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PROGRAMME AND RELATED QUESTIONS IN THE ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND RELATED  
FIELDS: CALENDAR OF CONFERENCES AND MEETINGS IN THE ECONOMIC,  
SOCIAL AND RELATED FIELDS FOR THE BIENNIUM 1996-1997

Letter dated 22 June 1995 from the Chairman of the Committee on  
Conferences to the President of the Economic and Social Council

In response to the Economic and Social Council's invitation set forth in its decision 1988/103 of 5 February 1988, the Committee on Conferences met on 21 June 1995 to review the provisional calendar of conferences and meetings for 1996 and 1997 in the economic, social and related fields, as contained in document E/1995/L.20. The Committee welcomed the opportunity to review the provisional calendar of conferences and meetings and to provide, as appropriate, its recommendations thereon to the Council.

In introducing the provisional calendar, the representative of the Secretariat referred to a number of amendments to the calendar. He drew the attention of the Committee to the number of subsidiary bodies that had been mandated to annualize their sessions, which was a cause for concern in view of the limited Secretariat services available, inter alia, for meetings and documentation.

During the discussion of the item, the question of the biennialization of conferences and meetings referred to in paragraph 2 (f) (ii) of Council resolution 1988/77 of 29 July 1988 was recalled. Concern was expressed regarding the increase in requests from intergovernmental bodies to seek exceptions to the biennialization of their sessions. It was suggested that the Council might review all mandates granted for annual cycles of meetings, although the view was also expressed that it was up to the subsidiary bodies to determine the need for such authorizations; that an arrangement could be explored to limit the number of bodies authorized to annualize their substantive sessions; and that the work of the Council's subsidiary bodies might be reviewed

so as to avoid duplication, thereby maximizing the utilization of scarce conference-servicing resources.

Furthermore, the Committee was assured by the Secretariat that the Secretariat had taken into account the arrangements referred to in paragraph 6 of General Assembly resolution 49/221 A in the drafting of the provisional calendar of conferences and meetings for 1996 and 1997 in the economic, social and related fields.

The Committee on Conferences recommended the adoption of the provisional calendar of conferences and meetings of the subsidiary bodies of the Economic and Social Council for 1996-1997 with the amendments read out by the representative of the Secretariat.

The Committee also recommended, in view of the difficult financial situation of the Organization, that the Council continue to consider the biennialization of meetings of subsidiary bodies, taking into account the substantive needs of the bodies concerned. In this connection, requests for an annual cycle of meetings should be based on substantive reasons.

The Committee was apprised of the possibility of requests for open-ended, ad hoc meetings and noted with concern the possible adverse effect of such meetings on the efficient utilization of conference-servicing resources.

In closing, I should like to express the Committee's appreciation of the Council's invitation to review its draft calendar of conferences and meetings, and of the continued close cooperation between the Economic and Social Council and the Committee on Conferences.

(Signed) Fernando VARELA  
Chairman  
Committee on Conferences

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