Resolution 736 (1980)[1]

World Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (Rome, 12-20 July 1979)

Parliamentary Assembly

The Assembly,

1. Having regard to the United Nations World Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development, held in Rome from 12 to 20 July 1979 within the framework of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation ;

2. Referring to the declaration of principles, programme of action and resolution on a follow-up adopted by the said conference ;

3. Welcoming the fact that this conference, attended by nearly all of the world's nations and observers from a large number of intergovernmental agencies, as well as from the European Communities, was convened to discuss the urgent need to undertake agrarian reform and to develop rural areas in large parts of the developing world ;

4. Recognising, however, that the need to hold such a conference must in part be seen as reflecting the failure of governments to live up to many of the commitments made at the 1974 World Food Conference ;

5. Recalling its own Resolution 583 (1975), on the 1974 World Food Conference and the recommendations contained therein ;

6. Noting that, in spite of the socalled "green revolution" - which has allowed the introduction of crops with higher yields and better resistance against diseases - per capita agricultural production in the developing world has almost stagnated in the 1970s, probably and at least in part as a consequence of the insufficient governmental action referred to above ;

7. Regretting that representatives of farmers' associations or agricultural production in general were not invited to assist in the preparation of the conference, and believing that such participation would have been of great use to the conference,

8. Pledges its support of the implicit conclusion of the conference, namely that the food shortage in the developing world cannot be solved exclusively, or even principally, by large-scale food exports from countries enjoying surplus production, but that such measures must be supplemented by policies within developing countries themselves aiming at increased self-sufficiency in agricultural produce ;

9. Believes that such policies of developing countries must be based, inter alia, on the following principles, some of which were recognised in the declaration of principles and in the programme of action adopted by the conference :

a. that the traditional emphasis on urban expansion and large-scale industrial projects should be abandoned in favour of a policy which sees the development of rural areas, with their agriculture and forestry, as the prime motor for sustained economic and social development

1. See Doc. 4546, report of the Committee on Agriculture Text adopted by the Standing Committee, acting on behalf of the Assembly, on 3 July 1980.

b. that agrarian reform is necessary if further stagnation in agricultural production is to be avoided, and that such reform must be based on the recognition that the access to resources has to be made more equitable and more of the revenues should befall those who actually work the land ;

c. that agricultural production should in the first place be aimed at meeting domestic needs and only in the second be geared to capricious world demand for various export crops ;

d. that particular support should be given toward building up socio-economic infrastructures in rural areas, and in particular toward the establishment of agriculture- and forestry-related industries which will act as multipliers for economic growth in general ;

e. that any successful agricultural policy will need the active participation, from the inception to the implementation of projects, of farmers themselves or representatives of associations acting on their behalf, and that governments should actively encourage the establishment of representative rural organisations pursuing the economic and social advancement of their members ;

f. that the diffusion of knowledge and the transfer of resources made possible by international co-operation are necessary components of change, and that governments should not regard such external influence as a potential threat to their national interests or independence ;

10. Calls on all its members to urge - especially before measures of the kind referred to above can have a positive effect on production - national parliaments and their governments to work in favour of the international community finally living up to the commitments entered into at the United Nations World Food Conference of 1974, and in particular those relating to :

10.1. the setting up of an international system of food reserves ;

10.2. the conclusion of world-wide agreements to stabilise prices of basic food commodities ;

11. Appeals to governments of member states to give FAO, the World Bank and other financing institutes the means to implement or support the initiatives called for in the present resolution.