

UNITED NATIONS

ECONOMIC  
AND  
SOCIAL COUNCIL



GENERAL

E/AC.34/SR.5  
20 April 1951

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

AD HOC COMMITTEE ON THE ORGANIZATION AND OPERATION  
OF THE COUNCIL AND ITS COMMISSIONS  
SUMMARY RECORD OF THE FIFTH MEETING

Held at Lake Success, New York,  
on Thursday, 12 April 1951, at 11 a.m.

**CONTENTS:** Structure of the Economic and Social Council and organization  
of its work: proposals submitted by Member States (Conference  
Room Paper No. 1 and No. 1/Corr.1)

**Chairman:** Mr. SANTA CRUZ President of the Economic and  
Social Council

**Members:** Mr. BRENNAN Australia  
Mr. AIMEIDA Brazil  
Mr. CHANG China  
Mr. DEVINAT France  
Mr. SAKSENA )  
Mr. RAJAN ) India

Members (continued)

Mr. CHERNYSHEV

Mr. CORLEY SMITH

Mr. IUBIN

Observer: Miss WITTEVEEN

Representative of a non-

governmental organization in Category A:

Mr. BROPLEY

Secretariat: Mr. LUKAC

Mr. YATES

Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

United Kingdom of Great Britain

and Northern Ireland

United States of America

Netherlands

Director, Division of Transport  
and Communications

Secretary of the Council

STRUCTURE OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL AND ORGANIZATION OF ITS WORK:

PROPOSALS SUBMITTED BY MEMBER STATES (Conference Room Paper No.1 and No. 1/Corr.1)

The CHAIRMAN asked the Committee to consider the Secretariat's summary of the proposals concerning the structure and organization of the Council as a basic working paper for the first phase of its discussion. It represented a concise over-all picture of the various views put forward by Member States in broad outline.

The representatives of Brazil, China, France and the USSR had suggested several corrections and additions to the statements of their views, which were set forth in Conference Room Paper No.1/Corr.1

To clarify a point raised by the representative of Australia, Mr. CORLEY SMITH (United Kingdom) explained that the proposals submitted by his Government for three sessions, of which the first would be divided into two parts, should not be taken as a final blueprint but rather as an experimental sketch of the Council's organization. They placed emphasis on two main factors: the attempt to separate routine matters and questions of policy of immediate importance into two distinct categories; and the attempt to retain enough elasticity over a long period so as not to bind the Council too rigidly in advance to a fixed programme. If the Agenda Committee were to work out an agenda for the whole year's work, it would probably be able to decide how to organize the tasks in hand, leaving the Council free to make whatever adaptation appeared necessary. There was actually no distinction between "sessions" and "sittings".

/Mr. IUBIN

Mr. LUBIN (United States of America) noted that there would be a more favourable psychological reaction to the suggestion for three sittings or sessions, the first to be divided into two parts, than to four sessions.

Mr. CHANG (China) agreed that it would be wiser from the psychological point of view to speak of not more than three sessions. On the other hand, more fruitful results in reorganizing the Council's work could be achieved by thinking in terms of "sittings" rather than sessions. In effect, with the first session divided into two parts, there would be four such sittings in the period of a year. The first might be held for one to three weeks in January - February. The Council would then deal with routine matters referred to it by the General Assembly, co-ordination and organizational business. The second sitting might begin a few days after the close of that first routine discussion and last for some three weeks in February - March. It would be devoted to consideration of social subjects, including human rights. The third sitting, during which the Council would deal with economic subjects, might be held in April. The fourth and final sitting of the year might be held in May and extend for some two to three weeks through June. At that time the Council would again be dealing with routine matters, it would prepare social subjects for discussion at the February meeting of the following year, it might arrange the agenda for that year, and it would prepare the final report to the General Assembly.

The two "routine sittings" should be held at Headquarters to avoid any unnecessary disruption of the Secretariat's preparatory work. On the other hand, the two sittings on specific social and economic subjects might usefully be held away from Headquarters, preferably in areas more vitally affected by the problems under discussion.

Under the system of four sittings, as described, the final June meeting could be expected to replace the regular summer session and to cover from 70 to 80 per cent of the routine work normally accomplished at that time. Of course, the Economic and Social Committee might have to meet independently of the four yearly sittings. The Secretariat should consider whether a system of four sittings would contribute to greater efficiency and whether it would be practical to arrange the 1951 Council agenda on that pattern.

/Mr. LUBIN

Mr. LUBIN (United States of America) found that the main weakness of the Chinese proposal lay in the suggestion that a two to three week June sitting would be adequate to dispose of the very important matters before the Council at that time. It was precisely in respect of those matters, which included questions of co-ordination and reports of specialized agencies, that the Council had failed most notably in the past. Discussion of those reports warranted more time and more thorough study. For that reason the United States delegation agreed with the United Kingdom that the fourth sitting should be held late in the year rather than early in the summer.

Mr. CHANG (China) was prepared to extend the fourth sitting to three or four weeks in order to give more time for the consideration of those very important reports. It might be advisable, however, to restrict debate to the most urgent among them and to defer consideration of the others until the following year.

Mr. BRENNAN (Australia) recalled that his delegation had originally favoured two sessions per year, and meetings of the Economic and Social Committees before or after the plenary sessions. It might be able to compromise on an increase to three sessions but the four-sittings system outlined by the representative of China might impose a heavy burden on smaller delegations. In the course of a routine session, discussion of very important issues might develop and the question of representation might become a problem: among smaller delegations it would often occur -- more so than among larger delegations -- that the delegate dealing with routine questions which were not necessarily unimportant would also deal with policy questions. The problem would be especially difficult if routine and policy "sittings" were separated not only by a time interval but by a change in the place of meeting.

Mr. CORLEY SMITH (United Kingdom) felt that the Australian representative was drawing too sharp a distinction between committees of the whole and plenary meetings. If, in the course of a session on routine matters, questions of major policy arose, it was perfectly possible for representatives to request deferment of such matters until they had consulted their Governments

/and received

and received appropriate instructions. Accordingly, the Australian representative need have no apprehension that an expert selected for his knowledge of organizational matters would be unduly embarrassed should the debate turn to substantive matters which had not been anticipated.

Wherever possible, the Council sitting in plenary session should take decisions on all questions before it. Only where double discussion, that is, discussion both on the Committee and the Council levels, was absolutely necessary, should it be resorted to. Moreover, on the basis of the agenda for the two parts of the first sitting, it should be possible in advance to assign two sets of representatives: technical experts and persons qualified to speak on policy questions.

Mr. CHERNYSHEV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) asked the United States representative whether, by accepting the United Kingdom proposal for three sessions per year, he was in fact departing from the position originally stated by his Government in its memorandum.

Mr. LUBIN (United States of America) said that the United States had accepted the United Kingdom modification of its original proposal and the concept of three sessions at which the work would be done by the Council itself. In practice the distinction between "sessions" and "sittings" was purely artificial and there might be no more than two days between the end of the so-called "routine session" and that dealing with social questions and human rights. In the same way, the sitting devoted to economic matters later in the year could be expected to include certain routine questions. It would be the business of the Agenda Committee to fix the number of days for the discussion of the various categories of topics with which the Council had to deal.

Mr. BRENNAN (Australia) said that it was important to know how long an interval there would be between the two parts of the first session of the year if the United Kingdom proposals were adopted. Naturally, an interval of one or

/two days

two days between the two parts would not have any harmful effects, but an interval of any length of time would place a considerable strain on the smaller delegations. The difficulties would be even greater if the first and second parts of the session were not held in the same place.

Mr. CORLEY SMITH (United Kingdom) explained that he had made his proposal of dividing the first session of the year into two parts for purely practical reasons. The lapse of time between the two parts would only be a matter of days and the proposal would have the advantage of setting a definite date for the beginning of the discussion on the substantive items, so that the specialists who were appointed to deal with them would know exactly when they should arrive at the meeting place. At the same time, the proposal to divide the Council's work by subject matter and spread it out over the year might help to eliminate some of the purely administrative difficulties which had arisen in the past. For example, if his suggestions were adopted it should be easier for the Secretariat to prepare all the documents in the two working languages in advance of the meetings so that there would no longer be delays due to insufficient preparation. Similarly, if his suggestions were adopted, it should be possible to avoid the accumulation of too many items towards the end of the year when the Council was left with insufficient time to deal with them all adequately.

He agreed with the way in which the representative of China had approached the problem, but felt he had been somewhat over-optimistic in calculating the length of time needed for the Council's sessions.

Mr. CHERNYSHEV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) concluded that the United Kingdom suggestions would actually mean that the Council would be in permanent session except for the period when the General Assembly was in session. He had already expressed his opposition to such a proposal and shown that it could have no possible justification. The adoption of such a proposal would involve extra expenditure for delegations and for the Secretariat in servicing additional meetings. He was still convinced that one session a year would be quite sufficient to enable the Council to discuss the basic issues before it and he urged members to adopt his proposal.

/He could

He could not accept the suggestion that the Council's agenda should be drawn up at the beginning of the year to cover the whole year. In his opinion, the prevailing method of preparing the agenda was quite satisfactory and he emphasized that the Council itself must be free to decide which items it wished to discuss and to add items of an urgent nature, if necessary. He did not think it was within the Committee's terms of reference to discuss the procedure for the preparation of the Council's agenda.

Mr. DEVINAT (France) remarked that there appeared to be general agreement that the important persons who were called upon to take part in the Council's meetings should not be taken from their usual work unnecessarily or for too long a period. It was with that in mind that the United Kingdom representative had proposed a system of short, specialized sessions at the beginning of the year and a long session on general subjects in the second part of the year. That proposal had the disadvantage of extending the Council's work over a longer period and creating difficulties for small delegations. He personally did not think it was necessary or advisable to separate the economic and social questions into two different sessions. The economic and social problems were interdependent and should preferably be discussed at the same session.

He agreed with the United Kingdom representative that routine questions should be separated from questions of general policy for purposes of discussion. It would not be possible to settle all routine questions at the first session of the year because the reports of the subsidiary organs would not be available at that stage. He therefore suggested that the Council should hold one session at the beginning of the year to discuss all the important questions of principle in the economic and social fields. There were not so very many important questions requiring the participation of people of the first rank and if those questions were separated from routine matters it should be possible to settle them fairly quickly. That first session would be followed by a period for work and reflection which could be used for meetings of the various functional commissions.

He did not favour the proposal that the committees of the Council should meet during periods when the Council itself was not in plenary session. If such a proposal were adopted, it would mean that the members of permanent delegations

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would have to attend the committee meetings instead of representatives with a specialized knowledge of the item to be discussed. Consequently, the committee would lose their technical nature and their work would be less valuable.

He emphasized the importance of adequate preparation for the Council's sessions. The Secretariat should have more time for preparation so that the documents needed for discussion in the Council could be made available to Governments well in advance in order to allow for serious study.

With regard to the preparation of the agenda, he suggested that both the role and membership of the Agenda Committee should be enlarged so that the Committee would be in a position to prepare the agenda for a whole year, as proposed. Its membership might be increased to nine.

Mr. CORLEY SMITH (United Kingdom) emphasized that his proposals had not been intended to increase the burden on delegations. On the contrary, the main purpose had been to reduce the strain on delegations and on the Secretariat. An increase in the number of sessions held by the Council should actually serve to reduce the total number of meetings by eliminating double discussion and giving delegations more time to study the relevant documents before the discussion.

Mr. LUBIN (United States of America), in reply to the remarks made earlier by the USSR representative, explained that the preparation of the Council's agenda for a whole year at a time would not in any way affect the Council's right to alter the agenda or to add any urgent items which might arise in the course of the year.

Mr. CHERNYSHEV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) still maintained that one session a year would be quite sufficient for the important tasks before the Council. In spite of the explanations given, it was clear that the adoption of the United Kingdom proposals would mean that the Council would be practically in permanent session. Delegations would then have to keep their experts permanently available and a great deal of unnecessary expense would be involved.

Mr. ALMEIDA (Brazil) said that the Committee had to consider three essential problems. The first was how to increase the efficiency of the Council and its commissions; the second was how to increase the time available to the

/Council



Council for its discussions; and the third was how to achieve the collaboration of as many governments as possible in the work of the Council. The first two problems were closely inter-related and he would not dwell on the third at that stage. A better distribution of the Council's work throughout the year would do much to increase its efficiency but that alone would not suffice and extra time was needed to enable the Council to do its work thoroughly. He was therefore prepared to support the United Kingdom proposals. At the same time however he did not think that the number of sessions to be held each year should be increased beyond three since an increase to four sessions a year might create an unfavourable impression.

The CHAIRMAN suggested that the Committee should go on to discuss the organization and operation of the functional commissions at its following meeting leaving its decisions until the end of the session.

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 12.55 p.m.