



Ninth session
Agenda item 30

FORCED LABOUR: REPORT OF THE
ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL

Report of the Third Committee

Rapporteur: Mrs. L. TSALDARIS (Greece)

1. The General Assembly, at its 478th meeting on 25 September 1954, decided to refer item 30 of the agenda of its ninth session, "Forced Labour: Report of the Economic and Social Council", to the Third Committee for consideration and report.

2. The Committee considered this item, as the sixth item of its agenda, at its 613th to 615th and 617th to 620th meetings held on 10, 11, 13 and 14 December. It had before it a note by the Secretary-General (A/2662) reporting on the action taken by the Economic and Social Council at its seventeenth session (resolution 524 (XVII)), on the report of the Ad Hoc Committee on Forced Labour.

3. The general debate was marked by charges and counter-charges of the existence of forced labour in various countries and territories. Some delegations cited the Report of the Ad Hoc Committee on Forced Labour and other information as evidence of the existence of systems of forced labour employed as a means of political coercion or for economic purposes in a number of countries, endorsed the action taken by the Economic and Social Council on the Ad Hoc Committee's report, and recommended that the Council and the International Labour Organisation should continue their efforts for the abolition of such systems of forced labour. Other delegations strongly criticized the Ad Hoc Committee with regard to its composition, methods of work and conclusions concerning the existence of forced labour in some countries,

and charged that the Committee had disregarded information on forced labour practices, examples of which were given, in other countries and territories. Several delegations felt that the Ad Hoc Committee's terms of reference had been too narrow to permit a universal inquiry into forced labour in all its forms, and asserted that the problem should be treated from a humanitarian rather than from a political point of view.

4. A draft resolution (A/C.3/L.456) was submitted jointly by Australia, Brazil, Canada, Costa Rica, Cuba, Norway, Peru, Philippines, Turkey, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America. There were no amendments to this proposal, although a separate vote was requested on several phrases in the text with the following results:

5. The words "on such a scale as to constitute" in operative paragraph 1 were adopted by 29 votes to 8, with 7 abstentions.

6. Operative paragraph 1 was adopted by 31 votes to 5, with 12 abstentions.

7. The words "at its nineteenth session" in operative paragraph 4 were adopted by 26 votes to 6, with 15 abstentions.

8. The words "and non-governmental organizations in consultative status" in sub-paragraph (b) of operative paragraph 4 were adopted by 27 votes to 6, with 14 abstentions.

9. The joint draft resolution as a whole was adopted without change by a roll-call vote of 31 to 5, with 12 abstentions. The voting was as follows:

In favour: Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Chile, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Denmark, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Ethiopia, France, Greece, Guatemala, Iraq, Israel, Mexico, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Pakistan, Peru, Philippines, Sweden, Thailand, United Kingdom, United States, Venezuela, Yugoslavia.

Against: Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

Abstaining: Afghanistan, Argentina, Burma, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Iran, Liberia, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Union of South Africa, Yemen.

10. The Committee therefore recommends to the General Assembly the adoption of the following resolution:

FORCED LABOUR: REPORT OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL

The General Assembly,

Having noted Economic and Social Council resolution 524 (XVII) of 27 April 1954 concerning the report of the Ad Hoc Committee on Forced Labour,

1. Endorses the condemnation by the Economic and Social Council of the existence of systems of forced labour which are employed as a means of political coercion or punishment for holding or expressing political views, and which are on such a scale as to constitute an important element in the economy of a given country;

2. Requests the Economic and Social Council and the International Labour Organisation to continue their efforts towards the abolition of such systems of forced labour;

3. Supports the Council's appeal to all Governments to re-examine their laws and administrative practices in the light of present conditions and the increasing desire of peoples of the world to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights and in the dignity and worth of the human person;

4. Expresses its satisfaction with the action taken by the Economic and Social Council in requesting the Secretary-General and the Director-General of the International Labour Office to prepare a further report on this subject for consideration by the Council at its nineteenth session, setting out:

(a) Whatever replies are received from Governments in pursuance of General Assembly resolution 740 (VIII) of 7 December 1953;

(b) Any new information on systems of forced labour which might be submitted by Member States, specialized agencies, and non-governmental organizations in consultative status, together with any comments submitted by Governments concerned.
