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ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL

Ninth Session

CO-ORDINATION COMMITTEE

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE TWENTY-NINTH MEETING.

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Thursday, 14 July 1949, at 2.45 p.m.Contents:

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Present:

Chairman:

Mr. PLIMSOLL

Members:

Belgium

Baron de KERCHOVE d'EXAERDE

Brazil

Mr. MACHADO

Byelorussian SSR

Mr. ZEMST

Chile

Mr. RODRIGUEZ

China

Mr. TSE

Denmark

Mr. ECKBERG

France

Mr. de SEYNES

Mr. AMERICH

India

Mr. SEN

Lebanon

Mr. AZKUL

New Zealand

Dr. SUTCH

Peru

Mr. PIZARRO

Poland

Miss CZARKO

Turkey

Mr. MIRAS

Union of Soviet Socialist
Republics

Mr. BERSOV

United Kingdom

Mr. LEITCH

United States of America

Mr. HIDE

Venezuela

Mr. NIS

Representatives of Specialized Agencies:International Labour
Organization

Mr. RICHES

Food and Agriculture
Organization

Mr. McDUGALL

United Nations Educational,
Scientific and Cultural
Organization

Mr. TRENZIO

International Civil Aviation
Organization

Mr. MARLIN

Representatives of Specialized Agencies (continued):

International Bank	Mr. LOPEZ-HERRARTE
International Monetary Fund	Mr. WILLIAMS
International Refugee Organization	(Mr. BLANCHARD (Miss BAVERSTOCK
Universal Postal Union	Mr. RADICE
World Health Organization	(Dr. CALDERONE (Miss HOWELL
Interim Commission of the International Trade Organization	Mr. FORD

Secretariat:

Mr. OWEN	Assistant Secretary-General for Economic Affairs.
Mr. LAUGIER	Assistant Secretary-General for Social Affairs.
Mr. MARTIN HILL	Director of Co-ordination for the Specialized Agencies for Economic and Social Matters.
Mr. SZE	Secretary to the Committee.

1. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

On the proposal of Mr. AMANRICH (France), seconded by Mr. SEN (India) and Mr. BORBERG (Denmark),

Mr. PLIMSOLL (Australia) was unanimously elected Chairman of the Co-ordination Committee.

2. ORDER OF DISCUSSION OF ITEMS ON THE AGENDA (Document E/AC.24/W.16)

The CHAIRMAN called the attention of the meeting to Document E/AC.24/W.16 and invited Mr. Martin Hill, Director of Co-ordination for the Specialized Agencies and for Economic and Social Matters, to make some introductory remarks on the documentation before the Committee .

Mr. MARTIN HILL, Director of Co-ordination for the Specialized Agencies and for Economic and Social Matters said that Document E/AC.24/W.16 was designed to assist the Committee in dealing with its complicated Agenda. Commencing with Document E/1340 (Report of the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination) and its Annexes, published as separate documents, he stated that Document E/1343 (Report of the Secretary-General on Housing and Town and Country Planning) had originated in two resolutions adopted by the Economic and Social Council at its seventh session. It had already gone before the Social Committee but was also before the Co-ordination Committee for examination of any questions of co-ordination which might be involved. Document E/1342 (Report on Co-ordination of Fellowship Programmes) had been referred to at the Council's eighth session in February, 1949.

Documents E/1341 (Report of the Secretary-General on Co-ordination of Migration Activities), and E/1347 (Communications from the Director-General of the International Labour Office on Manpower Programmes) were statements of progress made,

placed before the Committee for information.

Under Council Resolution 128 (VI), which invited the Secretary-General to report on any matters to which he considered the Council's attention should be drawn, a report had been drawn up on three special matters (Document E/1331). The questions discussed were: that of the location of the Headquarters offices of the specialized agencies; that of the consultative status of inter-governmental organizations; and that of the procedure to be adopted in the conclusion of agreements among the specialized agencies themselves.

Documents E/1344, E/1351 and United Nations Publication No.1949 D.1 were for reference purposes. Document E/1351 had been revised to include the results of recently held sessions of the various commissions of the United Nations and now appeared as Document E/1351/Rev.1. He drew attention to paragraph 1 on page 22 and to paragraph 4 on page 23 of the revised Comparative Review of Activities and Work Programmes which explained the general purpose of the review.

Document E/1317 (Action Taken in Pursuance of the Agreements between the United Nations and the Specialized Agencies) had been prepared in accordance with the provisions of General Assembly Resolutions 50 (I) and 124 (II), which had instructed the Council to report within three years on the progress of collaboration with those bodies.

Document E/1320 (Agreement between the United Nations and the International Labour Organization) was linked with Document E/1317. It proposed no revision of the Agreement, but made certain suggestions which should be taken into account in the event of its being revised.

In connection with Document E/1348 on the Agreement between United Nations and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, it was to be noted that provision had been made for a review by both parties of the original Agreement within three years.

Referring to the reports of the various specialized agencies (Items 35 - 42 of the Council Agenda), he recalled that, at its sixth session, the Council had taken note of the fact that shortage of personnel and budget limitations might prevent some of the specialized agencies providing full reports, and had expressed the hope that greater uniformity and improved comparability would be gradually achieved.

Document E/1318 had its origin in Council Resolution 171 (VII) on relations with inter-governmental organizations in which the Secretary-General was requested to submit a consolidated report of replies from governments and specialized agencies on possible relationships between the inter-governmental organizations and the specialized agencies and the question of absorption of the former into the United Nations or one of the specialized agencies. A list of such inter-governmental organizations could be found in Document E/818/Rev.1.

Mr. SZE, Secretary to the Committee, announced that, since Document E/AC.24/W.16 had been issued, it had been decided that a further meeting of the Interim Committee on Programme of Meetings was unnecessary; consequently, a paper would be submitted by the Secretariat to bring Document E/C4/29 up to date.

The CHAIRMAN suggested that, in view of the long Agenda and the large amount of documentation, the Committee should first hold a general discussion covering Items 34 to 42 of the Council's Agenda. Any subjects set aside for special consideration in the course of the general discussion could be dealt with in more detail afterwards.

Dr. SUTCH (New Zealand) proposed that the Committee adopt

the proposal of the Chairman and the tentative suggestion of the Secretariat in Section 3 of Document E/AC.24/W.16. The Committee had a very difficult task before it, and a general discussion on policy would be necessary even if it lasted several days.

Mr. AMANRICH (France), supporting the New Zealand proposal, regretted that Documents E/1344 Add.1 and E/1351 were not available in French.

Mr. HYDE (United States of America) expressed his gratitude for the guidance contained in the Secretariat note on the Agenda. Never before had the Committee had such a vast volume of documentation before it. He hoped, however, that the proposal to cover all the reports of the specialized agencies in one general discussion did not mean that each representative would be expected to deal with every aspect in a single speech.

The CHAIRMAN explained that members might speak several times if they wished, and that in any case points requiring special examination could be set aside for discussion later. He suggested that the Committee should hold only one meeting daily for the next few days, to permit members to study the relevant documents.

Mr. BORISOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) pointed out that a general discussion on Items 34 to 42 of the Council's Agenda would involve the examination of no less than twenty-six documents, some of which were not available in all the working languages. In such circumstances, he wondered how long it would be before representatives were ready for discussion. Since there were twelve documents to be studied on Item 34 (Relations with and Coordination of Specialized Agencies) alone, it would be advisable to hold a general discussion on that item. He had no objection

to the reports of the specialized agencies being taken together. He formally proposed, therefore, that the Committee hold a general discussion on Item 34; it could then decide on the basis of that experience how it wished to deal with the rest of the Agenda.

The CHAIRMAN suggested that there was really no great divergence between the proposal of the Soviet Union representative and that of the representative of New Zealand. A general discussion could be held on Item 34, in the course of which reference could be made to Items 35 to 42 (Reports of the specialized agencies). It could then be decided whether further discussion on those reports was called for, after which any other special questions could be dealt with. He understood that the aim of the proposal of the representative of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics was to reserve the right to representatives to speak on any specific item if they wished.

Mr. BORISOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) replied that that was so.

The Committee unanimously decided to hold a general discussion on Item 34 with possible reference to Items 35 to 42 and to deal with any special matters subsequently.

3. GENERAL DISCUSSION

Dr. SUTCH (New Zealand) said that this was perhaps the most important meeting of the Committee, not only because the Council would shortly be reporting to the General Assembly, but also because the excellent and most complete documentation prepared enabled an extremely good general picture to be gained of the whole question of co-ordination.

Having recalled the fact that Articles 63 and 64 of the Charter provided for the co-ordination of the activities of the specialized agencies by the Economic and Social Council and for the procurement of reports from those agencies, he expressed his pleasure at the large number of senior officials of the specialized agencies who had come forward to give their organization's views on specific points. That was an excellent thing, and he hoped that the Secretary-General would similarly maintain United Nations representation at a high level.

The section on programme co-ordination in the Fifth Report of the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination to the Economic and Social Council dealt extremely well with the subject. It was only when actual details of projects came to be examined that the possibility of overlapping could be observed. In that connection, he singled out the Study on Housing and Town and Country Planning (Document E/1343) as a particularly good example of clear allocation of functions among the organizations concerned.

He did not consider, however, that the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination should be called on to advise on matters of policy. Such matters should be decided by the Council and the Governing Bodies of the specialized agencies all of which were ultimately acting on decisions of the General Assembly. In that connection, he would point out a certain weakness, if that were not too strong a term, in the Report on Technical Assistance for Economic Development where, in the absence of definite recommendations from the Council or from Governments, the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination had attempted to formulate a policy. As a result, certain proposals had been made which were not calculated to lead to practical fruitful results. He fully appreciated that it was the duty of international civil servants to defend their own position, but

felt that representatives expected too many policy recommendations from the Secretariat.

He had not yet had an opportunity of studying the revised version of the Comparative Review of Activities and Work Programmes of the United Nations and Specialized Agencies (Document E/1351/Rev.1), but considered the original an excellent production, which obviously embodied an enormous amount of work. He was extremely grateful for that compendium of all that was being done in the economic and social fields, and considered it quite irreplaceable either by a single or by a series of documents. In order to obtain such information for itself, each delegation would have had to maintain a large research staff. He wished, however, to make certain criticisms of detail, which should not be interpreted as in any way detracting from his appreciation of the document as a whole. In the section on Relief and Refugees (page 90), it was to be regretted that the activities of the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund had been dismissed so briefly. In connection with the section on Co-ordination of Statistics (page 94), he remarked that his delegation had observed considerable discrepancies between the statistics of the Economic Commission for Europe and those of Headquarters at Lake Success, when it was quite clear that the divergent figures given referred to exactly the same item. There was clearly room for considerably more co-ordination between the Geneva Office and Headquarters on that matter. He likewise noted with regret that inadequate reference was made to the fact that the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, and the International Monetary Fund, worked in close collaboration on statistical matters.

Turning to the Report of the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination (Document E/1340), and to Part III on Administrative

and Budgetary Co-ordination, in particular, he expressed the hope that the studies being undertaken by the Committee of Experts on Salaries, Allowances and Leave Systems would lead to the adoption by the specialized agencies of more uniform practice in that matter. Another problem mentioned in the same section, namely, the difficulties experienced in recruiting senior personnel of the necessary competence on a wide geographical basis, was a matter for the serious consideration of the Committee. He realised, of course, that the consideration of the geographical distribution of personnel was not the only difficulty involved in the recruiting of senior personnel and he would deal with other factors later. The selection of personnel with due regard to geographical distribution must be made elastic enough to ensure the appointment of persons of high competence. It was a fact that certain countries, having no highly developed public services, were not in a position to make the same contribution to United Nations personnel as others. He sympathised with United Nations and the specialized agencies in the efforts they had been compelled to make to combine the often irreconcilable considerations of fair geographical distribution and a high standard of competence.

He noted with satisfaction that some progress had been made towards the adoption of a common procedure in the auditing of accounts.

Section IV of the same Report, which dealt with the question of Regional Offices, was less satisfactory. Although some specialized agencies had established regional offices only after prior consultation with the United Nations, he noted that the Report of the International Labour Organization, referring to plans for field offices in Asia and Latin America, gave no indication that that Organization had consulted any other Body on the matter. It might, of course, be that such consultations had not taken place at the time of writing the Report, but he was disappointed at the fact

that the International Labour Organisation had so far failed to initiate such consultations. The proposal of the World Health Organization to locate its Eastern Mediterranean Regional Office at Alexandria was a different question, since the Committee had recognised the special considerations which had prompted the choice. In the case of the establishment of a regional centre in Havana by United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, he considered it regrettable that the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination had confined itself to noting a decision already taken, without discussing it further with the specialized agency concerned. Such occurrences demonstrated the inadequacy of the procedure on the question of regional co-ordination.

As far as co-ordination at national level was concerned, he felt that the attention of governments should be drawn once more to the desirability of establishing a co-ordinated national policy. Although some governments had already made such arrangements, it happened all too frequently that a point supported at a session of a specialized agency by a particular representative, was later opposed in the Economic and Social Council or in the General Assembly by a representative of the same country.

He was pleased to note that the Committee had undertaken to develop co-ordination between the specialized agencies concerned with questions of transport and communication. Since the number of bodies concerned was small, and the various questions closely inter-related, it was especially desirable to establish co-ordination in that field.

Referring to the question of the facilities to be offered to specialized agencies at the new Headquarters of the United Nations (Document E/1331), he stressed the great advantage that would accrue to specialized agencies having their headquarters offices either in

Manhattan or at Geneva, and, in particular, expressed the hope that the Secretary-General would extend every possible assistance to the Food and Agriculture Organization to enable it to set up its headquarters in New York. It was also most desirable that the World Health Organization and the International Telecommunication Union, which had decided to have their permanent headquarters in Geneva, should, if possible, be located in the Palais des Nations itself. The same consideration applied to the World Meteorological Organization, although that body had not yet acquired the status of a specialized agency.

In connection with the study of inter-agency agreements, he suggested that it should be a regular practice to include a section on this subject in all future reports of the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination to the Economic and Social Council.

Turning to the Report on Action Taken in Pursuance of the Agreements between the United Nations and the Specialized Agencies, (Document E/1317), he congratulated the persons concerned in its preparation for the excellence of their achievement. It was extremely well laid out and easy to read, in spite of its 133 pages. His delegation would have some recommendations to make on certain of the questions dealt with in that Report. He realised that certain specialized agencies were still at an early stage of development, but felt nevertheless that there was still room for far greater co-operation between the United Nations and all the specialized agencies. Although his Government had been, and was still, critical of some agreements made with agencies, his delegation did not consider that the time was ripe to revise them. He would take the opportunity of making certain more detailed comments when the individual reports of the specialized agencies were discussed.

Mr. MACHADO (Brazil) said he was speaking to the Committee for the first time, and wished to give a frank exposition of his views on the question of co-ordination. The reports before them were impressive, both in number and weight, but he felt that there was often a clear contradiction between reports and realities. Co-ordination in the proper sense of the word did not exist, and government representatives should hold themselves responsible for that fact and the dangerous situation to which it gave rise. The Secretariat, too, might be held indirectly responsible, since often, in the absence of clear directives, the initiative came from it.

In affirming that there was no sign of real co-ordination between the United Nations and the specialized agencies, he was taking co-ordination in the fullest sense of the term, namely, in administrative and budgetary matters, and on matters of substance. On administrative questions, some slight progress had been made. On matters of substance, however, no progress at all had been made, partly because the agreements with the specialized agencies made no provision for co-ordination on substantive questions, apart from measures designed to avoid overlapping of activities. There must however be some provision for co-ordination in that field since, for lack of it, governments were being overloaded with work arising out of the duplication of activities and the multiplicity of committees and projects. Under such circumstances, the value of the work of the United Nations tended to be purely academic.

Co-ordination did not mean, however, that the United Nations should always play the leading part; there should be genuine co-operation and understanding, together with loyal acceptance of the best solution. At present, when discussions between organizations reached a deadlock, there was no organ to settle these disputes. Hence, though co-ordination existed in theory, in practice

there was none at all. What existed was a sort of "United Front" of specialized agencies, based on the fear that co-ordination would spell subordination and control. That, at least, was the impression he had gained from attendance at meetings on co-ordination.

He wished to pay a personal tribute to the open-minded attitude of the Secretary-General of the United Nations on the matter.

The absence of administrative co-ordination was shown by the case of the Staff Pension Fund. The existence of a number of totally independent funds was clearly financially wasteful. The question of establishing a single fund had already been studied, but the recommendations of the General Assembly on that question had come to nothing, because it had proved impossible to secure agreement between the organizations concerned, in spite of the irrefutable fact that a single fund would be more efficient and much cheaper.

Similarly, if the intention was to create a single international civil service, he wondered why there should be no single uniform scheme of salaries, without which complete integration and interchangeability of staff was impossible. On that question too, individual viewpoints had triumphed over the general interest. As an example, he asserted that the World Health Organization had in 1948 decided to increase the salary scales for its staff without prior consultation with the United Nations. There was no question of the right of the Organization to do so, but it should first have consulted the United Nations. As a result, he declared, the United Nations had been led to increase the salaries of the staff of its European Office correspondingly. The employment of additional staff in Annecy and Rome, while United Nations personnel in Geneva remained idle, was a further example of lack of co-ordination in administrative matters.

It was likewise a regrettable fact that, after many meetings on the question, no agreement had been reached on a common structure and nomenclature for Budgets.

In the field of substantive questions, the situation was worse. He realized that there were constitutional difficulties involved, but that did not lighten the task of those who had to justify expenditure on projects adopted by the United Nations and the specialized agencies to their respective national assemblies. It was unfortunate that the persons who adopted the measures were not those who ultimately had to ask for funds to be voted by their assemblies.

It was clear, for instance, that headquarters offices should be grouped at the same place; no effective action, however, had been taken to that end. On the question of technical assistance in economic development, it seemed that, in reality, there was no ground for any general understanding between the organizations involved. Programmes existed, but there was no possibility of agreement on their co-ordinated implementation, and for that the Secretariat must be held responsible.

It was difficult to see how the present unsatisfactory situation with regard to the geographical distribution of personnel could have come into existence had the Secretariat faithfully executed the relevant decisions of the General Assembly.

Further examples of complete absence of co-ordination were to be seen in the implementation of the reports of the regional economic commissions. Even when these had been approved by the Economic Council and the General Assembly, the International Bank and the International Monetary Fund, in spite of their agreements with the United Nations, did not accept the reports of the regional economic commission but studied the questions afresh. He did not wish to suggest that the Bank should

accept such reports without question, but in such a case it was clear that one of the studies of the question was useless.

Owing to the absence of machinery to deal with deadlocks between organizations, such deadlocks became perpetuated in a form of policy.

Many governments, and his own in particular, were unable to bear the burden placed upon them by the multiplicity of activities of the United Nations and the specialized agencies. No less than 739 different projects had been adopted in the last three years, to which number must be added the many decisions of the specialized agencies. In that connection, he recalled that there had been no less than 200 different items on the Agenda of the Second World Health Assembly recently held in Rome. It was impossible for governments to implement such a multitude of decisions. He himself was a witness of the ever-growing demand for dollars and for material effort which these decisions involved. As an example of the heavy strain placed on governments, he quoted the fact that in the course of five months, representatives had had to be provided for 85 different Conferences, an average of four a week. The fact that governments could no longer cope even with the questionnaires which arrived almost daily, threatened to vitiate the practical value of the activities of the United Nations and other international bodies. Unless the attention of all governments was drawn to such facts, they would be faced with an impossible situation in the field of international co-operation.

On purely practical matters, he wished to ask the Secretariat what policy had been laid down by the Secretary-General for the guidance of representatives of the United Nations attending Conferences of the specialized agencies, at what level representation was made, and

what were the powers of the representatives. He feared that such representation was being carried out on an improvised basis, and was in any case unfavourably impressed by the tremendous list of journeys made, in the course of the year, for the purposes of co-ordination.

He admitted that lack of co-ordination at national level might be responsible for the general absence of co-ordination, and stated that on occasions Brazilian delegations had supported decisions which had been contrary to the views of those who would have to vote the funds to implement those decisions.

In conclusion, he reaffirmed his contention that the proper co-ordination of the activities of the United Nations and the specialized agencies was still only an objective and not an accomplished fact, and urged the setting up of an organ with authority to take decisions on co-ordination in substantive questions and to allocate priorities. He reserved the right to intervene on more detailed matters at a later stage.

The meeting rose at 5.45 p.m.