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COMMITTEE ON CONTRIBUTIONS
Fifteenth session, 19 March 1956
New York

ASSESSMENT OF COLOMBIA

1. The following communication has been addressed to the Controller of the United Nations by the Permanent Representative of Colombia to the United Nations:

Translated from Spanish

"17 February 1956

Sir,

I thank you for your letter No. FI 313 (1), dated 15 February, in which you inform me that the next session of the Committee on Contributions is scheduled to open on 19 March next, and that it is expected that the session will last about three or four days.

I should be very grateful if you would bring before that session of the Committee the letter from Ambassador Urrutia to the Secretary-General, dated 9 June 1955, the acknowledgement of which (signed by you) is dated 29 July and bears the reference number FI 48/1/06, and also the statement made by Ambassador Urrutia in the Fifth Committee at the tenth session of the General Assembly, during the debate on the report of the Committee on Contributions, with a view to the information transmitted by Ambassador Urrutia through the Secretary-General being considered by the Committee at its next session.

Accept, Sir, the renewed assurances of my highest consideration.

(Signed) Carlos Echeverri Cortes
Permanent Representative of Colombia
to the United Nations"

2. The letter of 9 June 1955 addressed by Ambassador Urrutia to the Secretary-General of the United Nations as well as the statements made by Ambassador Urrutia in the Fifth Committee at the tenth session of the General Assembly are annexed.

ANNEX I

LETTER ADDRESSED TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL BY THE PERMANENT
REPRESENTATIVE OF COLOMBIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS

Translated from Spanish

"9 June 1955

Sir,

I refer to your letter FI 48/1/05 of 13 May 1955.

I would most earnestly ask you to bring to the notice of the Committee on Contributions the following facts concerning the reduced value of exports from Colombia last year so that the Committee may consider the possibility of reducing the contribution to be paid by Colombia next year.

In 1953, the total exports of Colombia amounted to \$596 million, of which \$492 million were derived from coffee, \$60 million from petroleum, \$12 million from gold and the remainder from bananas and other commodities.

As you will see, coffee exports accounted for 80 per cent of our foreign-currency receipts.

The high coffee prices lasted only through the second half of 1953 and the first half of 1954, so that our coffee exports amounted to \$267 million and \$300 million respectively in those two half-years. As is generally known, coffee prices began to fall at the middle of last year and have been continuing downward ever since. During the first four months of 1955 our coffee exports amounted to only \$131,519,272, and although the decline seems to have halted, there is no prospect of any increase in prices for the time being. Thus, our coffee exports for 1955 will not exceed \$390-400 million, representing a reduction for the year of \$100 million in comparison with 1954 and of over \$150 million in comparison with 1953.

The exact figures for coffee exports in 1953, 1954 and the first four months of this year are as follows:

First half of 1953	\$225,050,859
Second " " "	267,223,834
First half of 1954	300,215,195
Second " " "	249,936,340
January - April 1955	131,519,272

I feel sure that the Committee on Contributions will take these facts into account, since it would be unreasonable if Colombia had to pay the same contribution for the coming year as for last year with its foreign-currency receipts reduced by twenty per cent.

Accept, Sir, the renewed assurances of my highest consideration.

(Signed) Francisco Urrutia
Ambassador of Colombia to the
United Nations"

EXTRACT FROM THE SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 502ND MEETING
OF THE FIFTH COMMITTEE

"19. Mr. URRUTIA (Colombia) said that he would vote against the draft resolution; he completely disagreed with the Committee's report which had proposed that the Colombian assessment should be fixed at a completely unrealistic level. Some months ago the Secretary-General had sent his delegation a note requesting it to explain why its assessment should be altered. The Committee on Contributions had completely disregarded the views of the Colombian Government. It had acted arbitrarily to say the very least.

20. A few years ago the Colombian economy had enjoyed the benefits of a favourable coffee market and the Colombian contribution had then been increased. The situation had subsequently become unfavourable but the Committee on Contributions was not proposing that Colombia's assessment should be reduced. That was particularly regrettable because the Committee recommended that the assessment should be fixed for three years. Under those conditions he could not, unlike most of the members of the Committee, support the recommendations of the Committee on Contributions."

Reply by the Chairman of the Committee on Contributions

"27. In reply to the Colombian representative, he (Mr. Lall) said that the Committee had not forgotten that equilibrium in Colombia's balance of payments depended to a large extent on coffee exports which amounted to 80 per cent of its total exports. However, its national income had been increasing annually for the past four years and if the Committee on Contributions had taken only relative ability to pay into account the normal procedure would have been to increase the Colombian assessment. Moreover, there had been no real decline in coffee consumption; the Committee on Contributions had taken coffee market conditions into account and it had felt justified in recommending that Colombia's contribution for 1956 should be the same as for 1955."

.....

"29. Mr. URRUTIA (Colombia) agreed that Colombia's national income expressed in local currency had risen; however, the statistics used by the Committee on Contributions had not reflected its devaluation so that the results obtained had been incorrect. The national income of certain other countries had also increased and yet the Committee recommended that their assessments should be reduced. Moreover, it was unfair that the Committee should have increased the Colombian assessment some years ago because its dollar earnings had increased and refused to reduce its contribution now that Colombia's dollar earnings were declining. He felt besides that all delegations should be able to speak directly to the Committee on Contributions in order to state their views, whereas so far only the countries represented on that Committee had been able to do so."
