



UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL



Distr.
GENERAL

E/4828
19 June 1970

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

Forty-ninth session
Agenda item 16

Dual distr.

UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON THE HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

Report of the Secretary-General

1. The General Assembly in its resolution 2581 (XXIV) requested the Secretary-General to submit a brief report to the General Assembly at its twenty-fifth session through the Economic and Social Council at its forty-ninth session.

Preparatory Committee

2. The Preparatory Committee for the United Nations Conference on Human Environment held its first session at United Nations Headquarters from 10 to 20 March 1970. The Committee discussed the definition of the programme contents and topics for the Conference, the preparation of documentation, and measures to encourage national participation. The recommendations of the Committee are contained in its report (A/CONF.48/PC/6).
3. The Preparatory Committee underlined the call for an "action oriented" conference as already set out in General Assembly resolutions 2398 (XXIII) and 2581 (XXIV) and emphasized in the Secretary-General's report entitled "Problems of the human environment" (E/4667). A number of areas for action at the national and international levels were identified. The Committee stressed that it was of the greatest importance to ensure an appropriate balance between the environmental problems of developing and developed countries and proposed that the Conference programme should be prepared around the following three areas (a) environmental aspects of human settlements (b) rational management of natural resources and (c) environmental degradation from pollution and nuisances.

Conference secretariat

4. The Conference secretariat has been established at the United Nations Headquarters. The Secretary-General has appointed a Director of the Conference secretariat and other staff will be appointed before the end of the year. It is associated with the Office for Science and Technology and collaborates closely with other divisions of the United Nations Secretariat, the specialized agencies and IAEA. The General Assembly in its resolution 2581 (XXIV) requested the Secretary-General to set up the Conference secretariat "by drawing with the agreement of the specialized agencies concerned particularly upon regular staff of the United Nations system". In order to facilitate close co-operation with the specialized agencies and other bodies in Europe, a unit of the Conference secretariat particularly concerned with the preparation of substantive documentation will be located at the European Office of the United Nations in Geneva. These arrangements should facilitate increasing assistance being received from the agencies and from divisions of the United Nations Secretariat on a full time and part-time basis.

Co-operation with the specialized agencies

5. Fruitful consultations with the specialized agencies of the United Nations, IAEA and the Advisory Committee on the Application of Science and Technology have taken place. The preparatory work was discussed in particular at a special meeting of the ACC Sub-Committee on Science and Technology held on 21 March 1970 and a proposal to establish an ACC Ad Hoc Inter-Agency Working Group was subsequently approved by the ACC (E/4840). The first meeting of this Ad Hoc Group at the end of June 1970 will consider a tentative detailed programme breakdown for the Conference and arrangements for the assistance of the specialized agencies and the regional economic commissions.

Co-operation with other international organizations

6. The General Assembly in its resolution 2581 (XXIV) invited the intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations concerned to lend every possible assistance for the preparation of the Conference. In fact, valuable

suggestions have already been obtained from a number of such organizations and the Secretary-General considers that their continuing co-operation will be essential both from a technical point of view and for the purpose of ensuring a wide public interest for the Conference. The Secretary-General therefore intends to maintain close contacts with them and to invite them as appropriate to send observers to the meetings of the Preparatory Committee.

Programme of work of the Conference secretariat

7. The Preparatory Committee will consider at its second session the detailed Conference programme which is being prepared on the basis of the proposals contained in the report of its first session (A/CONF.48/PC/6). It will also consider the Secretary-General's preliminary proposals concerning the question of a universal declaration on the human environment.

8. In the period before the second session of the Preparatory Committee, the Conference secretariat will therefore be mainly concerned with:

(a) The preparation of a detailed list of topics for discussion at the Conference;

(b) The establishment of contacts with experts and organizations which may be called upon to assist in preparing the working papers corresponding to the various topics of the detailed Conference programme; in particular the establishment of close co-operation with the leading non-governmental scientific organizations, such as the International Council of Scientific Unions and the International Union for the Conservation of Nature are already engaged in valuable work pertinent to the Conference programme;

(c) The consideration of proposals concerning case studies to be undertaken by participating countries or appropriate governmental or non-governmental organizations;

(d) The consideration of basic principles which might be embodied in an international declaration on the human environment;

(e) A review of international or regional environmental programmes being undertaken or planned at present within or outside the United Nations system, in order to make best possible use of all existing expertise in preparing for the Conference; in particular a review of existing or proposed international agreements, including conclusions from experience thus gained;

(f) To enlist public understanding and support for the objectives of the Conference.

9. In order to accomplish these tasks efficiently the Secretary-General intends to call on the assistance and advice of all authorities concerned, both at the national and international levels. The substantive work involved in this programme as well as the administrative and liaison activities involved will be of considerable magnitude.

Background documentation

10. Governments have been invited to prepare national reports, as outlined in the report of the Preparatory Committee (A/CONF.48/PC/6, para. 35), before 31 March 1971. It is hoped, however, that a number of these reports will be available before the end of 1970. These reports will complete the background documentation which is being collected at present from various sources within as well as outside the United Nations system.

11. Governments have also been invited to submit proposals concerning the preparation of case studies describing specific examples of management of environmental problems in specific geographical areas or locations.

12. The second session of the Preparatory Committee should provide solid ground for the Secretary-General to proceed with the drafting of the working papers for discussions at the Conference. It is intended, however, to undertake immediately as much as possible of this preparatory work on a tentative basis, making maximum use of the valuable suggestions which have already been made by the Preparatory Committee. For this purpose the Secretary-General attaches great importance to the active co-operation provided by the specialized agencies. Furthering this co-operation will be one of the main immediate tasks of the ACC Ad Hoc Working Group and of the Conference secretariat.

Place and date of meetings of the Preparatory Committee

13. The Preparatory Committee indicated that if the Secretary-General felt it desirable it would be prepared to meet in September 1970, otherwise it proposed to hold its second session in January 1971. It also considered holding the second session at Geneva if this would not involve significant additional financial

implications compared with meeting at United Nations Headquarters. The Committee agreed that those decisions should be left to the Secretary-General.

14. The Secretary-General believes that the preparatory work for the Conference will not have proceeded far enough to justify a meeting in September 1970.

Bearing in mind the Committee's recommendations, the Secretary-General therefore proposes to convene the second session of the Preparatory Committee at Geneva early in 1971, the exact date to be determined, taking account of the convenience of members and of the programme of meetings at the United Nations office at Geneva.

15. The Secretary-General believes that it will be useful to hold the third session of the Preparatory Committee during 1971. In drawing up the financial implications, New York is assumed as the meeting place.

Emphasis on the needs and special problems of developing countries

16. The Preparatory Committee emphasized the importance of encouraging active interest in the developing countries and regions in the Conference. As one means of meeting this need, the Committee recommended that as far as possible its future sessions should be held at the headquarters of the regional economic commissions or, as an alternative, that the Chairman and members of the Committee should visit the commissions and regions concerned.

17. The Secretary-General fully appreciates the need to ensure the involvement of the developing countries in the Conference and to support them in preparing themselves for it. In view of the additional cost of holding sessions of the Preparatory Committee away from New York or Geneva, however, the Secretary-General proposes to consider alternative forms of assistance which the United Nations can provide to developing countries by making best possible use of expertise which already exists within the specialized agencies. Guidance will be sought on this possibility from the ACC Ad Hoc Working Group and the matter will be taken up in direct consultations with the agencies and the regional economic commissions. The Conference secretariat will ensure that the information programmes discussed below contain a broad element designed to encourage active interest on the part of developing countries in the environmental problems of special concern to them.

Information activities

18. The Preparatory Committee considered the nature and extent of the information effort to be undertaken prior to the actual meeting of the Conference on the basis of suggestions set out in a note by the Secretary-General (A/CONF.48/PC/5), and elaborated further at the meeting by a representative of the Secretary-General. It considered the type of audience towards which this information programme should be directed, as well as the organizational, administrative and financial arrangements needed.
19. In his note, the Secretary-General had stated that the complex problem of the impairment of the human environment had presented itself under circumstances which called for a new type of information effort. Emphasis would have to be given to the promotional and educational approach in a somewhat different sense from that which is frequently described as public information.
20. The Press, radio and television have recently drawn so much attention to environmental problems that on first sight there may appear to be no convincing argument in favour of a special activity on the part of the Centre for Economic and Social Information of the United Nations Secretariat in this respect. There is a real danger, however, that the popularization of the subject may lead to a concentration on the more spectacular aspects of environmental deterioration in a few advanced countries, like pollution for example, while other less obvious aspects of a cultural and economic nature may remain neglected. After having devoted considerable thought to this subject, the Secretary-General is convinced that there is a real need for an intellectual activity aimed at legislators, government policy-makers, leading personalities in industry and agriculture, with a view to placing current concern about pollution and other evident nuisances in the proper socio-economic perspective. Consequently, there will be a need for carefully targeted information in support of the three main themes of the Conference. This would be destined to specialized audiences and would serve as background material for symposia grouping industrialists, city planners, national officials responsible for environmental problems and others. Furthermore, the information programme will give prominence to the specific environmental problems of developing countries.

21. Among specific assignments proposed, the Centre for Economic and Social Information of the United Nations Secretariat would prepare a study on the problem of the human environment, as part of its series known as "Executive briefing papers", for distribution to leaders of public opinion and mass media; prepare and make available to national government information services "easily readable and non-technical information material on the issues involved; encourage the production of films and television programmes designed to focus attention on the dangers inherent in the defilement and impairment of the human environment and on the possible remedies; develop its co-operation with non-governmental organizations; and evolve, in consultation with the specialized agencies, a common information approach.

Costs of the Conference

22. With regard to the costs of the Conference the Secretary-General has noted the views expressed during the debates of the Economic and Social Council at its forty-seventh session and of the General Assembly at its twenty-fourth session that all efforts should be made to reduce them. It will be recalled that as a result of the views expressed in the General Assembly the Secretary-General revised the figures which he had originally proposed as the requirements for the Conference budget, reducing the estimated cost from \$1,918,000 (A/4667) to \$1,564,000 (A/7707). The Secretary-General is aware of the need to keep the costs of the Conference to a minimum but a number of important developments have occurred since the proposals for the Conference were first drawn up which necessitate a revision of the estimates.

23. In the first place, the concern about environmental problems by the public in general and on the part of public authorities, scientific organizations, universities etc. has shown a dramatic growth. This upsurge of interest is a hopeful sign for the success of the Conference but it necessitates considerable liaison activity on the part of the Conference secretariat. The staff envisaged when the financial proposals were first put forward would be quite unable to deal responsibly with the inquiries and work which is already being received.

24. Secondly, a number of international non-governmental organizations such as the International Council of Scientific Unions and the International Union for

the Conservation of Nature are already actively taking steps to assist the Conference secretariat. While such activity represents a major contribution to the Conference, to take advantage of it requires consultation, liaison and intellectual work on the part of the Conference secretariat.

25. In the third place, almost all the specialized agencies are now engaged upon a broad spectrum of work related to environmental problems. These activities may be considered as parts of a global approach by the United Nations in view of the Conference, provided that they are properly synchronized with the preparatory work of the Conference secretariat. Adequate provisions for staff and travel will have to be made, however, if this purpose is to be achieved within the short time available. This will require, in particular, the establishment of a branch of the Conference secretariat at Geneva.

26. The interest of the concerned public, the non-governmental organizations and the specialized agencies are being reflected in a large number and types of conferences, symposia, meetings etc. being convened to consider environmental problems from sectoral or interdisciplinary points of view and the involvement of the Secretary-General is constantly being solicited in connexion with such meetings. While it is neither possible nor necessary for the Conference secretariat to be represented at all such meetings, it is essential that it be in a position, as requested by the General Assembly in its resolution 2581 (XXIV) "to take account of the results of other international conferences" and "to draw on contributions from appropriate intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations". This involves a volume of work much greater than that originally envisaged.

27. The General Assembly (resolution 2511 (XXIV)) had also stated that all participating countries should be enabled to take an active part in the preparations for the Conference and in the Conference itself, and requested the Secretary-General to investigate the concrete steps which could be taken to that end. The Preparatory Committee suggested more specifically "that case studies relating to problems in developing countries would be very desirable and that technical assistance should, at the request of the Governments concerned, be extended as far as possible and desirable for their preparation - as well as for the preparation of national reports - particularly through the United Nations and the specialized agencies having relevant operational activities in the countries concerned" (A/CONF.48/PC/6, para. 37). The Conference secretariat is taking steps in order

that the fullest possible effect may be given to these recommendations, but, at present, no financial provision exists for this purpose.

28. Finally, the figures given in A/7707 did not include any provision for the work which the Centre for Economic and Social Information of the United Nations Secretariat is now expected to undertake in connexion with the preparation of the Conference (though it included a sum of \$58,500 for 1972 public information activities during the Conference itself). Since the Centre for Economic and Social Information has no financial resources which could be earmarked for the information activities referred to in the present report, consideration will have to be given either to incorporating those costs within the Conference budget, thereby increasing it, or by seeking additional financial resources to be made available on a voluntary basis. If neither of the approaches suggested above can be implemented, the proposals contained in this report relating to information will have to be reviewed accordingly.

Financial implications

29. The developments referred to in the preceding paragraphs will result in additional financial implications for the Conference.

(a) Meetings of the Preparatory Committee

Provision for the servicing of the meetings of the Preparatory Committee was made on the basis of two sessions which will be held in 1970, one in 1971 and one in 1972. On the present indications it appears that there would be one meeting in 1970, two meetings in 1971 and one meeting in 1972. Based on the assumption that the second session would be convened at Geneva and subsequent ones in New York, this would require an additional provision of approximately \$26,000 for 1971 and 1972.

(b) Temporary Conference secretariat

The figures given in A/7707 were based on the assumption that the Conference secretariat would comprise four professional and five general service staff. It is clear now that this is inadequate for the work to be done. The Secretary-General believes that the requirements will be eight professional and nine general service staff. This would include an additional D-1 post and one general service

staff required within the Centre for Economic and Social Information, whose salaries would be charged to the budget of the Conference. This would require an additional provision of approximately \$295,000, for the years 1971-1972.

(c) Travel

The provisions for travel were originally based on an assumption of six major journeys per year; the increasing need for liaison between the Conference secretariat and Governments, agencies and non-governmental organizations, as well as the requirement for attendance at relevant conferences and meetings clearly make this inadequate and the Secretary-General recommends that an increase of \$58,000 be provided for this item.

(d) Assistance to developing countries

While it is difficult to estimate the cost of assisting developing countries in their preparations for the Conference, the Secretary-General recommends that a sum of \$65,000 be added to enable the Conference secretariat to fulfil this function during 1971.

(e) Experts and consultants

The preparation of the Conference documentation by the Conference secretariat assisted by consultants has been envisaged as a feature of the Conference which was originally stressed in the report of the Secretary-General (E/4667) and supported by the Preparatory Committee. In the figures contained in A/7707 a provision of \$68,500 in 1970 and \$51,500 in 1971 was made for consultants. It is now expected that a sum of \$112,000 will be required for this purpose in 1971. This increase, however, would be offset by a similar saving under this heading in 1970, which is likely to arise because the preparatory work for the Conference has started somewhat later than was originally hoped.

30. It should be noted, however, that one of the principal elements in the costs of the Conference, viz. substantive background documentation \$689,000 has been left unchanged. This figure was estimated on the basis of proposals made by the Secretary-General in his report (E/4667). These proposals still stand in principle but some revision of this figure may be necessary when the detailed programme of the Conference is determined following the second session of the Preparatory Committee.

31. It should also be noted that no financial provision has been made in this report for:

(a) The honorarium of the Secretary-General of the Conference, whose appointment was requested by the General Assembly (resolution 2581 (XXIV)) and the cost of any additional staff and travel requirements; the total amount required for this purpose will depend upon the type and duration of the contract agreed upon and the date of appointment;

(b) The expanded information programme, except that provision has been made for a D-1 post and one general service staff, and a small provision (\$9,000) for essential travel the Centre for Economic and Social Information will undertake in 1971 and 1972 in connexion with the Conference.

ANNEX

The proposals contained in this report would have certain additional financial implications over the four-year period which can be summarized as follows:

	(US dollars)
(a) Meetings of the Preparatory Committee	17,600
(b) Temporary Conference secretariat	295,000
(c) Travel of staff	58,000
(d) Assistance to developing countries (consultants). .	65,000
(e) Centre for Economic and Social Information - travel	<u>9,000</u>
Total .	<u><u>444,600</u></u>

REVISED ESTIMATED COSTS AS AT JUNE 1970
(US Dollars)

E/4828
English
Annex
Page 2

	1970		1971		1972		1973		Total	
	A/T707	Revised	A/T707	Revised	A/T707	Revised	A/T707	Revised	A/T707	Revised
(a) Costs of meeting of the Preparatory Committee	16,700	8,300	8,600	34,600	9,700	9,700	-	-	35,000	52,600
(b) Temporary Conference secretariat	81,000	81,000	160,000	320,000	120,000	255,000	-	-	361,000	656,000
(c) Travel of staff	5,000	5,000	5,000	34,000	10,000	39,000	-	-	20,000	78,000
(d) Experts and consultants	68,500	8,000	51,500	112,000	37,500	37,500	-	-	157,500	157,500
(e) Substantive background documentation (translation, editing, reproduction, copy preparation and printing)	-	-	689,600	689,600	-	-	-	-	689,600	689,600
(f) Conference servicing costs (travel and subsistence of substantive staff from Headquarters, temporary Conference servicing staff, in-conference documentation and final report, general expenses)	-	-	-	-	123,800	123,800	-	-	123,800	123,800
(g) Public information services	-	-	-	-	58,500	58,500	-	-	58,500	58,500
(h) Printing of final report and proceedings (report, summary of discussions and papers submitted to the Conference)	-	-	-	-	-	-	118,600	118,600	118,600	118,600
Centre for Economic and Social Information (travel)	-	-	-	4,500	-	4,500	-	-	-	9,000
Assistance to developing countries	-	-	-	65,000	-	-	-	-	-	65,000
171,200	102,300	914,700	1,259,700	359,500	528,000	118,600	118,600	118,600	1,564,000	2,008,600
Net increase (decrease)	(68,900)		345,000	168,500	-	-	-	-		444,600