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Thirty-fifth session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 10th MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva  
on Monday, 6 June 1988, at 10 a.m.

President: Mr. MANGWAZU (Malawi)

CONTENTS

Opening of the session

Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters

United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)

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

OPENING OF THE SESSION (item 1 of the provisional agenda)

1. The PRESIDENT declared open the thirty-fifth session of the Governing Council of the United Nations Development Programme and expressed the hope that the Council would take constructive decisions that would enable UNDP to maintain and enhance its contribution to the development efforts of the third world countries.
2. Mr. DRAPER (Administrator, United Nations Development Programme) said that the Council's thirty-fifth session was a very important one, since it would have to take decisions that would affect not only the current programming cycle but also the future of the Programme. He was certain that the Council's customary perseverance and spirit of consensus would once again enable it to complete its work successfully, work that was so meaningful for the developing world.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA AND OTHER ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS (item 2 of the provisional agenda) (DP/1988/L.8; DP/1988/16; DP/1988/17 and Add. 1; DP/1988/BFC/L.1)

3. Mr. CHEA URRUELA (Guatemala), speaking on behalf of the Central American countries and the Group of Latin American Countries, requested that the question of Central America and the special economic co-operation plan for the region be included in the Council's agenda. He asked that, if his proposal were adopted, a date should be set for the consideration of those problems.
4. Mrs. DUDIK-GAYOSO (United States of America) proposed that the question of the United Nations Capital Development Fund should be considered at the current session, preferably on Friday, 24 June, since that was when the Council would be studying the question of the funds administered by UNDP (agenda item 8). Although the Council had decided that the activities of some funds administered by UNDP should be considered once every two years only, she felt that it was important to examine UNCDF activities in the current year in view of their rapid expansion. In fact, \$58.5 million had been approved for new projects in 1987 and project expenditure had risen to about \$40 million, which was a substantial increase on the 1986 figure. The data provided in the annual report of the Administrator (DP/1988/18/Add.1, para. 109) could serve as a basis for discussion of that item.
5. Mr. PETTITT (United Kingdom) said, with reference to agenda item 10 (c), that the Council should consider that item in its capacity as the governing body not only of UNDP but also of UNFPA and the Department of Technical Co-operation for Development. He hoped that, on that occasion, the Council would be able to count on the collaboration of the secretariats of those three organs and that that topic would be considered before the departure of the experts on population matters, so that those experts could answer the Council's questions.
6. Mr. KIRDAR (Secretary of the Council) said, with reference to the proposal by the representative of Guatemala, that the Council must first take a decision on the subject and then, if it decided in favour, must consider when the subject could be examined.

7. With regard to the proposal by the delegation of the United States, he recalled that the Council had decided to examine those topics only every second year. The Council was, of course, free to reconsider its decision.

8. As for the question raised by the representative of the United Kingdom, it was true that the Council oversaw three organizations: UNDP, UNFPA and the Department of Technical Co-operation for Development. It would consider the question of those organizations under item 10 (c) and had decided, at its organizational meeting, to do so during the high-level segment of the general debate. Moreover, as indicated in document DP/1988/L.8, one day (17 June) would be specially devoted to the consideration of that item. The Council, which had been requested by the General Assembly (resolution 42/196) to report to it through the Economic and Social Council on those questions, would be examining not only the activities of UNDP but also those of UNFPA and the Department of Technical Co-operation for Development.

9. Following an exchange of views on the organization of work, in which Mr. PAYTON (New Zealand), Mr. PETRONE (Italy) and Mrs. FRANKINET (Belgium) supported the proposal by the representative of Guatemala, the PRESIDENT said that, if he heard no objection, he would take it that the Council wished to include the topic proposed by the delegation of Guatemala in its agenda, as a new item 4 (b) (iv).

10. It was so decided.

11. Following an exchange of views on the United States proposal, in which Mr. PATRONE (Italy), Mr. KIRDAR (Secretary of the Council), Mrs. DUDIK-GAYOSO (United States of America) and Mr. GAJENTAAN (Netherlands) took part, the PRESIDENT suggested that the Council should, without reconsidering its decision to examine those topics once every two years only, invite the Secretariat to provide it, within the context of a new item 8 (q), with the information requested by the delegation of the United States, so that that delegation, and possibly others, could express their views concerning the rapid increase in UNCDF expenditure.

12. It was so decided.

13. The PRESIDENT said that, if he heard no objection, he would take it that the Council wished to adopt the provisional agenda (DP/1988/L.8) as orally amended.

14. It was so decided.

15. Mr. KIRDAR (Secretary of the Council) introduced the provisional programme of work (DP/1988/L.8, annex II).

16. The provisional programme of work, as orally amended, was adopted.

UNITED NATIONS POPULATION FUND (UNFPA) (agenda item 6) (DP/1988/32, Parts I and II; DP/1988/33, Parts I and II)

17. Mrs. SADIK (Executive Director, UNFPA) said that the world's population was increasing by one billion persons every 12 years and that the 6 billion threshold would be reached before the end of the century. By then, half the world's population would be living in large cities, most of which would be in the developing countries. Those figures illustrated the importance of

18. Since the Bucharest Conference of 1974, many developing countries had adopted comprehensive population programmes and most Governments had recognized the need for birth-spacing and family planning. That trend had been particularly striking in Africa. However, progress remained sporadic, since the economic and other problems faced by many developing countries had resulted in a decline in basic social services, including population programmes. In many countries, information did not necessarily bring about a change in behaviour in areas such as contraception. Accordingly, there was a need to improve the quality of services and to achieve a better understanding not only of the socio-cultural context in which programmes had to operate, but also of the role to be played by women. Greater efforts should also be directed towards underserved populations.

19. In 1989, on the threshold of a new 20-year phase, UNFPA would have to readjust its programmes to respond to the constantly changing needs more effectively. First of all, it must review its basic strategy by conducting a careful analysis of the socio-cultural environment in which it operated, assessing its successes and failures and evaluating the future needs that it would have to meet.

20. To that end, the Council had approved, in the previous year, the Fund's strategy for the integration of women as participants in and beneficiaries of all population programmes and The Strategy for UNFPA Assistance in Sub-Saharan Africa. In future, efforts must also be made to ensure that population activities were closely linked to other development policies and programmes at the multilateral, bilateral and non-governmental levels.

21. There was also a need to improve the quality of operational activities. To that end, the programming procedures had been revised and their monitoring and evaluation had been improved. UNFPA was following closely the discussion on the Jansson Report and, with a view to improving programme implementation, was applying the General Assembly recommendations on operational activities.

22. Furthermore, UNFPA must change its organization and procedures, primarily through structural adjustments, decentralization of various programming functions, improvement of staff training and co-ordination of activities with its partner organizations.

23. The main organizational changes that had been made were set forth in document DP/1988/42. In brief, various functions previously distributed among various units had been consolidated in a single division, the new Technical and Evaluation Division. The Programme Division had been divided into four geographical divisions to facilitate decision-making and improve programme implementation. In future, the Information and External Relations Division, not the Office of the Executive Director, would be responsible for liaison with the Governing Council and the United Nations. New units had been set up to deal with policy and programme issues and resource mobilization. For example, a Programme Co-ordination, Management and Field Support Office had been established in the Office of the Executive Director. In view of the important role assigned to women in all UNFPA programmes, the Special Unit for Women, Population and Development had been placed under the direct supervision of the Executive Director.

24. Although the recent decentralization had affected the field offices in particular, it had also had an impact at Headquarters. Its objective was to eliminate unnecessary paperwork and increase staff responsibility. Staff rotation was also being encouraged between Headquarters and the field and among the field offices.
25. UNFPA was submitting six policy papers to the Governing Council. In the first (DP/1988/38), UNFPA proposed that female literacy should be added to the criteria for the designation of priority countries and that the threshold levels of the indicators should be periodically adjusted upwards or downwards in response to their aggregate changes over a given period of time.
26. The second policy paper (DP/1988/37 and Add.1-5) was devoted to the first intercountry programme that UNFPA had ever submitted to UNDP. Under that programme, the Fund proposed four Headquarters-based projects including a management information systems (MIS) project, which UNFPA needed in order to keep track of its increasingly complex operations and take advantage of the new information technology; a project concerning the Fund's publications, intended to promote better awareness of population questions, an essential part of the Fund's mandate; and a project concerning a review and assessment exercise which was due to be completed in 1989.
27. UNFPA staffing requirements were set out in the third policy paper (DP/1988/42) and it should be noted, in that connection, that all the additional posts that had been deemed necessary were international or national field posts, the establishment of which was justified by the intensification of UNFPA activities in sub-Saharan Africa. A fourth policy paper (DP/1988/34) contained the Fund's Work Plan for 1989-1992 and request for approval authority for the same years.
28. In 1987, the Fund's income had totalled more than \$156 million, representing an increase of almost 12 per cent over 1986. Large increases in pledges had been made by developed countries, such as Austria, Belgium, Canada and the Federal Republic of Germany, and also by many developing countries, such as Bangladesh, Bhutan, Bolivia, China and Guatemala. Income in 1988 had continued the upward trend: although the Fund had requested a 15 per cent increase in contributions as compared with 1987, that target might be exceeded. The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics was making its first contribution, which was equivalent to about half a million United States dollars, and Algeria, Angola, Bahrain and Nicaragua had also become contributors. Unfortunately, as in 1987 and 1986, the United States Government had made no contribution to UNFPA in 1988, thereby greatly weakening the international consensus on population issues. For a long time, the Fund had, to a large extent, relied upon the financial and moral backing of the United States. UNFPA was continuing its discussions with the United States Government and sincerely hoped that the latter would soon resume its place among the Fund's major donors.
29. Uncertainties regarding financial resources in recent years had led UNFPA to adopt an extremely cautious approach to programming, as a result of which the project implementation rate in 1987 had been much lower. However, UNFPA had continued to devote more than two thirds of its available country programme resources to priority countries. Moreover, family planning, and associated information, education and communication programmes had continued to receive the largest share of UNFPA resources. Sub-Saharan Africa was once

again the geographical region that had benefited from an UNFPA allocation increase in both volume and percentage terms. The year 1987 and the beginning of 1988 had been marked by several important events, such as the International Conference on Safe Motherhood and the International Conference on Better Health for Women and Children through Family Planning. However, it was the UNFPA Global Conference, in particular, that had highlighted three essential aspects of the Fund's activities: co-ordination, the strategy on women, population and development; and the strategy on assistance to the countries of sub-Saharan Africa.

30. Under its mandate, UNFPA was required to co-operate systematically with a wide variety of United Nations organs and with institutions outside the United Nations system. Accordingly, in response to the Jansson Report and General Assembly resolution 42/196 on operational activities for development, UNFPA had frequently consulted the Administrator of UNDP and his senior staff, and the Fund's geographical divisions had also systematically consulted the UNDP Regional Bureaux. UNFPA also maintained regular contact with WHO, UNICEF, the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), the World Bank, the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF), IFAD, UNEP and the International Union for the Scientific Study of Population (IUSSP) and had recently established links with the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN). In 1987, the Fund had chaired the meetings of the Joint Consultative Group on Policy (JCGP), the work of which had focused on women and development, the social dimension of structural adjustment, collaboration in operational activities, particularly in the sub-Saharan Africa region, and harmonization of programming procedures.

31. Good progress had been made in implementing the strategy on women, population and development, which the Governing Council of UNDP had approved in 1987 (DP/1987/38). The headquarters staff and African field offices staff had been trained to incorporate women's concerns into project development and implementation. UNFPA procedures had been revised to ensure that gender considerations became an integral part of all programmes. The Fund had also supported a number of country projects to collect and analyse data on the role and status of women. In particular, a microcomputer data base on women would make it possible to produce country profiles on the socio-economic situation of women. Lastly, all new country programmes would be designed to ensure that proposed activities reflected the needs of women and made provision for their participation.

32. At its thirty-fourth session, the Governing Council had requested UNFPA to report on the implementation of The Strategy for UNFPA Assistance to Sub-Saharan Africa. The results achieved had been satisfactory, in spite of the difficulties encountered. At all levels, countries were becoming increasingly aware of the importance of population issues and were integrating them into all development activities. At the international level, UNFPA was participating in the implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development and was taking part in the regional consultations. UNFPA had been closely involved in the work of the High-level International Conference on the Human Dimension of the African Economic Recovery Programme, held at Khartoum in March 1988. The Declaration that had been adopted on the conclusion of that meeting had given prominence to population issues.

33. In conclusion, she referred to the State of World Population Report for 1988, which discussed the relationships between population, resources, the environment and development. The Report highlighted the threats that population pressures posed to the environment, through desertification and deforestation, for example. The developing countries themselves would undoubtedly have to take action to curb population growth. However, for that purpose, they would need more efficient and environmentally safe technologies that would have to be developed by countries possessing the requisite industrial and technical resources. For its part, UNFPA was endeavouring to promote awareness of the crucial linkages between population and the environment and to integrate environmental factors more effectively into its own programmes. In a broader perspective, after 20 years of work, the Fund was considering its future activities in a spirit of constructive self-criticism, with a view to improving the quality and effectiveness of its programmes and constantly widening the scope of its activities.

34. Mr. OHLIN (Assistant Secretary-General for Development Research and Policy Analysis) said, with reference to resolution 1986/7 of the Economic and Social Council, that the framework thus laid down for co-operation between his United Nations Department and UNFPA in the field of population had proved to be useful and had strengthened the operational activities of the United Nations system in that area.

35. Every two years, the Department of International Economic and Social Affairs (DIESA) made a complete assessment of population size and growth and prepared projections on the basis of reliable data. According to the most recent estimates, the world population was currently about 5.12 billion, with an annual growth rate of about 1.78 per cent, and would be 6.25 billion by the year 2000 and nearly 8.5 billion by the year 2025. Those revised data indicated that the rate of world population growth had reached a temporary plateau, but the number of people entering the child-bearing years remained very high and the decline in fertility rates at global level was slowing down. The rapid fertility decline in a number of developing countries during the 1970s had not continued into the 1980s: that was so in the case of India, of Latin America as a whole, and especially of China, where very large declines in rates had already been achieved. In sub-Saharan Africa, fertility had not yet begun to show any sign of a significant reduction.

36. Most of the world's population growth was taking place in the developing regions. Some 93 out of every 100 children currently being born would live in developing countries. The current rate of fertility in those countries was more than sufficient to offset mortality and to sustain the continued growth of population at 2 per cent per year. There were, however, some very large differences in fertility in the various parts of the developing world.

37. One of the chief determinants of fertility levels in the modern world was the extent of family planning and, especially, of contraceptive use. The estimates prepared by DIESA showed that the rate of contraceptive use by married women of reproductive age differed greatly by region: in Africa, the percentage was only about 14 per cent, in South Asia and in Oceania it was about 33 per cent and elsewhere in the world it was over 50 per cent.

38. World mortality continued to decline. Over the past five years, average life expectancy at birth had increased by almost two years to about 61.5 years. Again, there were marked differences in mortality levels in

different parts of the developing world: for Africa as a whole, average life expectancy at birth had risen beyond 50 years, but it was still in the 40s for many countries; the Asian average was currently over 60 years; it was 66 years in Latin America and 73 years in the developed countries.

39. A recent study by DIESA showed that, for the world as a whole, about 12 per cent of all children would die before they reached their fifth birthdays. That rate had declined by about 50 per cent since the early 1950s, but it was seven times as high in the developing countries as in the developed countries and was 40 times as high in very high mortality countries as in very low mortality countries, such as those of northern Europe.

40. Current demographic conditions in the world were thus mixed. There was progress, but in some countries it was very slow.

41. A number of important steps had been taken within the United Nations system to co-operate and to co-ordinate work in the area of population. Stronger links had been forged between UNFPA and DIESA, and a task force had been established to develop projects in new areas of co-operation. A number of projects had been identified to study the linkages between demographic, social and economic policies and trends. The Fund had provided financial assistance for a number of projects carried out by DIESA, and the two bodies had worked together successfully.

42. DIESA and the Department of Technical Co-operation for Development (DTCO) had established a joint task force on co-operation. Population specialists from DIESA provided technical backstopping to projects being executed by DTCO. Conversely, DTCO was providing DIESA with a better understanding of conditions at the field level.

43. Mr. POWER (Canada) said that his Government was deeply concerned by the delicate balance between the needs of a growing population, the inadequate resources available for development and the ability of the environment to sustain those needs. It therefore recognized that addressing population issues must be a major element in its strategy of development assistance into the twenty-first century if it was to meet a number of objectives concerning the alleviation of poverty, the environment, food security and women in development.

44. In view of such a challenge, the United Nations Population Fund must continually assess and refine its role. UNFPA had clearly been making a major contribution towards increasing the awareness of the interrelationship between population and development and bringing about a greater understanding of the linkages between fertility, infant mortality, health and family planning, and the status of women. UNFPA assisted many countries in developing data bases and in articulating realistic population policies. His Government encouraged the Fund to increase its efforts to attune national planners to the social, economic and environmental implications of rapid population growth.

45. His delegation noted with satisfaction the progress made, in both programming and staff training, towards carrying out the Implementation Strategy adopted in 1987 concerning women, population and development. The role of women must be taken into account in both project design and evaluation.



46. Within the United Nations system, UNFPA must encourage the individual agencies to integrate population activities into all their programmes, not just those financed by the Fund. There were many non-contentious areas that could be tackled in response to population problems: education, primary health care and immunization programmes, for example. A strengthening of the Joint Consultative Group on Policy (JCGP) and closer UNFPA co-operation with UNDP's country programming process offered opportunities for a broader and more integrated approach to population problems.

47. In view of the acute development situation and looming population crisis in Africa, the Fund must implement its strategy for assistance to sub-Saharan Africa as efficiently and rapidly as possible. His delegation therefore welcomed the staffing proposals presented, which would strengthen the capacity of the Fund to carry out its programme in Africa as well as provide for greater staff mobility. It would also welcome comments from UNFPA on other issues, such as the need to introduce greater flexibility in programme development and implementation.

48. His delegation commended the Fund for its work in establishing formal means of co-operation with the World Health Organization's Global Programme on AIDS and the issuing of policy guidelines on AIDS for use by its field offices. It encouraged UNFPA to continue to programme activities related to that serious pandemic and invited the Executive Director to prepare a report on the question for the thirty-sixth session of the Governing Council.

49. His Government paid tribute to the new Executive Director of the Fund for her energetic efforts. Despite the absence of the major traditional donor, UNFPA had been able to mobilize in 1987 a record \$US 173 million which should be concentrated on priority countries. His Government was in favour of enhancing the technical and substantive capability of the Fund and effecting a prudent decentralization of its operations, in the hope that such reforms would, in the long run, lead to greater efficiency and accountability. UNFPA could rest assured of Canada's continued support.

50. Mr. GAJENTAAN (Netherlands) said that UNFPA's financial situation was a healthy one. Income in 1987 amounted to more than \$US 156 million, an 11.5 per cent increase on 1986, despite the fact that no pledge had been made by the Government that had formerly been UNFPA's largest contributor. In 1988, UNFPA resources were estimated at \$US 176 million. The Netherlands had increased its contribution in 1988 by 12 per cent to some \$US 24 million. There had also been a welcome broadening of the Fund's resource base.

51. The problem of demographic growth had taken on such dimensions, particularly in the developing countries, that the Fund could not slacken its efforts. Population problems were, by definition, development problems and could be addressed only as a whole. More research was needed to investigate the complex links between population, resources, environment and development so as to design and implement appropriate policies at the national and international levels. The creation over the past 15 years of some form of population policy in nearly all developing countries clearly reflected the increased awareness of the effects of high fertility and rapid population growth on the prospects for development. UNFPA's assistance was still needed, however, particularly for increasing managerial capacity and for integrating population policies into human-resources development.

52. In 1987, the Council had strongly endorsed The Strategy for UNFPA Assistance in Sub-Saharan Africa. His delegation was thus somewhat disappointed at the small increase in allocations for the region and at the decrease in the project expenditure rate. His Government therefore supported the Executive Director's proposal to increase the size of field staff in Africa. Such an increase and the new intercountry programme for Africa would enhance the technical backstopping of projects. Technical co-operation in basic data collection for census and survey activities should not be neglected.

53. Since its inception, UNFPA had been the primary multilateral channel of development assistance in the field of population. His Government had also supported other multilateral initiatives, such as those undertaken by WHO and a number of non-governmental organizations, and it had the firm intention to continue and, indeed, to increase its support for those programmes. Recently, his Government had submitted to the Parliament of the Netherlands a memorandum on population policy in developing countries, in which basic policy principles were set out and opportunities were explored for increasing the population assistance offered by the Netherlands through its bilateral programmes.

54. The Netherlands endorsed family planning as a basic human right because of its stabilizing effect on demographic growth and its impact on the health of women and children. To that end, information on fertility regulation and choice of methods must be widely available. Health care programmes for mothers and children must be extended and monitored carefully, because a reduction in mother and child mortality had been shown to be closely related to the acceptance of family planning practices and programmes.

55. A balanced population policy entailed more than just family planning programmes. Support for demographic analysis and statistics, policy formulation and implementation, biomedical and socio-economic research and increased public awareness were of vital importance. In the context of his Government's bilateral assistance, special attention would be paid to improving the status of women, not only as an object in itself, but also in view of the crucial role they played in the development process.

56. General Assembly resolution 42/196 on operational activities for development called upon the Governing Council to discuss the conclusions and recommendations of the report of the Director-General for Development and International Economic Co-operation regarding case-studies on the functioning of operational activities for development, the so-called "Jansson Report" (A/42/326/Add.1-E/1987/82/Add.1, appendix I). His Government attached particular importance to a systematic follow-up of the Jansson Report and welcomed the agreement reached on more systematic inclusion of UNFPA inputs in the UNPD country programming process. It also appreciated UNFPA's commitments to the work of the Joint Consultative Group on Policy (JCGP).

57. One of the key recommendations of the Jansson Report, followed up in General Assembly resolution 42/196 (section III, para. 15), related to the possibilities for a broader and more efficient process of programming in terms of more coherent action and effective integration of various sectoral inputs of the United Nations system. While the formulation of a single country-specific United Nations development co-operation programme embracing

the separate country programmes of UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and possibly other bodies might still be in the distant future, the follow-up to the Jansson Report and the General Assembly resolution was a formidable challenge which the UNFPA's Executive Director and her colleagues in the JCGP must try to meet. Co-ordination was a state of mind which must be transformed into action at all levels, in particular at the country level. In that context, his Government welcomed the emphasis placed by UNFPA upon staff quality and better interplay with UNPD.

The meeting rose at 1.15 p.m.

