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COMMITTEE ON CONTRIBUTIONS  
Thirty-third session

REQUESTS FOR ADVICE RECEIVED FROM SPECIALIZED AGENCIES

Report of the Secretary-General

The following letter dated 17 July 1973 from the Food and Agriculture Organization to the Chairman of the Committee on Contributions is submitted to the Committee for consideration:

17 July 1973

Dear Mr. Ali,

Your letter of 19 June 1973 addressed to Mr. C. F. Pennison, Assistant Director-General of this Organization, and which is in response to his cable of 13 March and letter of 4 May 1973 to the Secretary of the Committee on Contributions, has been brought to my attention. I am grateful for the information you have given concerning the "theoretical probable percentage rate" for Bangladesh for 1973.

At the same time, however, I must express serious concern over the difficulties that could be faced not only by the Secretariat, but more particularly by the governing bodies of FAO if the additional information sought by Mr. Pennison, relating to the interpretation and implementation of General Assembly resolutions 2961 B, C and D (XXVII), is not forthcoming. The difficulties would arise if the FAO Conference, in November of this year, were to decide to base the FAO Scale of Contributions for 1974-75 on the new United Nations Scale of Assessments for 1974-76 and at the same time adopt the principles embodied in General Assembly resolutions 2961 B and D (XXVII) referred to above. In this event, and with reference to subparagraphs (a) and (b) of the first mentioned resolution, it appears most unlikely - on the basis of pending requests for membership - that the rate of assessment of the maximum contributor could be reduced to 25 per cent in FAO solely through the application of "the percentage contributions of any newly admitted Member States...".

Thus, as provided in subparagraph (b) (ii) of resolution 2961 B, it would be necessary to utilize for this purpose to the extent necessary

"the normal triennial increase in the percentage contributions of Member States resulting from increases in their national incomes".

As you know that resolution then lays down at subparagraph (c) that

"the percentage contribution of Member States shall not in any case in the United Nations, the specialized agencies, or the International Atomic Energy Agency be increased as a consequence of the present resolution".  
(underlining supplied)

In view of the reference to the "specialized agencies" in the latter proviso of this General Assembly resolution, the Member Nations of FAO will expect the Secretariat to be in a position to draw up an FAO Scale on the basis of the above formulations. If, however, information as to the percentage points representing normal triennial increases resulting from increases in national incomes of individual Members, as embodied in the new United Nations Scale, is not made available to FAO, then it would not be possible to draw up a Scale for FAO which would utilize such points in reduction of the rate of the Member paying the maximum contribution.

In this connexion I note that the Committee on Contributions has authorized the United Nations Secretariat to make available to the specialized agencies, upon their request, the basic statistical data used by the Committee for its review of the United Nations Scale of Assessments. This data however would not resolve the difficulty since the FAO Secretariat is not aware of how it is utilized in arriving at the United Nations Scale of Assessments nor how the various principles underlying the United Nations Scale are applied in practice. As subparagraph (b) (ii) of resolution 2961 B refers specifically to "the normal triennial increase in the percentage contributions of Member States..." (underlining supplied) it is this refined information which is needed and not the underlying raw data.

With regard to another question raised in Mr. Pennison's letter of 4 May, it would also seem necessary to receive clarification as to the order in which the various General Assembly resolutions were applied in arriving at the new United Nations Scale. Otherwise lack of consistency between the United Nations and the various Specialized Agencies can arise.

With reference to the extract from the Report of the Committee on Contributions attached to your letter of 19 June, I would like to comment on the quotation contained therein from the Committee's Report of its 1950 Session as it related to the questions in hand. For ease of reference I repeat that quotation:

"In making recommendations or tendering advice, the Committee cannot, even in an indirect way, assume responsibility for the scale of contributions of a specialized agency. Nor does the Committee believe that it should, on behalf of any specialized agency, attempt to apply principles which are not similar to those on which the contributions of Members of the United Nations are based."

/...

In seeking information and advice from the Committee, I do not suggest that the Committee should assume, even in an indirect way, responsibility for such Scale. That responsibility clearly lies with the FAO Conference in adopting the Scale. Indeed the reason that information and advice is sought is so that FAO may be in a position to apply in the same way, the same principles on which the contributions of Members of the United Nations are based.

That the FAO Governing Bodies would expect me to look to the Committee in this matter is, I think, clear from Conference resolution 42/55 (1955) wherein, in deciding to base future FAO Scales on the United Nations Scale of Assessments, the Conference recognized

"... that the United Nations Committee on Contributions is the most qualified body for assessing Member Governments' ability to pay as well as all the other factors entering in the computation of an equitable scale of contributions".

In view of the foregoing I should be grateful if you would give further consideration to making available advice and information on the interpretation and implementation of General Assembly resolutions 2961 B, C and D (XXVII) as referred to above and set out in more detail in Mr. Pennison's letter of 4 May 1973.

In this connexion I should mention that the FAO Finance Committee, which is charged with the responsibility of submitting recommendations to the Council, regarding any modification in the Scale of Contributions, must consider this matter at its next session, scheduled for 19 September to 2 October.

The Council must in turn consider the Scale of Contributions at its next session, 5 to 9 November, and recommend any modifications thereof to the Conference which commences on 10 November. The Conference of course must adopt a Scale for 1974-75.

While I appreciate that the report of the Committee on Contributions cannot be finally approved and released until the Federal Republic of Germany and the German Democratic Republic have become Members of the United Nations, I understand that the admission of these two States will be acted upon by the General Assembly at about the same date as the FAO Finance Committee session commences. I would suppose that the Committee on Contributions may be in a position to approve its report immediately thereafter and therefore authorize its release within the period that the FAO Finance Committee is in session. Since it would be necessary for the FAO Secretariat to work on the report of the Committee on Contributions before a presentation could be made to the FAO Finance Committee, I would be grateful if you could provide me with a copy at an early date on a confidential basis until such time as the report is released.

I should like to thank you in advance for your consideration and assistance in this matter.

Yours sincerely,

(Signed) A. H. BOERMA  
Director-General