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UNITED NATIONS OPIUM CONFERENCE
ORGANIZATION OF THE WORK OF THE CONFERENCE

Note by the Secretary-General

Terms of reference

1. The purpose for which the Conference has been called by the Economic and Social Council is "to draft and adopt a protocol relating to the limitation of the production of opium" (resolution 436 A [XIV]). The draft text of the protocol before the Conference was prepared in accordance with the instructions of the Council in resolution 395 (XIII), and is contained in the annex to document E/2186.

Initial general debate

2. It will no doubt be convenient, as soon as the Conference has completed the initial business of organizing itself, to hold a general debate on the draft protocol. In this debate, it is assumed that delegations would state their position generally with regard to the main provisions of the protocol; that it would also provide an opportunity for an exchange of questions and elucidations between delegations; but that no decisions as to substance or text of the protocol would be taken at this stage.

Committee structure

3. At this point, the Conference might proceed to decide on its further organization, in the light of any particular problems which had arisen in the general debate, and of any organizational proposals that might have been introduced. It is clear that in order that the Conference should complete its task in good time some division of labour will be necessary. Various ways of dividing up the work have been examined in the Secretariat.

4. An arrangement that suggested itself for consideration was that different parts of the draft protocol should be assigned to different committees - for instance, the predominantly economic parts to one committee and the remainder of the protocol to another committee. Study of arrangements on these lines has, however, indicated a number of difficulties, as follows. At many points the parts of the protocol interlock closely with each other and there would be a strong possibility of overlapping, or conflict of scope, between such committees. Moreover, some machinery intermediate between these committees and the plenary conference would probably be necessary as part of such arrangements in order to fit the parts of the protocol together again, which might lead to unnecessary complication of work. Again, if the arrangement for the division of labour is to be workable, it would be necessary that delegations should be able to attend more than one meeting at the same time, and from this point of view this kind of committee structure is likely to cause difficulties for a number of delegations.

5. Accordingly, arrangements generally on the following lines, which appear to be as simple as the requirements permit, are suggested for the consideration of the Conference.

Main Committee

6. The general work of the Conference on the draft protocol for arriving at decisions as to its substance (subject, of course, to eventual confirmation by the plenary conference) might be assigned to a Main Committee. This committee should be a committee of the whole, on which all members of the Conference who wish to attend should have a vote. This committee would not engage in the detailed work of drafting.

Drafting Committee

7. As the Main Committee disposes successively of various parts of the draft protocol, its decisions could go to a Drafting Committee, to make the necessary revised draft of the parts of the protocol concerned. This committee should be charged with questions of drafting, clarification, consistency and arrangement of the draft protocol only. If such points prove to require decisions of substance in order to resolve them, the Drafting Committee would refer them, either back to the Main Committee, or to the plenary conference,

as appropriate. Since the Drafting Committee would not be concerned with decisions of substance, it would be unnecessary that all members of the Conference should be represented on it; and it is suggested that it might be composed, on a personal basis, of an appropriate number of those members of delegations, including, in particular, legal advisers, available for this work.

Sub-committees of the Main Committee

8. It may be anticipated that the Main Committee may wish to appoint sub-committees or working parties to report to it on such subjects, for instance, as national monopolies, sanctions, anti-cartel provisions.

Business Committee and Credentials Committee

9. The functions and composition of these committees are laid down in the rules of procedure (E/CONF.14/13).

Final decisions of the Conference

10. All final decisions would, of course, be taken by the plenary conference. Plenary sessions would be held as required at intervals during and at the end of the session. Final votes would be taken on the Final Act of the Conference covering the protocol as a whole and the resolutions of the Conference at the concluding sessions.

Number of meetings

11. It would be essential to the proper working of the plan outlined above for the Main Committee and for the Drafting Committee that the Drafting Committee should be able to meet at the same time as the Main Committee, to consider material referred to it (at an appropriate interval in arrears of its having been dealt with by the Main Committee). Appointments to this committee would therefore have to take this requirement into account.

12. The members of the Conference will recall the scope of the material facilities within which the operations have to be carried on, as set out in the memorandum which accompanied the invitations to the Conference. For convenience of reference, the relevant paragraphs are reproduced in an annex to this paper. The working arrangements tentatively outlined above could be carried out within the scope of these arrangements.

ANNEX

1. In making organizational arrangements for the Conference, the Secretary-General, having regard to the fact that a number of conferences will be taking place simultaneously at headquarters and to the resources at his disposal, is making the following assumptions:

(a) There will normally be not more than two plenary meetings or one plenary meeting and two committee meetings or four committee meetings a day, i.e. not more than two meetings at one time;

(b) As regards interpretation facilities, simultaneous interpretation in the five official languages, English, French, Russian, Spanish and Chinese, will be provided as required for plenary meetings, and for committee meetings when only one committee is sitting; when more than one committee is sitting, consecutive interpretation will be furnished from the five official languages into English and French. For speeches made in languages other than the official languages, delegates should themselves provide interpretation into one of the official languages;

(c) As regards records, summary records will be prepared by the Secretariat in English and French for plenary meetings. Committee records will normally be in the form of reports of the committee.

2. The current production of documents during the Conference will be subject to a priority system. It would therefore be expedient that delegates who wish to circulate material to the Conference should forward it as far as practicable well in advance of the opening date.

(The rest of the memorandum dealt with other matters.)
