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CO-ORDINATION

REVIEW OF THE AGREEMENTS BETWEEN THE UNITED NATIONS  
AND THE SPECIALIZED AGENCIES AND THE INTERNATIONAL  
ATOMIC ENERGY AGENCY

Views of the executive heads of organizations transmitted  
in response to paragraph 13 of Economic and Social Council  
resolution 1768 (LIV)

WORLD METEOROLOGICAL ORGANIZATION

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY INCLUDING THE ROLES OF  
THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL AND THE ACC

1. The factors affecting economic and social development in this modern world are extremely complex and the task of the Economic and Social Council, as the over-all co-ordinator of such activities in the United Nations system, is therefore a very difficult one and, at the same time, a very important one. Moreover, as the resolution itself points out, these factors have changed significantly since the time when most of the specialized agencies were established and new bodies have had to be created (mainly within the United Nations itself) to meet the changing requirements. The nature and status of the bodies so created differ widely, so that co-ordination of the activities of the whole system of United Nations organizations has inevitably become more difficult with the passage of time. By the same token, the problems of co-ordination and co-operation between individual organizations themselves, old and new, have increased. Even a relatively small agency like WMO finds itself increasingly involved in substantial co-ordination activities with new bodies and new programmes especially those dealing with such subjects as water resources (hydrology), ocean affairs (oceanography), outer space, natural disasters (tropical cyclones, floods, droughts, etc.), world food problems, and the environment.

2. Indeed in WMO the stage has been reached when the question has to be asked

whether the effort devoted to co-ordination of activities with other agencies and with the new bodies referred to, at the expense of substantive work, can be further increased or even maintained at its present level with existing resources. These remarks do not apply to WMO's direct relationship with the Economic and Social Council which does not raise difficulties of this kind (see paragraph 6).

3. For all these reasons it is clearly necessary for a general review of all these bodies to be made both as regards their functions and as regards the machinery required to ensure co-ordination of their activities, and the Economic and Social Council resolution is therefore timely. If, as is to be hoped, the review will provide a more rationalized system of co-ordination it will benefit not only the Economic and Social Council itself but also all the agencies and the other bodies. The review will hopefully produce answers to such questions as to whether all these bodies are still necessary and whether it would be advantageous to follow a more uniform approach as regards their status and form. The review will hopefully also show to what extent a more flexible system could be developed for the specialized agencies themselves and to what extent such a system might then obviate the necessity of creating still further new bodies.

#### Role of the Economic and Social Council

4. As explained above recent developments have greatly increased the responsibilities and also the difficulties of the Economic and Social Council in acting as the over-all co-ordinator for the activities of all the organizations in the United Nations system now dealing with economic and social affairs on the international level. As regards the experience of WMO however it is gratifying to report that few such difficulties have been encountered in its relations with the Economic and Social Council, possibly because WMO is a relatively small organization dealing with a highly specialized and clearly defined subject. It is to be further noted that the views of the Economic and Social Council (and also the General Assembly) as expressed in formal resolutions have in fact had a profound and beneficial influence upon the WMO programmes. For example General Assembly resolution 1721 (XVI) entitled "International co-operation in the peaceful use of outer space" led to the basic global operational programme of WMO called World Weather Watch. A year later General Assembly resolution 1801 (XVII) with a similar title led to the global atmospheric research programme. This was later followed by General Assembly resolution 2733 (XXV) once again under the same title, which led to the WMO Tropical Cyclone Project. Following the in-depth study of WMO by the Economic and Social Council in 1972 resolution 1728 (LIII) was adopted which drew the attention of Member States to the importance of supporting the WMO programmes and this resolution has been used with good effect by WMO.

5. The experience of WMO therefore suggests that formal resolutions addressed to the governing bodies of the agencies (rather than to the executive heads) may perhaps be the most effective method of achieving the impact on agency programmes which the Economic and Social Council seeks. Some arrangements for direct contacts between the Council and the governing bodies might even be

contemplated to ensure that the Council views on the over-all co-ordination of activities are fully understood. For example, a representative of the Economic and Social Council, such as the chairman of the CPC, might, when necessary, attend sessions of the governing bodies of the specialized agencies in order to explain the Economic and Social Council views on all relevant questions and to report back to the Council on the reactions of the agencies.

#### Role of ACC

6. The ACC is essential to interagency co-operation. The personal contacts between executive heads has done much to ensure that a spirit of co-operation prevails regardless of the particular form of the working arrangements between their respective organizations. In recent years, ACC has taken some steps to improve its methods of operation (e.g. creation of functional groups, strengthening of the United Nations Secretariat for ACC), with beneficial results to all concerned.

7. As far as WMO is concerned, the main difficulty which exists at present is the call upon the limited financial and manpower resources which full participation in ACC and all its subsidiary bodies entails; but this is hardly the fault of ACC itself.

8. The introduction of persons with a scientific background into the ACC Secretariat would, it is thought, improve still further its usefulness since many of the activities with which ACC deals are of a scientific or technical character. This has been proposed by some members of the ACC in the past but has never been accepted. Perhaps WMO is particularly conscious of this since it has no permanent representative based in New York.

9. Turning now to the question of the assistance which ACC gives to the Economic and Social Council, it is difficult to envisage any major improvements to present arrangements but the following comments may be of use.

10. The experience of WMO suggests that the system of in-depth studies of a limited number of agencies at each of the July sessions of the Economic and Social Council is a very useful development. This leads to the thought that the Economic and Social Council might find it useful more frequently to call upon a particular agency or a group of agencies to prepare special in-depth studies or reports on special subjects outside the framework of the normal ACC reports.

11. The joint CPC/ACC meetings are interesting but their usefulness, from the WMO point of view, is indirect rather than direct. As already mentioned the WMO experience suggests that the influence of the Economic and Social Council on agency programmes would be much more effective if the Economic and Social Council recommendations and proposals were addressed to governing bodies rather than to executive heads.

#### MACHINERY FOR CO-ORDINATION AT THE GLOBAL LEVEL

12. It is in the field of co-ordination of broad global plans having an over-all impact on world economic development that the Economic and Social Council evidently has a primary responsibility. The International Development Strategy is a clear demonstration of this. Co-ordination at this level enables the role of each agency in the over-all global plan to be identified and even agencies not having a major role to play may see in what ways, however modest, they too can assist in the global effort.

13. On the other hand, the WMO experience suggests that global plans in highly specialized technical fields (such as World Weather Watch) can best be left to the particular agency concerned but, as already mentioned, the Economic and Social Council can play an important role in endorsing and supporting such plans or even in giving an initial impetus to their conception and formulation.

#### REGIONAL CO-OPERATION AND CO-ORDINATION

14. The only useful comment which can be made under this heading is that WMO has found that it benefits greatly from the co-operation it enjoys with the Regional Economic Commissions; any steps which the Economic and Social Council may take to foster such co-operation would therefore be most welcome. WMO finds that its own specialized "know-how", combined with the intimate knowledge which the Commissions have acquired of the countries in their respective regions, as well as the confidence they enjoy vis-à-vis these countries, provides a very suitable basis on which to formulate and implement regional plans.

#### CO-ORDINATION AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL

15. It has often been said that if there were full co-ordination at the national level, problems of co-ordination at the international level would not arise since the programmes and activities approved in the different specialized agencies by the representatives of virtually the same countries in each case, would not then involve overlap and the programmes and activities of all the intergovernmental bodies would collectively comprise a coherent whole. While it is perhaps unrealistic to expect that such a state of affairs could ever be completely achieved, there is good reason to foster co-ordination at the national level in every possible way. WMO (and doubtless other agencies) makes a special point of keeping the bodies with whom it is in direct contact in each country, fully informed of relevant Economic and Social Council and other United Nations decisions and policies in order to ensure as far as possible that meteorological factors are not forgotten when national plans and proposals are being formulated.

16. In the field of technical assistance, the UNDP Resident Representatives clearly have special responsibilities in helping to ensure a co-ordinated approach at the national level and WMO has at all times supported this concept.

17. As most countries have national planning committees the co-ordinating task of the Economic and Social Council might perhaps be facilitated if it could be arranged for a person familiar with the activities of each of the specialized agencies to be included in the membership of each national committee.

#### DEVELOPMENT OF INTERAGENCY SYSTEM

18. WMO, like all other agencies has entered into agreements with a number of international bodies. These agreements may be grouped into three categories:

(a) Formal agreements approved by the members. There are only two such agreements - one with the United Nations itself (the usual "specialized agency" agreement) and the other with IAEA.

(b) Working arrangements approved by the Executive Committee. Such arrangements have been made with several other specialized agencies FAO, ICAO, IMCO, ITU, UNESCO and WHO, four other intergovernmental bodies (Danube Commission, International Council for the Exploration of the Sea, the League of Arab States and the European Space Research Organization) while an agreement with the Organization of African Unity is in the process of being negotiated. Such arrangements have also been made with two non-governmental international organizations (International Council of Scientific Unions and the International Union of Geodesy and Geophysics).

(c) Consultative status, approved by the Executive Committee. Seventeen non-governmental international organizations have been granted such status.

(d) Agreements on the Secretariat level. There are two such agreements, one with the Director-General of UNESCO and the other with the Director-General of FAO, the subject-matter in both cases being co-ordination and co-operation on hydrological activities. These are relatively recent agreements which promise to be very effective means of co-ordination in this very important field.

19. In general this system of agreements has worked smoothly. No great difficulties have arisen and no significant changes seem called for. In any case, the experience of WMO suggests that it is not so much the form and status of an agreement which decides its effectiveness but rather the spirit in which both organizations apply the agreement. Useful and substantial co-operation can in fact be developed between agencies which have no formal working arrangements.

20. In the present context however the agreements between the United Nations and the specialized agencies should clearly be given special consideration. As regards the form and status of these agreements, no changes would seem necessary; as regards the substance however some consideration seems necessary for two reasons. First, the individual agencies may have changed the scale and scope of their activities (by decisions of their governing bodies) to such an extent as to justify a revision of the agreement. Secondly, it would provide an opportunity for the over-all activities of the agencies as specified in the

agreements to be reviewed as a whole to determine whether, from the point of view of the Economic and Social Council, there are, on the one hand possible gaps or deficiencies, or on the other hand, there is duplication and overlap. The next step would presumably be for the Economic and Social Council to make proposals for adjustments to these activities. At this stage the governing bodies of the agencies would become involved. As already mentioned however there is reason to believe that the Economic and Social Council's views and advice could in any case be more effective if addressed to the governing bodies.

21. It is recognized that the problem is more complex than the rather simple approach suggested above would suggest. In the first place the agreements do not present in great detail the fields of activity of each agency so that to detect gaps or overlaps would be difficult if not impossible in present circumstances. This leads to the thought that as an Annex to each such agreement a more detailed list of responsibilities and terms of reference of the agency in question might be attached, which could be brought up-to-date whenever necessary. In this way without having to undertake the procedure of renegotiating these agreements at unduly frequent intervals, they would at all times be correct statements of the actual situation. Indeed the annual review of these annexes, in the light of the Economic and Social Council's over-all programmes and priorities (and these could be specifically referred to in the annexes) might become one of the main means whereby the Economic and Social Council fulfils its co-ordinating role. Decisions as to whether new bodies should be created or whether the functions of existing agencies should be adjusted to meet a new requirement, could much more readily be taken on the basis of such information.

22. A further advantage of such a system would be that the Economic and Social Council (and the General Assembly) would be able to avoid the unnecessary direct involvement of bodies outside the United Nations system (including the NGOs) in matters which fall within the terms of reference of an agency which, by definition, the United Nations has recognized as its "specialized" agency for these matters.

#### CO-ORDINATION OF SUPPORT ACTIVITIES

23. WMO has long accepted that in questions relating to the conditions of service of its staff, it follows in almost all respects the decisions of the United Nations for its Geneva-based staff. This is because many complexities of staff management on the international level involve studies and inquiries which for their proper treatment go far beyond the resources of a Secretariat of the size of WMO's. While therefore WMO follows closely all developments in this field and participates as necessary in the discussions, it accepts the United Nations decision once it has been taken. This has been found a very satisfactory arrangement.

## RESOURCES

24. Most specialized agencies find that at the present time, they have to face serious financial difficulties. To the extent that these difficulties create an air of uncertainty and even programme reductions in fields which may be of direct concern to the Economic and Social Council, the difficulties must be considered as affecting adversely the attainment of Economic and Social Council objectives. Any steps which the Economic and Social Council might be able to take to hasten a return to a more stable financial situation in the agencies, would therefore be of general benefit.

## PROPOSALS FOR GREATER CO-ORDINATION AND STRENGTHENING OF THE INTERAGENCY SYSTEM

25. In the preceding paragraphs some thoughts and ideas have emerged from the experience of WMO as to how greater co-ordination and strengthening of the interagency system might be facilitated and these will not be repeated. The only additional comments which might usefully be made on this subject are rather to underline the nature of the problem rather than to make specific proposals for its solution.

26. The specialized agencies represented on the ACC differ widely in many respects. The broad spectrum of the activities they cover is of course an important feature of the collective support they can give to the Economic and Social Council objectives. On the other hand, as has been repeatedly stressed, this feature in itself makes the need for co-ordination essential. There are however other ways in which they differ. The activities of some are fully and directly related to the main preoccupations of the Economic and Social Council; those of others are much less directly involved although the services they make possible are basic to economic development. In addition, the budgets of the agencies vary over a very wide scale so that the ability of each to respond to Economic and Social Council or ACC initiatives also varies. Any proposals for improving interagency co-ordination will need to take these considerations into account. As regards the question of "ability to respond", consideration might perhaps be given to invoking when necessary the article of the United Nations agreement with each agency, whereby the United Nations may contribute to the financing of "special reports, studies or assistance" requested by the United Nations. It is believed that such an article features in each such agreement.

## CONCLUSION

27. The achievements of the Economic and Social Council in co-ordinating and guiding the programmes of the various organizations in the United Nations system are very substantial. Nevertheless a review of the terms of reference of these organizations, such as the Economic and Social Council is now undertaking, is for many reasons timely and useful. One such reason is to see whether adjustments in the functions of the specialized agencies could obviate the necessity of creating further new bodies.

28. The machinery for co-ordinating at the global, regional and national levels should also be scrutinized, due regard being given to the particular relevance of Economic and Social Council capabilities in global programmes, to the excellent work which the United Nations Regional Economic Commissions are doing and to the possibility of ensuring fuller consideration at the national level of the whole range of the specialized activities of the agencies.

29. The co-ordinating role of the Economic and Social Council might be facilitated if the Economic and Social Council were to make its views known in a more direct manner to the governing bodies of the agencies with whom the decision-making processes lie, rather than to the executive heads, whose functions are to carry out the decisions of the governing bodies.

30. In considering proposals for improvements in interagency co-ordination, attention should be given to the wide differences which exist between the agencies as regards the nature and scale of their activities and the resources available to them.

31. It need hardly be added, in conclusion, that whatever proposals may emerge from the Economic and Social Council study, the appropriate bodies in WMO will give them the most careful consideration.

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