



Wednesday, 23 October 1957,
 at 10.50 a.m.

NEW YORK

CONTENTS

| | <u>Page</u> |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|
| Agenda item 12: | |
| Report of the Economic and Social Council (chapters II, III, IV and V) (continued) | |
| Draft resolution on the creation of a regional economic commission for Africa (continued)..... | 89 |

Chairman: Mr. Jiří NOSEK (Czechoslovakia).

AGENDA ITEM 12

Report of the Economic and Social Council (chapters II, III, IV and V) (A/3613, A/3661, A/C.2/L.330, A/C.2/L.332, A/C.2/L.333, A/C.2/L.334 and Add.1 and 2, A/C.2/L.335) (continued)

DRAFT RESOLUTION ON THE CREATION OF A REGIONAL ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA (A/C.2/L.334 AND ADDS. 1 AND 2) (continued)

1. Mr. MISSALLATI (Libya) felt that little could be added to the arguments already put forward in favour of the establishment of an economic commission for Africa. In voting for the resolutions setting up the economic commissions for Europe, Latin America, and Asia and the Far East the members of the Economic and Social Council had done so in the conviction that the work of the commissions would be of benefit to the people of those continents. The annual reports of the three commissions showed that their faith had been justified. Technical experts from the United Nations and its specialized agencies were already at work in many parts of Africa and a regional commission would enable the African countries to derive full benefit from any assistance, technical or other, they might receive.

2. His delegation, as a co-sponsor of the draft resolution, hoped that it would win unanimous support.

3. Mr. THAKUR (Nepal) said that Asian countries had long benefited from the help and advice of the Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East (ECAFE) and saw no reason why the African countries should not be accorded similar benefits. Both continents faced the same problem of developing backward economies and helping them to catch up with the rest of the world technologically. His country was watching with interest the economic and social resurgence of Africa and it commended the draft resolution to the Committee.

4. Mr. DUPRAZ (France) said that his delegation's favourable reaction to the draft resolution before the Committee was consistent with its attitude in previous years to all proposals designed to provide more studies of and more information about the African continent. In 1956, for instance, it had voted in favour of granting the Secretary-General the extra funds he had asked for in order to carry out more extensive studies on economic and social conditions in Africa. It was following with interest the work being done by the

Secretariat independently and in co-operation with the Commission for Technical Co-operation in Africa South of the Sahara (CTCA) and hoped for a successful outcome from those efforts. The setting up of an economic commission for Africa would, of course, involve some difficulties, as the representative of Ghana had pointed out, but, like him, France was confident that the Economic and Social Council would be able to surmount them. The question of geographical definition, for instance, was not as simple as some might suppose. The various African countries and territories were at very different stages of economic and political development and the data concerning them were not comparable. The administrative difficulties, to which reference had been made, would probably be greater in Africa than elsewhere. There was also the question of the relationship between the proposed commission and CTCA. The example of the relationship between ECLA and the Organization of American States was certainly encouraging but it should not be forgotten that there had been duplication in the work of those two bodies. Nevertheless the proposal had, in his delegation's opinion, great merit.

5. The Committee should not, of course, prejudge the action of the Economic and Social Council but the terms of the draft were very general and the final paragraph, the Committee had been assured, was not intended to tie the hands of the Council. His delegation was therefore ready to agree in principle to the establishment of the proposed commission, which would enable the peoples of Africa to participate more effectively in the work of promoting the economic development of their continent and of the world as a whole.

6. Mr. KAMENOV (Bulgaria) noted that his delegation had expressed sympathy at the eleventh session with the idea of setting up an economic commission for Africa. In introducing the draft resolution the representatives of Sudan and Ghana (468th meeting) had offered clear and convincing arguments in favour of the early establishment of such a commission and many other representatives had made persuasive supporting statements. In joining them he would simply point out how valuable the commission could be in enabling the newly independent African countries to pool experience on problems common to them all, such as industrialization, the development of their productive forces and the raising of the level of living of their people. The commission could also play an important part in undertaking the organized study of Africa, about which there was at present a dearth of statistical and other information.

7. Ato Yawand - Wossen MANGASHA (Ethiopia) said that his delegation considered the proposal for the establishment of an economic commission for Africa timely and reasonable. It was clear that Africa's economic development would be greatly accelerated if a regional economic commission were available to

provide advice and information on the use of the continent's immense unexploited resources. The benefits that the establishment of the commission would bring both to the countries immediately concerned and to the world as a whole were indeed generally recognized. Only the representative of Belgium had voiced any objection to the proposal, but his arguments had not been persuasive. The argument against a "continental" commission was not valid for the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) might equally well be described as continental and no one would deny the value of its work. The alleged distinction between Africa south and Africa north of the Sahara was purely imaginary. As for the argument that CTCA performed the functions of an economic commission in the southern part of Africa, it could be seen from that body's terms of reference that it was not in a position to do so. Nor was there any greater force in the objection that a regional commission for Africa would be a charge on the budget. All the regional economic commissions were a charge on the Organization's budget and as the African States contributed to that budget they had a right to ask for an economic commission.

8. Mr. SZITA (Hungary) felt that the proposal deserved the Committee's full support. The arguments in favour of the draft resolution had been ably stated by previous speakers and there did not appear to be any well-founded arguments against it. The commission would be of help to the African peoples in their efforts to attain economic independence and to exploit the huge economic resources which had not so far been utilized for their benefit. His delegation was sure that the establishment of the commission would be of importance far beyond the confines of Africa itself and that it would, indeed, be an important factor in world economic progress.

9. It would therefore warmly support the draft resolution and hoped that the Committee would demonstrate its support for the work of the future commission by a unanimous vote.

10. Mr. BATTISTA (Italy) said that his delegation was convinced that the proposed commission would assist the African peoples to solve their economic problems and would be a means of securing fruitful co-operation. It was therefore sympathetic towards the draft resolution and agreed that the Economic and Social Council should consider the possibility of setting up the commission. It was mindful, too, of the fact that the Trust Territory of Somaliland under Italian administration would shortly become independent and hoped that the new State would find in such a commission a place to discuss its economic problems and a source of help in promoting the well-being of its people.

11. Mr. KRIVEN (Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic) said that the many representatives who had spoken had put forward convincing arguments in favour of the setting up of the proposed commission, for which the need was clearly urgent. There had been great changes in the social and political life of the African peoples since the Second World War. Many of them were seeking to establish themselves as independent States and to play their proper part in the world and in the United Nations. But, as had often been said, independence was not complete if a country still depended economically in any degree on more advanced countries. In that field also the United Nations should do all

in its power to help the infant African States. The utilization of Africa's great natural resources in the interests of the people would assuredly lead to the growth of industry and agriculture and to social and cultural advancement. A regional economic commission in Africa could help forward the process of economic development in the independent countries and assist those which had not yet secured their freedom.

12. The Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic sympathized with the hopes and aspirations of the African peoples and would therefore vote for the joint draft resolution.

13. Mr. RUIZ MORALES (Spain) reminded the Committee that, although a European country, Spain had much in common with Africa geographically, economically and culturally. It sympathized with the African peoples' desire for a better life and noted with interest the great volume of support which had rallied behind the joint draft resolution. His delegation had been particularly interested in the statement of the representative of Morocco with which Spain had many ties. He was glad, therefore, to be able to respond to that representative's appeal; he would vote for the draft resolution and hoped that his country might participate actively in the work of the future commission.

14. Mr. KAUFMANN (Netherlands) said that his delegation was in agreement with the representatives who had stressed the importance of accelerating the economic development of Africa. It shared the view that the Economic and Social Council should give full consideration to the question of establishing an economic commission for Africa and would vote for the draft resolution on the understanding that the Council would, in accordance with Article 68 of the Charter of the United Nations, have full authority to settle all the details of the actual establishment of the commission.

15. Mr. HAYTA (Turkey) observed that Turkey had, historically, close links with the African countries. It therefore welcomed the proposal to establish an economic commission for Africa and hoped that the idea would shortly become a reality. As a member of ECE Turkey could echo the remarks of other delegations regarding the value of the existing commissions. It would therefore vote for the joint draft resolution and was sure that the commission would provide invaluable information on Africa's economic problems and the best ways of exploiting its rich natural resources and thereby raising the level of living of its peoples. There would of course be difficulties in the setting up of the commission but his delegation was sure that the Economic and Social Council had sufficient experience to enable it to solve the problems which would arise.

17. Mr. MENDOZA LOPEZ (Bolivia) said that in view of the benefits the Latin American countries had derived from the Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLA) his delegation unhesitatingly supported the draft resolution. Referring to the problems that had been mentioned in regard to the composition of an African regional commission, he noted that no difficulties had arisen in the case of ECLA although the situation had been similar. ECLA had a number of European members and he hoped that the membership would one day include Spain. The economic commissions could further economic development by making efforts to develop basic industries and promoting

political and economic unity in their regions by such measures as customs unions and monetary unification.

18. Mr. SOLONÓ LOPEZ (Paraguay) said that the repeated references to the excellent work of the existing regional commissions emphasized the disadvantage Africa suffered in not having a commission of its own. His delegation warmly supported the draft resolution the adoption of which would be a step towards correcting great injustice.

19. Mr. SEN (Pakistan), speaking as a sponsor of the joint draft resolution, said that Africa, although the second largest continent, was the least developed in spite of its vast resources. In order to develop economically, it must understand its problems and, as ECAFE, ECE and ECLA had shown, a regional commission could be of great assistance in collecting and interpreting data and rendering advisory services.

20. It was six years since the Group of Experts appointed by the Secretary-General to examine measures for the economic development of under-developed countries (E/1986) had recommended the establishment of an economic commission for Africa and there appeared to be no good reason for not giving effect to that recommendation. The arguments that the economic conditions were substantially different in the north and south of Africa and that the continent included dependent territories were not convincing in view of the success of the regional commissions in Latin America and in Asia and the Far East where a similar situation prevailed. In any case, an increasing number of African countries would accede to statehood in the near future and with technological advances, the economic differences between the various parts of the region would be largely eliminated. With regard to the additional burden the establishment of an African commission would place on the United Nations budget, the General Assembly must of course weigh carefully the financial implications of its actions, but in the case in point the undertaking fully justified the expenditure entailed.

21. For those reasons, his delegation urged the Committee to endorse the joint draft and would support appropriate action in the Economic and Social Council. Drawing attention to the fruitful co-operation between ECAFE and ECE in a number of projects, he expressed the hope that similar, and perhaps even more extensive, co-operation would be achieved between ECAFE and the proposed commission for Africa.

22. Sir Alec RANDALL (United Kingdom) stressed the importance of the proposal before the Committee which had far-reaching political, financial, constitutional and economic implications. He did not wish to go into the substance of the matter which, together with the various practical questions raised in the Committee, would have to be decided by the Economic and Social Council. He would merely note that in examining the problem, the Council would have to take into account the manifold divergencies between the various parts of Africa which would make the establishment of a regional commission in Africa a more difficult matter than it had been in other regions. The question of co-operation between CTCA and the proposed commission had also been mentioned. In that connexion, it would be advisable to consult those familiar with African

economic affairs. Other machinery operating in Africa ought also to be taken into account. His Government was in favour of any action to promote Africa's development and well-being and had made extensive efforts on behalf of the African Territories in its care. Nevertheless, it believed that it was important not to overestimate what a regional commission could do. The existing regional commissions, while effective in their own way in providing information, especially statistical data, did not furnish technical assistance or offer funds for economic development.

23. Commenting on the last two paragraphs of the joint draft, he said that his delegation did not oppose further study of the question of an African economic commission, especially in view of recent developments in Africa and would have no objection to the transmission of the matter for that purpose to the Economic and Social Council, the competent organ in the matter. In so doing, however, the General Assembly must not prejudice the Council's decision in any way. His delegation was keeping the question under consideration and reserved the right to speak on it again.

24. Mr. ARKADEV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that the establishment of an African regional commission would be an important contribution to international economic co-operation and would do much to promote the economic development of Africa. The African countries were entitled to, and in great need of, an economic commission of their own.

25. The myth that the African races were inferior and must be placed under the tutelage of the colonial powers had long been exploded. It was sufficient in that connexion to recall how much the world owed to Egyptian civilization. It was true that the slave trade, colonialism and artificially stimulated wars had cost the African peoples many sacrifices and that, although it was the African people who had dug the mines, and built the roads, railways and canals in Africa, it was not they, but foreign colonialists who had benefited and were benefiting from the resulting exploitation of the continent's resources. Nevertheless, only a small part of Africa's vast resources had so far been tapped, and the growing number of independent African countries needed the assistance of a regional body to overcome the enormous difficulties in the way of their economic, social and educational development. Those difficulties were certainly common to all of them, as they were common to the countries of other regions, and their solution required a joint effort. The regional commission for Africa, with the assistance of economic and other experts, could study the various problems and arrange for exchanges of information among the African countries and between them and countries facing similar problems in other parts of the world. The commission could also assist in the training of experts and technicians. Through its efforts, the more advanced African countries could help their less advanced neighbours, and an African community of economically and politically independent nations would develop.

26. The establishment of a regional African commission had been recommended in 1951 by the Group of Experts on economic development and the United Nations had had ample time to consider the recommendation, against which no serious arguments had been raised. The time for action had now come. The Soviet delegation therefore supported the joint draft

resolution and trusted that the Economic and Social Council would not submit that question to the bureaucratic red tape and take the necessary practical steps to give effect to the General Assembly's wishes without delay.

27. Mr. O'BEIRNE (Ireland) said that in view of the importance of assisting the newly independent countries to develop their economies it was desirable that an economic commission for Africa should be established to do for that continent what the existing commissions had done for other regions. His delegation believed that the potential value of the proposed commission far outweighed the difficulties involved. It therefore supported the joint draft resolution.

28. Mr. DAN (Romania) observed that the activities of the existing regional commissions were one of the most effective forms of international and interregional economic co-operation. The commissions had played an important part in the development of under-developed countries and of under-developed areas in relatively highly developed countries.

29. The Romanian people warmly sympathized with the African people's determined efforts to make use of their abundant natural resources and talents and energies to raise their levels of living. His Government therefore supported the proposal to set up an economic commission for Africa.

30. Commenting on the problem of the commission's membership, he stressed his delegation's view that all African countries should be members. Any attempts to divide the continent on a geographical or other basis were unjustified. His delegation also believed that the Council should take into account the view expressed by the representative of Saudi Arabia, at the 468th meeting, that adequate provision should be made for territories which had not yet achieved independence to participate in the commission's work.

31. Mr. SAHNI (India) said that the fact that nine African countries were Members of the United Nations justified the Committee's reconsideration of the question of establishing an economic commission for Africa. While he was aware of the limitations of the existing commissions and realized that they could not give financial or technical assistance, he felt that they could serve as a model for the new commission.

32. The joint draft resolution did not envisage that the matter should be referred to the Council merely for study. In the view of the sponsors, the time had come for action. Referring to the question of the membership of the commission, he said that it was important that it should include all African countries; political misunderstandings and economic inefficiency might result if that were not the case. Clearly the representatives of the African countries in the United Nations should play a decisive part in the matter under discussion.

33. With respect to the last paragraph of the draft, it had been suggested that the Council should be given greater latitude in deciding at which session it would consider the establishment of the commission. He wondered whether the Secretariat could indicate whether the twenty-fifth or twenty-sixth session of 1958 would be more convenient, from the standpoint of the preparation of the necessary documentation. Explaining the use of the words "effective aid" in the

last paragraph of the draft, he said that they had been used in the sense of the preceding paragraph and did not imply financial assistance.

34. He hoped that the Council would give the matter prompt consideration and that its report would be submitted to the Assembly at its thirteenth session.

35. Mr. LAMANI (Albania) said that his delegation supported the joint draft resolution. As the majority of African countries were under-developed, the proposed commission would further the Organization's aim of promoting the economic development of the under-developed countries. His country had followed with interest Africa's struggles for independence and felt that the countries of that continent should develop their economic relations with each other and with the rest of the world on a basis of equality.

36. Mr. ROGERS (Canada) remarked that although not a member of a regional commission, Canada was conscious of the accomplishments of those commissions and his delegation had listened with sympathy to the expressions of the African nations' desire to have one. He assured the co-sponsors that the Canadian delegation in the Council would give sympathetic consideration to the matter when it came up for consideration.

37. He doubted whether the Council should be asked to report to the Assembly at its thirteenth session. It was important that the Council should give careful rather than hurried consideration to the problem.

38. Mr. WOULBROUN (Belgium), clarifying his earlier statement at the 469th meeting, explained that he had stated that the Council had not deliberately set out to create any "continental" commissions. The fact was that not all countries in the Americas were members of ECLA. He had not proposed the establishment of a separate commission for Africa south of the Sahara but had merely indicated that a body already existed which was carrying out extensive work in a field that would overlap with that of the new commission.

39. He had raised some objections and pointed to certain difficulties because he had reservations as to the best means of attaining the universally accepted objective of co-operation between the African countries and territories, with a view to raising levels of living in that continent and ensuring respect for the principles set forth in the Charter of the United Nations.

40. Mr. de SEYNES (Under-Secretary for Economic and Social Affairs) drew attention to the fact that the Secretary-General had had the problems of Africa under consideration for some years and had mentioned them in the introduction to his annual report to the tenth session of the General Assembly (A/2911) 2/. In 1956 the Department of Economic and Social Affairs had requested special funds in order to accelerate work on its African studies, and he thanked the General Assembly for the action it had taken at the previous session. He agreed with the Egyptian representative, however, that the present data on Africa were inadequate.

^{2/} Official Records of the General Assembly, Tenth Session, Supplement No. 1.

41. As to the question raised by the Indian representative, he wished to give the assurance that the Secretariat would be able to prepare for the April session of the Council documentation which he hoped would prove useful to the deliberations of the Council.

Of course, if the debate took place in July, the documentation might be more complete, but that need not be a determining factor in the Assembly's decision.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.