



## ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL

Forty-sixth Session

OFFICIAL RECORDS

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**President: Mr. Raymond SCHEYVEN (Belgium).**

## AGENDA ITEM 17

Non-governmental organizations (E/4647, E/4671, E/L.1251):

- (a) Applications and re-application for consultative status;
- (b) Review of non-governmental organizations in consultative status

1. The PRESIDENT said that the Council had before it three documents: the report of the Council Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations (E/4647), a note by the Secretary-General (E/4671) on the subject of non-governmental organizations placed on the register by the Secretary-General under the terms of Council resolution 288 B (X) of 27 February 1950 and another note by the Secretary-General (E/L.1251) suggesting for the Council's consideration a number of amendments to the rules of procedure of the Council or of its subsidiary bodies which might be considered necessary as a result of the entry into force of resolution 1296 (XLIV) of 23 May 1968. In the same note the Secretary-General had also called attention to certain problems which arose, in his view, as a result of the provision of resolution 1296 (XLIV) that members of the Council Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations should henceforth be elected at the spring session of the Council each year. In the final section of his note (E/L.1251), the Secretary-General had indicated some editorial and drafting corrections which he thought the Council might wish to make to resolution 1296 (XLIV).

2. In view of the nature of that note—and in view of rule 88 of the rules of procedure of the Council, which provided that the rules might not be amended until the Council had received a report on the proposed amendment from a committee of the Council—it was his own opinion that it would be simpler and less time-consuming to set up a small working group to look into the questions raised in the note and report back to the Council. He suggested that Mr. Maramis (Indonesia), Vice-President of the Council, should preside over such a group, which might also include four other members of the Council whose names he himself would put forward later after consultation with delegations. The group might meet and report to the

Council during the present session. The Council could then perhaps come to a rapid conclusion regarding the points raised in the Secretary-General's note.

*It was so decided.*

3. Mr. JHA (Chairman, Council Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations) introduced the report of the Committee (E/4647). He pointed out that, in its resolution 1225 (XLII) of 6 June 1967, the Council had requested the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations to undertake a review of the procedure by which non-governmental organizations were granted consultative status and to report to the Council at its forty-fourth session. A new set of criteria had been drawn up by the Committee, and the Council had incorporated them into its resolution 1296 (XLIV). At its 1520th plenary meeting during the same session, on 23 May 1968, the Council had agreed, however, that the resolution should not take effect until the Committee had completed its review of organizations then in consultative status or until the Council at its forty-sixth session had acted upon the Committee's report. The Committee had been carrying out the review intermittently since September 1968 in conformity with resolution 1225 (XLII) but on the basis of the criteria contained in resolution 1296 (XLIV). Although the report was brief, the discussions had been long. For example, on the subject of the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL) alone, forty-two interventions had been made.

4. Explaining the form of presentation used in paragraph 8 of the report (E/4647) he said that where the name of an organization was marked with an asterisk, a vote had been taken on a proposal not to place that organization in the category in which it now appeared; where results of voting appeared after the name of an organization not marked with an asterisk, a vote had been taken on a proposal to place that organization in the category in which it now appeared.

5. He also drew the Council's attention to annex III of the report, and more particularly to the joint statement by the representatives of the United Kingdom and the United States, supported by the representative of France, in which it was said that the proposal raised by the Soviet delegation was not appropriate to the work currently before the Committee. He wished simply to place on record the stand which he himself had taken when that point had been made in the Committee. In his view, the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations, although deriving its terms of reference from Council resolution 1225 (XLII), did not owe its existence to that resolution; it was a standing Committee of the Council and could, therefore, discuss any proposal at any stage of its work. In the matter referred to, however, the Committee had not discussed the Soviet proposal but had merely decided to attach it as an annex to the report.



6. Mr. HAMBRO (Norway) said that non-governmental organizations played a very important part in the social and political life of his country and were consulted by the Government before any serious decision was taken in the fields with which they were concerned. His delegation therefore favoured close collaboration between such organizations and the Economic and Social Council.

7. It could be seen from the report of the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations (E/4647) that the Committee had worked hard and well, but he noted with regret that the debate on some problems had been marked with a considerable degree of acrimony. He realized, of course, that it was very difficult to draft rules and criteria whereby an organization could be admitted automatically to one category or another.

8. The whole question was particularly interesting in view of the forthcoming twenty-fifth anniversary of the United Nations, in which the non-governmental organizations would be called upon to play an important part. They would participate increasingly in the social and the human rights work of the United Nations, and he was sure that they would also have an important contribution to make in connexion with the question of problems of the human environment, which had been raised by the Swedish delegation at the forty-fifth session of the Council<sup>1/</sup> and was to be taken up again by the Council in the near future. They could also help by providing a link with young people, who must be brought into active co-operation with the United Nations. His delegation believed that the United Nations would in future have to rely more rather than less on co-operation with such organizations. Its approach to the Committee's report and to the whole question of non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Council would be influenced by that belief.

9. Mr. PAOLINI (France) recalled that non-governmental organizations had been brought into consultative status with the Council because the founders of the United Nations had felt, at least in so far as the economic, social and human rights activities of the Organization were concerned, that not only Member Governments but also organizations of that kind should be called upon to speak as the voice of public opinion in the various countries. Since the founding of the United Nations, its membership had grown and its tasks had become diversified, and many non-governmental organizations had themselves undergone change in regard to their structure and activities. The assistance which they could give was, however, still very valuable. The International Year for Human Rights in 1968, for example, had been an occasion for several conferences of non-governmental organizations, and the one held at Montreal in the spring had been an excellent preparation for the first International Conference on Human Rights, which had been held at Teheran from 22 April to 13 May 1968. Such organizations would no doubt also be called upon to participate in various ways in the Second United Nations Development Decade.

10. The activities of non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Council had been

reviewed periodically in the past, and the latest review had been careful and thorough. His delegation had played its part in that review in a spirit of complete impartiality, uninfluenced in any way by political, ideological, racial or religious considerations. It was to the credit of the organizations concerned that the report (E/4647) testified to their independence of operation and freedom from governmental control.

11. The proposals for reclassification contained in the report of the Committee (*ibid.*) were, with few exceptions, acceptable to his delegation. He wished, however, to propose one amendment. When the Committee had voted to place the Women's International Democratic Federation in category I, his delegation had abstained simply because, like other delegations, it felt that women's organizations should be in category II.

12. He did not wish to go back on the Committee's decision and was prepared to admit that at the present time, when the emancipation of women was already far advanced, women were no longer solely interested in improving their own status but were actively concerned with all kinds of activities having a bearing on social and economic progress and the defence of human rights. Nevertheless, to be in category I, a women's organization must not only show a genuine interest in activities of that kind but must also be broadly representative of the different regions of the world.

13. There was one organization which met those conditions, namely, the International Council of Women. It had been the first of the women's organizations, having been founded in 1888, and had been in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council since 1945. Its membership comprised women of all races and religions, and it had sixty-three national councils in all parts of the world. The national councils were independent bodies composed of the representatives of large numbers of women's organizations. The action of the International Council of Women, which supported United Nations activities, was thus itself supported by action at the national level. Consultations between the national councils were held regularly on the occasion of regional seminars organized by the Commission on Human Rights or the Commission on the Status of Women.

14. The International Council of Women was not, however, concerned solely with human rights. In 1967, for example, it had held a conference of the national councils of East Africa, as a result of which the Governments of the region had been asked to transmit to the International Labour Organization a request for the establishment in East Africa of a training centre for handicraft work. For four years the National Council of Women had been involved in the pilot programme of literacy campaigns in various developing countries undertaken by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. The forthcoming triennial conference of the International Council of Women, to be held at Bangkok in 1970, was to have as its theme "Human Resources in the Service of Development". In view of the great variety of programmes undertaken by the International Council of Women and its broadly representative character, he felt that it deserved to be placed in category I, and he wished to make a formal proposal to that effect.

<sup>1/</sup> See *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, Forty-fifth Session, Annexes*, agenda item 12, document E/4466/Add.1



15. Mr. KOTSCHNIG (United States of America) said his delegation recognized that there were wide divergences of opinion on the basic issue of the place of non-governmental organizations in relation to the United Nations. Some delegations were somewhat negative in their attitude to such organizations as they related to the work of the United Nations. The reservations of those delegations might be due to the fact that some countries, because of their recent independence or other factors, as yet possessed relatively few non-governmental organizations. They might also be irritated by critical statements sometimes made by non-governmental organizations on specific issues or Governments. Consequently, there was a feeling among such delegations that the time spent on discussing the reclassification of organizations had been wasted; however, the non-governmental organizations themselves could scarcely be blamed, since much of the loss of time had been due to the fact that Governments were unable to agree among themselves.

16. The United States Government and the people of the United States attached great importance to the work of non-governmental organizations. Such organizations had helped to make the United States what it was today; the first schools, hospitals and welfare organizations had all been non-governmental in origin, and non-governmental organizations continued to be instrumental in achieving social progress - leading the fight against injustice and for racial equality in practice rather than merely in law. Such organizations were also responsible for the fact that the United Nations was known throughout the United States and for the continuing support, financial and moral, which the Organization received there.


17. It was noteworthy that the Preamble to the United Nations Charter, in a passage drafted by a United States citizen, opened with the words "We the peoples of the United Nations". The provisions of Article 71 of the Charter on consultation with non-governmental organizations originated with a group of non-governmental consultants to the United States delegation at the San Francisco Conference and were a means of maintaining contact with the peoples, who were as important to the United Nations system as were Governments. It was thus apparent that such organizations had much to contribute to the United Nations, and his Government preferred a generous policy with regard to their admission to consultative status.

18. His delegation's decisions with regard to the organizations listed in the report before the Council (E/4647) would be guided by three principles.

19. The first principle was complete objectivity in line with the provisions of article 2 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, no distinction being made with regard to the race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status" of the members of the organizations concerned.

20. The second, and perhaps the most important consideration, was what the organizations had contributed or were contributing to the work of the United Nations, in accordance with the provision, appearing both in Council resolution 288 B (X) and in Council resolution 1296 (XLIV), that an organization should "undertake to support the work of the United Nations

and to promote knowledge of its principles and activities, in accordance with its own aims and purposes and the nature and scope of its competence and activities".

21. Thirdly, it was important to be fair in the ting of status to organizations. Difficult decisions were often involved, especially with regard to classification in the various categories. There had been a tendency to exclude religious organizations from category I, although many were doing outstanding work in all fields of interest to the United Nations. It was only recently that a women's organization had been included in category I, and he agreed with the representative of France that once such a step had been taken, it would be desirable to examine other women's organizations with a view to including them in the same category. If a vote was taken, his delegation would vote for the French proposal, but it felt that consideration might also be given to the possibility of keeping all women's organizations in category II for the reason that they were primarily concerned with human rights and social problems. The recommendations on category I before the Council in the report (*ibid.*) would in their present form lead to an inequitable situation.

22. Reference had been made to the inequitable geographical distribution of non-governmental organizations whereby few organizations from Africa, Asia and Latin America were in consultative status. While that was indeed regrettable, it was the fault neither of the Council nor of the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations, since there were relatively few such organizations in those continents. It was to be hoped that more would be formed and subsequently admitted to consultative status.

23. Mr. CREMIN (Ireland) said that his delegation's general approach would be within the framework of the functions and powers of the Economic and Social Council as defined by Article 62 of the Charter of the United Nations, and the role of non-governmental organizations as defined by Article 71 of the Charter and Council resolution 1296 (XLIV). In the present context, political considerations must be secondary, since they came within the scope of other principal organs, such as the General Assembly and the Security Council, in accordance with the relevant Articles of the Charter.

24. According to Article 62 of the Charter, the Council was concerned with "international economic, social, cultural, educational, health and related matters", which were also the basic goals of international economic and social co-operation as set forth in Article 55. For the better promotion of those goals, Article 71 authorized the Council to make suitable arrangements for consultation with non-governmental organizations, and the wider the range of such consultations, the more effective the Council's work would be. Its attitude should therefore be non-restrictive; if there was satisfactory evidence that consultation with a non-governmental organization would assist the Council in its work, that organization should be given consultative status. In deciding on the award of such status, his delegation would be guided by such factors as the standing of the organization, its proved usefulness and the extent to which



its aims and activities were distinct from those of other organizations which might appear similar in character.

25. Mr. BERRO (Uruguay) said that his delegation had participated in the work of the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations in a spirit of objectivity, bearing in mind the interests of mankind in the fulfilment of the Council's duties as defined in the Charter of the United Nations. Uruguay was a country deeply committed to democracy, with an atmosphere of complete freedom, and the principle of freedom of association was regarded as one of the foundations of its democratic and representative system. Respect for that principle should not, however, be confined to individual countries. The United Nations, too, should refrain from intervening in the internal affairs of non-governmental organizations, which were obviously a spontaneous expression of private initiative and as such not susceptible to pressure by Governments.

26. The fact that in certain parts of the world non-governmental organizations were so far conspicuous by their absence did not necessarily mean that a balance should be achieved by reducing the number of organizations in consultative status. It was rather to be hoped that more organizations would appear in those parts of the world to add their useful work to that of the organizations which already existed.

27. His delegation rejected any attempt to define non-governmental organizations by the racial extraction, ideology, or political and economic systems of their members; it was guided solely by the United Nations Charter and by Council resolution 1296 (XLIV). It was indeed a departure from the basic objectives of the international community to speak of races, since all men were members of the human race. Political considerations such as the Middle East situation were irrelevant to the task of the Committee and of the Council. It was only by disregarding such matters that members could perform their duty to mankind as a whole, at a time when scepticism was arising because of the failure by the United Nations to provide the guidance which had been hoped for.

28. The evaluation of non-governmental organizations by the Committee had often been too restrictive. Indeed, the representative of the United Kingdom had been led to remark, in a statement included in annex II of the report of the Committee (E/4647), that his delegation had been shocked that the representative of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics had openly revealed his hostility to organizations whose members held certain creeds, namely, Jews and Catholics. That had seemed to the United Kingdom delegation to be a total denial of what the Members of the United Nations were working for and of the principles in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by which they were bound. The Uruguayan delegation had also made a statement for inclusion in the report, in answer to criticisms made of the line taken by several delegations which constituted the majority of the Committee's members and were therefore able to impose their views quite legitimately by means of the vote. That statement included the sentence "each representative expressed his views objectively, interpreting the provisions of [Council resolution 1296 (XLIV)] according to his own judgement; and there is no

possible ground for making insidious deductions regarding extraneous influences or political factors capable of perverting the purely legal objectives which were envisaged" (*ibid.*, annex II). His delegation had also stated—with regard to the problem of interpretation to be given to paragraph 4 of that resolution, a matter raised by the Soviet Union—that "it is highly doubtful, in the light of Economic and Social Council resolution 1225 (XLII) that the Committee's mandate empowers it, on its own initiative, to form groups of non-governmental organizations" (*ibid.*, annex III), and that it was obvious that the phrase "organizations with similar objectives, interests and basic views in a given field" could not "be construed as referring to the racial origin of the members and refers solely to similarity in the activities, aims or objectives of those organizations" (*ibid.*). It was therefore clear that the principle of free association should not be infringed by grouping organizations in the way which had been proposed.

29. The case of the Women's International Democratic Federation, which had been raised by the representative of France, clearly demonstrated the Committee's objectivity. That organization had requested a change in category from category II to category I, and although the Uruguayan delegation had not the slightest affinity with the ideology of that organization, it had been satisfied that it met all the requirements laid down in resolution 1296 (XLIV), and had therefore proposed its inclusion in category I. His delegation would also have voted for the inclusion in that category of the International Council of Women if any proposal to that effect had been made. It would therefore vote for the French proposal when the time came to do so, but it wished to point out that its position was determined, not by the fact that the organization was for women, but by the record of its activities. His delegation had expressed reservations with regard to certain other organizations and would state its position when the individual cases were discussed. It would also in due course explain its views, from a legal standpoint, on the procedural and substantive aspects of the case in which no proposal with regard to an organization had received a majority vote, and a provisional decision had therefore been made to retain the organization in category II.

30. Mr. ALLEN (United Kingdom) stressed the vital role played by the non-governmental organizations in forming a two-way link between the work of the United Nations and the public. He shared the hope that the present numerical imbalance, in relation to the various parts of the world, in the non-governmental organizations having consultative status would be redressed by the admission of new organizations from the less-well-represented areas. While the recommendations in the report of the Council Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations (E/4647) did not perhaps contain as many changes as might have been expected, all the qualifications of the organizations concerned had been very carefully reviewed. Although there had been criticism concerning the time taken and concerning a certain partisan tone in the debates, it had to be remembered that the review had led to two valuable results: on the one hand, Member States had obtained a better realization of the scope of the



work being done by non-governmental organizations; and on the other hand, those organizations themselves had learnt that consultative status was not to be had just for the asking and that the requirements of resolution 1296 (XLIV) had to be met. The report was thus a significant contribution to the work of the Council.

31. His delegation supported the proposal that the Council should place the International Council of Women in category I.

32. The PRESIDENT said that he proposed to give the floor to the representative of the International Union of Local Authorities, as the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations had recommended (E/4673) that the request of that organization for a hearing should be accepted.

33. Mr. ASCHER (International Union of Local Authorities) said that he welcomed the opportunity of making some comments. The International Union of Local Authorities had been granted category B consultative status in 1947, and only three years ago, at the forty-first session of the Council, had been granted category A status; consequently, his remarks would be of a general nature. From the point of view of the non-governmental organizations, one of the matters of major concern was to attract the participation of individuals and officials from all regions of the world so as to provide well-balanced views. He himself also represented five other organizations, which had held many congresses in Asia, Africa and the Far East, as well as in America and Europe. Interest in such organizations was in fact increasing at a tremendous rate among the newly independent countries, and statistics produced by the Union of International Associations showed that in some cases there had been an increase in participation of 1,000 per cent over a period of ten years.

34. The Committee on Non-governmental Organizations apparently felt that if an organization received financial support from its Government, it was in danger of losing its independent character. According, however, to a yearbook published by the Union of International Associations, two of the twelve non-governmental organizations in category A, and forty-two of the 143 in category B received government support. It was thus apparent that that situation was a normal relationship. In many cases there would be no other way to obtain funds for travel expenses. The main issue was of course whether the Government sought to influence the policies of any such body. In his experience there had never been any serious attempt to do so.

35. Mr. KHANACHET (Kuwait) said that he wished to define his delegation's position concerning the nature of the relations which should be established between the non-governmental organizations in consultative status and the Economic and Social Council itself. Clearly, apart from the official delegations, there was a need for a permanent organic link between the United Nations and the peoples of the world through non-governmental organizations acting in accordance with United Nations ideals.

36. The principle set out in operative paragraphs 2 and 3 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1296 (XLIV) implied not just the honour of belonging to the

United Nations family, but also the acceptance of certain commitments and obligations. It was therefore important for the Council to make sure that the organizations fulfilled their commitments in good faith and that consultative status was not granted lightly.



37. The criteria needed to be strict so as to avoid abuses, since the reputation of the United Nations as a whole was involved. Paragraph 36 (b) of the above resolution provided for a specific sanction—the suspension and withdrawal of consultative status in the case of abuse—and that could also be taken as a criterion for the admission of a non-governmental organization to consultative status. In his view, that paragraph was of vital importance and represented a key principle in the relations between the United Nations and the non-governmental organizations. It was, however, complementary to paragraph 36 (a) concerning financial influence, and the same argument would seem to be valid in both cases. His delegation and his Government intended to use that criterion as a basis in any decision concerning the admission, exclusion or classification of any non-governmental organization. It was in the light of those principles that his delegation had studied the report of the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations (E/4647) with complete objectivity. It would vote according to those principles and would if necessary ask for its position to be clearly defined.

38. His delegation supported the proposal of France for placing the International Council of Women in category I.

39. The PRESIDENT said that the representative of the USSR wished to exercise his right of reply under rule 52 of the rules of procedure of the Council.

40. Mr. ZAKHAROV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that he took exception to the comments made by the representative of Uruguay concerning the Soviet delegation's attitude to the admission and classification of non-governmental organizations. His delegation had always favoured strict adherence to the terms of the United Nations Charter and of Economic and Social Council resolution 1296 (XLIV). Before the meeting, a paper had been circulated by the International Union of Local Authorities, and in table C 1 of that paper there was a chart listing thirty-one countries which participated in more than 200 non-governmental organizations. That list included the USSR and five other socialist countries and thus constituted good evidence that the Soviet Union participated in many organizations throughout the world which had members of many races and many religions.

41. Mr. BERRO (Uruguay) pointed out that he had made no accusation but had merely cited comments, made by another delegation, appearing in annex II to document E/4647. That had been in the context of a general comment on the way in which the Committee had worked. His own delegation had made particular efforts to be absolutely impartial; it had, in fact, supported the inclusion in category I of an organization proposed by the Soviet Union.

42. Mr. HAMBRO (Norway), supported by Mr. GALLARDO MORENO (Mexico), expressed support for the

French proposal that the International Council of Women should be given category I status.

43. The PRESIDENT suggested to the Council, in the light of consultations he had conducted, that the working group to be set up to study the questions raised in document E/L.1251 should be composed of: Mr.

Maramis (Indonesia) as Chairman, and the representatives of the USSR, the United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, India and the United States of America.

*It was so decided.*



*The meeting rose at 5.35 p.m.*