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Chairman: Sir Douglas COPLAND (Australia).

AGENDA ITEM 26

Programmes of technical assistance: report of the Economic and Social Council (A/2661, A/2686, A/2702; A/C.2/L.224) (*continued*)

1. Mr. KEENLEYSIDE (Director-General of Technical Assistance Administration) said that the implementation of programmes of technical assistance had now reached a stage at which it was possible to speak of achievement as well as of aspirations. By 1 November 1954, for instance, the Technical Assistance Administration (TAA) had provided Governments with 1,125 experts recruited from sixty-two different countries; in addition, it had arranged for more than 2,900 fellows from ninety-eight nations to study in forty-seven countries.

2. Those figures showed that the Expanded Programme was truly international, a fact to which both the General Assembly and TAA itself attached great importance. The same was true of Headquarters: the 135 permanent members of the TAA secretariat had been recruited from thirty-three different countries and the eleven senior officers were drawn from ten different countries.

3. From the budgetary point of view, it was to be noted that TAA had already reduced the ratio of its administrative costs and it would continue its efforts in that direction.

4. Encouraging results had been achieved in TAA's relations with Governments. The initial difficulties arising from the vagueness of the requests from Governments and TAA's lack of experience had to a large extent disappeared, as a result of two administrative innovations: firstly, recipient countries had set up national bureaux and committees, often at cabinet level, to study the way in which technical assistance could best contribute to economic and social development, and, secondly, contributing countries—which increasingly included recipient countries—had taken steps to improve the recruitment of experts and the training of fellows.

5. Progress had also been achieved in determining the order of priority to be accorded to the various projects. Full country programming within the terms of Economic and Social Council resolution 542 B II

(XVIII) would not be in force until 1956 but it could be said that even for the 1955 programme many Governments had submitted their requests only after very serious study and careful assessment.

6. He expressed satisfaction at the arrangements made by national committees and similar bodies for the recruitment of experts and the reception of fellows. The report of the meeting of those committees held in Rome in September 1954 contained many searching though not unkindly criticisms of the conduct of the Expanded Programme to which TAA would certainly give careful study. In fact, TAA entertained the liveliest sentiments of gratitude and admiration for those Committees, which had received little publicity but were doing valuable work without any increase to administrative costs.

7. In spite of the satisfactory results achieved, however, TAA was aware that mistakes were still being made and that the operation of the technical assistance services could be improved. It was devoting every effort to that end but there were a number of obstacles which were difficult to overcome.

8. The first was a matter of finance. Less money had been available to TAA in 1953 than in 1952 and less again in 1954 than in 1953. During 1954, moreover, it had been necessary to revise four times the estimates of the money which was likely to be available. Governments had inevitably felt the impact of those measures and had become anxious. As a result of its lack of resources, TAA had been obliged to discourage or refuse three reasonable requests for each one it had been able to accept in the course of the year.

9. It was difficult, in those conditions, to improve the quality of the Expanded Programme of Technical Assistance. Recipient countries could not be certain what assistance would be given them and it was therefore more difficult for them to plan a well-balanced programme. Similarly, contributing countries, which were found to rely on the good will of professional organizations, were handicapped by the expansions or contractions in the assistance asked of them.

10. Furthermore, TAA encountered administrative difficulties which were inevitably reflected in the planning of the programmes. The legislative bodies from which TAA received advice advocated prudent financing at times, and at other times vigorous expansion. Prudence and enterprise were not, of course, irreconcilable, but the fact that stress was laid first on the one and then on the other did not make the task of TAA any easier.

11. Since the extent of the Expanded Programme itself varied according to the funds available, TAA found a further difficulty in keeping administrative expenses sufficiently low in relation to total expenditure. It was, of course, impossible to increase or reduce the size of the administrative staff as the Programme expanded and contracted.

12. TAA had therefore tried to extend its services without any increase in cost. It had met with some measure

of success, through an arrangement known as the "Burma Plan" because it had been conceived with the help and co-operation of the Government of that country. Under that arrangement, TAA recruited, paid and serviced the experts while the recipient Government repaid TAA directly for any costs incurred. TAA was investigating similar possibilities for the reimbursement of costs relating to scholarships and fellowships. Useful as the system undoubtedly was, it could only constitute a supplement to the Expanded Programme and there could be no question of applying it in every case.

13. TAA fully endorsed the principle, laid down in Economic and Social Council resolution 542 B II (XVIII), that programmes should be drawn up at the country level but it foresaw some difficulties in its application. It was true that the resolution allowed also for regional programmes, but it was to be feared that national programmes would tend to crowd them out. Members of the Committee who were familiar with the work of the Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East and of the Economic Commission for Latin America would understand how regrettable such a development would be.

14. In spite of the administrative difficulties confronting it, TAA had succeeded in utilizing almost all the funds made available to it in 1953. Although it was very difficult to make completely accurate budgetary estimates, in view of the many variables and of the many currencies involved, the 1954 estimates indicated that even more satisfactory results might be obtained for that year.

15. In conclusion, he said that TAA was convinced that the Expanded Programme met a very real and urgent need, that the arrangements made for it by the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly were fundamentally sound, that the participating agencies had made greater efforts to carry out the instructions of the Organization and that the new arrangements would undoubtedly give the Programme greater stability. He added that the Expanded Programme would give better results if Governments were prepared to increase their contributions and if it were possible to organize the payment of contributions on a more reliable basis.

16. Mr. SAENZ HINOJOSA (Mexico) said that his delegation had examined the documents before the Committee with great interest and considered the work accomplished highly satisfactory. He stressed the importance of technical assistance, which he regarded as one of the best ways of maintaining peace, raising the standard of living of the under-developed countries and promoting friendly relations between nations.

17. The programmes of technical assistance had brought about such an improvement in the situation in some countries that during the debate on the establishment of the Special United Nations Fund for Economic Development the Swedish representative had suggested (290th meeting) that, instead of establishing that fund, technical assistance should be made one of the principal instruments in the economic development of under-developed countries. For that purpose, however, those programmes would have to be expanded still further.

18. His delegation wholeheartedly endorsed the terms of resolution 542 B II (XVIII), in which the Economic and Social Council reaffirmed the principle that technical assistance programmes should be drawn up by Governments in relation to their economic development plans and that the technical resources of the various participating organizations should be used to the maximum.

In order to facilitate the application of that principle, a central planning office should be set up in each country to determine national needs and to co-ordinate the execution of national plans with technical assistance operations. An advisory technical assistance organ was already in operation in Mexico and its work would become even more important when the new system was put into effect.

19. His delegation likewise supported the measures recommended by TAC to make the Expanded Programme more stable financially; it was a wise step gradually to build up a working capital and reserve fund of \$12 million and to request Governments to fix the total of their contribution for a period of several years rather than for one year at a time.

20. In conclusion, he referred briefly to Mexico's contribution to the Expanded Programme. It was a modest contribution, for his Mexico was a capital-importing country and all its resources were devoted to its economic development. Nevertheless, in 1953 Mexico had offered eighty-nine scholarships, while it had received thirty-nine; it had benefited from the advice of forty-one experts and had placed twenty-four at the disposal of TAA. Furthermore, it had concluded agreements with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and the International Civil Aviation Organization concerning the fundamental education centre for Latin America at Patzcuaro and the international aviation centre of Mexico, both of which had provided valuable training to many students from different countries of Latin America.

21. Mr. ZAIN (Indonesia) found it commendable that the United Nations provided the under-developed countries with technical assistance before it was able to give them financial assistance through such organs as the special fund and the international finance corporation. If financial aid had preceded technical assistance, the countries would certainly have had more money at their disposal but they might not have had the technical knowledge necessary to make the most effective use of their own resources.

22. He stressed the difficulties that TAA had encountered during the preceding year and congratulated all those whose wisdom, courage, devotion and optimism had made it possible to proceed with the work. As a result of the measures taken to ensure a more rational distribution of expenditure, a more judicious use of knowledge and greater co-ordination of the various activities, it would seem that technical assistance had entered upon a new phase in its development.

23. The Indonesian Government wished to reaffirm its willingness to co-operate in the work of technical assistance and, as it had announced the previous year, to pledge a contribution for a period of more than a year. It was important that the participating organizations should have greater financial resources at their disposal and more stable sources of income.

24. It was not enough, however, to contribute the necessary funds to technical assistance. The developed countries should allow their experts to participate actively in the work of technical assistance and the under-developed countries should take care that the technical skill placed at their disposal was used in the most efficient way for their economic development. The new provisions for the integration of the work of the technical assistance programme with national programmes opened new possibilities in that respect. The different sectors of a country's economy were closely inter-related and technical as-

sistance should be given to those sectors which were of primary importance to the country's development.

25. There were various reasons which might explain why technical assistance had not always brought about the desired results, but the experience gained showed that more rational planning was necessary. To that end, some changes in the method of allocating funds would be useful. The Indonesian Government hoped before long to be able to work out a plan which would make it easier to co-ordinate its requests for technical assistance with the requirements of the country's development. Even without a definite plan, however, the advice provided by TAB should make it possible for similar results to be achieved. That was where resident representatives could be very helpful.

26. He paid tribute to the experts of the various countries who had given Indonesia the benefit of their knowledge in various fields and he hoped that their number would increase. In general, he felt confident that technical assistance would continue to expand as it became increasingly evident that the development of the under-developed countries was essential to the development of world economy and to the maintenance of peace.

27. Mr. CHAUVET (Haiti) recalled that Haiti had been the first country to invite a group of experts, known as the Rosenborg Mission, and had thus been the first testing ground for United Nations technical assistance. In Haiti, acts had preceded words and the United Nations had undertaken a practical study of the requirements of the economic development of under-developed countries. That stage in United Nations history was all the more important in that the under-developed countries were entitled to international assistance to help them to put their resources in man-power, raw materials and technical means to full use.

28. Inasmuch as the countries which had the greatest need of technical assistance had also the least financial means, the Haitian delegation had constantly urged that TAB should classify recipient countries according to the extent and urgency of their needs, and that it should give special priority to countries which were really under-developed.

29. The Haitian delegation was also concerned with the question of training national staffs: it was a matter that required the most careful consideration in order to determine how best foreign experts could train the experts of the countries to which they were sent, for professional competence was not always accompanied by the ability to teach. Moreover, technical training on the spot, especially in the case of the under-developed countries, seemed preferable to training abroad for by that method the future experts were sure to receive not only theoretical instruction but also practical advice which would enable them the better to solve the problems peculiar to their own country.

30. Citing the experience of the past four years in Haiti, he emphasized the value of having resident representatives permanently stationed in the under-developed countries that were receiving technical assistance. The resident representative, by co-ordinating the activities of the various experts and by centralizing the collection and distribution of information, gave unity and continuity to the international effort and established close co-operation between TAB and the Government concerned. To do away with the post of resident representative would effect no economy; on the contrary, it might well open the door to a waste of effort and money.

31. In conclusion, he wished to express once more his admiration for the work accomplished by TAB, TAA and the participating organizations. On behalf of the Haitian Government and of his delegation, he offered them his congratulations and best wishes for success.

32. Mr. WOULBROUN (Belgium) stressed the importance of the part played by the Expanded Programme of Technical Assistance in the life of the United Nations. That Programme should be given fresh impetus, despite some structural difficulties and serious financial instability.

33. He underlined the co-operative nature of the Expanded Programme and the importance of the Special Account. He dwelt upon the diversity of the Programme and in particular the training in public administration which was indispensable to the success of the other forms of assistance. In that connexion he was pleased to see the organic co-operation that had been established between the United Nations and the International Institute of Administrative Sciences.

34. In the industrial field, certain technical offices and firms of consulting engineers could usefully co-operate in carrying out the Expanded Programme. The Belgian Government would be glad to help TAA, if necessary, in overcoming any practical difficulties that might appear to complicate the utilization of such services.

35. After briefly outlining the results achieved, he spoke of the various difficulties that TAA had to face. The difficulties which related to contributions could be solved only by the Governments. The Belgian delegation thought that in future it might perhaps be possible to convene the Technical Assistance Conference at which the Governments announced the amount of their contributions at a date earlier in the financial year. While some Governments had given basic undertakings covering several years, others, including the Belgian Government, could not, in view of the system of annual budgets, make firm commitments for more than one financial year. The Belgian Government had, however, decided to abandon the system of conditional contribution for the year 1955 and had authorized the conversion of part of its contribution into foreign currency.

36. His delegation considered that the steps envisaged by TAC and the Economic and Social Council for the solution of certain structural difficulties were judicious: namely, the creation of a working capital and reserve fund and the abolition of automatic allocations. With regard to the Working Group which TAC had instructed to appraise the results achieved, he pointed out that such an appraisal should be carried out primarily by the Governments of the applicant countries, by TAB and by the participating organizations. The Belgian delegation hoped, therefore, that the working group would merely supplement the work of appraisal, since it was extremely important not to introduce yet another cog-wheel into an already over-complex mechanism and thus further reduce the portion of the budget available for productive work.

37. The Belgian delegation had found encouragement in the statements of the Executive Chairman of TAB and of the Director-General of TAA concerning the reduction of administrative expenses. Further efforts should be made in that direction. His delegation also felt that the secretariats of the specialized agencies could collaborate more effectively with the resident representatives in order to achieve a close co-ordination of the various bilateral and multilateral technical assistance programmes.

38. In conclusion, he wished to pay a tribute to the devotion and the competence of all those administering the Expanded Programme.

39. Mr. AHMAD (Pakistan) fully endorsed the new rules for the allocation of the funds of the Expanded Programme of Technical Assistance which the Economic and Social Council had adopted on the Technical Assistance Committee's recommendation, and hoped that their application would prove satisfactory, both for the administrators of the Expanded Programme and for the recipient countries. He was convinced that the new method would make it easier to draw up programmes at the national level, to integrate them with national economic development plans and to co-ordinate the work done at all stages. The Executive Chairman of TAB and his collaborators, to whom that initiative was due, were to be congratulated on the care and conscientiousness with which they had acquitted themselves.

40. Pakistan was deeply grateful to the United Nations for providing it with the technical assistance it needed and to the many experts from the most diverse countries who were working tirelessly, often under difficult conditions, to carry out complex technical projects.

41. He did not question the necessity of establishing a working capital and reserve fund to improve the financial stability of the Expanded Programme, but he wondered whether the best way to provide the fund was that recommended by TAC, which consisted of withholding the necessary sums from the contributions paid in 1955

and 1956; that, he feared, might have the effect of unduly slowing up the Programme. It would be particularly regrettable to have to curtail the implementation of the Programme at a time when the under-developed countries were sparing no efforts to speed up their economic development, in which technical assistance was an essential element. To put a brake on international action at that stage could only give rise to disappointment and might even undermine the trust that the peoples of the world had placed in the United Nations. That was why the Pakistani delegation had abstained from voting when the Economic and Social Council had adopted resolution 542 B II (XVIII).

42. In the opinion of the Pakistani delegation, the working capital and reserve fund could be set up by means of long-term, low-interest loans granted by the contributing countries. He hoped that those countries and the Executive Chairman of TAB would give that suggestion their favourable consideration, for it would be a pity to have to curtail work which above all, was calculated to strengthen international co-operation.

43. The Pakistani delegation favoured the establishment of a working group to appraise the results and the effectiveness of the Expanded Programme and to report to TAC. It hoped that the recipient countries would be invited to give their views on the part played by technical assistance in the development of their economies.

The meeting rose at 4.50 p.m.