



**Governing Council
of the
United Nations
Development Programme**

Distr.
GENERAL

DP/1989/SR.14
15 June 1989
ENGLISH
ORIGINAL: FRENCH

GOVERNING COUNCIL

Thirty-sixth session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 14th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Wednesday, 7 June 1989, at 10 a.m.

President: Mr. POPESCU (Romania)

CONTENTS

United Nations Population Fund (continued)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

UNITED NATIONS POPULATION FUND (continued) (DP/1989/34, 36, 39 and 40)

1. Mr. SOUTTER (Canada), taking up the issue of sustainable development, welcomed efforts by UNFPA to incorporate environmental and resource concerns into its activities, and encouraged it to keep the question on the international agenda. He hoped the Fund would continue, through such activities as research and the implementation of pilot projects, to collect information in order to shed light on the complex and little-understood relationship between population, environment and sustainable development. Finally, he stressed that the Fund must help countries to develop their capacity to plan and carry out population programmes which included that component.
2. On the question of women, his delegation subscribed to the view that the mandate and policy of the Fund concerning special projects to benefit women needed further clarification. It was extremely important that the Fund should do everything it could to integrate women's issues into data collection and analysis, population dynamics and policy development, but it did not always appear to do so. On the other hand, the systematic inclusion of projects for women in every country programme was questionable; the Fund should take care to concentrate on activities directly relevant to population.
3. The good overall results which the Fund had had in providing balanced training for men and women were compromised by the large proportion of women trained in mother and child health services and family planning to the detriment of other sectors; he called on the Fund to provide more systematic information on progress in that area.
4. On the subject of UNFPA publications, his delegation thought it was legitimate to try to improve their cost-benefit ratio, and agreed with ACABQ that the cost of all publications by UNFPA should be included in the administrative and programme support services budget; it would, however, like the implications of the reduction recommended by ACABQ to be explained, and better indicators of the effectiveness of each publication to be defined.
5. Finally, on the subject of the work plan, his delegation, while willing to establish annual disbursements rather than allocation ceilings, felt that limits should be set to total commitments over the four-year period.
6. Mrs. KRAVER MULLER (Switzerland) concentrated on the role of women in population and development issues (DP/1989/36). While accepting that UNFPA must be careful not to dissipate its efforts but focus on its specific mandate, her delegation believed that, given the enormous impact which improving women's educational levels and involvement in economic life might have on the success of programmes promoting family planning, the Fund needed to keep the point in mind as it designed its programmes.

(Mrs. Kraver Muller, Switzerland)

7. Unfortunately, the report offered insufficient detail on some basic points. She was sorry in particular, although it still might be a little early, that no conclusions had been drawn from the outcome of the activities described, and she hoped that the next report on the matter would give a proper evaluation. She would also like to be given some information on planned and actual methods of project implementation, a matter on which the document was silent.

8. She would also have liked the report to give specific examples of the way in which cultural determinism had influenced the implementation of projects in the countries cited. Finally, she asked for more specific information on how it was planned to secure women's participation.

9. Mrs. MAGUIRE (United States of America), referring to the report on issues concerning women, population and development (DP/1989/36), welcomed the priority UNFPA put in its programmes and projects on improving the status of women. She wondered whether the Fund, as it assessed the effects of the economic crisis in developing countries on women's health, education and employment, would also consider the effects of the crisis on desired family size and the use of modern family planning methods, and whether the Special Unit, as it assisted and monitored the various policies of UNFPA, would evaluate the indirect effects of improvements in women's status on their desired family size and use of modern methods of contraception.

10. On the subject of sustainable development (DP/1989/39), policy makers in the least developed countries needed to be made aware of the problem and efforts must be made to link environment and natural resource issues to population. The Agency for International Development (AID) was supporting the development of global, regional and country-specific microcomputer models illustrating some of the relationships between population growth and distribution and environmental and natural resource issues, with the aim of fostering increased awareness of those relationships among policy makers in the least developed countries. Furthermore, AID had recently published an article on sustainable development in newspapers and journals throughout the developing world, and, with UNEP, had co-sponsored an international seminar on the subject with the editors concerned. Co-ordination between such activities and similar programmes supported by UNFPA would be desirable.

11. On the work plan for 1990-1993 (DP/1989/34), she remarked that the priority given to sub-Saharan Africa, the development of MCH/FP services and informational, educational and communications programmes corresponded to the priorities set by AID. She mentioned the problem of contraceptives and family planning services, the need for and cost of which were mushrooming, and pointed out that AID could not by itself cope with the increase. UNFPA must significantly increase the resources it planned to devote to the purchase of contraceptives in its work plan and report to the following session of the Governing Council on how it intended to meet growing demand during the 1990s.

12. Mrs. BONIS (Netherlands) paid tribute to UNFPA for its programme of assistance to sub-Saharan African countries and its efforts to combine women's concerns with population programmes. The keen interest shown by many delegations, particularly in the Fund's activities to benefit women, should be a source of encouragement.

13. Her delegation was very aware how complex were the relationships between demographic variables and environmental damage, as presented in the State of World Population report. To put things in the right perspective, however, it must be remembered that per capita consumption of energy and other resources was much higher in the industrialized countries than in developing ones, where people had only limited access to the resources they needed to survive. The growing pressure on limited resources was a problem that affected one and all.

14. UNFPA should continue its efforts to increase awareness of that point through publications, training activities, seminars and so forth. As its mandate did not allow it to play a leading role, it should seek to collaborate with other bodies working towards similar objectives and finance specific useful, educational activities in order to heighten awareness of the environmental implications of population growth and the consequences of unequal resource distribution. Document DP/1989/39 revealed that UNEP had begun to draw up policy guidelines for the inclusion of environmental questions in its activities; it also said that UNFPA would be working on the creation of a set of operational procedures.

15. Realistically, her delegation believed that UNFPA should devote itself to consciousness-raising, relying on published research from a variety of sources. Co-operation with other competent organizations was also necessary for programme co-ordination. At the project level, UNFPA had indicated that it would take population, environment and development objectives into account in an integrated whole; she wondered what precisely it intended to do. As regards the work plan for 1990-1993, which her delegation supported, she called for some clarification of the proposed change in the approval authority of the Executive Director.

16. Mr. CALLWAY (United Kingdom), referring to document DP/1989/34 concerning UNFPA's work plan for 1990-1993, said that unfortunately circumstances and the limited time available had made it impossible for his delegation to give that important report the in-depth consideration it deserved since it included a request for approval authority involving fairly high figures; however, he had already noted certain points which required clarification.

17. First, his delegation, while welcoming the attempt to use a more reliable method for assessing programme performance, was not convinced that the resource utilization rate was a significant improvement. It had to be accepted that the resource projection varied throughout the fiscal year, depending on fluctuations in interest rates and in currency exchange rates. Perhaps the Fund, in order to take into account or take advantage of those fluctuations, could present several sets of figures for each fiscal year, depending on the effects of the rephasing exercises carried out. The Fund's project expenditure rate had been on average 80 per cent in 1988, to which an adjustment of about 10 per cent had to be added. He asked whether that meant that carry-forwards would accumulate, with ever-growing rates of

(Mr. Callway, United Kingdom)

unutilized resources; and what measures could then be taken to break that cycle. He sought clarification on that point.

18. His delegation also noted that many projects had been envisaged for Africa over the past three years, most of which would continue to be financed during the period 1990-1993. Since the amount already programmed for Africa constituted only 41 per cent of the total (tables J and K), he asked what would be done with the remaining 60 per cent.

19. He supported the comments made by the United States delegation about the very important problem of contraception, which indeed should be given more attention.

20. Mr. ZONGWE (Zaire), limiting his statement to the report on the status of the strategy for UNFPA assistance to sub-Saharan Africa (DP/1989/38), said that his delegation was grateful to UNFPA for the considerable efforts it had made during the period 1987-1988 to achieve the objectives of the strategy. It supported the country programmes that the Fund was using for that purpose in its subregion. The efforts that UNFPA was making to strengthen the administrative capability of countries, encourage comprehensive country programming and give its field offices greater authority also deserved support, as did the sectoral activities underlying the strategy, particularly those relating to family planning and birth spacing, maternal and child health, the reduction of fertility levels and of population growth, and the activities undertaken in the context of programmes of information, education and communication. Zaire also welcomed the attention the Fund was paying to programmes in the countries of sub-Saharan Africa and its close co-operation with Governments in reorienting country programmes that had been developed before the strategy had been formulated. Thirty programmes had already been approved by the Council and seven new programmes were being submitted to the current session.

21. The success of those efforts would depend on the resources available. The sub-Saharan region of Africa was vast and of great socio-cultural diversity. Yet it had a single aspiration: to raise the awareness of the population and establish a consensus with regard to population programmes and policies. Governments were trying to translate that aspiration into concrete efforts. They were therefore calling on their partners to support those efforts with sufficient resources. Zaire was particularly grateful to donors for their bilateral assistance, among others, the Canadian International Development Agency, the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany and USAID. However, it reiterated the concerns that had been expressed by African delegations with regard to the ever-widening gap between the actual level of resources received and the amount of external resources that were required, which was liable to impede the implementation of country programmes. Recognizing the obstacles in the way of the rapid adoption of new economic and demographic policies for certain Governments, his delegation called on UNFPA to continue its co-operation with those Governments in order to ensure an acceptable rate of implementation. It also hoped that UNFPA would be able to take all necessary steps without delay to strengthen its field offices and thus enable them to provide more effective assistance to Governments which were in a difficult situation because of the shortage of specialists and of data on population and

(Mr. Zongwe, Zaire)

development planning and because of the socio-cultural obstacles which impeded a better understanding of the relationship between population and development. As in the case of other activities undertaken in conjunction with UNDP, UNFPA was called upon, through a strengthening of its field offices, to increase its efforts to reduce the delay in programme implementation, which would necessarily require the active participation of Governments of the region.

22. Mr. KUNUGI (Deputy Executive Director of UNFPA) said that it was gratifying that many delegations had mentioned the links between population, resources and the environment. As to the practical questions which had to be faced by developing countries, the secretariat had taken note of the approaches proposed to tackle regional questions and ensure the participation of communities in the protection of the environment. Before embarking on operational activities in that sphere, UNFPA had launched an extensive information campaign among the public and government planners, and had continued its training activities for officers of the Fund and directors of national projects in developing countries.

23. As to the concerns of certain delegations about the allocation of valuable resources to new areas, the secretariat noted that those questions were not new and that UNFPA had been concerned with them since the 1970s. In co-operation with the competent NGOs, and in particular the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources, the Fund had prepared a guide on population, resources and development which would be a tool enabling developing countries and aid organizations to analyse the interaction between population, the environment and resources. The secretariat could provide an assurance that most of the projects that were currently being undertaken would be implemented in co-operation with the specialized agencies or governmental bodies. Operational activities would be undertaken after the testing of guidelines in the field.

24. Mr. SINGH (Chief, UNFPA Information and External Relations Division), replying to questions raised by certain delegations which had suggested that the cost of publications and of audio-visual productions should be charged to the regular budget for the period 1990-1991 and had asked whether they could be integrated within the context of the figures proposed by ACABQ, which had added a million dollars to the proposed budget, said that the additional amount of \$1.7 million in the programme budget covered both the cost of the three publications mentioned and that of various audio-visual productions. The proposed budget also provided for a French version of the Inventory.

25. On the question of the impact and effectiveness of those publications, document DP/1989/40 described certain measures which could help in evaluating them. UNFPA was also conducting surveys among readers. The publications were also considered at various technical meetings and conferences, and UNFPA took into account the observations made by participants in selecting new subjects to be studied in the publications.

26. As to the State of World Population report, its impact was assessed on the basis of the number of reports which appeared in the press, but there was no global

(Mr. Singh)

system to assess its use by radio and television. On the basis of the comments which had been made on the value of the report, the secretariat hoped that the budget and finance committee would allocate the necessary resources, taking into account the real cost of those publications and the staff needed to produce and distribute them.

27. Mr. VAN ARENDONK (Assistant Executive Director of UNFPA) said that, with regard to the new system proposed in document DP/1989/34, there were essentially two processes described in that document. UNFPA would first try to clarify the definitions used to evaluate and manage its financial resources. In the past, the secretariat had used the project expenditure rate as the rate of project implementation for a given year, but that rate did not make it possible to determine the effectiveness of UNFPA because it was based on year-end allocations which could be manipulated by means of carry-forwards to subsequent years; that made it easy to obtain an implementation rate of 100 per cent. For that reason UNFPA had introduced two different measurement tools, the resource utilization rate and the programme resource delivery rate. Those rates made it possible to assess the ratio of expenditure to the programmable resources available to the Fund and to determine the efficiency of the use of UNFPA resources in a given year. Carry-forwards related to specific projects for which expenses had been committed but not carried out during the year in question. Carry-forwards were effected in a continuous manner, but there were two major carry-forward operations every year: in the middle of the year and at the end. Mid-year carry-forwards were important because they freed resources for other projects whose implementation was more rapid than envisaged. Those carry-forwards were constantly monitored by UNFPA.

28. In the past, until the current year, the Council had allowed UNFPA to make provision for overprogramming of 10 per cent. That percentage would not be used in the future because UNFPA wished to have approval authority on the basis of actual programmable resources. However, UNFPA would continue to set a programme ceiling, which would continue to be an internal management tool, as well as a ceiling for each geographic division. Where the Council was concerned, the ceiling took the form of the available programmable resources, which were set forth in table M in document DP/1989/34. In the past, the Council's approval authority had covered a period of four or five years, with a descending scale. That system had been an obstacle to efficient programme implementation. From now onwards, UNFPA wished to submit an income estimate for each year and to receive approval authority to plan programmes on the basis of its resources, while continuing to take account of internal ceilings.

29. With regard to the comments concerning the resources required for supplying contraceptives, the Fund was also concerned about future increases in requirements in the area in question. Paragraph 239 of document DP/1989/32 concerned only the quantities procured by the Fund in New York, but there were in fact other sources of supply. However, the Fund's resources were limited and it would be impossible to use 80 per cent of the resources for the procurement of supplies. The Fund was therefore encouraging countries to produce their own contraceptives and was helping them to set up the necessary production structures.

30. Ms. HEKMATI (Chief, UNFPA Special Unit for Women, Population and Development), responding to issues raised by a number of delegations, said that staff training would be an ongoing UNFPA activity. As to the evaluation of activities for the benefit of women, it had been noted at the international level that improvements in the status of women led to a reduction in the number of births. Implementation of programmes for women would in fact be one of the secretariat's major concerns in the future. Although it was easy to include the advancement of women in the Fund's strategies and activities, guidelines were not necessarily always followed in the field, and UNFPA was endeavouring to overcome that difficulty.

31. UNFPA also took an interest in the problem of structural adjustment, which often led to a reduction in social programmes that could be of benefit to women, particularly in the area of education. In that connection, it was co-operating with the Commonwealth Secretariat, which was conducting research on the actual situation in the area in question.

32. Where training was concerned, there were two target groups: UNFPA staff and national counterparts. UNFPA emphasized the training of women in all projects that had a training component. In co-operation with universities in many countries, it was also considering social programmes for women in developing countries. Furthermore, there was training in the management of family-planning programmes specially designed for women. With regard to data collection, data analysis and information issues, the Fund had emphasized such matters in its strategy and was co-operating with the United Nations Statistical Office in such areas as the collection of socio-economic statistics on women.

33. As to the specific types of projects supported by UNFPA, the strategy clearly indicated that the Fund's projects must take account of women's needs and make provision for the involvement of women. With a view to attaining those goals, UNFPA supported specific activities that were of benefit to women in certain well-defined areas, such as education, training, skills development, data collection and analysis, and research. In order to promote income-generating activities for women, UNFPA had launched demonstration projects designed, for example, to reduce the considerable amount of time women devoted to fetching water and wood and to taking products to market. The extent to which such action was successful had been demonstrated in Indonesia, where a multi-purpose project launched by UNFPA in 18 villages had been extended by the Government to 1,800 villages.

34. Mrs. SADIK (Executive Director of UNFPA), replying to a delegation that wished to know what action UNFPA planned to take at the project level with a view to integrating ecological factors and development goals, said that the Fund was endeavouring to draw up guidelines on the basis of a dialogue with other agencies that had similar concerns, such as the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources and UNEP. It had recently consulted the Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator, with a view to conducting an extensive study on local decision-making and its implications for the environment. An inter-agency working group had met to consider issues relating to women, population and the environment; it had been concluded that that was the only way in which all

(Mrs. Sadik)

the factors in question could be effectively combined. A general framework was set forth in the report of the World Commission on Environment and Development. It was now a question of translating that outline into operational activities. That undertaking required a large staff. That was why more staff had been requested for the Population Data, Policy and Research Branch, which was directly concerned. UNFPA currently dealt with requirements relating to the conservation of resources in the context of population policy. Some Governments had already taken action in the area in question, such as Nigeria, which was playing a catalytic role in Africa, and Kenya. Moreover, the Fund was participating in the work of the Task Force on Sustainable Development and would be called upon to make a contribution to the conference that was to be held on that subject.

35. Turning to another issue, she said that currently there was not an equal number of male and female participants in all training programmes sponsored or financed by UNFPA. An endeavour was being made to attain that goal, and consideration had even been given to the possibility of making equal participation mandatory. Such a step would unquestionably be premature at the current stage, since it would mean that there would not be any participants in some programmes. Even in the areas of maternal and child welfare, family planning, and health, current participation by women was well below 50 per cent. Taking as a model a recommendation made in the context of a training programme set up at its request in Quebec for French-speaking countries, UNFPA planned to send trainees only to organizations that integrated women's concerns into their training activities. That would encourage agencies to change their programmes accordingly. She herself planned to consult WHO, the Department of Technical Co-operation for Development and several other agencies on the matter.

36. As to the work plan, the proposed change could be summarized very simply: UNFPA was requesting that the 10-per-cent restriction on allocations should be lifted, and that a system enabling UNFPA to spend all the resources likely to be generated in a given year should be set up. Expenditure was currently limited by the restriction. The Fund had to resort to various tricks in order to avoid carry-forwards from one year to another, to the extent possible. Moreover, a lifting of the 10-per-cent restriction did not mean that all constraints on allocations over the entire work-plan period would be removed. Allocations had to remain within the amount approved for the various country or intercountry programmes. The Fund must have the freedom to distribute as it saw fit the allocations for a given country programme. That function would be decentralized at the level of the geographic divisions. Programme expenditure authority could be given for one or two years. That would be sufficient to ensure effective financial management of the Fund. In any event, income was entered into the accounts annually and must also be adjusted annually. If the 10-per-cent restriction was lifted major savings could be made in the area of staff costs, since staff spent a considerable amount of time on rephrasing in order to permit expenditure. Both the regions and individual countries would have greater room for manoeuvre in managing their own programmes. If UNFPA responsibilities were decentralized, the geographic divisions and field staff must be given greater freedom. Under the new system, there would be only one phasing exercise each year, at the time of the tripartite

(Mrs. Sadik)

reviews. The executing agencies would be given all the necessary financial information at that time.

37. Where the programme delivery rate was concerned, UNFPA had proposed an evaluation index other than that of 80- or 90-per-cent implementation. Under the current system, even if all the available resources were actually used there was still no indication as to whether any particular programme had been implemented. The new formula would make it possible to provide delegations with more comprehensive information on the actual financial management of programmes. The short description given in the annual report would be supplemented by a table showing actual expenditure as a proportion of the total amount approved for a given country programme as well as the intended use of the balance.

The meeting rose at 11.40 a.m.