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SOCIAL COMMISSION

AD HOC ADVISORY COMMITTEE OF EXPERTS ON THE PREVENTION  
OF CRIME AND THE TREATMENT OF OFFENDERS, 1953

DRAFT REPORT

Prepared by the Rapporteur

IV. THE PREVENTION OF TYPES OF CRIMINALITY RESULTING FROM SOCIAL  
CHANGES AND ACCOMPANYING ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN LESS-DEVELOPED  
COUNTRIES

51. After a broad exchange of views on the subject, the Committee unanimously recognized that the proposed study touched on one of the most important problems of criminal policy in the less-developed countries and was therefore fully justified and highly desirable. The social effects of economic development were giving rise to much concern but the present state of knowledge in this field is inadequate.

52. The discussion brought out the fact that the problem of criminality resulting from social changes and accompanying economic development arises both in countries where a culture of alien origin is being superimposed on an indigenous culture and in countries which are endeavouring to develop new types of economic and social organization retaining their root in traditional cultures. The Committee also found that there is no fundamental distinction, so far as this problem is concerned, between independent countries and territories and non-self-governing territories.

53. The Committee considered that, in the preparation and execution of the project regarding which it was consulted, earlier research undertaken by other

bodies on the subject of social adaptation to economic changes should be taken into account. This view in no way detracts from the obvious value of and need for a special study of the question of criminality. The Committee feels that the most satisfactory way of carrying out the proposed study would be to undertake field investigations in various areas. These areas should be chosen both in independent countries and in non-self-governing territories. One or more of the field studies should deal with situations in which the problem of social adaptation has been solved satisfactorily. The geographical size of the area to be covered by the field study should be limited in such a way as to make the project feasible while permitting a complete investigation of the problem.

54. For the purpose of carrying out these field studies, the Secretary-General should endeavour, in accordance with United Nations procedure, to secure the assistance of local social research bodies or institutes of recognized standing. Examples of bodies or institutes whose assistance might be enlisted were given by several members of the Committee.

55. The Committee did not consider it desirable to draw up a plan of study indicating precisely the scope and content of the proposed studies. It was considered preferable to leave it to the Secretariat, with the co-operation of the various research bodies and institutes, to determine the scope and content of the studies, in each particular case, in the light of the preparatory documents and of the discussions in the Committee.

56. The results of the studies will be of great importance and the Committee recommends that they should be published and widely circulated. A comparison of observations made under different conditions in various parts of the world will enable interested governments to draw particularly useful practical conclusions. They should also provide a basis for recommendations to be presented to the competent organs of the United Nations and, through them, to governments. The ultimate object of the project should be to contribute to the practical solution of an important social problem. At this stage, it will be desirable to place the resources of the technical assistance programme in this field at the disposal of governments on their request.

## V. OTHER MATTERS

### 1. Projects in progress under the programme of work of the Social Commission

57. Recalling its general terms of reference under General Assembly Resolution 415 (V) and the fact that the programme of work of the Social Commission is still largely based on the recommendations made in 1945, 1949 and 1950 by the two international groups of experts, the Committee expressed a desire to review the progress made in connexion with certain studies undertaken by the Secretariat, which it had not had an opportunity to consider during its discussion of the programme of the Quinquennial Congress.

#### (a) Probation

58. The Secretariat reported that the study entitled Probation and Related Matters<sup>1/</sup> had been published in English. Probation was considered in 1950 by the second international group of experts which made a number of recommendations regarding further action in connexion with the study of probation. One recommendation called for a further study of the practical results of probation and the financial aspects of the organization of a probation system; an outside consultant has been made responsible for this study which is to be published in late 1953. In 1951, the Economic and Social Council adopted a resolution<sup>2/</sup> in which it described probation as a humane and effective method for the treatment of offenders, urged all governments to give favourable consideration to the adoption of probation and called their attention to the wide range of United Nations facilities for technical assistance in this matter. In addition a seminar on probation was held in London in 1952.

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1/ Document E/CN.5/230

2/ Resolution 390 E (XIII) of 9 August 1951

59. One member of the Committee expressed his great regret that the Secretariat had decided not to publish the French version of the study on probation and related measures. He said that information regarding probation, the development of which had been advocated by the Economic and Social Council, could not be effectively publicised in certain countries unless the study appeared in French. The Committee recommended that the Secretariat should consider the possibility of having the study printed, at the least possible expense, either directly or through a publishing house, or of arranging for it to be printed by the prison administration of a Member State willing to undertake the work.

60. During the discussion of this matter the Committee heard an explanation of the distribution of United Nations publications generally and expressed the hope that everything possible would be done to bring the existence of such publications to the notice of interested specialists.

(b) After-care and parole

61. The Secretariat briefly outlined the progress made in connexion with this study. An outside consultant has prepared a report giving a general analysis of the leading developments affecting parole procedures in penal and correctional establishments for adults and also of after-care programmes and the question of personnel. It will be for the Social Commission to decide what further action is to be taken in this direction.

62. The Committee could not express any opinion on the report itself since it was unable to consider it. It nevertheless stressed the importance of the question and recommended that the Secretariat should consider its inclusion in the agenda of the second series of regional conferences to which the report might be submitted as a basis for discussion, with any additional documentation that might be considered necessary. The Committee also expressed the hope that the United Nations would be able to develop practical programmes, such as seminars, enabling the various countries to receive direct assistance and helping them to establish better organized services.

(c) Criminal statistics

63. The Secretariat gave a general account of the progress and present state of the studies relating to this question. Two projects are now in preparation, in accordance with the instructions given to the Secretary-General by the Economic and Social Council in 1951.<sup>3/</sup> The first, a survey and analysis of national statistics on crime with a view to the preparation of a manual, is being undertaken by the United Nations Statistical Office. The second is a study to explore the possibility of achieving an agreed definition of three types of offence, in order to determine the practicability of an ultimate compilation of comparable international statistics. A circular letter inviting comments on the subject has been sent to national correspondents. The Secretariat stated that it proposed to analyse the replies received, to consider the possibility of securing the assistance of other international organizations dealing with criminal statistics, and to explore the possibility of approaching some suitable body or institute to carry out the later stages of the study, in co-operation with the Secretariat.

64. One member of the Committee stressed the considerable difficulties involved in the problem of the international comparability of criminal statistics, and particularly in the preparation of a standard definition of offences. While appreciating the difficulties, other members emphasized that work in this important field ought to be proceeded with if progress was to be made. After discussion, the Committee decided to recommend that the Secretariat should continue the study on the lines described and, in particular, that it should endeavour to secure the assistance of a competent outside body to continue consideration of the question of a standard definition of certain offences.

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<sup>3/</sup> Resolution 390 F (XIII) of 9 August 1951