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COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE COUNCIL

WORLD FOOD CONFERENCE

(Rome, 5 to 16 November 1974)

PART ONE

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RESULTS OF THE WORLD FOOD CONFERENCE

The World Food Conference met in Rome from 5 to 16 November 1974. Work was carried out at a very steady rate by three working committees as well as by the Assembly in plenary session.

The Conference opened with various speeches particularly by Mr. LEONE, President of the Italian Republic and Mr. WALDHEIM, General Secretary of the United Nations. Mr. KISSINGER, the United States Secretary of State and Mr. ECHEVERRIA, President of the Mexican Republic, also addressed the Conference.

Mr. BONNET, the French Minister for Agriculture, and Mr. LARDINOIS, a member of the Commission expressed the Community's view in plenary session.

The most important questions discussed at the Conference were the following :

- 1. The International Fund for Agricultural Development.
- 2. World Food Security :
 - (a) Global information and early warning system on food and agriculture;
 - (b) Reserve stocks
 - (c) Food aid.
- 3. Institutional framework for implementing the Conference's recommendations.

The Conference also examined the implications which exist between the problems of international trade and those concerned with food.

1. International Fund for Agricultural Development

Generally speaking, the requirement to develop agricultural production in the developing countries and the measures to be taken to achieve this aim were in the forefront of the discussions.

In order to promote this objective the Conference recommended the immediate setting up of a Fund.

The General Secretary of the United Nations was asked to call an emergency meeting of all the countries and organizations concerned to finalize the details of setting up the Fund, but he had already established that :

- Contributions to the Fund would be voluntary and should be additional to the resources already provided for the agriculture of the developing countries;
- The operations of the Fund would be carried out through existing institutions;
- The governing body would be made up of representatives of the developed and developing countries contributing to the Fund and of the recipient countries;
- The Fund should finance in particular projects aimed at increasing food production, including stock breeding and fisheries;
- The Fund would become operational as soon as the General Secretary of the United Nations had established, in consultation with the representatives of the countries having offered contributions to the Fund, that it was bringing in substantial additional resources and that there was a reasonable prospect of continuity of its operations.

Most of the oil producing countries were among those who tabled this recommendation. They announced their intention of contributing to the Fund on condition that the industrialized countries also contributed thereto. It should be noted that, in addition to Australia and New Zealand, one Member State of the E.E.C., the Netherlands, was among those who tabled this recommendation.

The Community as such refrained from adopting a position on the subject.

Although accepting the setting up of the Fund, the United States declared that they had no intention of participating. A similar position was expressed by certain Member States who emphasized the extent of the aid which they give to the developing countries' agriculture.

2. World Food Security

The recommendations of the Conference were concerned with :

(a) A global information and early warning system on food and agriculture

This system was accepted by all the countries with the exception of the USSR and China, which expressed reservations regarding this system

which, in their view, could call in question the sovereignty of States, include the communication of information of a strategic nature and could also contribute to the speculative operations of the multinational companies.

(b) Reserve stocks

The Conference agreed to subscribe to the International Undertaking for World Food Security project, known as the "Boerma Plan". Furthermore, the recommendation urged the governments of all the countries which played an important part in the production, the consumption and the trade of foodstuffs, mainly cereals, to enter into discussions, as soon as possible, with the appropriate international authorities in order to speed up the implementation of the principles expressed in the International Undertaking for World Food Security.

Under pressure from the developing countries who wish to have available an international system of emergency stocks of 500,000 tonnes of cereals, a system which had been rejected by the developed countries, it was agreed to study the possibility of establishing reserves of cereals which would be situated at strategic locations.

The American Delegation hoped to arrive at undertakings for stocks which went beyond the International Undertaking proposed by Mr. BOERMA and which should be established before the multilateral negotiations.

In accordance with its instructions the Community, for its part, insisted on remaining within the limits of the "International Undertaking" even though the undertakings for storage would have to be negotiated later in greater detail during the multilateral negotiations, in the context of international agreements by products.

The two delegations arrived at an arrangement which is described in the attached recommendation N° II but which leaves difficulties for the future.

(c) Food Aid

The Conference accepted a recommendation that food aid in cereals should be increased, from 1975, to a minimum figure of 10,000,000 tonnes per year. This figure was accepted as an objective.

The inclusion in food aid of products other than cereals was also considered.

Finally, the Conference accepted the principle that food aid should be planned.

Canada had already stated that it was ready to increase its food aid in cereals from approximately 500,000 tonnes to 1,000,000 tonnes per year.

Australia stated that it was prepared appreciably to increase its food aid.

The E.E.C. and the United States confined themselves to accepting the objective of 10,000,000 tonnes.

The oil producing countries showed no particular interest in the financing of food aid, their main concern being with the establishment of the International Fund for Agricultural Development.

On the initiative of the developing countries (India, Bangladesh, Pakistan) the Conference accepted the principle of a meeting as soon as possible between the exporting and importing and the potential donor countries (oil producing countries) in order to assess the immediate needs and the means of meeting them.

3. International trade

Straight away, the "Group of 77" presented a draft resolution consisting of a list of demands by the developing countries on the subject of problems of trade and the balance of payments. This draft was unacceptable to the western countries. It provided, in particular, for the removal of the agricultural support measures and the acceptance of the principle of repayment to the developing countries of the levies and other taxes collected on imports of products from those countries. After much bargaining, the "77" agreed to drop this request for the repayment of levies and to tone down the text on

agricultural support. The complete text of the Resolution is attached. It should be noted that the Conference did not become a negotiating body; it merely transmitted to the international organizations (UNCTAD, G.A.T.T.) recommendations relating to the latter's activity, the content of which raises no special problems for the Community.

4. Institutional framework

The Conference :

- (a) recommended the establishment of a World Food Council (WFC) whose members would be nominated by ECOSOC with balanced geographic representation and confirmed by the General Assembly. The Secretariat would be provided by the F.A.O. This Council would be a coordinating mechanism which would see to it that an integrated approach was made to solving the food problem. This Council would periodically examine the main problems and the questions of policy affecting the world food situation and the measures proposed or taken by governments or the United Nations with a view to solving them.
- (b) instructed the F.A.O. to create within itself a Food Security Committee responsible in particular for :
- examining continuously the situation and the prospects of demand, supply and the stocks of basic food products and to examine, in particular, whether the level of stocks was adequate for ensuring a regular supply in case of bad harvests;
 - to examine the measures taken by governments to implement the International Undertaking on World Food Security project.
- (c) recommended the reshaping of the existing inter-governmental Committee for the World Food Programme in order to change it into a Committee for Policies and Programmes for Food Aid which would be responsible in particular for :
- coordinating the national and international, bilateral and multilateral food aid programmes and assessing the needs and availabilities of aid;

- making recommendations to governments as regards, for example, the priorities of the programmes, the composition of aid, etc.

The two above Committees will be responsible for making regular reports to the World Food Council.

Notice is drawn to the fact that the International Fund for Agricultural Development (see Point 1) will be managed by a management body, also responsible for reporting to the W.F.C.

The institutional framework created by the Conference is a satisfactory compromise solution in the sense that :

- it is relatively outside the sphere of politics for it stems from ECOSOC and not from the General Assembly;
- it does not include the creation of a new administrative body.

5. Universal declaration for the definitive elimination of hunger

The Conference adopted a universal declaration, of a political nature, which proclaims the right of every human being to be free from hunger and malnutrition. This declaration adopts moreover the principles stated in the various recommendations for action by the International Community in the different specific spheres of aid for development, world food security and trade.

PART TWO

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CONCLUSIONS OF THE WORLD FOOD CONFERENCE AND THE RESULTING
IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COMMUNITY1. World Food Security(a) Global information and early warning system on food aid and agriculture

In order to carry out the recommendations of the Conference the Community and its Member States will be required to provide regular information and forecasts in respect of production, consumption and trade in basic food products (in particular wheat, rice, secondary cereals, soya beans and meat) and on other aspects affecting their situation e.g. the prices and the production of the main elements and the agricultural equipment, etc.

(b) The International Undertaking on World Food Security project

The Community and its Member States will undertake actively to participate in the future work of the F.A.O. for implementing the Undertaking and they will declare their readiness to subscribe to it when they will be requested to do so by the Director General of the F.A.O.

The Community will see to it that the discussions which are planned in this field in the more restricted framework of a Group of the main importing and exporting countries (see point 2 b)) in no way prejudge the principle stated in the overall approach for the multilateral negotiations in the context of G.A.T.T.

(c) Food Aid

As regards meeting the objective of 10,000,000 tonnes set out in the Recommendation of the Conference, one of the first opportunities for meeting such an objective could be the negotiation for the extension of the term of validity of the Convention on food aid scheduled for the beginning of 1975.

2. The International Fund for Agricultural Development

Although the Community as such has not at his stage adopted a constructive attitude on the matter, it will be required to reconsider its position in due course, in the light of the real opportunities which will appear as regards the Fund.

3. Institutional framework and participation by the Community

The various recommendations adopted by the Conference on the subject of the matters mentioned in particular at point 1 (a), (b) and (c) above raise the problem of the full participation by the Community in the work of the organizations responsible for implementing such recommendations. To the extent that the actions considered concern the Community as such the responsibility of the latter is directly committed and, consequently, the Community must be able to participate actively at all the stages of the discussion and the negotiation in the appropriate bodies.

However, it should be made quite clear right away that any obligation on the part of the Community could not be assumed except on condition that it is recognized as a member by right, apart from the right to vote, of the new organizations to be created under the World Food Council. The representation of the Community would be ensured according to its own internal rules.

The problem of the participation of the Community as such arises in respect of the World Food Council, given the questions which will be handled by that body. It should be noted in this connection that the composition of the World Food Council must be decided by the General Assembly on a proposal of ECOSOC.

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