

(Check against delivery)

61st SESSION OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL, ABIDJAN, 1 JULY

STATEMENT BY MR IVOR RICHARD QC, PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE UNITED KINGDOM TO THE UNITED NATIONS, ON BEHALF OF THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC COMMUNITY

Mr President,

It is an honour for me to be the first representative of my Government to speak on behalf of the Presidency of the European Community in a Charter organ of the United Nations. I do so since the Netherlands, which today assumes the Presidency, is not at present a member of the Council. It thus falls to the UK, which follows the Netherlands in the Presidency, to speak on its behalf.

It is an honour for me on behalf of the Community to salute the President, the Government and the people of the Ivory Coast; to express our pleasure at meeting, at your invitation, in Abidjan, the first meeting of the Economic and Social Council to be held in the continent of Africa; and, in so doing, to mark the great width and depth of interest, association and history which link the member countries of the Community with the countries of Africa represented here with such distinction.

It is an honour for me to take part in a debate which goes to the heart of the central issues of our time. Relations between developed and developing countries have become the dominant political question in international relations. The United Nations system has been the principal means of expressing this truth. The Economic and Social Council has been assigned under the Charter a unique responsibility. This sets the scene for our meeting.

II

My first direct connection with the United Nations, in the capacity of Permanent Representative of my country in New York, coincided with the Sixth Special Session of the General Assembly. On that occasion I allowed myself the prophecy that things would never be the same again, and that that session of the Assembly would be seen as a turning point. We had proclaimed the agenda of much of the international community's business for the next decade.

Let us recall how much has happened since then. Things indeed are not the same. In the time that has elapsed, we have already moved substantially into that agenda. We all devoted major efforts to preparations for the Seventh Special Session, and we there reached important conclusions which were unanimously adopted. UNCTAD has continued our dialogue. I believe it can be called progress. But concrete negotiations will be necessary to transform the conclusions of UNCTAD into tangible reality. Of course there remain major differences on some substantive questions, but we have already narrowed these significantly in others. In May 1974 I spoke of the work of a Decade; two years on, we are I think on target. We have agreed major international monetary reforms, we have taken emergency measures to help the most vulnerable economies through a period of harsh adjustment, and we are deep into the most thorough exploration every undertaken of the problems of international trade in commodities. We have had a major conference on industrialisation, whose decisions are now being followed up. We have had a major conference on food; we have, as a result, established new international coordinating machinery in that field, and we are on the verge of making new international assistance machinery operative.

In the social field we have reached important agreements on practical measures for increased international cooperation on population<sup>questions</sup>, on the role of women, and now on human settlements. Conferences are scheduled in the next three years to seek new agreements on water resources, on the problem of the encroaching deserts and on science and technology.

Every body, programme, organ and agency of the United Nations has been affected by the pressure of events and ideas and responses. The Seventh Special Session of the General Assembly was a model of the efficient conduct of business on the basis of shared perceptions, sound preparation and executive competence. It has been found that the key to successful diplomacy is precision, and General Assembly resolution 3362 is certainly precise. It needs to be re-read at regular intervals as a framework of thought and action about all these problems.

You have only to list these meetings and activities, Mr President, to summon up in the minds of those who are familiar with these complex issues the immense amount of work which we have done together. He would be a bold man who aspired to evaluate it in any final way. He would be a foolish man who disregarded how much has changed as a result of it. Those who ignore or minimise the extent of that change do a great disservice to themselves and their fellow men. Those who use the extent of that change as a pretext for not facing the future are if anything even more unhelpful. So far we have neither succeeded nor failed, but we have made progress. What would in my view be wrong would be to judge the success or failure of this massive dialogue by the result of one meeting alone - whether it be in UNCPAD or in CIEC or in any other forum. We have to look at the process as a whole and if we do it is difficult to deny that there has been progress - and in a relatively short time.

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So far, Mr President, I have talked of the issues which face us in world-wide terms. But we know that in the realm of practical action what happens at the country level, the regional level and the inter-regional level is of key importance as well. The concept of indicative planning figures for individual countries in the UNDP context has long been crucial to effective forethought and action. Regional cooperation, especially among developing countries, is of growing importance, as we have seen in the last session of the General Assembly. As a result of the decisions taken at its Seventh Special Session, the General Assembly is to receive further studies on these questions at its next regular session. The Community welcome the proposal of a Conference on Regional Cooperation.

When we talk of interregional cooperation, Mr President, it is natural for the European Community to think of its special links with a great number of developing countries, especially those of Africa, through the Yaoundé and Lomé conventions, and through a number of other arrangements. There is enormous potential here. As M. Cheysson will be addressing the Council on behalf of the Commission of the Communities later today, I shall not go into detail. But I state today the full awareness of the Community of the needs of African developing countries. 28 of the most seriously affected countries, and 18 of the least developed countries, are in this continent. The world knows of the Sahelian Zone. It is right that the Council should have on its agenda at this session as separate items the question of assistance to Zambia and Mozambique.

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All the matters to which I have referred are in the realm of the responsibilities of this Council. The Charter, from which those responsibilities derive, requires us to look at economic questions in a broad context. Article 55 and the related provisions link economic, social and humanitarian issues at many points. The word "development" covers all these issues. It covers the full range of human life not merely the economic. The Economic and Social Council is one council, not two. Its constitution is a reflection of the ultimate objectives of the evolution and re-ordering of our economic relations: respect for the individual and helping him or her to achieve a fuller life.

The Council's prime responsibility, as we in the Community see it, is to coordinate the work of the economic and social sectors of the UN system and to initiate new policies in these sectors so as to help the General Assembly in its work. Our functions are those of forethought, preparation, political decision-making and coordination. During this session, and later in New York, we will be considering how the Council can best fulfil these functions; and, indeed, the consolidated negotiating text prepared by the Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee on Restructuring constitutes an important element in this perspective. This Council has its own individual contribution to make to world interdependence. I know some people think that the word "interdependence" is so overworked that it should be expunged from the vocabulary of international relations. Indeed, I sometimes share that view myself. But we need to understand what is meant by it. We in the Community have good reason to be aware that there is not only interdependence between countries but also interdependence between issues with all that that implies within as well as among countries.

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The Economic and Social Council, as a glance at its agenda shows has a special responsibility for that interdependence in the United Nations context. We can best discharge it not by duplicating the work of expert bodies charged with detailed discussions and negotiations, but by putting all this work into a firm and dynamic perspective. That is what the system wants from us. That is what the system needs. As I have already indicated we should avoid excessive emphasis on any one meeting or policy or prescription as the touchstone of world cooperation for development. Life is more complicated than that. But what we should do is to look ahead. We have noted with interest the report of the most recent meeting of the Committee for Development Planning which will be considered later in this session. The Committee conclude that the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly should initiate the necessary technical work by organisations of the United Nations system in their respective areas of competence - that could serve as a basis for formulating an appropriate international development strategy for a third United Nations Development Decade. As a Community, Mr President, we endorse that recommendation.

V

Finally I would like to return to the question of restructuring of the United Nations system. The Ad Hoc Committee established by the Seventh Special Session of the General Assembly has already made a useful start. We value the spirit of inquiry and understanding which has characterised its proceedings. Restructuring of the Economic and Social sectors of the UN system is no substitute to discussion and action more fruitful and effective. The delegations of the members states of the European Community will continue to play an active part in this important

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task in the Ad Hoc Committee, in the Economic and Social Council and in the General Assembly.

VI

I would not wish to conclude this intervention without reaffirming the clear determination of the European Community to pursue and intensify the process of discussion and dialogue, which was initiated in the framework of the United Nations, and for the success of which this Council has a particular responsibility, as was so outstandingly expressed by His Excellency the President of the Republic, M. Houphouet-Boigny, in his opening speech. I would like to pay tribute to him, not only for the clear analysis he gave of the world situation, but also for the spirit of cooperation and understanding which inspired his statement as well as the general policy of his country.