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PROGRAMMES OF TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE: REPORT OF
THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL

Statement by the Executive Chairman of
the Technical Assistance Board at the
471st meeting on 24 October 1957

Mr. Chairman,

It has become a tradition of the Second Committee of the General Assembly that the annual debate on technical assistance should be opened by a statement from the Executive Chairman of the Technical Assistance Board on the progress of the Expanded Programme. This arrangement provides a welcome opportunity for the Executive Chairman to present his report to the representatives of all the Members of the United Nations, and for him to hear their reactions to it during the course of the debate. The statement to the Second Committee which I make this morning is the seventh of its kind since I was first concerned with the Expanded Programme; and, once again, I am grateful for the opportunity for which this occasion provides.

Members of this Committee who may also have been present at the meeting of the Technical Assistance Committee in Geneva this summer will recall that I described the year 1956 as a landmark in the history of the Expanded Programme. The 1956 programme was the first annual programme planned, approved and implemented in accordance with the new country programming procedure prescribed by the Economic and Social Council. In breaking the previous highest record set in 1955, the level of technical assistance provided in 1956 was the largest since the Expanded Programme was started in 1950. Some 104 countries and territories, including 47 Trust and Non-Self-Governing Territories received assistance during the year. Measured in dollars, the total programme reached \$30.5 million, compared to \$25.8 million in 1955, an increase of 18 per cent. The field programme itself

reached \$25.3 million compared to \$21.3 million in 1955, an increase of nearly 19 per cent. Measured in the form of assistance, 2,346 experts were at work in the field, or 11 per cent more than in the previous highest year. Some 2,128 fellowships were awarded for training abroad during 1956; this was slightly fewer than in 1955, but the cost of equipment and supplies provided for training and demonstration purposes reached \$3.3 million, compared to \$2.8 million in the previous year. In judging the size of the programme it should not be overlooked that the current counterpart expenditures incurred by the recipient Governments themselves in connexion with their obligations to provide national staff, office and other physical facilities, transportation, local living costs for experts, and equipment and supplies for project support, not counting the long-term capital investment for projects, were estimated in the neighbourhood of \$77 million in 1956, or more than three times the field cost of the Expanded Programme.

You may welcome these developments and yet inquire whether the increase in the scale of the Programme is not accompanied by some falling off in the high quality of the assistance provided. There is, however, reassuring evidence that 1956 was a year of all-round progress. Programme submissions reflected a marked improvement in the quality of their form and content. Solid results were achieved in the great majority of projects, and the basic conditions for securing even more satisfactory results from the Expanded Programme as a whole were improved. The establishment or strengthening of effective central co-ordinating machinery in many countries led to the preparation of much improved programmes properly co-ordinated with national development policies. In such countries, it may be fairly said that programmes reflected both the preference of the recipient countries and the judgement of the agencies as to the technical merits of the projects themselves. It may also be said that the absence of effective co-ordinating machinery was the major factor limiting the improvement in programme planning in those countries in which "country programming" proved less than wholly satisfactory.

The implementation of the 1956 programme was greatly assisted by the improved financial situation. Thus it was found possible in 1956, for the first time in

the history of the Expanded Programme to start the year with the assurance of sufficient funds to cover approximately 92 per cent of the cost of the approved Category I programme. At the end of the year, the total sum actually made available amounted to \$52 million, or 97 per cent of the total approved Category I programme. Such a high percentage had never been achieved in any previous year, and it would be difficult to exaggerate the benefits from the point of view of carefully planned and smooth implementation which have resulted from this improvement.

In 1956, as in previous years, the greatest asset of the Expanded Programme was the extent to which it was possible for it to draw upon the technical skill and experience and the training facilities of a wide range of countries. As the report of the Technical Assistance Board shows, the 2,345 experts were recruited from some 67 countries. Although the majority of them came from Europe and North America, no fewer than 601, or more than 25 per cent of the total number, were recruited from countries or territories which also received the services of foreign experts under the Expanded Programme. Thus, while Brazil received 51 international experts, she supplied 35 experts for assignments in other countries; Chile received 40 and supplied 29; Egypt received 86 and supplied 55; Greece received 20 and supplied 16; and India received 110 and supplied 89. Similarly, some 88 countries and territories served as hosts for 2,125 fellows and made the training facilities in their public as well as private educational and research institutions, factories, farms, hospitals, and other enterprises available to the fellows coming to their country. Finally, even the equipment and supplies provided for training and demonstration purposes were purchased from some 45 different countries.

There is one aspect of the development of the Programme in recent years the importance of which cannot be overestimated. The world-wide range of expert services and training facilities now available for the Expanded Programme opens up possibilities of expansion without sacrifice of quality which could not otherwise have been contemplated. As it is stated in the introduction to the Annual Report of the Technical Assistance Board: "The professional standard of experts recruited in 1956 appears to have been maintained at a high average level". On the other hand, the Report does go on to say that "there are increasing signs

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that the financial inducements and conditions of service offered by the Expanded Programme are not adequate to attract high-level experts in certain fields and from certain countries, except in the case of men and women for whom idealistic motives or a sense of adventure outweigh all other considerations". It is hoped that the new salary and conditions of service scheme established by the eleventh session of the General Assembly will prove helpful to the participating organizations in meeting some of the difficulties in recruitment which are beginning to be encountered.

As I reported to the Technical Assistance Committee in July, continuing effort was made in 1956 to ensure close co-operation and effective co-ordination between the Expanded Programme and other multi-lateral programmes, such as the Colombo Plan, the Organization of American States and the bilateral programmes of the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Switzerland, Norway and Sweden and other countries, as well as the technical assistance activities of various private foundations and institutions. During the year, a large number of projects were undertaken with direct participation of, or in close co-operation with, various other programmes of assistance. The form of co-operation varied from day-to-day contact in operating projects to regular consultations on the formulation of programmes and plans for the future. The emphasis in co-ordination, as the TAB Report indicated, shifted from the negative aspect of eliminating overlapping or duplication of effort, to the positive form of enhancing the value of projects through concerted effort to ensure the best timing of each action and the most effective combination of resources. This was achieved mainly through the efforts of the recipient Governments themselves, though resident representatives were able to play an important role, and there is no doubt that the advance planning required under the country programming procedure has helped to improve the co-ordination of the Expanded Programme with other aid programmes. Considerable interest in the co-ordination of different technical aid programmes was shown by the Technical Assistance Committee in July and, as you will recall, after some debate, a resolution designed to encourage this kind of co-ordinated effort was adopted.

As members of this Committee will have noticed in the Report of the Technical Assistance Committee which is before you, TAC devoted considerable time during its

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summer meeting to a number of special problems - including the apparently high proportion of continuing projects, the question of evaluation, the resources to be devoted to regional projects, the possibility of extending the provision of technical assistance on a payment basis, and the temporary need for some geographical concentration of effort. May I touch upon the first three of these questions and possibly return to the others later.

So far as continuing projects were concerned, it was seen by the Committee that they presented a problem which was much more complex than it may have seemed at first sight. For example, many so-called continuing projects were continuing only in the sense that they started in one programme year and finished in the next. Other long-term projects were deliberately planned as such by the Government and agency concerned for very good reasons, and some of these had already been taken over by the local authorities concerned. Thus in Yugoslavia the Milk Institute and the UNICEF Dairies are now being run by the Government; in Bolivia the work of the international expert who recommended the cultivation of a plant to deal with insecticides and disinfectants has been followed up under the direction of Bolivian technicians; in Pakistan the tuberculosis training centre has been taken over by the Government. Other projects which are being progressively transferred to Governments include the malaria control in Afghanistan, the nursing school in Ceylon, and the textile printing project in Burma. These developments were welcomed. Nevertheless, the Committee was concerned at the large number of continuing projects, which limited the possibility of new programme initiatives, and the TAB has undertaken to make a further study of the matter which will certainly present accentuated difficulties should there be any contraction in the resources of the Programme as a whole.

The Board has been greatly encouraged by the friendly reception given by the TAC (and also by critical reviewers outside the house) of the evaluation study presented for the first time as a regular chapter of the Annual Report. The broad picture of the results of the programme which emerged from this study was a favourable one, but a number of shortcomings, weaknesses, and indeed some outright failures were indicated. The frank recognition of such unsatisfactory results was essential if they were to be avoided in future, whether they were due to some failure on the part of the participating organization or, as was shown

to be the case in some instances, to the lack of effective local co-operation and the provision of local counterpart services. The Board is now preparing the next phase of this "built-in" evaluation exercise, and in doing so it will take account of the most helpful comments of the Technical Assistance Committee, including the suggestion that regional projects, and in particular training centres, should be included in the next study.

Some time was devoted by the Technical Assistance Committee to a discussion of the proportion of the available resources that should be allocated to regional and inter-regional projects. After carefully weighing all pros and cons, the Committee came to the conclusion that the existing limitation of 10 per cent was somewhat too rigid and did not always meet genuine programme requirements. The general view was that it was necessary to give the Board greater flexibility and discretionary powers in dealing with regional and inter-regional projects. In the end it was decided that the arrangements now in force should continue to hold good in 1958, but that thereafter a participating organization might raise the amount for regional and inter-regional projects up to 12 per cent of its Category I programme, provided there was unmistakable evidence of adequate Government support as reflected in counterpart expenditures, including the payment of local living costs for experts. The Committee may be interested to hear that in view of the financial prospects for 1958, the Technical Assistance Board has recently decided to recommend to the TAC a programme of regional and inter-regional projects limited to 10.5 per cent of the 1958 field programme.

Before turning from a review of last year and its problems to the outlook for the future, I should like to say a brief word about the field service of the Technical Assistance Board. The tribute paid by the Technical Assistance Committee to the role played by the TAB Resident Representatives both at the planning and implementation stages of the Programme has given great encouragement to my colleagues in the field. Their important task is not an easy one; moreover, their supporting services are for the most part, modest, indeed; and their success depends more upon the confidence which they establish and the personal influence they exercise rather than upon any formal authority which is conferred upon them. I should like to take this opportunity of thanking the many Governments represented here who have co-operated so closely with the field representatives of the Board,

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and supported them so well, over the last twelve months. Thanks to the devoted work of the field representatives and their small local staffs, and to the co-operation and support which they receive from the Governments to which they are accredited, I believe that the Expanded Programme is now equipped with a world-wide service of proven usefulness and great potentiality.

I must now turn to the future outlook concerning which, I must confess, I entertain ambivalent feelings of confidence and anxiety. My confidence in the future of the Programme is based on my appraisal of what it has already achieved, first and foremost in terms of the betterment of human life in so many countries and territories throughout the world; but also in terms of successful inter-governmental and inter-agency co-operation, improved out of all recognition since the early years of our work. We have, I believe, created an efficient instrument for programme planning and execution; for the recruitment of technicians and the use of training facilities on a world scale; and for the effective co-ordination and evaluation of our efforts. Moreover, we appear to have won the confidence and practical co-operation of Governments and government officials in the great majority of countries in which we serve. What seem to us to be soundly conceived requests for technical assistance of the kind which we have been providing greatly exceed our present resources, and I firmly believe that we can expand the scale of our present activities to a much higher level over a period of years without loss of effectiveness or any appreciable increase in our present administrative establishment.

These are my grounds for confidence in the future. What are my anxieties? At one time my chief anxiety was whether the system of inter-agency activity which the Board represents would overcome its inherent difficulties and prove itself to be an effective instrument of international economic co-operation. This anxiety has now disappeared. Many difficulties remain, but the system works as well as most human institutions work. At a later stage I was chiefly concerned lest difficulties with regard to recruitment and the availability of suitable training facilities would set an early limit to our expansion. Despite some problems to which I have already referred this is not a major headache, nor is it likely to be unless there is a most unexpectedly large and sudden increase in our financial resources. Currency management in a programme whose resources are

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comprised of voluntary contributions, expressed in more than 60 local currencies of varying degrees of convertibility, has not been without its problems but they are now under control.

No, the only major anxiety concerning the future of the Expanded Programme today is financial; and in this connexion I believe it to be my duty to draw your attention to the facts as I see them. The facts themselves are a little paradoxical as you may gather from a study of the results of the recent Pledging Conference. In many ways it was the best Pledging Conference we have so far had. The number of countries making definite pledges - 74 of them - was larger than at any previous Conference. There was one new contributor - Malaya - and we have had increased pledges from 20 other countries. Increases of 20 per cent or more have now been announced by Australia, Austria, Bolivia, Burma, Greece, Liberia, Libya, Mexico, Netherlands, New Zealand, Peru, Portugal and Venezuela. Contributions from countries other than the largest donor - the United States - which have been increasing steadily in recent years will probably exceed \$16.5 million, or more than \$1 million higher in 1958 than in 1957. Following the increases of recent years, this result might be thought to be a moderately encouraging one, but as you all know, the Government of the United States has announced that the percentage share of the resources which it provides would be progressively reduced. Thus in making its pledge for 1958, the United States has provided that its contribution shall not exceed 45 per cent of the total. On the basis of \$16.5 million contributions from others, this would limit the United States share to \$15.5 million (compared with its total pledge of \$15.5 million), making a total of \$30 million. This would be less than the amount pledged for 1957 and about \$1 million less than the amount needed to finance the slightly smaller programme planned for 1958. From the budgetary standpoint, it is possible to cope with this situation by making earmarking controls to see that actual deficits are avoided. This, however, is a very negative way of dealing with the problem and would mean checking the momentum which has gathered over the last few years and which has brought the level of activities from \$19 million in 1951 to approximately \$31 million this year. It is only fair to point out that my estimate for 1958 is based upon a rather conservative estimate of what a number of Governments which did not announce a

final pledge at the Conference may ultimately decide to do. It is very much to be hoped that in making their final decisions, these Governments and others who may be in a position to consider supplementary pledges will take into account the financial situation of the programme which I have described. Even on the reduced matching formula to be employed by the United States next year, we shall receive 82 cents from them for every additional dollar contributed by other countries until the \$15.5 million limit of their pledge is reached.

A further contraction of the 1958 Programme, however small, would be regrettable in the light of the discussion which took place in Geneva on what, it was hoped, would be no more than a temporary need for some geographical concentration of effort. It was announced at that time that considerable reductions in the programmes in certain important countries had been planned in order to make provision for increased activities in some of the newly independent States and in some other under-developed countries where changes of policy had made it possible to undertake promising new developments. The prospects for 1959 and 1960 are, however, much more serious as the decline in the United States matching percentage, to 38 per cent in 1959 and 33 per cent in 1960, takes effect. In the absence of reliable indications that substantially larger contributions may be expected from some of the more important contributors, the Technical Assistance Board will have no option but to plan the 1959 programme (concerning which decisions have to be taken in the early spring of next year) at least 10 per cent below the already reduced 1958 level. Reductions of the same order of magnitude would be called for the following year if there was no basic change in the financial situation. Moreover, even these tentative estimates assume that the modest rate of increase, which has been provided by contributors other than the United States, will be maintained and that severe administrative retrenchment will be enforced. The gravity of the situation needs no further elaboration, and it may be hoped that it will itself constitute an irresistible challenge to contributing Governments.

The challenging situation which I have just described must inevitably be present in your minds when you turn to consider the resolution of the Economic and Social Council on the "Forward Look" (Res. 659 (XXIV)). You recall that this resolution appealed to the participating organizations to consider the

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possibility of increasing the financial resources of the programme and invited Governments to suggest measures which would make it possible to implement a substantially larger programme, including some of the more important projects described in the "Forward Look" document submitted by the TAB. The "Forward Look" does not represent the final thought of the Board and the participating organizations with regard to the possible development of the Expanded Programme. It does, however, set out the broad consensus of thinking among those responsible for the administration of the programme at the time when it was prepared. A revised version prepared today would probably include additional suggestions and some changes of emphasis, but the main outline would almost certainly remain the same. The developments proposed are based on practical experience gained in the operation of the technical assistance programme, though in many cases they call for expenditures on equipment and supplies going far beyond what has normally been thought possible within the limits of the Expanded Programme as we have known it so far. What has to be recognized is that in the application of all forms of technical assistance the point is often reached which may perhaps best be described as the "frustration point": the point at which sound advice, careful blueprints, and well-organized training programmes seem vain and profitless for lack of the means to take new steps towards the practical implementation of an important scheme. The next step may be the establishment of a technological research laboratory, an agricultural demonstration project, a multi-purpose river development survey, or a technical training college. But this next step - essential for economic development - all too frequently costs money beyond the reach of many less-developed countries, though they may be able to make a sizable contribution from their own resources. Looked at one way, this next step may be a logical extension of technical assistance. Looked at another way, it may be a move of much more far-reaching consequences, leaving technical assistance as we have known it very far behind. Certainly it is a subject worthy of the most careful consideration.

I should like in closing to return to technical assistance as we have known it hitherto, and to paraphrase some words I used in Geneva this summer when addressing the Technical Assistance Committee. It is my hope now, as

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it was on that occasion, that in considering the administrative and financial aspects of our work we shall not lose sight altogether of the living realities of this world-wide programme. Behind the statistics and the administrative jargon are to be found the stories of the men and women actually engaged in giving practical expression to the decisions which we rather remotely make. They include not only the growing band of experts and fellows drawn from so many lands but also the numerous officials in government departments throughout the world without whose partnership in our work technical assistance would be a sterile one-way traffic in ideas. I have in the past many times spoken of projects which I have seen during the course of my visits to the countries we serve and of experts whose work has caught my imagination during the course of my travels. I wish there was more time to tell you some of the things I saw earlier this year in Latin America, West Africa and some Mediterranean countries. For it is out of these first-hand experiences that one savours the essential quality of our work and renews one's faith in the worthwhileness of this enterprise. In the last resort, the real test of all our expenditure of money, time and effort is to be found in the changes which result in the quality of life of human beings. No one who has visited the Indian villages of the Andean Altiplano, can be otherwise than deeply moved not only by the eager response of poverty-stricken, illiterate people to the modest opportunities of training and service which our Andean-Indian Mission is able to provide, but by a sense of the rich untapped potentialities of human achievement which are just beginning to be explored. No one who has seen the transformation in the lives of whole communities resulting from the eradication of malaria or yaws with the help of WHO can doubt for an instant the need to press on with this work till the goal of a world free from these sources of human degradation is realized. To sit down with the officials of a new country still grappling with the problems of securing the economic and administrative realities as well as the constitutional forms of independence is an unforgettable but humbling experience for anyone who is conscious of the disparity between what is hoped of international organizations and what he knows to be the limited possibilities of action. Desert encroachment and hill erosion held at bay, and finally driven back by skilful reafforestation,

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and whole regions defended against the devastation of locusts leave an ineffaceable memory of dramatic achievements secured by almost absurdly small expenditures in money. In every country I have visited, I have felt the programme vindicated alone by the achievement of some returned fellow whose imagination had been fired by his experiences abroad and who was making his own small revolution in some segment of his country's economy.

Small in themselves, it is the patient multiplication of such things that has made the Expanded Programme of Technical Assistance a significant achievement in international economic co-operation. But the Programme is more than an achievement realized. It is a promise of achievement to come. That this promise should be fulfilled is the responsibility of everyone concerned with the programme. Certainly it is a fitting subject for discussion in the Second Committee.
