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INTERNATIONAL TECHNICAL CONFERENCE ON THE CONSERVATION  
OF THE LIVING RESOURCES OF THE SEA

Rome - 18 April 1955

INTERNATIONAL TECHNICAL CONFERENCE ON THE CONSERVATION  
OF THE LIVING RESOURCES OF THE SEA

GENERAL COMMITTEE

PROVISIONAL SUMMARY RECORD OF THE FIRST MEETING

held on 23 April 1955 at 11.30 hours

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CHAIRMAN: Mr. SUNNANA (Norway)

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(5 p.)

1. Discussion of the composition and functions of working parties

The CHAIRMAN asked for comments on his suggestion that Working Parties should be set up to deal with the various agenda items. Amongst numerous other suggestions, Mr. HERRINGTON (United States of America) thought the views of different regions should be represented.

Mr. BABAIAN (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) suggested that it was essential to know first what the principal problems were, and Mr. CHOPRA (India) thought that there should be some arrangement by which the Working Parties should study the relevant problems on a regional basis.

Mr. d'ANCONA (Italy) thought that one Working Party could deal with the scientific problems raised in items 9 and 10 of the agenda while the second, an "interpretative" one, could consider items 11 and 12.

Mr. ANDERSON (Australia) agreed with this suggestion but Mr. BABAIAN (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) thought that the second Working Party might involve itself in legal questions outside the scope of the Conference.

Mr. de ESPADA (Spain) emphasized that the Conference was concerned with technical matters.

The DEPUTY CHAIRMAN felt that the Conference should certainly not exceed its terms of reference by trespassing on the juridical sphere. It should not produce a legal report but a report which was not only well founded from a technical point of view but also presented in terms which would be useful to the International Law Commission.

Mr. WALL (United Kingdom) thought that the first Working Party should deal with items 10 to 11 of the agenda and the second with items 12 and 13.

The CHAIRMAN emphasized the necessity of working quickly through small committees. Mr. HERRINGTON (United States of America) felt that the Conference had to consider:

(a) Types of regulations in operation

(b) Unresolved problems

and that the Committee drafting the report would have to look at regional and at general problems.

The CHAIRMAN proposed to create one Working Party only with a possibility of establishing special groups for specific problems. All delegations could attend the Working Party but the groups might include technicians only.

Mr. WALL (United Kingdom) pointed out that in view of the variety of items to be considered by the Working Party the delegates attending at different times would have to have different qualifications, e.g. for items 9 and 10 biologists would be needed while other types of delegates would be more suitable for the other items. If there is only one Working Party, it might be difficult to get the right type of people.

Mr. d'ANCONA (Italy) supporting Mr. Wall thought it was difficult to have only one Working Party. He thought two would be necessary and proposed that in order to keep the number of participants down only delegations with technicians would participate.

Mr. BABAIAN (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) was in favour of one Working Party which could establish if necessary a certain number of working sub-groups.

Mr. LIANG (Legal Adviser) gave some background information and stated that according to his understanding the purpose of the present Conference was

- (a) to increase knowledge of methods of fishery conservation and
- (b) to make recommendations to the International Law Commission.

Recommendations were not to be of a juridical nature but rather conclusions on principles of conservation based on scientific knowledge.

The CHAIRMAN said that he understood that the terms of reference of the Conference were:

- (a) to assemble the available knowledge of fishery conservation and
- (b) to consider what solutions could be applied to specific problems.

Mr. de ESPADA (Spain) thought that these various clarifications were of major importance and that it would be most useful to the delegates to have them recorded by the Secretariat.

The DEPUTY CHAIRMAN pointed out that of course the Conference was of a technical nature but that it ought to be kept in mind that it was to report to a juridical commission which in its turn would have to report to the United Nations General Assembly. In other words the technical conclusions were not an end in themselves, and must be oriented towards use by the International Law Commission. This could be illustrated by matters arising under item 12 of the agenda dealing with existing Conventions which have technical provisions but are supported by juridical machinery.

The CHAIRMAN illustrated the scope of the discussion at the Conference by saying that the Conference could conceivably conclude that present Conventions are sufficient. This would be of value to the International Law Commission. Alternatively it might conclude the contrary. In either case the International Law Commission would be the authority on the legal aspects. The Chairman proposed to have one Working Party including representatives of all delegations with technical qualifications plus if necessary small working groups. This question could not, however, be solved immediately.

Mr. d'ANCONA (Italy) expressed his agreement with the Chairman. The Conference must give the International Law Commission an exact basis for its work and arrive at sound technical conclusions on conservation problems (items 9 and 10 of the agenda). One Committee would be necessary to formulate those conclusions.

Mr. BABAIAN (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) pointed out that these points would have to be taken into account in the drafting of the final report.

In answer to a question put forward by Mr. WALL (United Kingdom) the CHAIRMAN stated that the countries could be represented in the Working Party by the expert they thought the most qualified for the subject under discussion. Item 13 would have to be deferred for consideration after conclusions were presented on items 9 - 12. All delegations desiring to do so could nominate representatives on the Working Party.

Mr. HERRINGTON (United States of America) said that if this was so the Working Party might become so big that it would be necessary to divide it into sub-groups.

The DEPUTY-CHAIRMAN suggested appointing a special Working Party of 7 - 9 members to work on item 9 only.

Mr. ANDERSON (Australia) supported the view of the United States delegate and thought it would be good to appoint a special Working Party on item 10

Mr. WALL (United Kingdom) emphasized the advantage of small Working Parties especially as far as drafting was concerned. On the proposal of the CHAIRMAN it was decided to leave the discussion at that point, and the members of the General Committee were asked to consider the points raised in order to be in a position to make useful proposals later.

Other questions considered were:

2. Holidays and work days.

It was decided to work every day of the week except on Sundays and to work half day on Saturdays.

3. Undesirability of discussing purely national conservation regulations

It was agreed that discussion of specific national regulations in the field of fishery conservation was not desirable.

The meeting was adjourned at 13.15 hours subject to the call of the Chairman.