

Dual Distribution

Third session

REPORT OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL  
(Chapters I, IV and VI)Report of the Joint Second and Third Committee

Rapporteur: Mr. J. THORN (New Zealand)

1. In pursuance of Article 15 of the Charter, the Economic and Social Council submitted to the third session of the General Assembly, a report covering the period 18 August 1947 to 29 August 1948 (A/625).
2. On 24 September 1948, the General Assembly referred to the Joint Second and Third Committee chapter I, "Constitutional and Organizational Questions", chapter IV "Other Economic and Social Questions", chapter V "Questions of Co-ordination" and chapter VI "Non-governmental Organizations" of this report (item 11 of its agenda, "Report of the Economic and Social Council"). It was subsequently agreed that the parts of chapter V relating to programme, budgetary and administrative co-ordination should be considered at joint meetings of the Joint Second and Third Committee and of the Fifth Committee; accordingly a separate report regarding chapter V will be submitted to the General Assembly in due course.

The Joint Second and Third Committee considered:

Chapter I at its 25th meeting ( 5 October)

26th " ( 7 " )

27th " (11 " )

28th " (12 " )

31st " (20 " )

Chapter IV 29th " (18 " )

Chapter VI 28th " (12 " )

Further, a resolution proposed by the representatives of Argentina, Colombia and Cuba on the distribution of membership in the subsidiary organs of the Economic and Social Council (A/C.2&3/69) which arose out of chapter I was the subject of consideration by a sub-committee (Sub-Committee I) appointed at the 28th meeting of the Joint Second and Third Committee, and which held two meetings on 14 and 16 October.

3. The Committee held a general discussion on chapter I. With regard to chapters IV and VI, the Committee decided, without discussion, to recommend the General Assembly to take note of them.

4. In the general discussion on chapter I, the place of the Economic and Social Council as a principal organ of the United Nations was discussed, and it was urged that it should intensify its activities. Special reference was made to the usefulness of economic and social surveys prepared under its direction. A suggestion was also made regarding the desirability of establishing a Regional Economic Commission for Africa, in addition to the proposed Economic Commission for the Middle East. The main discussion, however, centred around the following two draft resolutions:

- (i) Number of sessions of regional economic commissions in 1949: draft resolution proposed by the representative of India (A/C.2&3/68);
- (ii) Distribution of membership in subsidiary organs of the Economic and Social Council: draft resolution proposed by the representatives of Argentina, Colombia and Cuba (A/C.2&3/69).

These are considered separately in the following paragraphs.

Number of sessions of regional economic commissions in 1949

5. The Committee had before it the draft resolution proposed by the representative of India together with a note by the Secretary-General on the financial implications thereof (A/C.2&3/68/Add.1).

6. Resolution 174 (VII) adopted by the Economic and Social Council on 28 August 1948 provided that "its regional economic commissions should hold one session in 1949, the question of further sessions to be reviewed if necessary at the ninth session of the Council". The same resolution provided that the ninth session of the Council should commence on 5 July 1949.

7. The draft resolution proposed by the representative of India recommended "that the Regional Economic Commissions for Asia and the Far East, and for Latin America, be authorized to hold two sessions in 1949". Supporters of this draft resolution stated that it was the desire of the Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East to hold two sessions in 1949, that the work it had already undertaken justified this course and that practical inconvenience would result if the decision were deferred until the ninth session of the Council. Statements were also made to the effect that it was desirable for the Economic Commission for Latin America also to hold two sessions. While it was recognized that the Economic Commission for Europe was in a more advanced organizational stage and was therefore less likely to need two regular sessions in 1949, it was felt that the resolution should refer to all

the regional economic commissions. Stress was laid on the usefulness of the work of the regional economic commissions generally, and the view was expressed that an adequate share of the budget of the United Nations should be devoted to this purpose, and that there should be proportionate expenditures as between the various commissions.

8. Some members doubted whether a resolution such as that proposed was required; they pointed out that it did not differ greatly from that of the Economic and Social Council, which left open the possibility of holding second sessions in 1949 - which would naturally take place in the second half of the year - if they proved to be desirable. It was pointed out that the programme of conferences in the economic and social fields for 1949 had been adopted after a thorough study by the Council of all the relevant factors and taking into account the work of all the subsidiary bodies of the Council, the available personnel, and the financial implications. A number of members, however, held that this question should be brought up at the eighth session of the Council in February 1949.

9. As regards the financial situation, the estimates originally transmitted by the Secretary-General to the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions had been based on one regular session of the Economic Commission for Europe, and two sessions each for the Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East and the Economic Commission for Latin America; on the advice of the Advisory Committee, the budget presented to the General Assembly was based on one session only for each of these bodies.

According to document A/C.2&3/68/Add.1, the economy anticipated from having the commissions hold only one session would amount to \$29,3000. The mover of the resolution considered this saving insufficiently substantial to discourage second sessions, having regard to the estimated total expenditure for regional economic commissions, which amounted to \$1,800,000.

10. One member suggested that when the regional economic commissions held two sessions in a year, one of those sessions might be a "working" or "limited" session, held at the site of the headquarters of the commission, at which the agenda would be limited to giving guidance to its working groups.

11. Another member stressed that the structure of the regional economic commission was experimental. He suggested that, in a few years' time, it might be desirable to merge the regional economic commissions into one world body, with regional working groups and secretariats.

12. After a general discussion, the following proposed amendments to the operative part of the draft resolution quoted in paragraph 7 above were

voted on:

(a) An amendment proposed by the representative of Greece substituting the words "Recommends that the Council should reconsider at its eighth session the desirability of a second meeting of the regional economic commissions in 1949" was rejected by 28 votes against to 5 in favour, with 16 abstentions.

(b) An amendment proposed by the representatives of China and Turkey to delete from the text "for Asia and the Far East, and for Latin America", and an amendment by the representative of China to add the words "if necessary", were adopted by 28 votes in favour to 3 against, with 15 abstentions.

(c) An amendment proposed by the United Kingdom representative to add after "in 1949" the words "one of the sessions to be a working session to be held at the headquarters of the site of the commission", was rejected by 19 votes against to 4 in favour, with 23 abstentions.

13. The Joint Committee accordingly recommends to the General Assembly the adoption of resolution A, the text of which appears at the end of this report, and which was adopted by the Committee by 37 votes in favour to 6 against, with 6 abstentions.

Distribution of membership in subsidiary bodies of the Council

14. The Joint Second and Third Committee had before it during its consideration of this question, the following documents: A/C.2&3/69 (Argentina, Colombia and Cuba: draft resolution); A/C.2&3/70 (Venezuela: amendment to the joint proposal of Argentina, Colombia and Cuba); A/C.2&3/71 (France: amendment to the joint proposal); A/C.2&3/SC.1/1 (Belgium: amendment to the joint proposal); A/C.2&3/75 (report of Sub-Committee I).

15. The operative part of the draft resolution introduced by the representatives of Argentina, Colombia and Cuba recommended to the Economic and Social Council, "when proceeding to the election of the members of its commissions, sub-commissions, and other working organs, to take all Members of the United Nations into consideration with a view to utilizing the special services of each one of them". The preamble affirmed that, in 1948, of the fifty-eight Members of the United Nations "only thirty-nine" had representation among the hundred and twenty places on the eight functional commissions of the Council (other than the Commission on Narcotic Drugs). Those representatives who approved of this draft resolution contended that all Members of the United Nations had a positive contribution to make to the work of the Economic and Social Council. They stated also that the Members

which were permanent members of the Security Council were represented in all the functional commissions, and the desirability of this was questioned. Further, it was alleged that there had been too many re-elections to commissions. One member moved that the principle of rotation of membership should be written into the draft resolution.

16. Some members expressed doubt as to whether a resolution was necessary. Their view was that the relevant provisions of the Charter made a resolution superfluous, because the existing machinery and practice of the Council led to a proper expression of the intentions of the Charter. They contended that the debate in the Joint Committee would give sufficient guidance to the Council.

17. Between these two positions, other members, while agreeing with the basic object of obtaining as wide a representation of Member States on the commissions of the Council as possible, thought that the draft resolution should be amended in certain respects. They stated that, under the system of elections for membership of commissions which the Council had adopted, all fifty-eight Members of the United Nations (except those whose terms of office on the particular commission had not expired) were candidates at every election; that the elections were conducted on the most democratic system possible, i.e. a majority of votes by secret ballot, that, in fact, several ballots were often necessary before all the places were filled; and that a formal requirement either of representation of particular regions, or of rotation, would necessitate elaborate new electoral machinery and would detract from the universal and democratic character of the elections. A further argument was advanced, with particular reference to the places held by the five permanent members of the Security Council, to the effect that the contribution made by those members to the work of the commissions and other bodies, together with their importance in the economic and social structure of the world, must be determining factors. These representatives contended that exact geographical distribution or other considerations must not be made a mandatory requirement which would override those factors. It was pointed out that the provisions of Article 69 of the Charter (participation, without vote, of Member States not members of the Council in the consideration of subjects of special concern to them) constituted another protection against discrimination.

18. At its 28th meeting, the Joint Committee appointed Sub-Committee I consisting of the representatives of Argentina, Belgium, Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic, Colombia, Cuba, France, New Zealand, Norway and Pakistan, to report on the question. The Sub-Committee, of which Dr. W.B. Sutch

(New Zealand) was elected Chairman and Rapporteur, presented its report (A/C.2&3/75) to the Committee at its 31st meetings on 20 October 1948. 19. The report of the Sub-Committee recommended that the draft resolution should cover the subsidiary organs of the Council as follows, subject to the qualifications noted:

(a) The functional commissions of the Council, i.e. the Economic and Employment Commission, the Transport and Communications Commission, the Fiscal Commission, the Statistical Commission, the Social Commission, the Commission on Human Rights, the Commission on the Status of Women, the Commission on Narcotic Drugs, and the Population Commission;

(b) The sub-commissions, i.e. the Sub-Commission on the Freedom of Information and of the Press (Commission on Human Rights); The Sub-Commission on the Prevention of Discrimination and the Protection of Minorities (Commission on Human rights); the Sub-Commission on Employment and Economic Stability (Economic and Employment Commission); the Sub-Commission on Economic Development (Economic and Employment Commission); and the Sub-Commission on Statistical Sampling (Statistical Commission).

(c) The committees of the Council.

(i) The Council resolutions establishing the functional commissions, other than the Commission on Narcotic Drugs, provide that they shall consist of representatives from a number of Member States "selected" by the Council. It is also provided that, before these representatives are confirmed by the Council, there must be consultation between the Secretary-General and the nominating States in order to secure "a balanced representation in the various fields covered by the commission". In the case of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs, the members are States elected directly by the Council. The Council resolution establishing this Commission also requires special representation of important producing or manufacturing countries or countries in which illicit traffic in narcotic drugs constitutes a serious social problem.

(ii) The members of the five sub-commissions, under the Council's resolutions establishing them, are, subject to the consent of their Governments, elected in their personal capacity, by the parent commission. However, on two occasions in the past, at the request of the respective parent commission concerned, the Council has adopted resolutions under which members of

- sub-commissions have been directly elected by the Council.
- (iii) Committees of the Council are of various types, including sessional, standing and ad hoc committees. Usually, they consist of States Members of the Council, or of States Members together with officers of the Council, but, with particular reference to ad hoc committees, there may be cases in which wider representation is desirable.

The wording recommended by Sub-Committee 1 was accordingly, "in the election of Member states entitled to nominate members of functional commissions, and in elections and arrangements for elections of members of other subsidiary bodies". The words, "in the election of Member States entitled to nominate members of functional commissions" apply to the functional commissions (other than the Commission on Narcotic Drugs); and the words, "in elections and arrangements for elections of members of other subsidiary bodies" apply to the other subsidiary bodies.

20. During the discussion in the Sub-Committee, its Chairman ruled that the wording of the draft resolution would not of itself require the Economic and Social Council to change its rules of procedure, or to introduce new rules of procedure on this subject, but would require the Council to give consideration to the resolution.

21. During the examination by the Joint Second and Third Committee of the draft resolution drawn up by the Sub-Committee, the representative of Cuba moved the insertion therein of the clause in the preamble of the draft resolution proposed by Argentina, Colombia and Cuba, to the effect that in the hundred and twenty posts available on the functional commissions of the Council only thirty-nine of the fifty-eight Members of the United Nations were represented, should be reinserted. It was pointed out that the number for 1949 is forty. Opinions differed as to the evaluation of these figures, it being held on the one hand that the figure of forty was too low, and on the other hand that, since only eighteen States were represented on the Economic and Social Council, the fact that forty States had been elected to these commissions was an achievement deserving of praise. It was agreed that, while the clause should not be included in the preamble to the draft resolution, the Committee's action should be reported to the General Assembly by the Rapporteur.

22. The draft resolution submitted by the Sub-Committee (resolution B below), with minor drafting changes in the French version, was approved by 46 votes in favour to none against, with no abstentions and it was decided to recommend it to the General Assembly for adoption.

23. The Joint Committee accordingly recommends to the General Assembly the adoption of the following resolutions:

A

NUMBER OF SESSIONS OF REGIONAL ECONOMIC COMMISSIONS IN 1949

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY,

HAVING EXAMINED resolution 174 (VII) adopted by the Economic and Social Council on 28 August 1948 relative to the calendar of conferences for 1948,

RECOMMENDS that the Council authorize the regional economic commissions to hold two sessions in 1949 if necessary.

B

DISTRIBUTION OF MEMBERSHIP IN SUBSIDIARY ORGANS OF THE  
ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL

WHEREAS it would be equitable and highly beneficial if all Members of the United Nations were invited to co-operate on the functional commissions and other subsidiary bodies of the Economic and Social Council,

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

RECOMMENDS the Economic and Social Council, in the election of Member States entitled to nominate members of functional commissions, and in elections and arrangements for elections of members of other subsidiary bodies, to take all Members of the United Nations into consideration, with due regard to an equitable geographical distribution, to the special contribution each of the Member States may bring to the work of the Council, and to their ability to take effective action in response to their election.

-----