

DECLARATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON THE HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

Following a proposal of the Government of Sweden, formalized in a letter dated 20 May 1968, the Economic and Social Council decided to place the question of convening an International Conference on the Problems of the Human Environment on the agenda of its mid-1968 session (letter dated 20 May 1968 from the Permanent Representative of Sweden addressed to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, E/4466/Add.1). The explanatory memorandum attached to the letter stated that the changes in the natural surroundings, brought about by man, had become an urgent problem for developed as well as developing countries, and that these problems could only be solved through international co-operation. The Swedish Government proposed to convene a conference under the auspices of the United Nations, to work on a solution for the problems of human environment.

To assist the Economic and Social Council in its consideration of the question, the Secretary-General prepared a report outlining the work and programmes of the various organizations of the United Nations family, relevant to the problems of the human environment (E/4553). During its mid-1968 session, a draft resolution entitled "Question of convening an international conference on the problems of human environment" was submitted to the Economic and Social Council (E/L.1226). After revision, the Economic and Social Council adopted resolution 1346 (XLV) of 30 July 1968, by which it recommended that the General Assembly include the item entitled "The problems of human environment" in the agenda of its twenty-third session and consider the desirability of convening a conference on problems of the human environment.

At its twenty-third session, the General Assembly, in plenary, considered the item entitled "The problems of the human environment" on 3 December 1968. It had before it the report of the Economic and Social Council (A/7203), a note by the Secretary-General (A/7291), as well as a draft resolution sponsored by fifty-five Member States (A/L.553 and Add.1-4). The General Assembly adopted resolution 2398 (XXIII) of 3 December 1968, in which it decided to convene a United Nations Conference on the Human Environment and requested the Secretary-General to submit a report concerning, *inter alia*, the nature, scope and progress of work being done in the field of human environment, the main problems in this area, and the possible methods of preparing the Conference.

At its forty-seventh session in 1969, the Economic and Social Council considered the report of the Secretary-General entitled "Problems of the human environment" which had been prepared in response to General Assembly resolution 2398 (XXIII) (E/4667). A draft resolution sponsored by seventeen Member States was introduced and adopted as resolution 1448 (XLVII) of 6 August 1969 by the Economic and Social Council. The resolution recommended that a Preparatory Committee be established, a small conference secretariat be set up, and the Secretary-General be entrusted with overall responsibility of organizing the Conference (A/7603).

At the twenty-fourth session of the General Assembly in 1969, the item was allocated to the Second Committee, which had before it a note prepared by the Secretary-General (A/7707), including the Economic and Social Council resolution, and recommending the adoption of a resolution on this matter. On 12 November 1969, the Second Committee approved, by acclamation, a draft resolution introduced by Chile, Ethiopia, Finland, India, Iran, Jamaica, Mexico, Nigeria, Pakistan, the Philippines, Sweden and Yugoslavia (A/C.2/L.1069 and Add.1). Upon the recommendation of the Second Committee (A/7866), the General Assembly unanimously adopted resolution 2581 (XXIV) on 15 December 1969, which established the Preparatory Committee for the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment and requested the Secretary-General to

submit a progress report through the Economic and Social Council to the General Assembly for its twenty-fifth session.

The Preparatory Committee held its first session from 10 to 20 March 1970 and submitted its report to the General Assembly (A/CONF.48/PC/6).

On 19 June 1970, in response to the request of the General Assembly, the Secretary-General submitted a progress report to the Economic and Social Council (E/4828). The Economic and Social Council took note of the progress report by its resolution 1536 (XLIX) on 27 July 1970.

At its twenty-fifth session, the General Assembly considered the item “United Nations Conference on the Human Environment” and adopted resolution 2657 (XXV) of 7 December 1970 on this matter.

The Preparatory Committee held its second session from 8 to 19 February 1971 (A/CONF.48/PC/9), and its third session from 13 to 24 September 1971 (A/CONF.48/PC/13). During these sessions, the Preparatory Committee established an inter-governmental working group to prepare a draft declaration on the human environment and four other working groups to work on issues of marine pollution, soils, surveillance and conservation, respectively.

At its twenty-sixth session, the Second Committee of the General Assembly considered the item entitled “United Nations Conference on Human Environment” (A/8577). Serving as a basis for discussion was a report by the Secretary-General on the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment (A/8509). At the same session, the General Assembly adopted, on the recommendation of the Second Committee, resolution 2849 (XXVI) of 20 December 1971, by which it set forth conditions for the action plan and the action proposals that were to be submitted to the Conference. On the same day, the General Assembly also adopted resolution 2850 (XXVI) in which it, *inter alia*, approved the provisional agenda and draft rules of procedure for the Conference as submitted by the Preparatory Committee, and requested the Secretary-General to conclude the preparations for the Conference and to circulate in advance of the Conference a draft declaration on the human environment.

The fourth and final session of the Preparatory Committee was held from 6 to 10 March 1972. The Preparatory Committee agreed upon a draft preamble and principles of a declaration on the human environment, submitted by an inter-governmental working group (A/CONF.48/PC/16), and further agreed to forward the draft declaration to the Conference for consideration (A/CONF.48/PC/17).

The United Nations Conference on the Human Environment was held in Stockholm, Sweden, from 5 to 16 June 1972. The Conference was attended by representatives of 113 Member States of the United Nations, as well as members of the specialized agencies of the United Nations. The Conference documents drew upon a large number of papers received from Governments as well as inter-governmental and non-governmental organizations, including 86 national reports on environmental problems (Report of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, Stockholm, 5 to 16 June 1972, A/CONF.48/14).

The Conference established a Working Group on the Declaration on the Human Environment as well as three main committees to study the six substantive items on its agenda, namely: planning and management of human settlements for environmental quality; educational, informational, social and cultural aspects of environmental quality; environmental aspects of natural resources management; development and environment; identification and control of pollutants of broad international significance; and international organizational implications of action proposals. On 16 June 1972, after

consideration and discussion of the reports of the main committees and of the Working Group, the Conference adopted by acclamation, subject to observations and reservations, the Declaration on the Human Environment, which consisted of a preamble and 26 principles. The Declaration was based on the text of the draft declaration submitted by the Preparatory Committee, as revised and amended by the Working Group on the Declaration on the Human Environment and by the Conference in plenary. The Conference also adopted 109 recommendations for environmental action at the international level. The report of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment (A/CONF.48/14 and Corr.1), which contained the Declaration, was transmitted by the Secretary-General to the Economic and Social Council and to the General Assembly (E/5217 and A/8783, respectively).

The Economic and Social Council took note of the report of the Conference by a decision of 17 October 1972 (E/5209/Add.1). At its twenty-seventh session, the General Assembly, on the recommendation of the Second Committee, adopted resolution 2994 (XXVII) on 15 December 1972, by which it noted with satisfaction the report of the Conference and drew the attention of Governments to the Declaration. It also designated 5 June as World Environment Day.