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SOCIAL ADVANCEMENT IN TRUST TERRITORIES

(GENERAL ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION 323 (IV)):

MIGRANT LABOUR

Letter dated 3 April 1952 from the Assistant Director
General of the International Labour Office to
the Secretary-General

Note by the Secretariat: The Assistant Director-General has indicated that the documents referred to in the fourth paragraph of his letter are being sent under separate cover. They will be transmitted to the Trusteeship Council when they have been received.

I have the honour to send you on behalf of the Director-General of the International Labour Office, for the information of the Trusteeship Council, a note dealing with the action taken by the ILO in relation to migrant labour in non-metropolitan, including trust territories.

Reference has already been made to this subject in my letter to you of 21 June 1951 which indicated the action already taken and envisaged by the ILO in the matter. The information now supplied is communicated in accordance with the undertaking given by the Director-General in the course of the sixth session of the Trusteeship Council and to meet the wishes expressed by the General Assembly of the United Nations in its resolution 323 (IV) of 15 November 1949 and by the Trusteeship Council resolution 127 (VI).

The attached note gives certain details in regard to the work recently undertaken by the ILO on the subject and in particular indicates the nature of the conclusions and recommendations of the ILO Committee of Experts on Social Policy in Non-Metropolitan Territories, which met from 26 November to 8 December 1951.

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Also enclosed are copies of (1) a report on the matter prepared by the Office for the Committee of Experts (CNT/2/III), together with supplementary information supplied by Mr. M. Smuts, the South African member of the Committee, and by Mr. W. Gemmill, representative of the employers' group of the Governing Body at the Committee; (2) the report of the Committee of Experts relating to the migrant labour problem. Attention is drawn to the indications given in the note or in the report of the Committee as to the views expressed by Mr. Smuts and Mr. Gemmill.

International Labour Office

Note for the Trusteeship Council in regard to Measures Taken
by the ILO to deal with the problem of Migrant Labour in Non-
Metropolitan Territories

To meet the desire expressed by the General Assembly of the United Nations in its resolution 323 (IV), of 15 November 1949 in regard to social progress in Trust Territories and by the Trusteeship Council in resolution 127 (VI), the International Labour Office informed the Secretary-General of the United Nations by letter of 21 June 1951^{1/} of the measures taken by the ILO in relation to the problem of migrant labour in non-metropolitan territories. A note attached to that letter indicated that the Director-General of the ILO had already given assurance to the Trusteeship Council that the Office was continuing to study this question, that it proposed to follow up those studies by on-the-spot consultations and investigations with the co-operation of some of the authorities concerned in Africa in the course of 1950 and to discuss the whole matter with the ILO Committee of Experts on Social Policy in Non-Metropolitan Territories in the course of 1951. The note went on to say that three officials of the ILO had accordingly visited various territories in Africa in the summer of 1950 and had gathered a considerable amount of information on migrant labour. They had also laid a paper before and had taken part in the

^{1/} Circulated as document T/927.

discussions on the subject at the Inter-African Labour Conference in Elisabethville, Belgian Congo, in July 1950.

The information gathered in Africa and the other studies undertaken by the Office enabled a detailed report on the problem to be prepared which was submitted to the Committee of Experts on Social Policy in Non-Metropolitan Territories, which met in Geneva from 26 November to 8 December 1951. Copy of that Office report (CMT/2/III) is attached to this note, together with further information in regard to the conditions in the Union of South Africa supplied to the Committee by Mr. M. Smuts, the South African expert, and a note on the migrant labour policy of the Witwatersrand Gold Mines presented by Mr. W. Gemmill, the representative of the employers' group of the Governing Body at the Committee.^{2/}

There is also attached the report of the Committee itself dealing with migrant labour, together with a series of conclusions, certain of which deal with the improvement of conditions of life of inhabitants in rural areas from which migrants come and others with the protection of migrant workers in the course of their journeys and during their periods of employment. The conclusions of the Committee on the former point (conditions of life in rural areas) have as their starting point the belief of the experts that the migrations of workers (particularly those of African workers) are largely caused by the unsatisfactory economic and social conditions prevailing in many of the rural areas and that measures designed to solve the problem of migration should start in the rural areas. Accordingly, the Committee adopted a series of conclusions which are set out in appendix I of the report calling on the Governments concerned to intensify the efforts they are already making to improve social and economic conditions in these rural areas and, where necessary, to invite regional or international organizations, including the ILO, to co-operate in the study of the problems, in working out solutions and in their

^{2/} Three members of the Governing Body attended the meetings of the Committee of Experts representing respectively the Government, employers' and workers' groups. They made it clear in the course of the discussions that they were not parties to nor had responsibility for the report and recommendations of the Committee either in respect of migrant labour or any of the other matters discussed by it.

implementation by providing technical and financial assistance. The Committee then enumerated a series of points which should be given full consideration in connexion with any policies designed to raise the economic and social level of the rural communities from which the migrant workers come.

The Committee, in addition, considered that further steps should be taken for the protection of migrant workers on their journeys and during their periods of employment. It accordingly adopted a series of conclusions with that end in view. These call for intensive and continuous regional, bilateral and unilateral consideration by Governments of the problems of migrant workers with a view to appropriate regulation and adequate provision for migrant workers and their families, whether recruited in their own districts or otherwise engaged on contract, or presenting themselves voluntarily at the place of employment. The points to be covered should include measures to secure the welfare of workers on their journeys, medical examination before and after employment, satisfactory wages and conditions, welfare arrangements, provision for remittances to the worker's family, deferred pay and for the return of the worker to his home.

The Committee considered that the special question of migrations which are not subject or amenable to control should be dealt with unilaterally, bilaterally or regionally with a view to achieving a progressive limitation of such migrations but that meanwhile the workers concerned should, as far as practicable, receive protection similar to that afforded to other migrant workers. The general aim of policy should be that "workers should wherever practicable be established permanently in residence with their families at or near their places of employment except where permanent employment is clearly against the interest of the worker and of his family, or of the economies of the territories concerned".

To achieve these aims the Committee considered that Governments should consider the advisability of such measures as development of town planning and housing programmes, further steps for the fixing and protection of wages; the setting up of public employment service systems where appropriate; further development of vocational and technical training, including apprenticeship schemes and in-plant training; further provisions for the access of indigenous workers to skilled employment (on which the South African expert made certain

/reservations);

reservations); full rights of association of indigenous workers and freedom for all legitimate trade union activities; further development of welfare measures for workers and their families; development of co-operative undertakings; initial measures of social security and measures to promote permanent settlement.

The Committee suggested that the Governing Body of the ILO should examine the possibility of submitting its conclusions in regard to the protection of migrant workers on their journeys and during their periods of employment (appendix II of the report) to a future session of the International Labour Conference with a view to the adoption of a recommendation on the subject. The report of the Committee of Experts was considered by the Governing Body at its 118th session, in March 1952, and the following decisions were taken: on the first point (improvement of conditions of life in rural areas - appendix I), to authorize the Director-General to communicate the texts of the conclusions to the Governments of the States Members concerned and to appropriate international organizations; on the second point (protection of migrant workers on their journeys and during their periods of employment - appendix II), to agree that the matter should be brought again to its attention when it proceeds to consider the agenda of the thirty-seventh session of the International Labour Conference (1954) and meanwhile to authorize the communication of the conclusions of the Committee to the Governments of the States Members concerned and to the Trusteeship Council.
