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REPORT OF THE AD HOC ADVISORY COMMITTEE FOR THE RESEARCH AND
TRAINING IN REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Note by the Secretary-General

1. It will be recalled that the Economic and Social Council in its resolution 1086 C (XXXIX) requested the Secretary-General to prepare a draft programme of research and training in connexion with regional development efforts in Member States and to report to the Social Commission at its seventeenth session and the Council at its forty-first session, his concrete proposals for such a programme. In January 1966, the Secretary-General convened an Ad Hoc Advisory Committee to advise him on the drafting of the programme which was submitted to the Commission for Social Development at its seventeenth session.^{1/}

In pursuance of Economic and Social Council resolution 1141 (XLI) the Secretary-General initiated action to develop the programme of research and training in regional development reporting annually to the Commission for Social Development on the progress made.

2. In view of the fact that the programme had been operating for almost four years and also that within that time significant changes had occurred in

^{1/} Official Records of the Economic and Social Council. Forty-first Session, Supplement No. 10, chap. V, paras. 111-123.

the thinking and practice of regional development, it was felt that the time was opportune to convene another meeting of the Ad Hoc Advisory Committee for the Research and Training Programme in Regional Development, which was held at United Nations Headquarters from 1 to 4 September 1970 to review the progress made in the implementation of the programme, to assess its relevance to the changing needs and situations in regional development activities in different countries, both developed and developing, and to advise the Secretary-General on the future scope and direction of the programme. The Committee had before it working papers on progress made in training as well as research; tentative proposals for a world-wide programme of research and training; and the human and institutional aspects of regional development. Representatives of the various Divisions, regional economic commissions and the United Nations Economic and Social Office in Beirut, UNDP, UNICEF, UNRISD, the training centres co-operating in the programme and the specialized agencies in the United Nations directly concerned with regional planning and development participated in the meeting in a consultative and resource capacity.^{2/}

Conclusions and recommendations

3. The Committee concluded that the regional development approach was being used more widely by Member States to achieve a more effective integration of social, economic and spatial aspects of development; that the objectives for adopting the regional development approach had broadened significantly beyond those obtaining at the time when the Council adopted resolution 1086 C (XXXIX); and that large resources both from national and multinational and bilateral sources were being invested in regional development projects with the concomitant need for more trained personnel and for operational guidelines to ensure the viability of such investments within the regional (sub-national) framework. The Secretary-General is in agreement with these conclusions.

^{2/} The Social Development Division, The Office of Technical Co-operation, the Centre for Development Planning, Policies and Projections, the Centre for Housing, Building and Planning, Resources and Transport Division, Population Division, and Public Administration Division.

4. In the matter of recommendations the Ad Hoc Advisory Committee proposed certain actions which would be seen in the context of the rapidly changing views and approaches to development policies and planning. Since many countries have come to regard regional development as a major instrument for promoting balanced development, this approach will have an important role in the implementation of the strategy of the Second United Nations Development Decade.

5. Within this framework, there is ample scope for the United Nations to co-operate with Member States in initiating research and training activities primarily to meet the need for cadres of national officials and specialists engaged in regional development activities of a comprehensive nature. At the same time the programme would contribute through study and research to an exchange of information and experience and the transfer of knowledge among interested countries.

6. This will entail concerted action and co-ordination of activities on the part of the United Nations and the specialized agencies as well as UNDP and UNICEF, which have resources to provide for regional development training and research activities within operational projects assisted by them. The manner in which such action will be taken is proposed in the programme of work for the period 1971-1975 submitted to the Commission. These activities will be undertaken within the resources provided in the regular budget and or through the extra-budgetary resources for the research and training programme in regional development.

7. The Ad Hoc Advisory Committee's recommendation that Governments of Member States should be encouraged to assist the United Nations regional development programme (recommendation 3) is important for the future development of the research and training programme in this field. Voluntary contributions have already been received for promoting the research and training programme in regional development.^{3/} A beginning has been made to set up a documentation and clearing house service and to provide consultant services as a complement to the regular technical assistance resources. With the expansion of the programme on the lines recommended by the Ad Hoc Advisory Committee these services will have to

^{3/} In addition to a contribution of \$100,000 by the Government and the Netherlands to the Funds-in-trust account, financial support is expected from several Governments for specific projects within the programme.

be increased and others introduced, and it is the hope of the Secretary-General that other Member States will be disposed to make voluntary contributions as suggested by the Economic and Social Council in resolutions 1086 C (XXXIX) and 1141 (XLI).

8. On the question of member Governments of Member States making their research and training facilities available for training of persons from other countries and providing fellowships for them (recommendation 8 (iii)), it is expected that the interregional symposium to be held in Poland on the training of planners for comprehensive regional development and the symposium of European institutions engaged in training and research activities in regional development, both to be held in 1971, will help in identifying more clearly the facilities which are available and will enable the United Nations to work out co-operative arrangements with the Governments concerned for providing training and research fellowships in such institutions.

9. The Ad Hoc Advisory Committee has also recommended that a permanent high-level committee should be established to advise the United Nations on regional development activities and that the committee should meet once a year for a relatively extended period (recommendation 1). Considering the multi-disciplinary nature of the activities in regional development and the need to have balanced representation on the basis of geographical areas and major economic systems, the proposed committee would have to comprise at least ten members and meet for at least two weeks each time. The cost of holding a meeting of such a committee would be approximately \$35,000 to \$45,000. As an alternative the Commission may wish to consider continuing the present practice of convening an ad hoc advisory committee of experts at more frequent intervals than hitherto, at least once in two years. These meetings would have to be held for a longer period than in the past, perhaps two weeks, if the committee is to give adequate attention to the matters which have been suggested for its consideration.

10. The Ad Hoc Advisory Committee has also recommended the strengthening of the Headquarters' staff dealing with regional development and particularly with United Nations sponsored research and training efforts (recommendation 2). The substantive aspects of regional development fall within the purview of several of the Divisions within the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, and there

is merit in the recommendation of the Committee that the staff servicing particularly the research and training programme in regional development should be strengthened in order to bring together more closely the social, economic and physical elements which are essential to regional development processes. The Secretary-General will keep in mind the recommendations of the Advisory Committee when the 1972 budget estimates are being prepared. Meanwhile, the intent of the recommendation can be fulfilled to a considerable extent by having more intensive working relationships established among the substantive divisions in the United Nations concerned with regional planning and development^{4/} and by utilizing the extra-budgetary resources available to engage consultants on a short-term basis who will provide to the programme these essential elements. Although the Committee implicitly recognized the important role of the regional economic commissions and UNESOB in this programme, the Secretary-General would have welcomed greater attention in the report to this matter. It would be the intention of the Secretary-General to involve the regional secretariats fully in further work in this field and, in particular, in substantive support from institutes for training and research in their respective regions.

^{4/} There is an interdivisional committee of the Secretariat in which the Social Development Division, the Centre for Development Planning, Policies and Projections, the Centre for Housing, Building and Planning; the Public Administration Division; the Resources and Transport Division; the Population Division and the Office for Technical Co-operation are represented.