



Chapter I

Matters calling for action by or brought to the attention of the General Assembly

In 2003, the Economic and Social Council adopted resolutions and decisions that call for action by the General Assembly. The relevant paragraphs of those resolutions and decisions are summarized below.

Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters

Enlargement of the Executive Committee of the Programme of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

By decisions 2003/285 and 2003/286, the Council recommended that the General Assembly take a decision at its fifty-eighth session on the question of enlarging the membership of the Execu

Humanitarian affairs segment

Strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations

By resolution 2003/5, the Council requested the Secretary-General to reflect the progress made in the implementation of and follow-up to its resolution in his next report to the Council and the General Assembly on the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations.

Implementation of and follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits: follow-up to the International Conference on Financing for Development

International Conference on Financing for Development

Economic and social repercussions of the Israeli Occupation on the living conditions of the Palestinian people in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, and the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan

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By resolution 2003/59, the Council requested the Secretary-General to submit to the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session, through the Council, a report on the implementation of the resolution and to continue to include, in the report of the United Nations Special Coordinator, an update on the living conditions of the Palestinian people, in collaboration with the relevant United Nations agencies.

Economic and environment questions: sustainable development

Preparations for an international meeting to review the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States

By resolution 2003/55 and decision 2003/283, the Council, recalling General Assembly resolution 57/262 and reiterating the provisions of decision II adopted by the Commission on Sustainable Development eleventh session, in particular its paragraph 9, recommended to the Assembly that travel and subsistence allowance for participants from small island developing States to the preparatory meetings and the international meeting to undertake a comprehensive review of the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States be provided from the funds designated by donors for that purpose in the voluntary trust fund established by the Assembly in resolution 57/262.

Future programme, organization and methods of work of the Commission on Sustainable Development

By resolution 2003/61, the Council, having considered the report of the Commission on Sustainable Development on its eleventh session, decided to invite the General Assembly to consider using the resources previously devoted to the former ad hoc intersessional working groups of the Commission on Sustainable Development to support the participation of representatives of member States of the Commission in one of their respective regional meetings in each implementation cycle. The Council also recommended to the Assembly that resources released by the termination of the work of the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources for Development, whose work had been transferred to the Commission on Sustainable Development, could be used to support the work of the Commission.

Economic and environmental questions: United Nations Forum on Forests

Trust Fund for the United Nations Forum on Forests

By resolution 2003/63, the Council recommended that the General Assembly decide that support to participants from developing countries, with priority to the least developed countries, as well as from countries with economies in transition,

Policies and programmes involving youth

By resolution 2003/11, the Council invited the General Assembly to consider devoting, at its sixtieth session, in 2005, two plenary meetings to review the situation of youth and achievements produced in the implementation of the Programme of Action 10 years after its adoption. The Council also invited the General Assembly to request the Secretary-General to provide the Assembly, at its

International cooperation in the fight against transnational organized crime: assistance to States in capacity-building with a view to facilitating the implementation of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the Protocols thereto

By resolution 2003/21, the Council recommended to the General Assembly the adoption of the draft resolution contained therein.

Strengthening international cooperation and technical assistance in promoting the implementation of the universal conventions and protocols related to terrorism within the framework of the activities of the Centre for International Crime Prevention

By resolution 2003/22, the Council recommended to the General Assembly the adoption of the draft resolution contained therein.

Preparations for the Eleventh United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice

By resolution 2003/23, the Council recommended to the General Assembly the adoption of the draft resolution contained therein.

Social and human rights questions: human rights

The right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health

By resolution 2003/45, the Council approved Commission Human Rights resolution 2003/28, in which the Commission highlighted the importance of enhancing the international community's response to violence by strengthening prevention efforts at the national level and through international cooperation, recommended that the General Assembly declare 2007 the United Nations Year for Violence Prevention and requested the Commission on Human Rights to submit to the Council a draft programme of action for the Year.

Human rights situation of the Lebanese detainees in Israel

By decision 2003/238, the Council endorsed the decision of the Commission on Human Rights in its resolution 2003/8 to request the Secretary-General to bring the resolution to the attention of the Government of Israel and to call upon it to

Situation of human rights in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

By decision 2003/240, the Council endorsed the decision of the Commission on Human Rights in its resolution 2003/15 to extend the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Democratic Republic of the

Discrimination, to be submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 57/195, consider the closure of the Third Decade;

(d) To recommend that the General Assembly, in the coming decade of activities to combat racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, place emphasis on the concrete implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action on the basis of a broad-based consensus on the importance of the anti-discrimination struggle worldwide;

(e) To request that the Secretary-General provide the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance with all the necessary human and financial assistance to carry out his mandate efficiently, effectively and expeditiously and to enable him to submit an interim report to the General Assembly at its fifty-eighth session.

Elimination of all forms of religious intolerance

By decision 2003/252, the Council endorsed the request of the Commission on Human Rights in its resolution 2003/54 that the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief should submit an interim report to the General Assembly at its fifty-eighth session and report to the Commission at its sixtieth session.

Human rights defenders

By decision 2003/255, the Council endorsed the decision of the Commission on Human Rights in its resolution 2003/64 to extend the mandate of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on the situation of human rights defenders for a further three years and also approved the Commission's request that the Special Representative continue to report on her activities to the General Assembly and the Commission.

Protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism

By decision 2003/256, the Council endorsed the decision of the Commission on Human Rights in its resolution 2003/68 to request the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to submit a report on the implementation of resolution 2003/68 to the General Assembly at its fifty-eighth session and to the Commission at its sixtieth session.

Situation of human rights in Afghanistan

By decision 2003/257, the Council endorsed the decision of the Commission on Human Rights in its resolution 2003/77 to request the Secretary-General to appoint an independent expert for a period of one year to develop, in strict collaboration with the Afghan Transitional Authority, including the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission, as well as with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, a programme of advisory services to ensure the full respect and protection of human rights and the promotion of the rule of law and to seek and receive information about and report on the human rights situation in Afghanistan in an effort to prevent human rights violations.

The Council also approved the Commission's request that the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, continue to review the situation of women and girls in Afghanistan and submit a report to the General Assembly and the Commission.

Situation of human rights in Sierra Leone

By decision 2003/259, the Council endorsed the request of the Commission on Human Rights in its resolution 2003/80 to the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to report to the General Assembly at its fifty-eighth session and to the Commission at its sixtieth session on the human rights situation in Sierra Leone, including with reference to reports from the Human Rights Section of the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone.

Situation of human rights in Iraq

By decision 2003/262, the Council endorsed the decision of the Commission on Human Rights in its resolution 2003/84 to extend the mandate of the Special Rapporteur, as contained in Commission resolution 1991/74 and subsequent resolutions, for a further year, and to request the Special Rapporteur to submit an interim report on the situation of human rights in Iraq, focusing on newly available information about violations of human rights and international law by the Government of Iraq over many years, to the General Assembly at its fifty-eighth session and to report to the Commission at its sixtieth session.

Social and human rights questions: Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues

Executive Council of the World Tourism Organization on 4 June 2003, recommended that the General Assembly approve the text of the draft agreement at its fifty-eighth session.

Chapter II

Special high-level meeting of the Council with the Bretton Woods institutions and the World Trade Organization

1. In accordance with paragraph 88 of annex I to General Assembly resolution 50/227 and paragraph 69 (b) of the Monterrey Consensus, the Council held a special high-level meeting with the Bretton Woods institutions and the World Trade Organization at its 7th and 8th plenary meetings, on 14 April 2003 (for the proceedings, see E/2003/SR.7 and 8). It had before it a note by the Secretary-General on increased coherence, coordination and cooperation for the implementation of the Monterrey Consensus of the International Conference on Financing for Development at all levels one year after the Conference (E/2003/50).
2. At its 7th plenary meeting, on 14 April 2003, the President of the Council made an introductory statement.
3. At the same meeting, the Deputy Secretary-General addressed the meeting.
4. Also at the same meeting, the President of the fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly addressed the meeting.
5. At the same meeting, the President of the Council introduced the following panellists who made presentations: Trevor Manuel, Minister of Finance of South Africa and Chairperson of the Development Committee; Heidemarie Wieczorek-Zeul, Minister for Economic Cooperation and Development of Germany; Mary Whelan, Chairperson of the Trade Policy Review Body of the World Trade Organization; and Fouad Siniora, Chairperson of the Group of 24, Minister of Finance of Lebanon.
6. The President of the Council also introduced the following panellists by institutional organizations who made presentations: Eduardo Aninat, Deputy Managing Director, International Monetary Fund (IMF); Shengman Zhang, Managing Director, World Bank; and Francisco Thompson-Flores, Deputy Director-General of the World Trade Organization.
7. After the presentations, the Council adjourned its plenary meeting and moved onto round tables 1, 2, 3 and 4.
8. Round table 1 was chaired by Trevor Manuel, Chairperson of the Development Committee and Minister of Finance of South Africa, and co-chaired by Louise Fréchette, Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations.
9. Round table 2 was chaired by Hilde Frafjord Johnson, Minister of International Development of Norway, and co-chaired by Francisco Thompson-Flores, Deputy-Director General of the World Trade Organization.
10. Round table 3 was chaired by Mary Whelan, Chairperson of the Trade Policy Review Body of the World Trade Organization, and co-chaired by Shengman Zhang, Managing Director of the World Bank Group.
11. Round table 4 was chaired by Fathallah Oualalou, Minister of Finance of Morocco, and co-chaired by Eduardo Aninat, Deputy Managing-Director of IMF.

12. The four round tables addressed respectively the themes of: (a) systemic

Chapter III

High-level segment

Promoting an integrated approach to rural development in developing countries for poverty eradication and sustainable development

Opening of the session

1. The high-level segment of the substantive session of 2003 of the Council was held at its 13th to 18th plenary meetings, from 30 June to 2 July 2003 (for the proceedings, see E/2002/SR.13-18). In accordance with Council decision 2002/309 of 19 December 2002, the theme for the high-level segment was “Promoting an integrated approach to rural development in developing countries for poverty eradication and sustainable development” (agenda item 2). The Council had before it the following documents:

(a) Report of the Secretary-General on promoting an integrated approach to rural development in developing countries for poverty eradication and sustainable development (E/2003/51);

(b) (E/2003/70, chap. I);

(c) Relevant section of the report of the Committee for Development Policy on its fifth session (E/2003/33, Suppl. 13, chap. II);

(d) Statement submitted by Franciscans International, a non-governmental

Director, Oxfam; and Keith Jones, Issue and Policy Manager, Stewardship and Sustainable Agriculture, CropLife International. Interventions were made by the representatives of Uganda, Ethiopia and Chile, as well as by the observers for Mexico and the Holy See. Interventions were also made by the representatives of the International Association of Economic and Social Councils and Similar Institutions,

30. At its 17th plenary meeting, on 2 July 2003, statements were made by Petko

Action taken by the Council

34. At its 18th plenary meeting, on 2 July 2003, the President of the Council introduced the draft ministerial declaration submitted by the President of the Council, entitled "Promoting an integrated approach to rural development in

an integral part of national and international development policies, including bilateral donor response strategies and the activities and programmes of the United Nations system.

“3. We express our serious concern regarding the famine facing millions of people, especially in Africa. Recognizing that food security is a global concern, we are committed to respond to the internationally recognized emergency food aid needs and to improve famine prevention mechanisms and long-term food security.

“4. Rural development should be pursued through an integrated approach, encompassing the economic, social and environmental dimensions, taking into account the gender perspective and consisting of mutually reinforcing policies and programmes. This approach should be balanced, targeted, situation specific, locally owned, include local synergies and initiatives and be responsive to the needs of rural populations.

“5. Rural development is the responsibility of each country and is predicated on an enabling national environment. An enabling international economic environment is important to support effective national development efforts, including rural development efforts. An enabling environment combines effective and coherent policies, good governance and accountable institutions at national and international levels as well as the promotion of gender equality and the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the right to development. Robust, broad-based and equitable economic growth as well as human resource development are needed to fight rural poverty.

“6. In this regard, despite serious efforts to achieve progress, important issues in the implementation of the Doha Ministerial Declaration of the World Trade Organization, adopted at Doha on 20 November 2001,³ are still outstanding, in particular regarding the commitments under the said declaration for, inter alia, comprehensive negotiations aimed at substantial improvements in market access. In the agricultural sector, without prejudging the outcome of negotiations, reductions of, with a view to phasing out, all forms of export subsidies, substantial reduction in trade-distorting domestic support and enhanced market access is needed. We recall that special and differential treatment for developing countries shall be an integral part of all elements of the negotiations and shall be embodied in the schedules of concessions and commitments and as appropriate in the rules and disciplines to be negotiated, so as to be operationally effective and to enable developing countries to effectively take account of their development needs, including food security and rural development. We take note of the non-trade concerns reflected in the negotiating proposals submitted by members and confirm that non-trade concerns will be taken into account in the negotiations, as provided for in the Agreement of Agriculture.

“7. As for non-agricultural products, we call for reduction or, as appropriate, removal of non-tariff barriers, tariff peaks, high tariffs and tariff escalation to enhance market access, in particular for products of export interest to developing countries.

“8. These matters must be urgently addressed by members of the World Trade Organization in order to ensure full implementation of the Doha Ministerial Declaration, including regarding implementation issues and special and differential treatment, and to make a success of the Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization to be held in Cancun, Mexico, in September 2003.

“9. We invite members of the World Trade Organization to implement the commitments regarding trade-related technical assistance and capacity-building for developing countries, in particular the least developed countries, so that they can benefit from liberalized trade opportunities and adopt measures to reduce supply-side constraints, including by improving productivity and product diversification and enhancing competitiveness and community-based entrepreneurial capacity. We urge them to facilitate the accession of developing countries to the Organization, in particular the least developed countries and countries with economies in transition, taking into account the individual level of development of each country that applies for membership. In this regard, we welcome the recent agreement of the Organization to facilitate the accession of the least developed countries.

“10. We recognize the vulnerability of the commodity-dependent developing countries, in particular the low-income countries, to market fluctuations and stress the need to support their efforts for the diversification of exports as a means of increasing export earnings and improving terms of trade and to address the impact of the instability of commodity prices. In this context, it is very important to empower commodity producers in developing countries to insure themselves against risk. We underscore the need for reforming the existing facilities to respond to the needs of the rural poor.

“11. We urge developed countries that have not done so to make concrete efforts towards the target of 0.7 per cent of gross national product as official

“13. External debt relief can play a key role in liberating resources that can then be directed towards activities consistent with attaining sustainable growth and development, and therefore, debt relief measures should, where appropriate, be pursued vigorously and expeditiously, including within the Paris and London Clubs and other relevant forums. Noting the importance of re-establishing financial viability for those developing countries facing unsustainable debt burdens, we welcome initiatives that have been undertaken to reduce outstanding indebtedness and invite further national and international measures in that regard, including, as appropriate, debt cancellation and other arrangements.

“14. We are committed to empowering poor women and men to play a full and

their negative impact on the agricultural sector. We also recognize the importance of health, including reproductive health, to: rural development and the eradication of poverty; reducing infant, child and maternal mortality; combating HIV/AIDS; and promoting equality and empowerment among the rural poor, especially women.

“27. We emphasize that full implementation of the Doha Declaration on the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights and public health, adopted by the World Trade Organization at Doha on 20 November 2001,⁴ including its paragraph 6, is important for tackling public health problems, especially those resulting from HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria and other epidemics.

“28. We are deeply concerned about the devastating impact of the global HIV/AIDS epidemic, which undermines efforts to eradicate poverty. We recognize that HIV/AIDS has serious debilitating consequences for societies, particularly in Africa. We are therefore committed to the mainstreaming of HIV/AIDS concerns into rural development planning, including poverty eradication and food security strategies and multisectoral development activities covering economic and social aspects, taking into account the particular situation of rural women.

“29. Bearing in mind that the majority of indigenous people live in rural areas, we recognize the need to implement policies and programmes to eradicate poverty and achieve sustainable development that are focused on them, taking into account their traditional knowledge and their special relationship with the land.

“30. We reaffirm the goal of expanding access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation, particularly in the rural areas of developing countries and countries with economies in transition, and express our resolve to the expeditious realization of that goal, in accordance with the commitments contained in the United Nations Millennium Declaration and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development.⁵

“31. We also reaffirm the need to improve access to reliable, affordable, economically viable, socially acceptable and environmentally sound energy services and resources, taking into account national specificities and circumstances, through various means, such as enhanced rural electrification and decentralized energy systems, increased use of renewables, cleaner liquid and gaseous fuels and enhanced energy efficiency, as well as by intensifying regional and international cooperation in support of national efforts, including through capacity-building, financial and technological assistance and innovative financing mechanisms, including at the micro- and meso-levels, recognizing the specific factors for providing access to the poor.

“32. We undertake to promote rural-urban linkages by developing and strengthening a system of intermediate-size secondary and tertiary towns to stimulate rural development, as well as to minimize the negative impacts of rural-urban migration. At the same time, we will encourage programmes and policies designed to strengthen rural service centre and small town systems, including strengthening institutions and mechanisms for local or regional planning.

enhance their support for rural poverty eradication and rural development in developing countries and countries with economies in transition.

“38. We commit ourselves to the implementation of the present declaration and call upon civil society, the organizations of the United Nations system and other relevant actors and organizations to lend their full support to the realization of the objectives of integrated rural development for poverty eradication and sustainable development. We agree to review progress or lack thereof in the implementation of the present declaration at the substantive session of the Economic and Social Council in 2005.”

¹ E/2003/51.

² General Assembly resolution 55/2.

³ WT/MIN (01)/DEC/1.

⁴ WT/MIN (01)/DEC/2.

⁵

(United Nations publication, Sales No. E.03.II.A.1 and corrigendum), chap. I, resolution 2, annex.