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**SECOND COMMITTEE, 1359th  
MEETING**

Thursday, 3 December 1970,  
at 11 a.m.

NEW YORK

Chairman: Mr. Walter GUEVARA ARZE (Bolivia).

*In the absence of the Chairman, Mr. Peal (Liberia), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.*

**AGENDA ITEM 44**

**Question of the establishment of an international university: report of the Secretary-General (A/8003 and Corr.1, chap. XI, sect. B; A/8067, A/8182, A/C.2/L.1139)**

1. Mr. HILL (Assistant Secretary-General for Inter-Agency Affairs) said that the Secretary-General's report on the question of the establishment of an international university (A/8182) was submitted in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1542 (XLIX). He regretted that it could not have been issued sooner. The main reason for the delay was that the Secretary-General had been requested to base his report on the views of the international bodies concerned, and the views of UNITAR and UNESCO had not been available until mid-November.

2. The Secretary-General's report indicated the actions taken since General Assembly resolution 2573 (XXIV) had been adopted, and introduced in the annexes the important documents which had been produced since the study on the feasibility of an international university (E/4878) had been submitted to the Economic and Social Council at its forty-ninth session. The documents included the report submitted by the Director-General of UNESCO to the sixteenth session of the General Conference (annex II); extract from the report of the Programme Commission of that Conference (annex III) and Conference resolution 1.242 (annex IV); the views of the Board of Trustees of UNITAR (annex V); and a letter of 15 October 1970 from the Secretary-General to the Executive Director of UNITAR (annex VI), similar to one sent earlier to the Director-General of UNESCO.

3. The Board of Trustees of UNITAR had stated that, subject to certain understandings, the proposal to establish a United Nations international university system was acceptable in principle, and the Board had agreed with the Secretary-General that its aims "should include training, public service and research in a comprehensive system, functionally and geographically decentralized, but administratively integrated and including a variety of models responsive to the diversity and urgency of the world's needs and our common tasks" (see A/8182, annex V). The Board of Trustees of UNITAR emphasized that UNESCO and UNITAR, and other United Nations bodies, were already performing some of the functions of the proposed university, and many institutions of advanced study were engaged

on studies of international significance. The Board accordingly envisaged the proposed international university as an instrument for co-ordinating the existing work being done, and fostering the growth of existing institutions suitable for incorporation in or association with it. It should create new institutions only where they proved necessary. The co-ordinating machinery required should not be on a large scale, at least initially. The Secretary-General accepted those views, and the Assistant Secretary-General referred the Committee in particular to the statement by the Director-General of UNESCO on the goals and objectives of an international university and the needs it could fill (*ibid.*, annex II, paras. 6 to 12).

4. The Secretary-General's report suggested that the General Assembly might wish, in accordance with the hope expressed by the General Conference of UNESCO, to invite UNESCO to undertake jointly with the United Nations and other organizations concerned the further studies needed of the educational, financial and organizational factors involved in establishing an international university. If the General Assembly did so, no doubt it would wish the Secretary-General to contribute such staff and facilities as might be required.

5. The Secretary-General had expressed the hope that the General Assembly would authorize him to proceed further with his own consultations and studies and to report in due course on various aspects of the proposal, including key questions of special concern to the United Nations. The Secretary-General believed it would be useful if he could be assisted in that task by a small panel of experts, as suggested in his letter of 15 October 1970 to the Executive Director of UNITAR; the Board of Trustees of UNITAR had endorsed that suggestion at its ninth session, held from 2 to 5 November.

6. The Secretary-General emphasized in his report that the work to be undertaken by that panel and by UNESCO would be complementary, and hoped that the panel could benefit from the UNESCO studies as they proceeded. The Secretary-General recognized the vital importance of the closest co-operation within the United Nations systems, and particularly between the United Nations itself, UNESCO and UNITAR. The Secretary-General and the Director-General of UNESCO had been working in the closest contact and agreement, and the Secretary-General could give a categorical assurance that any further work undertaken by the two organizations would be so organized as to avoid any possibility of duplication and ensure optimum use of the resources of both organizations.

7. Mr. DE SILVA (United Nations Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization) stressed that there had been continuing consultation between the Secretary-General and

the Director-General of UNESCO. In its resolution 1542 (XLIX) the Economic and Social Council had taken the view that UNESCO's technical advice on the project must be sought. In accordance with that view, both the Executive Board of UNESCO and its General Conference had fully discussed all aspects of the project. Resolution 1.242 of the General Conference reflected the result of those discussions; it referred to the technical problems that might arise if the approach to the project were too hasty. The General Conference considered, in the light of those problems, that before a final decision was taken, there should be further studies of the educational, financial and organizational aspects. The General Conference had expressed the hope that the General Assembly would invite UNESCO to undertake complementary studies so that a full feasibility study could be submitted either to the Economic and Social Council or the General Assembly. In addition to the views embodied in the report (*ibid.*, annex II), the Director-General of UNESCO had stated in his report on the contribution to peace and its tasks with respect to the elimination of racism and colonialism<sup>1</sup> that the main task of the proposed international university would be to promote international understanding at the political and cultural levels, which could greatly assist UNESCO in its work to promote peace.

8. Accordingly, if the General Assembly was in favour of the additional studies proposed, and wished to entrust them to UNESCO, that body would be pleased to carry them out.

9. The CHAIRMAN drew the Committee's attention to draft resolution A/C.2/L.1139 and announced that the following countries had been added to the list of sponsors of the draft: Afghanistan, Algeria, Cyprus, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Ghana, Greece, Honduras, Indonesia, Iraq, Lebanon, Liberia, Malaysia, Morocco, Nepal, Nigeria, Norway, Pakistan, Philippines, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Sudan, Swaziland, Thailand, Tunisia and Yemen.

10. Mr. OGISO (Japan), introducing draft resolution A/C.2/L.1139 on behalf of the sponsors, said that the general picture regarding the establishment of an international university had become fairly clear and Japan believed that most Member States considered the proposal desirable, on the understanding that a comprehensive feasibility study should be made before a decision was taken. He agreed with UNESCO that it would be premature to take a decision before the educational, financial and organization aspects of an international university had been properly explored.

11. Japan had consulted the representatives of the Secretary-General and of UNESCO, and many interested delegations, and it was agreed that the best course would be to ask UNESCO to study the educational, financial and organizational aspects, in accordance with resolution 1.242 of the General Conference of UNESCO and to ask the Secretary-General to continue his consultations and studies on the problems that mainly concerned the United Nations. Those recommendations were included in the draft resolution.

12. In his report (see A/8182, para. 7), the Secretary-General referred to certain key questions for which the United Nations had a special concern, namely possible offers of assistance from individual Governments and institutions, the criteria for the possible integration of existing institutions within the international university system, the status of an international university in the United Nations family and its relations with the members of that family.

13. The Secretary-General should continue to play an active part, not only because he had put forward the idea first, but also because the question was the general concern of the Member States. The Secretary-General's role, therefore, referred to in operative paragraph 3, should not be regarded negatively, as interfering with the competence of UNESCO. The sponsors of the draft resolution had taken that possible criticism into account, and the fifth preambular paragraph consequently stressed the need for the closest co-operation among the United Nations organizations concerned, while operative paragraph 2 provided for full co-operation between UNESCO and the United Nations. Operative paragraph 6 noted that the relevant studies of the two bodies would be complementary; during the informal consultations assurances had been given that there would be a constant exchange of information on the subject between the two bodies, so that each could benefit from the other's work.

14. The sponsors of the draft resolution had felt the need for a panel of experts, including experts appointed by Governments, to assist the Secretary-General, and operative paragraph 5 so provided. Operative paragraphs 3 and 4 provided that Governments should not only express preliminary views on the question during the General Assembly, but also submit them to the Secretary-General in due course. He would take them into account in his consultations and studies.

15. Resolution 1.242 of the General Conference of UNESCO invited the Director-General to report on the question not later than the eighty-eighth session of the Executive Board of UNESCO, and the sponsors hoped that the Executive Board's views would be made available as soon as possible, in view of the timing of the twenty-sixth session of the General Assembly. Since the Secretary-General might not be able to submit his final report at that session, the draft resolution asked the Secretary-General to submit "a report" at that time. The sponsors hoped that the decision on establishing an international university would be made at the earliest possible date and that the draft resolution would win general support of Members of the Committee.

16. Mr. AHMED (Secretary of the Committee) said that, in accordance with rule 154 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, he wished to inform the Committee of the administrative and financial implications of draft resolution A/C.2/L.1139.

17. The Secretary-General did not envisage the need for additional resources to continue his consultations and studies as provided for in operative paragraph 3, since the existing staff resources would suffice.

<sup>1</sup> UNESCO document 16C/12.

18. As to operative paragraph 5, the Secretary-General envisaged the convening of a panel of experts that would meet for a period of two or three weeks in 1971; the arrangements could be made so as to avoid the need for additional resources to service the meeting. The Secretary-General expected that the ten experts to be appointed by Governments would be provided without cost to the United Nations. The travel and subsistence costs for the five experts to be nominated by the Secretary-General in consultation with the Director-General of UNESCO and the Executive Director of UNITAR were estimated at \$7,500, but could be provided out of the resources available to the Secretary-General.

19. If, therefore, the General Assembly adopted the draft resolution, the Secretary-General would not envisage the need for additional budgetary allocations for the financial year 1971.

20. Mr. AKWEI (Ghana) said that the Secretary-General's proposal for the establishment of an international university had aroused great interest not only among Member States, but in academic circles all over the world. The recent widespread unrest in universities made it imperative to conduct a comprehensive analysis of the reasons for the upheaval in education. The rapid advance of science and technology meant that knowledge soon became obsolete, and young people became restless in their search for up-to-date information. Young people were also protesting against the hypocrisy they found all around them, even in the educational institutions where the ideals of objectivism were taught. There was an urgent need to establish an integrated system of values and training relevant to the life of young people not only as workers of a State, but as members of the international community seeking the betterment of mankind as a whole. Such an institution as the proposed international university could make a great contribution to the establishment and promotion of such values and ideals.

21. Having examined the study on the feasibility of establishing an international university (E/4878), his delegation was convinced that there was a need for selective educational activity under the auspices of the United Nations to contribute to peace and progress. Its contribution would be directed mainly towards fulfilment of the purposes and principles of the Charter, through the creation of a community of scholars working to promote and develop mutual respect, harmony and tolerance among all nations. The proposed university should place special emphasis on interdisciplinary studies and on the application of knowledge to effective planning and management of the environment, urbanization and industrial development. Research should be conducted into the management sciences and other fields of modern technology which had practical applications, particularly in the developing countries. His Government attached great importance to the study of management sciences as part of an integrated science programme.

22. In view of the continuing exodus of skilled manpower from developing to developed countries, it was to be hoped that the curricula of the international university would be geared not only towards meeting the needs of the United Nations for trained personnel and to the production of

statesmen and diplomats, but also towards providing the developing countries with the requisite trained manpower for development, such as economists, engineers, doctors, administrators and teachers. The university should serve as a bridge not only between developed and developing countries, but between youth and older generations all over the world. His delegation attached particular importance to paragraph 18 of the International Development Strategy for the Second Development Decade (General Assembly resolution 2626 (XXV)). The international university, if located in the various geographical regions, should be able to provide the necessary guidelines and establish priorities for all of the areas referred to in that paragraph.

23. His delegation noted with interest the report of the Director-General of UNESCO (A/8182, annex II), and endorsed the goals and objectives set out in paragraphs 6 to 12, especially the essential requirements enumerated in paragraph 9 to which the constitution and activities of the proposed university should conform. His delegation also found the suggestions contained in paragraphs 15 and 16 commendable, and agreed that apart from the choice between the two basic possibilities indicated in paragraph 12, there were naturally other questions to be examined before the model of a future international university could be determined, as indicated in paragraph 19. His delegation was accordingly pleased to note that the Board of Trustees of UNITAR, the Secretary-General and the Director-General and General Conference of UNESCO all agreed that it would be premature to take a decision to establish the university until careful and objective studies of the educational, financial and organizational factors involved had been completed and considered.

24. It therefore endorsed very strongly the Secretary-General's view that the Assembly should establish a committee of eminently qualified persons to consider and report on a viable plan for the university in all its aspects. His delegation was a co-sponsor of draft resolution A/C.2/L.1139, and hoped that the panel of experts called for in operative paragraph 5 would examine all the points raised by the Director-General of UNESCO in paragraph 19 of his report, as well as the recommendations of the Board of Trustees of UNITAR (*ibid.*, annex V). Only when such studies had been completed could the final decision to establish the university be taken. The extent of international support for such a measure was clear from the fact that, according to the statement by the representative of UNESCO,<sup>2</sup> over the past twenty-four years UNESCO had received more than 150 proposals from Member States advocating the establishment of an international university.

25. In accordance with the hope expressed in resolution 1.242 of the General Conference of UNESCO, operative paragraph 2 of the draft resolution invited UNESCO to undertake studies of various aspects of the proposed university; his delegation urged the Committee to support the suggestion that the Assembly should request the Secretary-General to co-operate fully in that task. It would also be very important for the Secretary-General to continue his consultations and studies of the problems involved in establishing the university, as stated in operative

<sup>2</sup> See *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, Forty-ninth Session, 1720th meeting.*



paragraph 3, and also taking into account the views of Member States requested in operative paragraph 4.

26. The question of setting up the university had technical and cultural as well as political implications. Since it would be improper for UNESCO and UNITAR to deal with the political aspects, the Secretary-General must participate fully in the studies. Operative paragraph 6 therefore made it quite clear that the studies to be carried out by the Secretary-General would not duplicate those undertaken by UNESCO and UNITAR. Under the circumstances, it would be extremely undesirable for UNESCO to claim professional pre-eminence in the field of education as a reason for asserting exclusive control over the proposed university. It had required the initiative of the Secretary-General and the General Assembly to ensure that action was taken, and the Secretary-General should retain over-all control, backed by the political pre-eminence of the General Assembly, in order that he could elicit the support and confidence of the Governments of the world.

27. The proposed university would not be merely a professional educational institution. It would be the educational forum of the political idealism enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and an educational workshop of world citizenship. It must therefore be directly controlled by the Secretary-General under the guidance of the General Assembly. It would link many universities all over the world, some of them under governmental control, as well as United Nations institutes directly related to the General Assembly. There was a trend towards integration rather than mere co-ordination throughout the United Nations system. His delegation believed that the General Assembly should adopt the policy measures, and leave it to such organizations as UNESCO to undertake their detailed implementation.

28. The view of a number of Western countries that the international university might compete with their already adequate national university facilities was beside the point. The proposed university would not only cater for the educational needs of its students, but also inculcate in them the ideals of the United Nations. It would offer an international togetherness which no existing national university could provide. It would open more doors to the underprivileged, to the benefit of all its members, and would reinforce national universities in particular fields on which they had hitherto not placed a great deal of emphasis. Those countries with adequate national university systems should not deny the underprivileged world whose students would feel more at home in a university which they could feel was partly their own. His delegation therefore wished to appeal for unanimous adoption of the draft resolution.

29. Mr. BRADLEY (Argentina) said that two fundamental factors justified the establishment of an international university. First, an institution that was truly international in character would contribute to the achievement of the objectives of the United Nations Charter. Secondly, it would provide a synthesis of contemporary knowledge and culture and, in addition to educating future diplomats, would create a new humanism, imbuing students with a full understanding of the importance of international co-operation.

30. The draft resolution called for preliminary studies to determine whether a university should be established. UNESCO, UNITAR and Governments would examine the technical and political aspects of the question. The report to be submitted by the Secretary-General should be a progress report.

31. Mr. ARVESEN (Norway) said that Norway, as a sponsor of draft resolution A/C.2/L.1139 and the draft resolution which became General Assembly resolution 2573 (XXIV), supported the idea that serious consideration should be given to the possibility of establishing a United Nations university which would be truly international in character. The Secretary-General's report (A/8182) and the feasibility study (E/4878) showed that constructive work had already been done. Further study was required before a final decision could be taken on such complex issues as the objectives, organization and financing of the proposed institution.

32. The preliminary views to be submitted by Governments should not prejudice their final decision on the recommendations to be submitted. Member States should have an opportunity to review carefully all studies and recommendations on the matter. He therefore agreed that the report to be prepared by the Secretary-General in accordance with operative paragraph 7 of the draft resolution should be a progress report.

33. Mr. ZAINAL (Malaysia) recalled that his delegation had been among the first to support the idea of establishing an international university to channel the energies, ideas and enthusiasm of youth along constructive lines and further enhance international understanding and co-operation and promote the objectives of the Charter.

34. The feasibility study prepared in accordance with General Assembly resolution 2573 (XXIV), despite some shortcomings, provided a sound conceptual framework for further work on the question. Although his delegation had been looking forward to taking a decision in principle regarding the establishment of a university at the current session, on the occasion of the International Education Year, it fully understood the need for complete information and thorough planning of an undertaking of such magnitude. Those entrusted with the task should endeavour to prepare a practical plan which could be easily carried out, taking into account the objectives of the university, its form, organization and financing. It would be desirable to start on a modest scale. In addition to providing young people with professional training, the university should develop in them an understanding of and commitment to the international community and the objectives of the Charter and imbue them with an awareness of the needs and problems of the developing countries. In view of the physical limitations such a university would have, the methods and approach it adopted should be shared with institutions throughout the world through student and teacher exchanges.

35. Mr. STELLINI (Malta) said that, if properly translated into action, the concept of an international university—which his delegation supported—would have a constructive impact throughout the world.

36. Although his delegation appreciated the thorough examination which the concept had received in the feasibility study (E/4878) and in the report of the Director-General of UNESCO (A/8182, annex II), it could not accept the models proposed or the majority of the suggestions contained therein. It did not agree that the proposed institution necessarily required the construction of new buildings and a special curriculum. Such an institution would be expensive to run, would have little impact and its curriculum would be of marginal relevance outside the United Nations system. UNESCO envisaged the institution as one which would provide properly trained officials for employment in the United Nations system and various national and regional bodies associated with it. That useful, but limited, purpose was already being carried out by UNITAR and other institutions and was not sufficient justification for the creation of an international university. Moreover, yet another institution undertaking research on peace, international understanding and co-operation and development would not justify the substantial expenditure its establishment would require, nor would the special features which UNESCO wished to include, such as the democratic and flexible curriculum.

37. His delegation envisaged the university not as a separate institution, but as an organization which would enable national systems of higher education to incorporate within their existing curricula aspects of knowledge relevant to global issues. The university would consist of government-designated national universities or departments thereof, the activities and curriculum of which would be co-ordinated by a widely representative board of governors elected by the General Assembly from a group of highly qualified persons nominated by national or regional bodies. The board of governors would ensure that curricula of national universities adhering to the international system were at a comparable academic level and placed adequate emphasis on international matters to enrich the national curricula. To that end, the board would raise funds to upgrade participating national universities in poorer countries, establish a common examination system, promote the exchange of teachers and students between participating universities, and co-ordinate and promote the exchange of staff between research institutions in the United Nations system and participating national institutes designated by Governments. That would permit a more effective multi-disciplinary approach to research than would be possible with the establishment of a new institution. All participating Governments would recognize degrees awarded by any faculty of the university.

38. The financial requirements of such a system would not exceed \$1 million annually and would thus be substantially lower than those which would be required to implement the suggestions contained in the documents before the Committee. The views of all Governments concerning the proposed university should be carefully considered by the panel of experts to be established.

39. Mr. PARRA (Colombia) said his delegation regretted that it had not yet been possible to obtain a technical study on the feasibility of the proposed university, including a clear definition of its goals and objectives, as well as recommendations as to how it might be organized and financed, as requested in General Assembly resolution

2573 (XXIV). The reason was perhaps that there had been insufficient time for adequate consultation between the United Nations and Governments, universities and related sectors. Nevertheless, his delegation welcomed the fact that there had been close co-operation between the United Nations, UNESCO and UNITAR, which would facilitate the course to be pursued until the General Assembly adopted a final decision.

40. Various Member States had made known their views in the discussions in the Economic and Social Council and the General Conference of UNESCO. His delegation wished to add that the international university, to deserve the title of "Universal University", should be based on the following principles. It should seek a reaffirmation of faith in fundamental human rights and the dignity and value of the individual, as well as the equality of rights of men and women and of large and small nations. Its central objective should be to create an international outlook among the future leaders of the world. It should constitute a truly universal community practising tolerance among its professors, students and administrators. It should be a centre for the exchange of ideas and knowledge among the great minds of the world. Special emphasis should be placed on research into and instruction in political, economic and social development, as well as such new scientific areas as the resources of the sea, outer space and the human environment. The structure and methods of the university should be highly experimental, so that they could influence change in existing educational systems. It should explore and use new techniques for the exchange of knowledge, making use of technical advances in communications. It should have faculties in the different regions of the world, in order that the differing cultural traditions of mankind and their capacity for development could be taken into account. Finally, no conditions should be attached to its financing.

41. Draft resolution A/C.2/L.1139 requested a series of studies and consultations which would provide exceptional opportunities for positive progress towards the implementation of the Secretary-General's initiative. His delegation, like the other co-sponsors, hoped that the draft resolution would be adopted unanimously.

42. Mr. ZAKHAROV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that, unless the idea of establishing an international university was examined with great care before any action was taken, the whole idea might be compromised. The Economic and Social Council in resolution 1542 (XLIX) had therefore rightly invited UNESCO to make its views on the question available to the twenty-fifth session of the General Assembly. Only after careful study by UNESCO of all aspects of the problem could the General Assembly make the correct decision as to the establishment of such an institution. UNESCO had conducted preliminary work on the question, and had concluded that it would be premature to take a decision on the establishment of an international university until further careful and objective studies of the educational, financial and organizational factors involved had been completed and considered. His delegation fully agreed that further study was necessary. The Director-General's report to the sixteenth session of the General Conference of UNESCO

(A/8182, annex II) made it clear that much remained to be done, and expressed concern that there might be overlapping with existing institutions in the United Nations system and at the national level. In his delegation's view, UNESCO should continue to assess all the factors and arrive at conclusions which it could submit to the Economic and Social Council and to the twenty-sixth session of the General Assembly. His delegation was seriously concerned at the Secretary-General's intention to convene a group of experts to prepare proposals with regard to the interna-

tional university. Such a step would complicate the work of UNESCO, and through its prematureness would only confuse the issue. It was to be hoped that no incorrect decisions would be taken in the preparation of the question for the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly. His delegation's vote on draft resolution A/C.2/L.1139 would be determined by those considerations.

*The meeting rose at 12.50 p.m.*