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COMMISSION ON NARCOTIC DRUGS

Fourth session

COMMISSION OF INQUIRY INTO THE EFFECTS OF CHEWING THE COCA LEAF

Note by the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General has the honour to communicate to the members of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs the present memorandum prepared by the Secretariat concerning the Commission of Inquiry into the effects of chewing the coca leaf (Economic and Social Council resolutions No. 159 (VII) IV of 10 August 1948 and 202 (VIII) of 2 March 1949).

/COMMISSION OF ENQUIRY

COMMISSION OF ENQUIRY INTO THE EFFECTS OF CHEWING THE COCA LEAF

Memorandum by the Secretariat

1. At its second session (24 July to 8 August 1947) the Commission on Narcotic Drugs gave careful consideration to the request by the Government of Peru for a field survey of the effects of the chewing of the coca leaf on the population of certain regions in South America (document E/CN.7/67/Corr.1 and E/CN.7/77). It decided to recommend to the Economic and Social Council that a commission of inquiry should be sent to Peru and such others of the countries concerned as might give their approval. At the same time, the Commission was of the opinion that it would be advisable to combine with it an inquiry on the spot into the possibilities of limiting the production and regulating the distribution of coca leaves. It was recommended that the membership of the commission should include two medical men and two administrative experts (E/575 and Add.1 and 2, pages 16-19).
2. At its second session the General Assembly, taking note of the resolution of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs expressed its interest in this important subject. It invited the Economic and Social Council, without prejudgement, to consider the matter with all the urgency which it deserved (resolution 134 (II) 17 November 1947).
3. During its sixth session the Economic and Social Council (2 February to 11 March 1948) having taken note of the above resolution, approved, in principle, the dispatch of the Commission of Inquiry to Peru. It further requested the Secretary-General to submit to the Council at its next session a detailed plan for such a Commission, taking into account any request which might be received from other countries concerned (resolution 123 (VI) C 2 March 1948.)
4. In pursuance of the above resolution the Secretary-General submitted to the Economic and Social Council at its seventh session (19 July to 29 August 1948) a detailed plan concerning:
  - (a) the terms of reference of the Commission of Inquiry;
  - (b) its membership and appointment of members;
  - (c) its itinerary; and
  - (d) financial estimates of expenditure to be incurred.

In accordance with the proposal made by the Commission on Narcotic Drugs, the two medical members would be chosen by the Economic and Social Council from names submitted by the World Health Organization at the request of the Secretary-General of the United Nations. It was also suggested that names of three experts in international administration might be submitted by the Bureau of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs. The Council could then make the final appointments at its next session. If the duration of the

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mission in Peru were two months it was estimated that the cost would be \$35,000. It was added that this figure would have to be revised in the light of any further request which might be received from the Government of another country concerned (E/860). The Economic and Social Council having taken note of the resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 17 November 1947 and of the "detailed plan" submitted by the Secretary-General, approved the despatch of a Commission of Inquiry to Peru at the earliest possible date to investigate the effects of chewing the coca leaf and the possibilities of limiting its production and controlling its distribution. The Council further recommended that the General Assembly appropriate the necessary funds for the Commission of Enquiry (resolution No. 159 (VII) IV of 10 August 1948). The General Assembly at its third session made the following appropriation for a Commission of Inquiry:<sup>1/</sup>

- 4 experts at \$40 <u>per diem</u> for 30 days . . .	\$4,800
- 6 Members of the Secretariat at \$12.50 for	
30 days . . . . .	\$2,250
- Travel expenses \$850 for 10 persons . . .	\$8,500
- Miscellaneous . . . . .	\$1,450
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	\$17,000

5. During its eighth session (7 February to 18 March 1949) the Economic and Social Council referred to its Social Committee the question of the "appointment of members of the Commission of Inquiry into the effects of chewing the coca leaf". The Social Committee had before it the "detailed plan" (E/860) and also a note by the Secretary-General communicating the names of candidates proposed by the World Health Organization on 19 January 1949<sup>2/</sup>. As regards the experts on international administration, it was stated that the Bureau of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs having examined the situation, agreed that it would be preferable for the Commission itself to draw up a list of candidates from names to be suggested by its members. Accordingly, the Secretary-General asked the members of the Commission to communicate to him the names of suitable candidates before 20 April 1949, to enable the Commission to select the non-medical members during its fourth session in May. In these circumstances the Secretary-General proposed that the Council should defer further consideration of this matter until its ninth session (E/1124)<sup>3/</sup>.

<sup>1/</sup> See A/C.5/279 and A/765. The above amount is part of the total of \$5,334,633 of Part II: Special conferences, investigations and inquiries of the fourth annual budget and working capital fund of the United Nations (A/798, 10 December 1948).

<sup>2/</sup> See Annex 1.

<sup>3/</sup> The Social Committee examined also E/AC.7/W.42: Draft resolution by the United States representative concerning the appointment of members of the Commission of Inquiry.

6. At its meeting on 2 March 1949 the Economic and Social Council examined the report of the Social Committee. The Peruvian delegate stressed the international character of the problem under discussion and pointed out that a time limit of one month for the Commission of Inquiry to make its investigation on the spot was insufficient.<sup>4/</sup> Finally, the Economic and Social Council approved the following resolution (202 (VIII)):

The Economic and Social Council

Requests the Commission on Narcotic Drugs to select during its fourth session, for membership of the Commission of Inquiry into the effects of chewing the coca leaf, a team of two experts in the international administration and control of narcotic drugs, and a team of two medical experts to be chosen after consultation with the World Health Organization from the list of candidates already proposed by that Organization. (E/1204 - 4 March 1949).

<sup>4/</sup> In accordance with the request of the Peruvian representative, the President of the Council stated that the official records of the discussion would be sent to the Commission on Narcotic Drugs for its information (see Annex 2).

ANNEX 1

ANNEX to E/1124)

NOTE FROM THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION

Geneva, 19 January 1949

The Director General of the World Health Organization presents his compliments to the Secretary-General of the United Nations and submits herewith, in response to the request of the Secretary-General, a list of names proposed by the World Health Organization for the Commission of Inquiry on the Effects of Coca Leaf Chewing (resolution 159 (VII), IV, adopted by the Economic and Social Council).

Professor P. Pernambuco Filho

Professor of Psychiatry,  
University of Rio de Janeiro

Professor Jaime R. Pereira

Professor of Pharmacology,  
Sao Paulo

Professor D. Granier

Professor of Pharmacology,  
Member of the Academy of Medicine,  
Caracas

Professor D. Demetrio Mayoral Pardo

Professor of Pharmacology,  
Director of the Hospital of the  
Military Medical School,  
Mexico City

Professor John Romano

Department of Psychiatry,  
Rochester University, N. Y.

Professor Ronald E. Lane

Department of Occupational Health,  
University of Manchester,  
England

ANNEX 2

"APPOINTMENT OF MEMBERS OF THE COMMISSION OF ENQUIRY INTO THE EFFECTS OF CHEWING THE COCA LEAF (E/1167)

"Mr. FERNANDEZ-STOLL (Peru) requested that his statement should appear in the official records of the meeting and that it should be sent to the Commission on Narcotic Drugs for its information.

"The study of the effects of chewing the coca leaf was an international problem of extreme importance and complexity. The fact that Peru had been the only country to raise the question in the United Nations did not mean that the problem affected Peru exclusively. Other countries were also concerned, such as Colombia, Ecuador, Bolivia and the north of the Argentine. The chewing of coca leaf had been practised in those countries for centuries, and the question presented aspects of a social, medical, economic, agricultural, nutritive and administrative nature."

"The Peruvian Government hoped that the results of the work to be undertaken by the Commission of Inquiry would be useful to all countries concerned with the problem. The study, because of its complex nature, would require a certain minimum of time if practical results were to be obtained."

"The question of choosing experts to form such a Commission required careful consideration. The Peruvian Government hoped that, in their selection, the Commission on Narcotic Drugs would bear in mind the nutritive aspect of the problem. If the chewing of the coca leaf was found to be due, in great part, to a lack of adequate nourishment, that factor would merit careful study aimed at correcting the situation and at the gradual elimination of the use of the narcotic.

"The Peruvian representative therefore proposed that if a fifth expert were appointed to the Commission of Inquiry, as had been suggested by the Commission on Narcotic Drugs, that expert should be a representative of the Food and Agriculture Organization, or another person who was an expert on food questions. If, however, for administrative reasons, such an appointment was not feasible, then his Government hoped that one of the medical experts appointed would also be a nutrition expert.

"Mr. Fernandez-Stoll further suggested that the group of experts should be composed not only of persons possessing the specialized knowledge outlined by the Commission on Narcotic Drugs, but also by individuals having a knowledge of Latin-American sociology.

"The problem of the chewing of the coca leaf had existed for over four hundred years and, to study the matter properly, different regions of Peru should be visited. The Peruvian Government hoped that the Commission of Inquiry would be able to visit those regions of Peru and remain the

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necessary time to make a thorough investigation of the problem. It considered that a minimum stay of two months would be necessary, and that any Commission-staying for a shorter period of time would be unable to fulfil its mission properly. The Commission would be required at the same time to study the problem of limiting the production of the coca leaf as laid down in the Economic and Social Council resolution 159 (VII) of last August.

"After stressing the international character of the problem under discussion, Mr. Fernandez-Stoll pointed out that a time limit of one month for the Commission of Inquiry to make its investigation on the spot was insufficient. The Council should bear in mind that the chewing of the coca leaf was a problem which affected ten million people in various countries. The Peruvian Government was anxious that a thorough study be made, and if that could not be properly undertaken at the present time, it would probably prefer that the matter should be left in abeyance for the time being. If that postponement was decided upon, however, the Peruvian Government would decline any responsibility in the matter.

"Mr. Fernandez-Stoll concluded by urging that the Commission of Inquiry should be despatched with the least possible delay, and stated that the most suitable time would be between August and the middle of November. He expressed the hope that the Commission on Narcotic Drugs would, at its next meeting in May, choose the experts to be appointed on the Commission of Inquiry.

"The PRESIDENT informed the Peruvian representative that the official records of the present discussion would be sent to the Commission on Narcotic Drugs for its information. (E/SR.258 pp. 7-8 and 258/Corr.1)

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