

United Nations
**ECONOMIC
AND
SOCIAL COUNCIL**

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**CONSEIL
ECONOMIQUE
ET SOCIAL**

UNRESTRICTED

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ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

COMMITTEE ON PROCEDURAL QUESTIONS

FIFTH SESSION

Summary Record of the Tenth Meeting

Held at Lake Success, New York, on Wednesday, 13 August 1947 at 2:45 p.m.

Present:

Chairman: Mr. Davidson	(Canada)
Dr. P. C. Chang	(China)
Mr. Pitlik	(Czechoslovakia)
Mr. Mendes-France	(France)
Mr. Hakim	(Lebanon)
Miss Witteveen	(Netherlands)
Mr. Moe	(Norway)
Mr. Morgan	(United Kingdom)
Mr. Hyde	(United States of America)
Mr. Kamenev	(Union of Soviet Socialist Republics)
Mr. Larrain	(Cuba)
Mr. Sen	(India)

Secretariat: Mr. Yates	(Joint Division of Co-ordination and Liaison)
Mr. Humphrey	(Division of Human Rights)
Mr. Herman	(Conference Division)
Mr. Dumontet	(Joint Division of Co-ordination and Liaison)

1. Consideration of the Calendar of Meetings for 1947 (document E/280/Rev.2).

(a) Consideration of the possibility of advancing the dates of the session of the Sub-Commission on Discrimination and the Protection of Minorities and the next session of the Commission of Human Rights.

Mr. HERMAN (Secretariat) reported that after serious consideration, the Secretariat had come to the conclusion that it would be impossible to service
/the Commission

the Commission and the Sub-Commission at any dates earlier than those specified in document E/280/Rev.2.

The CHAIRMAN said that after consultation with members of the Secretariat he had been convinced that if the two meetings were to be held in 1947, it would have to be at the dates mentioned in document E/280/Rev.2. In the absence of more detailed technical information it would be inappropriate for the Committee to insist otherwise.

Mr. HYDE (United States of America) wondered if it would be technically possible to advance the date of the Commission by a week or even four days, thus having a small period of time in which the two meetings would overlap.

Mr. HERMAN (Secretariat) said that from the administrative point of view the only condition on which the United States proposal could possibly be implemented by the Secretariat was that the members of the Commission and Sub-Commission would accept inadequate servicing with regard to documents and agree to leave the scheduling of daily meetings in the hands of the Secretariat while the two bodies were in session simultaneously.

Mr. HUMPHREY (Secretariat) assured the Committee that, though it would be very difficult, the Division of Human Rights would undertake to service substantively the two meetings.

Although it would be difficult from the point of view of the delegations, Mr. CHANG (China) supported the United States proposal.

Mr. MORGAN (United Kingdom) was in favour of having the Commission meet on the date suggested by the Secretariat, or even a few days earlier, but preferred early January as the date for the session of the Sub-Commission.

Mr. MENDES-FRANCE (France) said that as the date of 8 December was generally unacceptable, the session would have to be either advanced or retarded. His delegation was of the opinion that the Commission should meet in January, but if it would be able to work effectively at the beginning of December he would agree to that date.

There seemed to be serious practical difficulties. If the Commission met simultaneously with the Sub-Commission, it would probably mean that each could meet only once a day. There was no guarantee that the General Assembly would complete its work by 7 November, and in any case transportation difficulties would arise as representatives would be returning home after the Assembly. It was a large risk to run for the sake of two weeks, particularly, as the Commission had before it the important and concrete task of drafting an International Bill of Rights.

The CHAIRMAN put to the vote the French proposal to defer the meeting of the Commission on Human Rights till January, and the United Kingdom

/proposal to so

proposal to so defer the meeting of the Sub-Commission on the Prevention of Discrimination and the Protection of Minorities.

DECISION: The French proposal was not carried by three votes to three. The United Kingdom proposal was not carried by two votes to two.

Mr. KAMENEV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) asked that the date suggested by the Secretariat for the two sessions be voted upon separately and that the dates suggested for the Sub-Commission be voted upon first.

After an exchange of views, the CHAIRMAN announced that a vote would be taken on whether the dates of the session of the Sub-Commission should be accepted definitely or conditionally.

DECISION: The Committee decided by five votes to four that the dates of the meeting of the Sub-Commission should be subject to conditions.

A vote was taken on whether the Committee wished the Sub-Commission to meet conditionally between 24 November and 5 December.

DECISION: The vote was carried.

The CHAIRMAN called for a vote on whether the Commission on Human Rights should meet between 1 and 19 December.

DECISION: The vote was carried; and in consequence it was agreed to accept unconditionally the dates 24 November to 5 December for the session of the Sub-Commission on the Prevention of Discrimination and the Protection of Minorities.

2. Consideration of Calendar of Meetings for 1948 (document E/478/Rev.1)

(a) Consideration of the French proposal to hold only two sessions of the Council during 1948 (document E/536).

Mr. CHANG (China) pointed out that if no special session of the Council were to be held concurrently with the next session of the General Assembly, there would be all the more reason for holding three sessions of the Council during 1948.

Mr. HAKIM (Lebanon) suggested that the decision on whether there should be two or three sessions of the Council in 1948 be postponed until the Secretariat was able to present the Committee with a programme of meetings based on the presumption of two sessions during 1948. With both programmes before it, the Committee would then be able to indicate which it preferred.

Mr. YATES (Secretariat) explained that it had been necessary to consult between sixty and seventy persons before the programme of meetings for 1948 was able to be drawn up. It was a complicated process and a new properly co-ordinated programme based on two Council sessions for next year and could

/not be

not be completed in a day or two. It would be more satisfactory if the Committee could first indicate by subtractions or additions to the present list what kind of a programme it had in mind and then afterwards the Secretariat could carry out the process of consultation and co-ordination.

Mr. CHANG (China) drew attention to Council Resolution No. 55 (IV), on the basis of which the Secretariat, with every justification, had drawn up a programme of meetings which included three sessions of the Council during 1948. It did not seem wise, at the very end of the session, to ask the Secretariat to start on another similar complicated task, and without it, any fair comparison would be impossible.

He sympathized with the French representative in his wish to revise the methods of work of the Council, a wish which was shared by several delegations. Certain commissions could be reorganized, others perhaps dropped altogether. The system whereby members of commissions only met for two weeks once or twice a year could not possibly make for satisfactory work.

Several remedies had been suggested. The Chinese delegation was in favour of the appointment of an ad hoc committee to study the problem and then at the next session a further ad hoc committee could be set up to make concrete recommendations.

Resolution No. 55 (IV) had been passed this year. It seemed only wise to wait awhile before reversing such a recent decision. A degree of qualified conditional conservatism was necessary if there was to be a solid basis to the work of the Council.

Mr. MENDES-FRANCE (France) said that the idea behind the French proposal was to unify the work of the Council in one long session a year and to leave all the rest of the year to the work of the commissions. To avoid delaying action on specific questions, the French delegation envisaged a short special session, which would be regarded as a part of the General Assembly, to pass formally and rapidly on what could and should be so treated.

Mr. MENDES-FRANCE reserved the right to comment later on the Chinese proposal regarding an ad hoc committee.

The Council was faced with the practical problem of how to get through the extremely heavy schedulé of next year's work. Barely two months' time would elapse between its three scheduled sessions, making it impossible for the commissions to achieve any really useful results. Neither would it be possible for the Secretariat to circulate documents six weeks before each session.

The essential part of the work of the Council was carried out by governments and by the expert commissions and time was needed both before
/and after

and after sessions for preparatory work. Under the present system there was a danger that governments would cease to send representatives from home and would simply maintain permanent delegations at headquarters.

Mr. MOE (Norway) felt that a better way to achieve the aim of the French representative would be to concentrate on planning the agenda of the various sessions. It was not necessary to discuss the reports of every commission which had met before a particular session; it should all depend upon the urgency of the material.

The Norwegian delegation had voted for Resolution No. 55 (IV) on the understanding that it was an emergency measure for 1947 only. If again the Council decided to hold only two sessions in the year, Mr. Moe was afraid that it might be interpreted as a move to reduce its importance. That was especially true in contrast to the Security Council which was sitting in permanent session.

He supported the Chinese proposal for the creation of an ad hoc committee to study the question. The commissions were having great difficulty in doing any real work in the limited time allowed them for their meetings. The Council agenda was overloaded to the extent that it was impossible to give any kind of detailed consideration to the various items. Instead of reducing the number of Council sessions to two, he would recommend the very careful planning of future work.

Mr. PITLIK (Czechoslovakia) supported the French resolution because experience had shown that governments, the Council and the Secretariat were always working against time. A decision to hold two sessions a year would not lower the prestige of the United Nations for that was dependent upon the quality of its work and not upon the number of its meetings.

Mr. KAMENEV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) stated that both from the point of view of the work of the Secretariat and the convenience of delegations, it would be wise to have only two sessions during 1948. There was no need to appoint an ad hoc committee for the officials of the Secretariat already had the necessary information on which a decision could be taken. He agreed with the representative of Norway that the work of the Council had to be planned before-hand and supported the French resolution on the understanding that the actual dates of the two sessions would be decided later.

Mr. SEN (India) felt that no effective work would be done if the Council rules and resolutions were constantly changed. He agreed with the representative of France that documents were not being circulated six weeks in advance of the date at which they were to be considered and thought that
/the solution

the solution to that problem would be to discuss only those documents which had been so circulated. He also agreed that it would be undesirable if the work of the Council were to be undertaken by delegations permanently attached to headquarters.

The question of whether there should be two or three sessions of the Council was not important as it was simply a case of dividing the year's work into two or three parts. In his opinion three sessions would be preferable. With only two sessions, there would be heavy pressure to overcharge the agenda and as a result less good work could be expected from the Secretariat.

Mr. Sen asked for clarification as to his status as a member of the Committee.

The CHAIRMAN drew attention to the verbatim record of the one hundred and first meeting of the Council, in which the representative of China had suggested that members of the Council, not members of the Committee on Procedural Questions, should be invited to attend its meetings when the calendar of meetings was being discussed. He also drew attention to the verbatim record of the one hundred and thirteenth meeting in which the Acting President had used the words, be invited to attend "as full members" of the Committee.

On that basis, the Chairman ruled that the representative of India and any other representative in a similar position would have the right to participate in any vote.

Mr. MORGAN (United Kingdom) supported the French resolution, without prejudice for the future, and said that he would speak later on the question of the dates of the two sessions, if the resolution were adopted.

He agreed that it was bad procedure to change rules and resolutions, but reminded the Committee that the last decision with respect to the number of sessions had been taken in March 1946. At that time the Council perhaps had not had the knowledge that it now possessed.

It was necessary to plan the agenda in advance of a session, but to put the Norwegian suggestion into action would involve considerable re-organization and it was doubtful if it would have the effect of lightening the burden of work.

Mr. HAAR (Norway) pointed out that, since there was no third session of the Economic and Social Council this year, certain matters connected, for instance, with the Advisory Social Welfare Services and the Convention on Genocide which should be considered by the Social Commission or other appropriate body before being presented to the General Assembly, had not received proper treatment. He believed that if there were only two sessions in 1948 a similar situation would arise and in certain cases items might be delayed for a year or more.

/Miss de WITTEVEEN

Miss de WITTEVEEN (Netherlands) supported the proposal of the representative of France.

Mr. HAKIM (Lebanon) welcomed the suggestion of the representative of China that, in order to improve the quality of the Council's work, an ad hoc committee should be appointed to study all the various aspects of it. He suggested that the resolution of the representative of France be amended by suspending Rule 1 and at the same time making it clear that in reducing the number of sessions provided for in the rules of procedure, efficiency would not be impaired.

The CHAIRMAN, with the consent of the representative of Lebanon, suggested that his amendment be simplified by deleting paragraph (2) of the resolution and substituting the following:

"(2) RESOLVES to suspend Rule 1 of its Rules of Procedure and to hold two sessions during 1948, it being understood that the two sessions shall be long enough to permit as complete consideration of the business of the Council as in the three sessions provided for in the rules of procedure."

Mr. HYDE (United States of America) was impressed by the arguments of the representatives of Czechoslovakia and Lebanon that quality was more important than quantity, and welcomed, subject to certain slight changes, the amendment suggested by the Lebanese representative. However, it should be understood that any decisions taken now were for 1948 and not for all time. He believed that, both from the point of view of the Secretariat which spent most of its time servicing the meetings, and of the representatives who attended them, it would be better to have more time between sessions in which to study the various problems.

Mr. CHANG (China) believed that the Council should experiment with three sessions. At each session there would be concentration on allied items, which would tend to lighten the load.

He disapproved of having so many "changes", "suspensions", "cancellations", etc. in the wording of resolutions, and said that in this a moral point was involved.

He did not think that the relative importance of the commissions and the Council should be prejudged by any decision of the present Committee, but in his opinion if there were fewer commissions meeting only on current problems once or twice a year, they would be more effective.

The representative of China added that he had a compromise motion which he would put before the Committee now if it so desired, but he would

/prefer to

prefer to consult privately with the representatives of France and Lebanon and postpone the decision under the next day.

Mr. SEN (India) moved that the meeting adjourn in view of the lateness of the hour.

DECISION: The Indian motion was adopted.

The meeting rose at 7:20 p.m.
