

UNITED NATIONS

NATIONS UNIES

UNRESTRICTED

ECONOMIC  
AND  
SOCIAL COUNCIL

CONSEIL  
ECONOMIQUE  
ET SOCIAL

E/CONF/PASS/PC/SR/16  
25 April 1947  
Original: EBGLISH

MEETING OF EXPERTS ON PASSPORTS AND FRONTIER  
FORMALITIES

MINUTES OF THE SIXTEENTH PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Friday  
25 April 1947, at 10.30 a.m.

CHAIRMAN : Mr. C.D. CAREW-ROBINSON (United Kingdom)

1. Consideration of the Draft Report to the Economic and Social Council. (document E/Conf/Pass/PC/13)

The CHAIRMAN, in opening the Meeting, stated that the Draft Report would be discussed paragraph by paragraph. He pointed out that in paragraph 1, a correction should be made to show that the representatives of the following countries had attended the Meeting in the capacity of observers only: Afghanistan, Egypt, Iran, New Zealand and Yugoslavia.

Decision: Paragraphs 1, 2, 3 and 4 were adopted without comment.

Paragraph 5.

Mr. KRIEGLER (South Africa) said that his delegation felt that the words in the resolution "improved version thereof" might be taken to mean an improved version of a passport issued by a particular country and not an improved version in so far as the Meeting was concerned. The words "international-type" of passport were sufficiently clear to describe the passport envisaged in the resolution.

Mr. TAIT (United States) wished the original wording

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retained so that any country would, at its own discretion, have the right to improve the international type of passport.

The CHAIRMAN asked whether any representative wished to support the amendment proposed by the representative of South Africa that the words "or an improved version thereof" should be deleted.

Mr. PETERS (Australia) asked whether the objection of the representative of South Africa could be met by rewording the paragraph to read: "The international type of passport recommended by the Conference of 1920 and 1926 should be generally used, subject to any improvements which individual countries might see fit to make."

Mr. PRZEZWANSKI (Poland) pointed out that the question had already been discussed and the wording "or an improved version thereof" had been adopted.

Mr. CONTEMPRE (Belgium) understood the apprehensions of the representative of South Africa, because if every country decided to make improvements on their national passports there would then be a great variety of passports not resembling at all the "international-type" recommended by the Conference of 1920 and 1926. He suggested that the words "which has been adopted internationally" should be added after the words "or improved version thereof".

The CHAIRMAN suggested that the words "or improved version thereof" should be placed at the end of the paragraph and should be followed by the phrase:- "with any detailed improvements which later experience might suggest."

Mr. KRIEGLER (South Africa) said that either the wording suggested by the representative of Belgium or that suggested by the Chairman would be acceptable to his delegation.

Mr. JEFFES (United Kingdom) supported the text suggested by the Chairman.

Mr. PERIER (France) supported the text proposed by the representative of Belgium. He did not see how "later experience" would enable countries to improve the type of passport issued by them. It would lead to a great deal of confusion if each country made its own improvements. He considered that all improvements should be submitted to an international Meeting of Experts or to a Conference before they were adopted.

The CHAIRMAN felt that the objective of the proposal by the representative of South Africa was to make it clear that, while preserving the essentials of the international-type already approved, individual governments should be free to make detailed adjustments which they found to be desirable.

Mr. TAIT (United States) pointed out that the text of the resolution in question had already been thoroughly discussed and adopted.

Mr. CONTEMPRE (Belgium) said that if his first proposal was not found acceptable, perhaps the Meeting could recommend the adoption of an improved version which took account of the characteristics of the "international-type" of passport, so that it would be understood that any improvement made should take into consideration the recommendations of the 1920 and 1926 Conferences.

Mr. KIRKWOOD (Canada) pointed out that the Resolution did not refer to an "improved type" but to an "improved version", which implied a version of the international-type.

Mr. PERIER (France) seconded the proposal made by the representative of Belgium. He asked whether a footnote could be inserted stating that the French delegation had submitted certain concrete suggestions regarding passports.

Mr. TAIT (United States) said that the text as written had already been approved unanimously. He did not see, therefore, what purpose could be accomplished by discussing minor changes which did not affect the meaning.

The CHAIRMAN put to the vote the amended version of the resolution proposed by the representative of Belgium reading as follows:-

"The 'international-type' of passport recommended by the Conferences of 1920 and 1926, or an improved version which takes account of the characteristics of the international type, should be generally used."

Decision: The amended version of the resolution was adopted.

The CHAIRMAN, referring to the request of the representative of France that reference should be made by footnote to a paper which his delegation had submitted, pointed out that a large number of such suggestions had been received, and if reference was made to the French document, the others would have to be mentioned as well.

Mr. PERIER (France) asked whether the documents in question would be annexed to the Report to the Economic and Social Council.

The CHAIRMAN said that the documents would be circulated, but would not appear as appendices to the Report.

Mr. LUKAC (Executive Secretary) said that the Economic and Social Council, in dealing with the Report of the Meeting of Experts, would be in possession of all documents which had been circulated.

Mr. PERIER (France) stated that, as the respective documents would be referred to in the Summary Record of the Meeting, he would withdraw his proposal.

Decision: Paragraph 5 as amended was adopted.

Paragraph 6.

The CHAIRMAN pointed out two amendments which the Drafting Committee wished to make. In line 3 the words "and particularly in view of" should be replaced by the word "including" and in line 2 of the resolution the words "is not yet practicable" should be replaced by "is not practicable at present".

Mr. SODERBLOM (Sweden) proposed that in line 3 of the resolution the words "However, it might constitute" should be replaced by "However, such a card might constitute".

The CHAIRMAN suggested that the text should read:-  
"However, the adoption of such a card might constitute."

Decision: Paragraph 6 was adopted with the amendment proposed.

Paragraph 7

adopted without comment.

Paragraph 8

The CHAIRMAN said there was a small drafting amendment to line 2 of the resolution. The words "Adopt a minimum validity of two years" should be replaced by the words "Adopt a validity of two years or more." The word "Renewal" in the fifth line should be in the plural as should the word "period" in the sixth line.

Mr. PETERS (Australia) considered that it would be better to keep the words "renewal" and "period" in the singular.

Mr. PRZEZWANSKI (Poland) pointed out that the Drafting Committee had proposed the text "Facilities should be given for easy renewals if possible for the same periods as that of the initial issue so long as the proper validity of the passport does not exceed ten years."

The CHAIRMAN suggested that the text of the recommendation should read:-

"Facilities should be given for easy renewals if possible for the same periods as at initial issue so long as the total validity of the passport does not exceed ten years."

He asked whether paragraph 8, as so amended, was acceptable.

Decision: Paragraph 8, as amended, was adopted.

Decision: Paragraphs 9 and 10 were adopted.

Paragraph 11

The CHAIRMAN said the Drafting Committee wished to amend the recommendation contained in the paragraph by the omission of the word "materially" in the fourth line.

Mr. PRZEWANSKI (Poland) suggested a full stop at the end of the fifth line and the omission of the rest of the sentence. He felt that the idea expressed in the sixth and seventh lines was already contained in the earlier part of the recommendation.

Mr. VILLA MICHEL (Mexico) supported.

Mr. JEFFES (United Kingdom) said the first part of the sentence under discussion did not actually contain the full significance of the Committee's intention.

Mr. TAIT (United States of America) supported the view taken by the United Kingdom representative.

The CHAIRMAN put to the meeting the amendment that a full stop be placed after the word "possible" and the following words omitted.

There were four in favour and eighteen against.

Decision: The amendment was rejected.

Mr. KIRKWOOD (Canada) suggested that in the last line of the recommendation the word "only" be inserted between the words "writing" and "to".

Mr. WU NAN-JU (China) and Mr. PRZEWANSKI (Poland) supported.

Mr. PETERS (Australia) felt that the recommendation as it stood implied that a person might apply to a central office, but his not applying was not ruled out.

The CHAIRMAN put to the meeting the amendment that the word "only" be inserted as indicated.

There were eleven votes in favour.

Decision: The amendment was adopted.

Mr. VILLA MICHEL (Mexico) said that with regard to paragraph 11 he wished to make a formal reservation on behalf of his government, as he felt the question dealt with was not within the competence of the present meeting. He believed it to be an internal matter, and outside their terms of reference.

The CHAIRMAN said the reservation just made and any other reservation any delegate might wish to make would be included in the minutes.

Mr. PERIER (France) suggested that in the French version the word "only" should be translated not by "seulement" but by "uniquement".

He proposed also that the words "In the opinion of the meeting" were unnecessary at the beginning of the second sentence of the recommendation.

Mr. PRZEZWANSKI (Poland) said he would like to reserve the right to make a general reservation with regard to all the paragraphs which touched internal questions of government. He would not, therefore, make reservations on such paragraphs during the discussion, but would do so after the discussion of the draft was completely finished.

The CHAIRMAN asked whether the representative of Poland wished to object to the omission of the words indicated by the representative of France.

Mr. PRZEZWANSKI (Poland) preferred that they should remain. He felt that the words conveyed the idea that it was only the opinion of the meeting that was being expressed, and that this



was not the same as adopting the text without those words.

He added that he would rather propose to divide the two sentences into two parts. The first part should be: "It should be the aim to achieve the maximum simplification of formalities for obtaining passports." To that part no state could make a reservation. The other part should be separated from it.

The CHAIRMAN said that he failed to understand what re-arrangement of the text the representative of Poland wished to make. The resolution was already in two sentences. The second sentence could be started on a fresh line if that would help.

Mr. PRZEWANSKI (Poland) answered affirmatively.

The CHAIRMAN thought they could accept that without any difficulty. He added that he understood that the representative of Canada felt now that there was some slight ambiguity in the amendment of the last line by the insertion of the word "only".

Mr. KIRKWOOD (Canada) felt that the word "only" suggested that two applications had to be made, one to a central office and one to some other decentralised office: he, therefore, felt that it was not the correct word. The French word seemed to supply a better interpretation than the English word; he did not know the exact word to express the idea of not being obliged to apply solely to the central office. The word "necessarily" was a possibility, but that might also have an ambiguous meaning.

The CHAIRMAN wondered whether "necessarily" added anything to the word "obliged".

Mr. KRIEGLER (South Africa) said the representative of South Africa was unable to appreciate the purpose of the amendment, but

he felt that if the word "only" followed the words "central office" it might help.

Mr. KIRKWOOD (Canada) said it was perhaps a distinction without a great deal of difference. He thought there might be put to the Meeting the question whether any amendment improved the original text.

The CHAIRMAN pointed out that the suggestion that the lines be amended had come from the Canadian representative himself, that it had been supported by the representatives of China and Poland, and that in favour of it there were eight additional votes. If the Canadian representative wished to withdraw his amendment perhaps the Conference would like him to do so and start again.

Mr. PRZEZWANSKI (Poland) thought the suggestion of the representative of South Africa, that the word "only" follow the words "central office", would meet their point.

Mr. TAIT (United States) moved that the word "only" be struck out.

The CHAIRMAN declared that the Meeting had in fact adopted the insertion of the word, and it was now part of the text.

Mr. JEFFES (United Kingdom) supported the suggestion of the representative of the United States of America.

Mr. PETERS (Australia) supported also. He thought that for those who might not be so versed as some of the English-speaking representatives in the subtleties of the English language the word "only" might hold some ambiguity.

Mr. KIRKWOOD (Canada) said that as the English language seemed to lack a suitable word for giving the correct interpretation he would like to see, he thought the best way would be to withdraw

the amendment and leave the motion as it had originally stood.

The CHAIRMAN put to the meeting the proposition that the word "only" should now be deleted from the text.

There were nineteen votes in favour and two against.

Decision: The proposal was adopted.

Mr. PRZEZWANSKI (Poland) wondered whether they could meet the point of the representative of Canada, and, he supposed, of the representative of Mexico, if they were to insert the words "in all cases" between the words "obliged" and "to" in the sixth line of the recommendation.

Mr. RUCK (United Kingdom) said the United Kingdom delegation was opposed to the amendment proposed by the representative of Poland, as it seemed contrary to the intention of the original words.

The CHAIRMAN mentioned that the proposal by the representative of Poland had not yet been seconded.

Mr. TAIT (United States) supported the remarks of the representative of the United Kingdom.

The CHAIRMAN asked again if any representative supported the proposition of the representative of Poland.

The CHAIRMAN declared that the proposition was not adopted, as it had found no one to second it. The CHAIRMAN then apologised and said he had been informed that it was not necessary for the proposition to be seconded: it would be put to a vote without being seconded.

Mr. PRZEZWANSKI (Poland) raised a point of order: if the decision of the chair was changed, a representative should have the right to cancel his proposal. He wished to avail himself of the right - as, he supposed, he might - to cancel the proposal.

The CHAIRMAN said he was much obliged to their Polish colleague and apologized for not having given him an earlier opportunity to do so.

He put to the meeting the text as it now stood: "It should be the aim to achieve the maximum simplification of formalities for obtaining passports. It would contribute materially to this end if the issue of passports were decentralised as much as possible and if applicants were not obliged to apply either in person or in writing to a Central Office."

Decision: The proposal was adopted.

Decision: Paragraph 12 was adopted.

Paragraph 13

The CHAIRMAN drew attention to a revised draft of paragraph 13. The revised draft read:

"In considering the various categories of visas the Meeting of Experts dealt first with exit visas. It agreed to recommend as follows:

'Exit visas should be universally abolished, and other exit formalities reduced to a minimum.'

Mr. PERIER (France) did not remember the proposal for the revision coming up at the meetings of the Drafting Committee.

The CHAIRMAN's recollection was that the version for the White Paper (containing the original draft) had been considered, but he was not certain about the revised version in the Blue Paper.

He added that the Secretary had just reminded him that the revised text was that adopted in plenary conference: it had arisen from the United States paper (E/CONF/PASS/PC.7) which contained the proposition, "Exit visas should be universally abolished and

other exit formalities reduced to a minimum". In the discussion they had divided the proposition into two parts. They had dealt with the first originally, then had forgotten the second part and had come back to it later.

Mr. PRZEZWANSKI (Poland) said his recollection was that the Drafting Committee on the previous day had agreed to propose another version of the text, that "as a general rule exit visas should be abolished and other exit formalities reduced to a strict minimum".

The CHAIRMAN pointed out that they had now before them the revised text as it stood in the Blue Paper. If it was desired to amend the text he would put to the conference the amending words.

Mr. PERIER (France) suggested that as the proposal had been taken from the text of the United States document, the United States representative might perhaps give them some explanation. He would like to know the signification of "other exit formalities". If those were formalities gone through at the frontier, he did not think they ought to be dealt with in that particular paragraph.

The CHAIRMAN referred the meeting to the remarks of Mr. Tait (United States of America) on page 10 of the minutes of the Tenth Plenary Meeting, held on the morning of 21st April. Mr. Tait had then said "Although the Conference had voted for the adoption of the first part: namely, that exit visas be universally abolished, the second suggestion, that other exit formalities be reduced to a minimum, had not been discussed. He would, therefore, like to propose the adoption of this suggestion."

Mr. PERIER (France) observed that that threw no light on the question he had raised.

Mr. TAIT (United States of America) believed the reference to "other exit formalities" in the revised draft was with regard to police, health and considerations of that kind. What they were there for was to simplify travel as far as they could, and any impediment to the free departure of a person from a country should be eliminated.

Mr. VAN DER POEL (Netherlands) suggested that the phrase covered all sorts of formalities: health, customs and so on.

Mr. PERIER (France) proposed that the words "other exit formalities", might be replaced by "other interior formalities to which the traveller might be submitted before crossing the frontier". He pointed out that other formalities in regard to crossing of the frontier were dealt with in the later paragraph.

The CHAIRMAN wondered whether it might meet the point of the representative of France, and be acceptable to the representative of the United States, if the sentence were amended to read, "... and other preliminary exit formalities reduced to a minimum".

Mr. PERIER (France) and Mr. TAIT (United States of America) accepted this wording, and respectively proposed and seconded the amendment to that effect.

On the revised paragraph, as thus amended, being put to the meeting, there were twenty votes in favour.

Decision: The proposal was adopted.

Mr. PRZEWANSKI (Poland) suggested the addition of the words, "Except in special circumstances", at the beginning of the recommendation contained in paragraph 13.

The CHAIRMAN did not quite see how exit visas could be abolished universally, "Except in special circumstances".

Mr. PRZEZWANSKI (Poland) said he had in mind something applicable temporarily, or for the time being.

The CHAIRMAN asked whether the point that the representative of Poland had in mind was that the abolition (of exit visas) should not relate to special circumstances such as a state of war or other emergency.

Mr. PRZEZWANSKI (Poland) felt that the decision on the point should be a decision of the government concerned; it was for the government to determine whether the circumstances were special or not.

The CHAIRMAN said he would have thought that it was necessarily for the government, which had control of the exit of passengers, to decide whether it would allow exit without formalities. It went without saying, did it not?

Mr. PRZEZWANSKI (Poland) said it was a question of interpretation.

The CHAIRMAN asked whether any representative wished to second the proposition.

The proposition was not seconded.

The CHAIRMAN enquired whether the representative of Poland wished his proposition to be put to the vote.

Mr. PRZEZWANSKI (Poland) answered in the negative.

Mr. EMBIRICOS-CONMOUNDOUROS (Greece) regretted that the Greek Delegation was not able to agree to the present proposal, in so far as it referred to a country's own nationals. The representative of Turkey had expounded, during the discussions in plenary meeting, some excellent motives from which a country might be led to deny exit visas to its nationals. He instanced indebtedness to the state or unfulfilment of military obligations.

The representative of Greece felt the issue was one that depended exclusively on the decision of the interested country, and which could not be solved by an international ruling of a compulsory character. Under the circumstances, the Greek Delegation regretted that it was not able to agree to the recommendation in the form adopted by the Drafting Committee, and requested that its reservation should be noted in the minutes.

The CHAIRMAN said the reservation, like all other reservations, would be recorded in the minutes.

Mr. WU NAN-JU (China) stated that with regard to the first part of paragraph 13, relating to the universal abolition of exit visas, the Delegation of China wished on behalf of its government to make a reservation. Exit visas had not existed in China before the war; they had come into existence as a wartime measure. While believing in their ultimate suppression, the Chinese Government might find it difficult to subscribe to their immediate total abolition.

Mr. TAIT:(United States of America) pointed out that the re-draft of the text of the recommendation was identical with that which he had submitted in plenary session, apart from the addition of one word, "preliminary", by his French colleague.

The CHAIRMAN asked whether they might take it that paragraph 13, with the addition of the word "preliminary", was now acceptable subject to the reservations, which would be noted in the minutes.

Decision: The proposal was adopted.

Paragraph 14

The CHAIRMAN stated that the representative of the International Chamber of Commerce had asked whether he might suggest an amendment to paragraph 14, which, he felt, was important from the



point of view of his organization. The CHAIRMAN thought it was unusual to call upon a representative of one of those organizations to suggest an amendment in the meeting's report or accept any responsibility for the report or the words in which it was expressed; but he was in the hands of the conference if they wished to hear the representative of the I.C.C. and consider whether they would themselves suggest some amendment as a result.

Mr. STOPPANI (International Chamber of Commerce) said he quite appreciated that members of unofficial organizations had not the right to propose an amendment, and he appreciated the representatives' kindness and forbearance in allowing him to speak. For his organization the recommendation was the most important one of the whole report. They were rather distressed, not so much about the substance, as about the utterly negative form, in which the resolution was expressed in the first two lines. He would have liked to see it divided into specific parts.

His organization had the impression that, as it stood, the resolution put the present state of affairs in wrong perspective. The resolution implied that bi-lateral agreements for the purpose of abolishing visas would start only after the resolution; but they had, of course, heard from the representative of the United States, Belgium, France, Great Britain and several other countries of what they had done, were doing or were striving to do in the way of such collaboration. His organization felt, on the other hand, that a sweeping resolution would come up against a situation which could not contemplate the abolition of visas, owing to the laws concerning immigration.

His organization's suggestions were: firstly, that the resolution should be in the form of a positive affirmation;

secondly, that it should present more exactly the situation as it was at present; thirdly, that it should not impede in any way the question of immigration, with which the present meeting was not concerned. The amendment suggested by the I.C.C. was :

"The goal to be attained is a general abolition of entrance and transit visas as soon as circumstances permit in all countries where this can be done without impairing the application of immigration laws..."

Mr. PERIER (France) felt that they should not now proceed to make a substantial change in the recommendation before them, after it had already been discussed in plenary meeting. He did think they might take into consideration what had just been said, in making a small amendment. He felt they should strike out the word "mutual" from line four of the preamble, because they should not discourage a country which might take the necessary action without asking for reciprocity. There might, for instance, be a case in which a government understood the position of another, and might grant some advantage without asking for the same strict reciprocity in return. He suggested also that they insert in line four of the preamble the word "especially", between "made" and "through".

The CHAIRMAN said the paragraph was an important one and he thought they might now adjourn so that representatives might give it further thought before the resumption.

The Meeting rose at 1 p.m.