had circulated guidelines on those matters in the autumn of 1979. One delegation had asked if it was appropriate for UNFPA to undertake activities concerning the ageing. It should be remembered that the Fund's mandate covered questions of population structure; moreover, in view of the decline in fertility rates, the matter was becoming important not only in the developed but also in the developing countries. The resources allocated by the Fund to that sector were very small: only \$60,000 for a meeting to be held in the autumn of 1980, and a maximum of \$150,000 for the whole year. It should also be remembered that the General Assembly had asked UNFPA to deal with the ageing in resolution 32/131; the Fund had been invited to participate in the organization of an international year on ageing and had provided an expert to assist in preparations for the World Assembly on the Elderly.

24. Several delegations, in particular those of Brazil and India, had asked for more information on Technical Co-operation among Developing Countries (TCDC). The Fund had a special interdivisional task force, whose work was based on the guidelines contained in a booklet entitled Population and Mutual Self-Reliance. The Fund had participated in the high-level conference on TCDC in May 1980. It supported the institutions of the developing countries concerned with population matters and promoted the dissemination of the information they had accumulated. In 1979, it had allocated \$25 million to training activities under country and intercountry projects aimed at mutual self-reliance; in particular, it contributed to increasing the number of research workers in the developing countries and supported regional and subregional projects for the exchange of ideas in areas within its mandate. It also promoted the introduction of population education in school curricula. UNFPA's experience made it well qualified to contribute to the implementation of the Buenos Aires Plan of Action; it intended to do even more in that respect, particularly with regard to the dissemination of information and the definition of what was encompassed by TCDC.

25. Many delegations, in particular those of Finland, Bangladesh, Denmark and Canada, had urged that efforts should be concentrated on priority countries. Others had drawn attention to the need to update the system of priorities. The Fund was in fact reviewing the criteria on the basis of new data and would report on the results of that work at the next session; it would then be possible to see if a revision of the priorities system was necessary.

26. The Swedish delegation had expressed regret that UNFPA's reports and documentation were not sufficiently detailed and had, in particular, requested that information should be provided on activities financed by the Fund in the past; account would be taken of that request, but the Fund could not spend too much time on the preparation of lengthy reports.

27. At the preceding session of the Council, the Executive Director had expressed the hope that delegations would give their views on the future role of UNFPA. An important debate would take place on that matter at the next session, and he wished to make some general comments to assist in preparation for that discussion.

28. First of all, the developing countries and international organizations had important tasks to undertake with respect to population during the 1980s. The preceding year, the Executive Director of UNFPA had said that the national and international development strategies should take all population elements, such as fertility, mortality, growth and structure, sufficiently into account. The developing countries had made some progress in that respect, especially in implementing the recommendations of the World Population Plan of Action, but most of them had not yet taken any decisive action. Moreover, in most countries much still remained to be done to involve the public, and especially women, in population activities. In many countries also, reliable data were still lacking and great efforts should be made with regard to vital statistics, sampling and censuses. The freedom of choice with respect to the number of children and the spacing of births advocated in the World Population Plan of Action was still not available in most countries, in particular due to lack of contraceptives; there was still much to be done in that respect, even in the countries where population growth had slowed down, especially to adapt contraceptive technology to the needs of developing countries.

29. The control of infant mortality would still remain a major objective of UNFPA's future work. The same applied to population distribution in line with economic possibilities; in that connexion, urbanization trends were very disturbing. Even the fall in fertility rates created problems which must be faced, and programmes would have to be carried out to deal with them. Understanding of population problems had greatly improved, but there was still room for progress; to that end, meetings should be organized and studies and publications prepared. If another world conference on population was organized in a few years' time, UNFPA should certainly make a major contribution to it.

30. UNFPA had played a catalytic role during the 1970s, a role which it should intensify during the 1980s in order to help the developing countries to achieve self-reliance in dealing with their population problems. The discussion at the Council's next session on the future role of the Fund should be based on the Fund's mandate, as defined in the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council and also by the recommendations of the World Population Plan of Action and by the strategy for the Third Decade. In that discussion, the Governing Council should in particular exercise its responsibilities concerning UNFPA's financial and administrative policies, in accordance with paragraph 2 of General Assembly resolution 3019 (XXVII), by giving directives on certain matters such as the system of priorities, the use of consultants, local salaries and procurement of equipment. The Council should also study the implications of the future role of UNFPA on the structure of its secretariat. In conclusion, he said that the Executive Director would present a document containing recommendations on the areas which he had just drawn to the Council's attention.

31. Mr. SALAS (Executive Director, United Nations Fund for Population Activities), referring first of all to the question of financing which had been discussed at length and to the difficulties experienced by UNFPA in achieving a balance between contributions and demand, said that six of the 11 major donors whom he had recently met had expressed their willingness to provide the Fund with the maximum support permitted by their budgetary resources. However, despite the goodwill of donors, there were a number of factors beyond their control, which often made it difficult for them to allocate all the necessary resources to population activities. The Fund should therefore be realistic and try to make the best possible use of the available resources in order to attain its objectives.
32. One of UNFPA's particular objectives was to help developing countries to lower their fertility rate or in some cases to increase it, and to formulate a genuine population policy. It was encouraging that all countries had now recognized that population was a factor in development, had established a population policy and had included population activities in their development plans. Thanks to the assistance of UNFPA, those countries were less dependent than previously on outside assistance. Population projects in their territories were now largely financed from national resources.
33. However, the reduction of the fertility rate and the preparation of population policies were only intermediate objectives. It could even be said that they were merely means of attaining the ultimate objective, which was to make individuals aware of the existence of population problems and enable them to regard childbearing in the more general context of the demographic situation, i.e., in relation to their country's capacity to support the children they might wish to have and to meet all their other needs.
34. Before attaining that objective, the international community must devote much effort and large resources to population activities. Unfortunately, the resources allocated to such activities, as to activities connected with the environment and development, were much too small.
35. To find a solution to that thorny problem of financing, it might perhaps be necessary for countries to consider the question of population activities from a more general point of view, in other words to weigh the importance of population questions against all other questions, in particular that of armaments, on which States spent some \$450,000 million a year. Such a global approach, which would make it clear that most human activities were designed to improve the lot of peoples and would thus highlight the central role of population programmes, would perhaps lead countries to give much higher priority to such programmes and to spend more money on them than they had done so far. The total sum spent on population activities each year was in fact currently only \$400 million, or less than 0.1 per cent of expenditure on armaments.
36. In that connexion, he considered that conferences of legislators, such as that held at Colombo in 1979, the value of which had been questioned by some representatives, could help to give countries an awareness of the vital importance of population activities. Such an awareness was indispensable if a permanent balance was ultimately to be established between population size and the resources needed to give every individual a reasonable standard of living.