



ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL

Eighteenth Session

OFFICIAL RECORDS

796th Meeting

Monday, 5 July 1954,
at 10.30 a.m.

PALAIS DES NATIONS, GENEVA

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*President: Mr. Juan I. COOKE (Argentina)**Present:*

The representatives of the following countries: Argentina, Australia, Belgium, China, Cuba, Czechoslovakia, Ecuador, Egypt, France, India, Norway, Pakistan, Turkey, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Venezuela, Yugoslavia.

Observers from the following Member States: Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Indonesia, Israel, Mexico, Netherlands, Poland.

The representatives of the following specialized agencies: International Labour Organisation, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, International Monetary Fund, World Health Organization, World Meteorological Organization.

Organization and operation of the Council and its commissions and amendment of rule 82 of the rules of procedure of the Council (Council resolutions 414 (XIII), 442 (XIV), 443 (XIV), 445 I (XIV), 512 A (XVII) and 530 (XVII), and General Assembly resolution 735 (VIII)) (E/2541, E/2542, E/2598, E/2623, E/2625)

[Agenda item 29]

1. The PRESIDENT welcomed the Secretary-General to the 796th meeting and invited him to address the Council.

2. Mr. HAMMARSKJÖLD (Secretary-General) wished first to thank the President for his kind welcome; he did not need to assure him of the very great interest taken by all members of the Secretariat in the activities of the Council, or of his personal feeling of responsibility in connexion with its work.

3. He thought that it was now generally recognized that the real basis for long-term development in the direction of peace and security was the establishment of sound economic and social conditions. That placed the Council at the very centre of the United Nations' work. What was more natural in such circumstances than that the Secretary-General should give all the time he could

find to close co-operation and collaboration with the Council? He was happy that that co-operation was welcomed by the Council and, in that spirit, was greatly encouraged in placing before the Council proposals which were an expression of his concern for the sound development of the United Nations Organization and for the best possible outcome of the efforts being mutually made by its main organs.

4. The importance of the item which the Council was then discussing needed no emphasis, for the organization and operation of the Council and its commissions bore directly on the functioning not only of the system of economic and social co-operation envisaged in the Charter, but also, fundamentally and decisively, of the whole work for peace. It was obviously not for him, at that stage, to make suggestions about the scope of the Council's discussion, and he would therefore venture to offer only a few comments on the documentation he had submitted. He would also be at the Council's disposal for the next fortnight to provide such additional information or comments as might be needed. He hoped that the Council would understand if at times he ventured to take the initiative in one direction or another, or to express personal views, because the logical sequel to the deep concern which, as he had already mentioned, the Council and the Secretariat shared, was that the two parties were collaborators, and it should be recognized that in the process of collaboration constitutional lines might occasionally get a little crossed. He would ask the Council's indulgence should he sometimes appear to be too eager to help; he would be prompted only by a sincere desire to be of assistance to the Council, and he hoped, therefore, that his action would be properly understood.

5. The Secretariat had submitted three documents to the Council. The first, document E/2541 of 12 February 1954, related to the implementation of the existing resolutions concerning the organization and operation of the Council and its commissions, especially Council resolution 414 (XIII). He warmly endorsed the aims set out in the preamble to section A I of that resolution—namely, the adequate preparation of meetings, the circulation of documentation in good time, the spreading of work more evenly over the year, the advance determination of dates of discussion, and the avoidance of double discussion. Some of the measures taken to achieve those aims—notably the proposals for the allocation of broad groups of items between the spring and summer sessions of the Council—had not so far proved practicable.

6. The possibility of making other arrangements called for serious consideration, taking into account all relevant circumstances. He felt that there lay the key to a few

of the main practical problems with which the Council was faced. Others—especially the arrangements for ensuring more thorough advance preparation of the Council's programme of work for the year as a whole and for any particular sessions—had already yielded useful results, and the Council might therefore wish to confirm them. It would, no doubt, also wish to consider other practical measures likely to enhance the effectiveness of its work. Such measures should, he submitted, aim above all at keeping the scope of the sessional agendas to manageable proportions, while at the same time ensuring greater concentration upon matters of priority importance where concrete results were achievable through international action.

7. With regard to the functional commissions, the sole specific suggestion made in document E/2541 (paragraph 16) concerned the Social Commission, about which the General Assembly had referred to the Council a number of different, and to some extent conflicting, proposals. His principal general suggestions were, first, that the Social Commission might continue to meet every other year, and secondly, that, while the Commission could discharge its broad policy functions through its biennial sessions, it might also benefit from the assistance of some expert working committees in the more specialized technical tasks it was called upon to carry out. He would like, however, to add two general comments about the functional commissions: in the first place, it did not seem likely that, with the development of long-term work programmes for the Secretariat, the need for the commissions to exercise general supervision of policy and work would continue to be so important as it had been in the formative years of the Organization. In the second place, the considerations which he would develop later in connexion with the review of the substantive work of the Secretariat had an important bearing on the question of future arrangements relating to individual commissions and sub-commissions of the Council.

8. The considerations he had just mentioned were also of direct relevance to the subject dealt with in the second document he had submitted to the Council—namely, the brief memorandum on the control and limitation of documentation (E/2542)—in which the Council's attention was drawn to General Assembly resolution 789 (VIII), which invited the Council to pursue and intensify its efforts to reduce further the documentation required by it and by its functional and regional commissions. The same General Assembly resolution also invited all United Nations organizations to co-operate with him in his efforts to reduce the volume and to improve the quality of United Nations documentation. He knew that in that matter, which was of vital importance to the achievement of the Council's purposes, he could count on its full support. He would suggest that, in conveying the General Assembly's request to the functional and regional commissions, the Council might formally invite them to consult closely with him with the object of realizing as fully as possible the General Assembly's objectives.

9. The third report he had submitted (E/2598), which, as he had already indicated, bore directly upon the other two, contained the conclusions drawn from the review of the organization and work of the Departments of

Economic and Social Affairs in so far as they concerned the Council's programmes and documentation. The Council, at its seventeenth session, had been good enough to defer consideration in order that it might have these conclusions before it, and he trusted that it would find them both helpful and generally acceptable.

10. He had had an opportunity of consulting the executive heads of the specialized agencies about those suggestions at the recent meeting of the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination (ACC). Their comments would be found in paragraphs 4-6 of ACC's sixteenth report (E/2607), which was also before the Council. The primary purpose of the review had been to re-assess, in consultation and in agreement with the other principal United Nations organs concerned, the part which the Secretariat could most appropriately and constructively play in furthering the aims and purposes of the Charter, and, in that context, to make a fresh appreciation of the nature and scope of the activities which it could most usefully undertake.

11. Describing the general philosophy and technique underlying the Secretariat's review of United Nations activities, he explained that the Secretariat's object had been to make the Organization as efficient and helpful to governments as possible. It was natural that during its first eight formative years of expansion and development the United Nations should have sought to test its influence in various directions and to try out and study various ways and methods. Any organization in its first youth was likely sometimes to try to do more than it could practically and usefully undertake. Hence, reconsideration was called for at a certain stage. Self-criticism was natural in a body like the United Nations in order to ascertain what ground had been covered and in which direction progress had been achieved or failure encountered.

12. It was always an open question when and how such a review should be undertaken. In instituting his review, first of the Secretariat and later of the Organization in general, he had been prompted by the consideration that the Organization had now reached a sufficient degree of maturity to require re-examination of its efforts and of the direction of its work.

13. While in such an operation the Secretary-General and the Secretariat bore only part of the responsibility, since the responsibilities were, in fact, carried by all the principal organs of the United Nations, the Secretariat was at the same time a permanent body with specific administrative responsibilities, and for that reason it had seemed to him that the main organs might rightly expect help from the Secretariat and that the latter should take upon itself the responsibility of providing, not guidance or a lead, but a basis on which the principal organs could conduct their examination.

14. In consultation with the officials mainly concerned, he had accordingly reviewed all the various activities of the Organization. The fundamental questions to which that review had been directed were: What does the United Nations do? Why does it do it? and How does it do it? The result had been to provide the Secretariat with a map of the United Nations work which had

proved invaluable as a basis for further study and proposals.

15. The next aim of the review had been to try to establish, at least tentatively, policy lines, with the object of determining the main aims and activities; that was to say, the Secretariat had had to establish criteria for what it should do and for the way in which it should do it.

16. The third stage was that of organization, the purpose being to find out what organizational patterns best fitted the tasks which it was felt should be pursued. What was required was to establish an "ideal" organization, one exhibiting the best possible lines of authority, communication and combination of work among the various groups in the Secretariat. The aim at that stage had been to reach a result where the whole would be more than merely the sum of the parts, since by combining all the activities in the best possible way it might be possible to achieve a general activity where the results obtained in the various sectors were mutually supporting, so that each of them acquired and added value as part of a whole.

17. Only the future could tell whether the Secretariat had succeeded in those aims. He believed, however, that the new organization was likely to provide a better scaffolding for the work than had been the case hitherto.

18. Once the lines of co-ordination between the various activities had been determined, it had been necessary to establish manning tables showing the staff normally required for the various activities; and after the decision had been taken on the target manning tables, a very important step had remained, that of establishing transitional arrangements. Here, two major considerations had come into play: first, that the personnel policy should be so developed as not to cause any unnecessary hardship and to provide the best possible conditions for all staff members, even should reorganization result in some reduction of staff. Secondly, a transitional period was needed in order to wind up various projects in such a manner as not to prejudice the aims in view. In many cases where useful work had been done, it was obvious that work should be continued, even if the project were abandoned, so as not to lose the benefit of what had already been done.

19. He estimated that the transition to the new organization would take some two or three years. Some might consider that too long, but he felt that such a transitional period represented a fairly good balance between the various interests involved. A long-term undertaking such as the United Nations would be unwise to allow itself to be rushed into anything until it was quite clear that what was being done was being done in the best possible way.

20. A subsidiary result of the operation just outlined was that it would effect certain economies, though he would stress that the principal aim had been not economy, but the greatest possible efficiency. The final degree of economy to be achieved would depend on two major decisions, one connected with personnel policy, as approved by the General Assembly, and the other with the programmes which would also have to be considered by the Assembly in the light of the Economic and Social Council's recommendations.

21. Having explained the general administrative policy which formed the frame of the questions under consideration by the Council, he would now revert to the Council's immediate concerns and problems.

22. As was shown in his report (E/2598), his approach to the question of the future development and direction of the Secretariat's activities had led him to conclusions very similar to those already adopted in the Council's resolutions on United Nations programme priorities and the concentration of effort and resources. He had accepted, by and large, the same criteria for the determination of priorities for Secretariat activities as had been established for United Nations economic and social activities as a whole. As a common denominator cementing the various and widespread activities so as to weld them into a whole made strong by inner unity of purpose, he had thus endorsed the promotion of economic and social development, more especially in under-developed countries, through appropriate inter-governmental organizations.

23. If those objectives were to be pursued with full vigour and success, the governments must, through the Council and the General Assembly, share with the Secretariat the responsibility for ensuring that appropriate action was taken to reduce work of lesser importance and to avoid new tasks of dubious value. Drawing the Council's attention to certain practical considerations mentioned in his report (E/2598), he observed that it must be recognized that in any international enterprise of the scope of the United Nations there was a danger of dispersion of efforts and resources over too many projects. The very nature of the responsibilities that must be assumed by the Secretary-General and his senior staff imposed a limit upon the volume of tasks that could be handled effectively, irrespective of any additional funds, personnel and facilities made available; that was to say, there was an optimum size for the Secretariat if it was to be efficient in the dynamic development of the Organization's activities. That was the main reason dictating the need for making a choice, but even without that limitation a choice would be imposed on the Organization by the fact that the governments themselves would, after a certain point had been reached, have difficulty in coping with the mass of documentation supplied by United Nations organs.

24. A decision therefore had to be taken with due regard to considerations such as whether a particular task was one that an international secretariat could perform efficiently and effectively; whether it was designed to meet an urgent and vital need essential for the proper functioning of the United Nations and its principal organs; whether the desired result could not be adequately achieved through independent and unassisted national action; whether the original importance or usefulness of certain activities had diminished, or, alternatively, whether, having regard to the dynamic nature of United Nations operations, new efforts were called for in new directions; and whether in a particular field of inquiry or research full account had been taken of work already done either nationally or internationally and of the practical possibilities that therefore existed of making a new and significant contribution. It went without saying

that the final responsibility for deciding on programmes and priorities rested with States Members.

25. Feeling that it was the Secretary-General's obvious duty to offer advice and express an opinion whenever he deemed it helpful and pertinent to do so, he had submitted to the Council a number of proposals looking towards a shift in emphasis from some of the existing information services and clearing-house activities, a more limited framework for the prosecution of certain work requested of the Secretariat in order to bring it within the true sphere of the Secretariat's competence, the re-consideration of certain low-priority projects by the organs concerned, the recognition of the full responsibility of specialized agencies for particular tasks clearly within their mandate, the assumption, under the Secretariat's general guidance, of certain research, training and other tasks by universities and other private institutions, and a reduction in the number and length of documents, including the discontinuance or reduction in frequency of certain periodicals.

26. Those proposals appeared in paragraphs 7-27 of document E/2598. They did not involve the elimination of any major programme or project upon which the Council or the General Assembly had decided. Such budgetary economies as they might entail represented only a by-product, his only purpose having been to ensure in terms of real benefit to the governments a greater return on the efforts and resources expended and to make the Secretariat the effective instrument of governments that it should be. He counted on the Council's full support in that endeavour.

27. Dealing next with the organization of the Expanded Programme of Technical Assistance, he stated that at its recent session ACC had examined various alternative proposals under consideration by the Technical Assistance Committee (TAC). Its findings appeared in paragraphs 10-16 and in the appendix to ACC's sixteenth report (E/2607). ACC recognized the great importance of the issues raised in the various proposals and was appreciative of the concern they reflected for better management of the Expanded Programme. The latter was still in an experimental stage, and all his colleagues agreed that it should be subject to continuous re-examination with a view to improving its operation. At the same time they believed it was most desirable to avoid the disturbances which inevitably attended frequent changes in organization and method. After careful examination of the complex issues involved, ACC had reached unanimous agreement on the following points of major importance.

28. First ACC welcomed the suggestion that TAC, possibly enlarged so as to broaden its representative character by the inclusion of non-member States, should each year review and formally approve the programme as a whole. That review would deal not with the technical aspects of projects, but with programme interrelationships, over-all priorities and evaluation. Subject to those arrangements, the governing body of each participating agency would be invited to make a technical review of its annual programme.

29. Secondly, it had been decided to study certain aspects of the present relationships between the Secretary-

General, the Executive Chairman, the organizations participating in the Technical Assistance Board (TAB) and TAC. In making that study, ACC would be helped by the careful examination of those matters contained in the report, recently issued, of the Advisory Committee on Budgetary and Administrative Questions (A/2661).

30. Thirdly, it had been generally recognized that there was need of an assurance of greater and more certain financial support for the Programme as a whole. ACC hoped that governments would earnestly consider the vital need for providing long-term financial security for the Programme on an expanding basis.

31. ACC had been unable to reach agreement on a revised system of allocations to the participating organizations. Some of its members considered that TAC should itself determine each year the percentage of available funds to be allocated for the following year to each of the participating organizations, as well as the percentage to be reserved for allocation by TAB. It was felt by the agencies favouring that system that it would retain the merits of the present system while providing for some flexibility in programme development in response to changing needs over a period of years. The majority, however, had favoured an alternative approach whereby programme priorities of requesting governments would be established by negotiations at the country level, subject to a provision which would give each agency a satisfactory measure of certainty and stability in its own programming and administrative planning.

32. He hoped that TAC and the Council would study those suggestions with the attention they deserved, and, in particular, that due weight would be given to the consideration that satisfactory technical assistance programmes were essentially co-operative undertakings based on the carefully formulated requirements of the recipient countries, on the one hand, and on the technical resources and experience of the operating agencies, on the other. The Expanded Programme of Technical Assistance was one of the great constructive agreements of international economic co-operation. It was essential to make sure, when taking an important step forward, that the right balance was preserved between the basic elements of the Programme—central co-ordination, country planning and the professional experience of the participating organizations.

33. Mr. MEADE (United Kingdom) expressed his delegation's appreciation of the Secretary-General's personal attendance at the present session. He would refer later in the Co-ordination Committee to the Secretary-General's proposals. His delegation was glad to see that the general policy envisaged was to achieve a greater concentration of effort rather than to propose any staff upheavals, which would necessarily be discouraging to the staff members themselves.

34. Two new lines of policy were of fundamental importance. The Secretary-General was proposing to spare the Secretariat as much unnecessary and repetitive work as he could; he intended to give it a clear purpose, a guiding principle by which its efforts might be directed. The United Kingdom delegation whole-heartedly approved that policy.

35. No direct mention had been made of the reorganization of the Council itself. The Council, in the words of the Charter, was a "principal organ" of the United Nations, having special powers in connexion with international economic, social, cultural and other matters; it was authorized to make recommendations to the General Assembly, to States Members, and to the specialized agencies; it also had important co-ordinating responsibilities. Accordingly, it should be in a better position than at present to give a lead on economic and social matters of international concern. At present, the agenda was such that the members were constrained, for days at a time, to discuss subjects which by no possible standard could be judged as of sufficient importance to require the attention of those who were responsible for policy-making in the individual countries. Many of the subjects reviewed could be better and more profitably discussed in the specialized agencies, whose membership was now almost universal. Very often the discussion in the Council was a mere reiteration of what had been previously said in an agency.

36. His Government felt that the Council had too many subordinate bodies, all of which sent forward reports for consideration. There was no question of stifling any useful activity in the name of economy, but it was necessary to ensure that the work done by the Council and its subordinate bodies was really useful and effective. The Council had habitually on its agenda reports requested at earlier sessions as a means of deferring decisions, or requested in connexion with some transient situation which no longer obtained. Hence, many meetings were occupied with matters which could not justify the attendance of government policy-makers.

37. The Council should give the lead and could do so by concentrating on problems connected with co-ordination. It could review the world economic situation once a year on the basis of the Secretariat's annual report and the activities of the regional economic commissions. On the social side, there might be a similar broad annual survey on a policy level. Those debates would assume commanding importance. The Council would, at the same time, co-ordinate the activities of the specialized agencies in accordance with Article 63 (2) of the Charter, and have general control of such vital programmes as the Expanded Technical Assistance Programme and those of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

38. Regular sessions should be shortened. The Council must decide whether discussion which seemed redundant could be eliminated. The need for existing subordinate bodies should be scrutinized. Some items might be examined at committee meetings, or at resumed sessions outside the main sessions. His Government believed that the agenda could be limited to main policy items, and the two annual sessions restricted to periods which would make it possible for more Cabinet Ministers to attend. The building stage could be considered as being more or less at an end, and the time had come for the Council to exercise a new function of policy-reviewing and co-ordinating which would be of the greatest international value.

39. Mr. BRILEJ (Yugoslavia) intended at that stage to limit his remarks to certain general principles which

his delegation believed had to be borne in mind if the Council was to carry out efficiently the various tasks entrusted to it. The fundamental task of the Council, in accordance with the terms of the Charter, was to create the conditions of stability and well-being which were the pre-requisite for peaceful and friendly relations among nations. The time had gone when stability could be more or less maintained through the division of the world amongst a few large empires. All non-self-governing territories were striving for independence, and new States had come into existence after both world wars. International co-operation was the only way in which the numerous independent national economies could be made to work together, and it was a principal responsibility of the Council to achieve it.

40. The question of the under-developed countries was the main element in the complex of problems which embraced such other matters as the expansion of international financing, full employment, the promotion of international trade, the development of productive resources, and a number of social and humanitarian problems. His delegation accordingly welcomed the United Kingdom suggestion of concentrating on major policy issues at two shorter regular sessions each year, which would be attended by high-ranking representatives. His delegation also favoured the idea of transforming the committees of the Council into standing committees which could assume some of the present functions of the plenary sessions; they could later submit short reports in a plenary meeting. While the committees' sessions could not be made permanent, since they could not assume the tasks of the functional commissions, they could, however, meet as necessary at shorter intervals.

41. The number of functional commissions should not be unnecessarily increased. They were expert bodies best adapted to the study of complex problems on a continuing basis, and they provided the data on which decisions could be taken; moreover, they allowed countries which were not members of the Council to participate directly in its work. Some, as for instance the Statistical Commission, had proved their worth; others, as for instance the Fiscal Commission, were apparently unable to comply with their terms of reference. The Economic Employment and Development Commission, which dealt with the fundamental problems of world economy, had been suspended by a decision of the Council at its thirteenth session (resolution 414 B.I (XIII)). His delegation felt that each of those complex problems required thorough study before any decision could usefully be taken.

42. It would seem advisable to have separate functional commissions to deal with such essential problems as international financing and the stabilization of the international primary commodity market. It had already been decided to set up a commission for the stabilization of primary commodities (resolution 512 A (XVII)); the second body might study some of the specific problems now included in the Council agenda. At present, there was no world agency studying the two categories of problem in their entirety.

43. While the regional commissions could deal with the utilization of water resources, the Council should take a more active part in developing economic resources

generally, including the application of atomic energy for peaceful purposes; a functional commission could make an appreciable contribution on that subject.

44. A discussion of world social problems would enable the Council to concentrate its efforts. In the years in which there were no reports to be considered, the Social Commission could make a detailed study of conclusions resulting from the general debate the previous year, and plan practical schemes in the light of its own findings. It was essential to have a suitable subordinate body dealing with the task, entrusted to the Council under Article 62 of the Charter, of eradicating prejudice and protecting minorities. In spite of political and other difficulties, progress had been made in regard to information; much more might be achieved by having a special body dealing with the freedom of nations. No change of organization at present seemed necessary in the Commission on Human Rights or in the Commission on the Status of Women; the Council should lay down a working programme for each.

45. His delegation appreciated the deep understanding of the problems under consideration by the Council which the Secretary-General had displayed when approaching the question of reorganization. In connexion with the proposed reorganization, his delegation believed that research work played a vitally important role in the Secretariat and that the most important of the present studies and reviews should remain the concern of the Secretariat; that, however, would not preclude collaboration with universities and scientific institutions. It did not seem that technical assistance and research work could be integrated to any considerable degree without considerable damage to research work, but studies could be made in collaboration with the specialized agencies and the regional commissions.

46. His delegation would listen with an open mind to the other members of the Council, and might have formal proposals to make when the detailed discussion took place in the Co-ordination Committee.

47. The PRESIDENT thanked the Secretary-General for his valuable contribution to the discussion. He reminded members that the Council had decided, in its resolution 512 A (XVII), in connexion with the reorganization of the Council and its commissions, to examine together a proposed amendment to rule 82 of the Council's rules of procedure and the organization and establishment of a permanent advisory commission on international commodity trade. He suggested that, in accordance with the Secretary-General's proposal, the reorganization of the Council would be considered by the Co-ordination Committee. The question of amending rule 82 would be referred to the Council Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations. The Secretary-General had suggested that the question of the permanent advisory commission might be referred to the Co-ordination Committee, and, if necessary, to the Economic Committee, for examination of the comments received from States Members. The Secretariat proposed that if the Council was unable to decide to which committee the question of the permanent advisory commission should be referred,

the matter should be decided after a general discussion in the Council itself.

The suggestions made by the President were approved.

48. Mr. HOTCHKIS (United States of America) noted with approval that the Secretary-General had chosen as his central theme the need for concentration of effort on major issues. Members were indebted to him for having so clearly and courageously pointed out present shortcomings. The Council, which was one of the principal organs of the United Nations, had broad responsibilities, because the advancement of well-being throughout the world was an essential counterpart to the work of the United Nations for the preservation of peace.

49. Though the Council had achieved much during its first eight years of existence it was not operating as effectively as was desirable. The agenda of each session was so overloaded as to prevent adequate consideration of each item, and much time was spent on the discussion of issues which would at best little affect the future course of events. As a corollary, the Secretariat was frequently overburdened with tasks from which little practical result could be expected. Means must be sought of transforming the Council into a fully effective and efficient instrument of general economic and social progress. As a first step, he believed that it would be possible to lighten the Council's agenda while at the same time increasing its effectiveness in the following ways.

50. First, the general programmes of the specialized agencies should be discussed once every two years only. That in no way implied that less attention should be paid to their work; rather he hoped that the agencies particularly the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development and the International Monetary Fund would in future take a more active part in the discussion of items concerning them.

51. Secondly, no items, including those connected with trade union rights and technical assistance, should be discussed more than once a year.

52. Thirdly, paragraph 17 in section A II (b) of resolution 414 (XIII) should be amended so that the subject of "full employment" might be discussed as part of the world economic situation instead of being discussed annually. If in any particular year the employment position throughout the world should become critical it could, of course, be discussed as a separate item.

53. Fourthly, the Council's commissions and sub-commissions should be requested to concentrate their effort on major issues and to refrain from recommending to the Council any projects not likely to make a real contribution towards the advancement of United Nations objectives. Accordingly, no new studies should be undertaken without full consultation with the Secretary-General and, in the case of requests addressed to specialized agencies, prior approval by the Council.

54. Fifthly, an appeal might be made to governments not to propose any new items of work unless they were of primary importance.

55. Although such measures would help to shorten sessional agendas, the Council's work would continue to be very heavy and would require special organization

changes concerning which he would make some general observations while reserving the right to make specific proposals in the Co-ordination Committee.

56. The Council might consider holding a third session of two to three weeks in January instead of the usual brief resumed summer session which normally took place before Christmas. At that third annual session the Council would deal with the usual business of the resumed session and consider such items as could be dealt with by permanent delegations at Headquarters. Thus the more important items could be discussed at the spring and summer sessions, which could be reduced in length to a maximum of three and four weeks respectively provided the earlier measures he had suggested were adopted.

57. His delegation felt that the Council's functional and regional commissions should be maintained and that no change was needed in their terms of reference, frequency of meetings or composition. They all discharged essential functions, and the better they did so, the easier it would be for the Council to deal with their recommendations.

58. As stated at the seventeenth session, the United States delegation understood the serious problems created by excessive price instability for countries producing primary commodities. Its opposition to the creation of a new permanent advisory commission on international commodity trade was not directed at the general objectives sought but at the particular machinery proposed. His country's genuine concern with such problems had been amply demonstrated in practice, ranging as it did from direct action to ensure orderly international markets for particular commodities to assisting under-developed countries to attack the core of the problem by diversifying their economies.

59. The organization of a commission on the lines set forth in resolution 512 A (XVII) raised most difficult questions for the United States as to its participation in the commission. The reasons why his Government maintained its view were set out in its comments (E/2623), and he noted that at least half of the small number of other governments which had replied proposed that the establishment of the commission should be postponed in order to give time for further consideration.

60. The regional economic commissions had done very well, but their work should be integrated more closely with that of the Council. His Government was disturbed by the tendency of some of them and of their secretariats to go their own way, ignoring the directing functions of the Council. Any attempt on their part to deal with world-wide economic issues without going through the Council was contrary to their terms of reference and the purposes for which they had been set up. The *Ad Hoc* Committee on the Organization and Operation of the Council and its Commissions had stated in paragraph 10 of its second report (E/1995/Add.1) submitted at the thirteenth session of the Council: "It is, therefore, the opinion of the Committee that the Council should, on its part, continue to exercise policy guidance, particularly in respect to such matters as the inauguration of major projects or of organizational changes in the regional economic commissions." That statement of principle was important enough to warrant the adoption of a

special resolution at the present session. He also hoped that the Secretary-General would do everything necessary to ensure that the principle was observed by the secretariats of the regional commissions.

61. In principle his Government endorsed the Secretary-General's proposals to eliminate as far as possible Secretariat studies and publications which were not essential to the policy discussions of the Council and its commissions. At the same time, in the interest of orderly procedure, it would be desirable for the Secretary-General to take up with the functional commissions any proposals for the elimination of studies and publications which had originated with them and had been formally approved by the Council. That should not prevent him from reducing the programme to a strict minimum.

62. The above-mentioned changes would go far towards increasing the effectiveness of the United Nations work in promoting general welfare, but the efficacy of any devices to simplify the Council's work would be limited because its heavy responsibilities under the Charter had increased rather than diminished. Justice could not be done to the importance and scope of the Council's work unless States Members were prepared to devote adequate time and staff to it. His Government would continue to exert every effort, together with other Members, to maintain the Council as the principal organ of the United Nations for the advancement of economic and social progress "and better standards of life in greater freedom".

63. Mr. MORALES (Argentina) commended the Secretary-General on his studies on the organization and operation of the Council and its commissions (E/2541 and E/2598) and thanked him for coming to Geneva for the present session. He requested that, in view of its importance, the Secretary-General's statement at that meeting should be circulated as a Council document.

64. The Argentine delegation considered that there were many and varied reasons to justify a review of the organization and operation of the Council and its commissions, in order to achieve the aims of Article 55 of the Charter.

65. After recalling the Council's functions and their importance in connexion with the purposes of the United Nations, he pointed out that between the aims to be achieved and the results so far obtained there was a very wide gap which must be closed. The Council had not in fact succeeded in becoming a truly effective organ for dealing with economic and social problems; it had strayed from the pursuit of concrete solutions to the study of problems which were frequently unconnected with its main tasks. However, that difficulty could probably not be remedied by a formula restricted to structural reorganization. Only if governments contributed to the solution of problems and displayed great breadth of vision could new life be breathed into the Council's work.

66. The main question affecting the fruitfulness of the Council's activities was the number of members. That question being regulated by the Charter, the Argentine Government had resolved to propose an amendment to the Charter in order to increase the membership of the Council in accordance with the increase in the number

of States Members and to improve geographical distribution.

67. So far as concerned the Council's work, it had to be admitted that the number of questions referred to it was constantly increasing, that the questions were more and more varied and that the Council's attention had sometimes been needlessly devoted to problems of minor importance. In order to remedy that state of affairs questions of detail should in future be considered, not in the Council itself, but in the specialized committees, or dealt with at the regional level.

68. The Argentine delegation agreed with the United Kingdom delegation as to the need for a higher level of representation within the Council, which would have the effect of enhancing the value of the decisions taken.

69. At the present stage the Argentine delegation wished to reserve its position with regard to the setting-up of standing committees; it would state its views on that question in the Co-ordination Committee. It considered that periodic meetings must continue to be held if the Council was to perform its functions; the preparatory work could be carried out by working parties in the intervals between sessions.

70. The holding of a third Council session in January, as proposed by the United States representative, would enable current problems to be settled.

71. The Argentine delegation had concluded from a careful study of the operation of the Council and its organs that, whereas in the social field the appropriate commissions studied the problems referred to the Council, such was not the case in the economic field. While it was true that questions as vital as the world economic situation and economic development, for example, should be examined by the Council itself, other complex problems were not dealt with satisfactorily. If, therefore, a permanent advisory commission on international commodity trade were set up, it would fill a considerable gap.

72. So far as concerned other economic problems, the Co-ordination Committee should consider how they might best be studied. The Argentine delegation reserved the right to submit proposals on the subject later.

73. In the social field the Argentine Government considered that the work of the Social Commission might be more fruitful. That Commission should not be overburdened with minor questions and should be in a position to study problems as a whole.

74. The Commission on Human Rights should be entrusted with all questions within its purview which had been dispersed among other organs, except, however, for questions submitted to the Commission on the Status of Women, which should carry on with its work.

75. The regional commissions represented one of the most fruitful experiments by the Council; that was particularly true of the Economic Commission for Latin America, in which Argentina co-operated very closely. In view of the concrete results achieved by that Commission, the Council should grant it still greater importance in the future. The Argentine delegation had noted with satisfaction the Secretary-General's observations on that subject in the documents which he had submitted to the Council.

76. The reorganization of the Secretariat contemplated by the Secretary-General lent particular importance to the question of regional commissions. The situation would best be studied simultaneously in the Council and its commissions on the one hand and by the Secretariat on the other. The Argentine delegation supported the Secretary-General's proposals, which revealed a clear understanding of the problem, and shared the view that reorganization should take place gradually.

77. As for any economies which might be made, they should be not the chief aim of the proposed changes but rather the natural outcome of rational organization of activities.

78. His delegation had great expectations of the contribution which the Secretariat would make to the Council's work in studying economic problems, but felt that reorganization of work should take account of past experience, particularly in the matter of technical assistance.

79. With regard to documents, as the Secretary-General himself had pointed out, it was desirable to avoid all duplication with existing international or national publications. The documents published by the United Nations should mainly serve as guides for bibliographical purposes. Particular emphasis should moreover be laid by the United Nations on essential publications such as periodical studies on the world economic situation and the world social situation or on problems bearing on world economic organization, such as full employment, economic financing or industrial development.

80. There should be a very clear distinction between activities which were the direct concern of governments and those which could be performed by the United Nations Secretariat. Everything appertaining to State policy should continue to be reserved for governmental committees or organs, and only technical questions of international concern should be studied by international organizations with authority to make proposals, the action of governments being confined to meetings and conferences held to consider the work done and issue directives for the future.

81. Finally, the important work performed by the specialized agencies and other inter-governmental and regional bodies, such as the Organization of American States, should not be overlooked. Effective contact must be maintained with such bodies and adequate co-ordination ensured.

82. His delegation, which was anxious to collaborate as closely and effectively as possible in the reorganization of the Council and its commissions, reserved the right to submit further observations to the Co-ordination Committee.

83. Mr. ABELIN (France) welcomed the opportunity provided for members of the Council to confer with the Secretary-General.

84. The Council's task was twofold: first, co-ordination at the policy-making level, and secondly, definition of the guiding principles of the economic and social programmes of the United Nations.

85. In order to achieve those aims, the first step was to shorten the agenda of sessions, as had been suggested by

the United Kingdom, Yugoslav and United States delegations. Council committees or commissions should study the items beforehand so that the amount of speech-making at plenary meetings could be limited.

86. A question worth considering was whether matters which were included in the agenda as a matter of course or were purely procedural should continue to be dealt with annually at the Council's sessions. Opinions differed on that point, some delegations considering, perhaps rightly, that even though no progress could be made in a given field it was right that members should be able to explain their attitude. Another question worthy of study was whether a less frequent but more fundamental examination of certain questions would not allow more real progress to be made in certain important fields.

87. Nevertheless, as the representative of Argentina had pointed out, the primary responsibility in the matter lay with the governments. Since 1951 some progress had been made and problems had been approached more realistically in the Council and its commissions. The French delegation considered that the work of the Council, in order to be effective, should be based on appropriate documentation and, in particular, that the reports on the world economic and social situations should not be published at too long intervals. The Secretary-General might also perhaps submit a yearly message to the Council on the situation in fields within its competence. Such a document would contain, in as synoptic a form as possible, an over-all picture of activities and programmes, taking account not only of the reports of the specialized agencies, but also of those of the regional commissions, the functional commissions, TAC, UNICEF and the various semi-autonomous bodies administering economic and social programmes. The work carried out by certain regional bodies whose competence and authority were generally recognized would also be taken into consideration.

88. With regard to the Secretary-General's report (E/2598), he would reserve the right to make certain observations to the Co-ordination Committee. For the moment, he would confine himself to the following remarks:

89. The Secretary-General expressed the opinion in the report that the work of the United Nations should tend more and more towards promoting the economic development of countries that were industrially under-developed. The French delegation, while fully sharing that opinion, believed that the importance of certain activities relating to the more developed countries should not be forgotten. Those countries should be able to compare the lessons of their experience and benefit mutually from the progress they had achieved. Inciden-

tally, the Secretary-General himself, in the same report, stressed the value of further developing co-ordinated action for the expansion of trade, a move which would affect the under-developed countries in the economic sphere and the more developed countries in the industrial field. The Secretary-General was also right in considering that the regional commissions should be closely associated with such work.

90. The French delegation likewise approved the Secretary-General's remarks on concentration of effort on matters directly related to the formulation of economic policy and to economic development. It further agreed with the Secretary-General on the need for cutting down research and studies to a certain extent, the example quoted in paragraphs 21 and 22 of document E/2598 in connexion with human rights being particularly significant.

91. He would also like to draw the Secretary-General's attention to the fact that the practice of delegating certain highly complex or specialized tasks to research institutions, non-governmental organizations or experts should never be allowed to upset the balance between the various cultures and languages of States Members. The principle of such a balance, which was essential within the United Nations, had been enunciated in the Charter, and the French delegation was not alone in being concerned to see that it was observed in practice.

92. Finally, his delegation could not subscribe out of hand to all the numerous reductions contemplated in the social field. Approval in principle of the Secretary-General's memorandum must not be interpreted as endorsing in advance every proposal for the abolition or continuance of activities of the functional commissions, particularly the Social Commission, which should be given a hearing before a final decision was taken.

93. The proposed fusion of the Department of Economic Affairs and the Department of Social Affairs was actually well under way, as the two departments were already working in close association.

94. The French delegation, which regarded decentralization as being in the interest of the universality of the United Nations, also approved of the proposed transfer of certain activities to Geneva.

95. Any savings which might be effected should, in its opinion, be devoted to the positive tasks confronting the United Nations in the economic and social fields.

96. Finally, the French delegation relied upon the Secretary-General to prevent monolingualism in the Secretariat and also the too exclusive influence of the methods and habits of the country in which the Headquarters was situated.

The meeting rose at 1.20 p.m.