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Eleventh Session

CO-ORDINATION COMMITTEE

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE SIXTY-SECOND MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Wednesday, 19 July 1950 at 10.30 a.m.

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(continued)

Present:

Chairman:

Mr. NORIEGA (Mexico)

Members:

Australia

Belgium

Brazil

Canada

Chile

China

Denmark

France

India

Iran

Pakistan

Peru

United Kingdom of Great Britain and
Northern Ireland

United States of America

Mr. CUMES

Baron de KERCHOVE d'EXAERDE

Mr. MURTINHO

Mr. GOMEZ

Mr. HALSTEAD

Mr. BERNSTEIN

Mr. TSAO

Mr. PRIIS

Mr. PERIER

Mr. VELLODI

Mr. SOTOUEH

Mr. AKHTAR

Mr. CABADA

Mr. LEDWARD

Mr. ROSEMAN

Representatives of specialized agencies:

International Labour Organisation

Food and Agriculture Organization

United Nations Educational, Scientific
and Cultural Organization

International Civil Aviation
Organization

International Monetary Fund

Universal Postal Union

World Health Organization

Mr. COX

Mr. OLSEN

Mr. TERENCE

Mr. MARLIN

Mr. WILLIAMS

Mr. RADICE

Dr. FORREST

Miss HOWELL

Secretariat:

Mr. Martin Hill

Director of co-ordination
for specialized agencies
and economic and social
matters.

Mr. Urquhart

Secretary to the
Committee.

RELATIONS WITH AND CO-ORDINATION OF SPECIALIZED AGENCIES (item 43 of the agenda) (E/1670, E/1682, E/1683, E/1683/Add.1, E/1684, E/1685, E/1734, E/1741, E/1743, E/AC.24/L.1, E/AC.24/L.7, E/AC.24/L.8, E/AC.24/L.9, ST/AFS/SGB/78/Rev.1, and ST/AFS/A.1/41/Rev.1) (continued)

Mr. URQUHART (Secretary to the Committee) called attention to two corrections which needed to be made to document E/AC.24/L.9. In the last line of page 3, the word "between" should be inserted between the words "meet" and "the", and in line 4 of paragraph 7 on page 4 the word "secretaries" should be replaced by "secretariats".

Mr. ROSEMAN (United States of America) wished to add that in the first line of paragraph 2 of the same document, the word "Secretariat" should be inserted between the words "inter-agency" and "consultation", and that in the sub-title of document E/AC.24/L.8 the word "resolution" should be replaced by the word "suggestion".

The CHAIRMAN observed that in document E/AC.24/L.8 the words "The General Assembly" should be replaced by the words "The Economic and Social Council".

Mr. CUMES (Australia) recalled that at the last meeting of the Committee the Australian delegation had made a suggestion about the establishment of priorities. No mention of that appeared in document E/AC.24/L.9, although the views of members of the Committee and of the Secretariat had been asked for. Did the Secretariat think that the Australian suggestion was sufficiently covered by the similar suggestion of the United States delegation?

Mr. URQUHART (Secretary to the Committee) explained that as the remarks of the Australian delegation had been formulated in very general terms, it had not been thought that they were intended as a specific suggestion.

The CHAIRMAN reminded the Committee that he had said at the last meeting that there would soon be a second working paper available, which would include the suggestions of representatives who had not yet spoken. It was understood that the representative of Pakistan had a suggestion to make similar to that of the representative of Australia, and both suggestions could be included in the second paper.

He then invited the representative of the World Health Organization to answer certain questions raised at previous meetings.

Dr. FORREST (World Health Organization) said that he would confine himself to answering questions which had been raised through misunderstanding. With regard to the participation of WHO in the literacy campaign in South America, the material used in the campaign had included documents on health matters. The agreement between WHO and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) provided for WHO to give assistance in an advisory capacity where questions of health fell within the competence of UNESCO. In China, in connection with the UNESCO campaign against trachoma, the assistance given had taken the form of advice on the preparation of a film strip called "The Healthy Village".

With regard to the question of reciprocal representation, WHO had decided very early in its development that it was desirable that it should be represented at all conferences on matters within its competence, either by members of the Organization itself, or by members of other organizations. To arrange such reciprocal representation was not so easy as it sounded, since it required the agreement of both parties, but the practice was growing and it was intended that it should be developed still further.

As to the representation of WHO and UNESCO at the Annual Session of the Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East (ECAFE), that Commission carried out functions in the field of transport, both of material and of personnel, closely inter-related with the activities of WHO in the prevention of the spread of diseases. Furthermore, as a result of WHO's intervention,

ECAFE had adopted at that session an important resolution relating to that problem.

Mr. HALSTEAD (Canada), in addition to some general remarks, wished to make a number of specific suggestions. He wished first to congratulate the Secretariat on the documentation which it had produced, particularly document E/1683 on the concentration of effort and resources, which was a very lucid and valuable contribution to the work of the Committee. The Secretariat might well adopt its own suggestion concerning the summing up of the chief contents of the report in the introduction. In that connection, the document might well serve as a framework for the resolutions which the Committee would eventually draw up. To facilitate the grouping of representatives' suggestions, the practical suggestions of the Secretariat contained in the document could be itemised under main headings, and the Committee's own report might then take the form of the re-grouping of those headings along with its own suggestions.

With regard to the general question of the concentration of the efforts of the United Nations and the specialized agencies, it was generally recognized that the task of co-ordination had now passed from the negative stage of preventing the overlapping of functions to the positive stage of the promotion of advanced consultation on programmes of work - what might in other words be called the co-ordination of initiatives. As certain representatives had said, it was above all governmental co-ordination that was needed for the achievement of that objective, but he felt that more could still be done to co-ordinate the initiatives of various agencies before investigations and projects were launched. The problem of the co-ordination of initiatives especially concerned the regional commissions in their relation to the various specialized agencies. Perhaps it would be impossible for the Committee to deal adequately with that particular question of the regional commissions at the present session, but it would certainly need very careful study in the near future.

The Canadian delegation felt that the co-ordination of initiatives might well be achieved through the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination (ACC) and had therefore drafted a suggestion on those lines for the Co-ordination Committee's consideration. In any case where a project fell within the competence of two or more agencies, consultation might take place through an ad hoc planning group of the ACC. To make such prior consultation possible, it would be necessary that the deadline for the submission of new projects, suggested by the United Kingdom representative be strictly adhered to. The machinery for consultation would be somewhat as follows. If some proposition which clearly concerned another specialized agency were placed before a specialized agency or a regional commission, it would be the responsibility of the executive head of that agency or commission to bring the proposition to the attention of the ACC; an ad hoc planning group could then be set up to determine how available resources could best be applied to the object in view. The co-operation of other agencies could be called on as thought fit. The recommendations of the planning group would then be placed before the competent assembly of the organization concerned, together with the original proposition.

The draft resolution of the Canadian delegation read as follows:

"The Economic and Social Council

"Noting the General Assembly resolution on proliferation 310 (IV),

"Expresses its conviction that the co-ordination of the projects of the United Nations and the specialized agencies at the point of their initiation is essential to the effective concentration of effort and available resources advocated in the above-mentioned resolution;

"Requests the Secretary-General, through the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination, to enlist the co-operation of the executive heads of the specialized agencies; (a) in discussing,

prior to their adoption by the competent commissions, councils and assemblies of the United Nations and the specialized agencies, those aspects of projected surveys, programmes and conferences which concern more than one of these organs; (b) in ensuring that the results of this consultation be before the competent organs of the United Nations and the specialized agencies when they consider such projects; (c) in ensuring, in order to facilitate such prior consultation on programmes, that a deadline for the submission of new projects to the competent organs of the United Nations and the specialized agencies be set an adequate period of time before the meeting of these organs."

That draft resolution, though by no means in final form, might serve as a working paper on the problem, only one aspect of which was dealt with in the draft suggestions submitted by the United States and Brazilian delegations in document E/AC.24/L.8. The representatives of those countries would no doubt present their views on the matter, but the Canadian delegation felt that the calling of conferences was only one aspect of the general problem of co-ordinating initiatives.

Finally, on the long-standing problem of priorities, perhaps all the abstract discussions of the Committee had served rather to cloud the issue than to clarify it. The awarding of first priorities, high priorities, top priorities and so forth had tended to debase the currency of priorities. What was needed was a permanent yard-stick for measuring claims to priorities. A concise list of criteria for the awarding of priorities would be extremely useful, not so much to the Secretariat, as to the competent bodies of the United Nations in the consideration of proposals for inclusion in work programmes. Such a list of criteria need not be rigid, but would be a useful guide. The Canadian delegation had therefore drawn up a list of four criteria, which were: first, the immediacy of the need for international action in the field in question; secondly, the possibility of achieving constructive results in a reasonably short time; thirdly, the degree of probability that such results could be achieved better by international than by national action; and, fourthly, the possible contribution of the launching of a project to the realization of the projects of other bodies and the possibility of tying it up with their programmes of work.

Mr. TSAO (China) wished to thank the representative of France for the interest he had shown in the work of WHO in China, and also to thank the representative of WHO for his explanations, as a supplement to which the Committee might be interested to learn that at its last meeting the Executive Board of the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) had approved a plan for a BCG vaccination campaign in the tuberculosis field to be carried out jointly by UNICEF and WHO in Formosa.

He wished now to raise one point concerning the report of the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination (E/1682), for which he had asked for the floor at the previous meeting. On page 2 of the report was a statement in the name of the members of the ACC on the "present international situation". That statement mentioned "serious conflicts of policy among the Great Powers" and also the principle of "true universality" in membership of the United Nations and the specialized agencies.

In the opinion of the Chinese delegation, that statement was irrelevant to the work of the Council. It was a manifestation of the Secretary-General's personal political illusion, and not a constructive suggestion for the co-ordination of activities in the economic and social fields.

The International Labour Organisation, the Food and Agriculture Organization and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization all had important achievements to their credit in their respective fields, but the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics had never been a member of any one of them. If the lack of Soviet Union membership had not proved a disaster in the past, why should it be a disaster at present? The Chinese delegation therefore regretted the inclusion of so irrelevant and misleading a statement in the report, and, without wishing to embark on a political discussion, felt that it could not let that statement pass without comment.

He formally requested that his statement in that connection be included in the Committee's report to the Council.

The CHAIRMAN pointed out that the remarks to which the Chinese representative took objection had referred to the international situation which had existed in the first few days of May 1950, and would probably not have been made had the report been drafted at a later date.

He felt strongly that as the competence of the Committee was strictly technical, the inclusion of the observations of the Chinese delegation in its report to the Council would be inappropriate. Some representatives might wish to express agreement with the representative of China, but it was hoped that no discussion on the question would ensue until the Committee came to draft its report.

Baron de KERCHOVE d'EXAERDE (Belgium) proposed to follow the practice of other speakers in confining his intervention to general remarks, reserving the right to speak later on specific proposals. He noted the general agreement of all representatives who had already spoken that considerable progress had been made in co-ordination. That was shown by documents, by debates and by the co-operation that existed between the Secretariats of the specialized agencies and the various bodies of the United Nations. In the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) in particular, such co-operation had reached a maximum. It was well known that the ECE worked in close co-operation with the Food and Agriculture Organization, the International Labour Organisation, the World Health Organization and others, but it was perhaps less well known that it had set up a joint Secretariat with FAO at Geneva with excellent results.

French-speaking delegations had often received documents and publications in French only on the very eve of discussions, and on some occasions had even had to participate in discussions using English texts only. It was important that in the future the Secretariat should see that such documents were distributed in good time and not just before meetings.

With regard to the reports of specialized agencies, the Belgian delegation felt that it would be better in future to consider them at plenary meetings of the Council. If technical questions arose during debate, there was no reason why they should not be referred to one of the Council's three Committees.

The presentation of budgets now seemed to be more uniform, and in that connection special praise was due to WHO; but some agencies were still paying insufficient attention to the wishes expressed by the Council.

There were grounds for wondering whether the prevailing long sessions of the meetings of the bodies of the United Nations and of the specialized agencies were not impairing the value of the work done, and even government representation at those meetings. It was certain that no government could send to a four-week or six-week session ministers in office or Senior Civil Servants with special qualifications. Shorter sessions would allow responsible persons to attend

the meetings, and would thus give greater weight to the decisions taken. That problem was admittedly difficult, but it nevertheless deserved continued attention.

Certain specialized agencies, in particular WHO, would do better not to indulge in excessive centralization of their secretariats, and would benefit if they introduced some degree of decentralization by setting up regional offices and giving them a freer hand. There were grounds for thinking that WHO, among others, would get better results if it followed that course.

In principle, the Belgian delegation favoured consultations of experts, so far as they were convened for some specific purpose. There were many examples of the effectiveness of their collaboration with the Secretariat. Nevertheless, it was important to avoid duplication of work, and in those fields where it proved better to have regular recourse to the advice of experts, reduction in the staff of the Secretariat concerned might be considered.

In the same connection, the Belgian delegation felt that in the matter of grants for fellowships the aim should be to get a fair return for the funds devoted to the grants. Unless there were technical and financial co-ordination of those travelling studies, neither the holders of fellowships nor the United Nations bodies would obtain from those journeys all the results hoped for.

It was imperative that in the field of technical assistance an effective system of co-ordination be adopted with a view to collecting in a centralizing body all information, such as lists of experts, relevant to the activities of bodies of the United Nations and of the specialized agencies. Governments should be assured of being able to obtain in the field of technical assistance, essential information covering all the bodies concerned with technical assistance at a single centre, without being obliged to apply first to the bodies in question. If that "Centre" were established at Lake Success, the possibility of setting up a branch at Geneva should be considered.

The CHAIRMAN, before calling on the Director of co-ordination for specialized agencies and economic and social matters to reply to the points raised by representatives, wished to make a few general remarks as representative of Mexico.

The first truly magnificent example of co-ordination had been the Spanish overseas empire. The port of Campeche, a rich town continually subject to the depredations of pirates, had decided to build a wall, but owing to the many co-ordination rules of the empire the necessary permit had been twenty years in arriving, by which time the pirates had disappeared, having taken up various peaceful occupations.

In Geneva there could be found watches of every sort for telling the time in all the capitals of the world, the phases of the moon, the weather forecast for the day and the results of baseball and golf matches. The only difficult thing was to tell exactly what the time was. The moral of all that was that the Committee must not be too ambitious or attempt too much. General Assembly resolution 214 (III) stated the problem very clearly. All the views of members of the Committee were interesting. All their suggestions were good, but there were perhaps too many of them. To be over-ambitious could lead to waste of time and money. It was for the Secretary-General and the Director-General of the specialized agencies to see that the established principles of action were put into practice, and there was no point in repeating them. The Committee must return to a sense of realism unless it wished its work to lead only to more files of documents and more committees of experts.

Mr. CUMES (Australia) wished to add to the general comments he had previously made.

First, with regard to statistics, his Government took the view that the maximum possible proportion of necessary statistical work should be done at the central office of the United Nations, and a minimum of specialized work in the various agencies. For that reason, his Government was concerned by the recent decision of UNESCO to set up its own independent statistical office,

That led directly to the question of the cost of statistical work, which his Government believed might be excessive. Would it be possible for the Secretariat to furnish a statement showing the total cost of the statistical work undertaken by the United Nations and the specialized agencies?

Secondly, with regard to regional co-ordination, the Australian Government would like to know more precisely the extent to which the operations of the United Nations and the specialized agencies were being directed to the various regions. That question had been raised previously, and it might be that the Secretariat already had in hand the preparation of a comprehensive statement showing the regional balance of the operational work of the United Nations and the specialized agencies.

He drew attention to the fact that the regional commissions had an acknowledged responsibility for co-ordination, and especially project co-ordination, within their regions. If a comprehensive statement of regional operations was not yet being undertaken, it might be appropriate for the regional commissions to assume the task.

Mr. BERNSTEIN (Chile) endorsed the views of the Belgian representative concerning the tardy distribution of documents in French, and stressed that in most Latin-American countries French rather than English was spoken, particularly in Ministries and public departments.

The representative of Denmark had seemed to be rather opposed to the suggestions on reciprocal representation made in paragraph 17 of document E/1683. The Chilean delegation shared those doubts, feeling that the United Nations, as the central body, should be represented at the conferences of other agencies, but that the usefulness of reverse representation was questionable.

With regard to paragraph 30 of document E/1683, experience had shown that simultaneous interpretation was indispensable to the work of the Co-ordination Committee, and it was hoped that the necessary steps had been taken to provide it in future. Finally, could the Secretariat say whether the personnel of the various agencies was available for use when needed by other agencies or by the United Nations itself? He had heard that the International Labour Organisation had a number of first class interpreters who were at present doing inferior office work, though badly needed by other organizations.

Mr. Martin HILL (Secretariat) expressed appreciation of the careful

consideration given by the Committee to the documents submitted by the Secretariat and by the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination.

He agreed with the Chairman on the moral of the story of Caspeche. It would be impossible always to call ad hoc committees at the appropriate time. Nevertheless, he welcomed the confidence in the machinery of the ACC shown in the proposals to use that machinery for advanced consultation. The United States representative at the previous meeting had raised the question whether problems concerning several organizations could not go before the ACC as a whole, instead of piecemeal before the various agencies. The Secretariat felt that such a practice was both possible and desirable.

The questions raised by the representatives of the United States of America, Denmark and Chile on paragraph 17 of document E/1683 were the result of a misunderstanding. That paragraph did not represent a request for increased allocations for travel or representation, but meant only that potentialities of representation could be better realised. Great efforts had in fact been made in the past year in the United Nations to achieve that aim. It would be relevant to quote some passages concerning the purposes of representation from a recent directive issued by the Secretary-General (SGB/78/Rev.1). Paragraph 2, sections A, B, C and D of that document stated that the aims of United Nations representation were: to present the questions that the organs of the United Nations had submitted to the examination of the organizations concerned; to explain the measures taken and the procedure followed by the United Nations on other questions that were examined; to transmit to the Secretary-General and to the departments and organs of the United Nations information concerning the policy and programmes of the organization concerned; and to maintain personal contacts to aid co-operation between the United Nations and the organization concerned. Paragraph 5a of the Administrative Instruction (ST/AFS/41/41/Rev.1) accompanying that document stated that at every stage of a conference the United Nations delegation would keep the competent officials of the specialized agency concerned informed of the views and objectives of the United Nations in respect of matters under discussion, and ascertain the views and objectives of the agency. The delegation was also to endeavour to work out constructive solutions in

agreement with those officials, and to settle privately any divergence of views before such differences emerged in public debate. It could be seen, therefore, that the participation of the United Nations in the conferences of the specialized agencies did not consist merely of occasional interventions. The appropriations for purposes of representation were really very small. In 1949 the sum of 60,000 dollars had been given as the estimated total travel costs in connection with representation and co-ordination.

Reference had been made the day before to a meeting of the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination in Paris, which several senior officials of the United Nations had attended. The Committee might be interested to know that none of those officials had travelled to Europe for the exclusive purpose of attending the meeting. Perhaps, in the light of the explanations given, the representative of Chile would not wish to press his proposal.

The Secretariat was fully alive to the importance of issuing documents in French in good time, and every effort would be made to improve the position. The question of making the best possible use of technical conference staff raised by the representative of Chile was referred to in paragraph 31 of document E/1683. The Board of Auditors had included in its report to the General Assembly a demand for a study of that problem as it affected the Geneva office.

The representative of Australia had wished to know to what extent various regions of the world were benefiting from the operations of the various agencies. It would be easy in a year's time to answer that question in the case, for example, of technical assistance programmes and programmes under resolution 58 (I) of the General Assembly, but it would be difficult to distribute regionally the benefits of the central work of the United Nations. The matter required further consideration.

The meeting rose at 1.35 p.m.