

**729 (XXVIII). Programme of advisory services
in the field of human rights**

The Economic and Social Council,

Noting with satisfaction the success achieved in the seminars held since its twenty-sixth session in pursuance of the programme of advisory services in the field of human rights,

Approves the plan presented by the Secretary-General,⁷⁴ for holding three seminars in 1960.

*1088th plenary meeting,
30 July 1959.*

732 (XXVIII). Draft declaration on freedom of information

The Economic and Social Council,

Desiring to promote freedom of information as a basic human right,

Recognizing the importance of freedom of information in the development of friendly relations among nations, and in the fulfilment of the purposes of the United Nations,

Recalling its resolution 720 (XXVII) of 24 April 1959 concerning a draft declaration on freedom of information,

Recalling that in the above-mentioned resolution it called attention to "the significance which the Universal Declaration of Human Rights has acquired among the peoples of the United Nations", and considered "that a United Nations declaration on freedom of information could be a further step towards the realization" of the promotion of freedom of information,

Noting that the provisional agenda for the fourteenth session of the General Assembly⁷⁵ includes the question of a draft convention on freedom of information,

Desiring to take no action which would hinder or prejudice Assembly action in this respect,

1. Accepts for submission to the Governments of Member States the draft text of a declaration on freedom of information annexed to this resolution;

2. Requests the Secretary-General to transmit this resolution and its annex to the Governments of Member States;

3. Invites Member States to communicate to the Secretary-General by 1 January 1960 comments on:

(a) The desirability of the adoption by the United Nations of a declaration on freedom of information;

(b) The draft text;

4. Requests the Secretary-General to prepare a consolidated report embodying the comments referred to above;

⁷⁴ *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, Twenty-eighth Session, Annexes, agenda item 12, document E/3253/Add.2.*

⁷⁵ A/4150.

5. Decides to consider the question further at its twenty-ninth session in light of the comments received.

*1088th plenary meeting,
30 July 1959.*

ANNEX

DRAFT DECLARATION ON FREEDOM OF INFORMATION

Whereas the development of friendly relations among nations and the promotion of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms for all are basic purposes of the United Nations,

Whereas the Universal Declaration of Human Rights provides that "Everyone has the right of freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers",

Whereas this right is fundamental to the respect for other rights and fundamental freedoms, since no other liberty is secure if men cannot freely convey their thoughts to one another,

Whereas the erection of artificial barriers to communication creates fear and suspicion between peoples and impairs prospects for world peace,

Whereas newspapers, periodicals, books, radio, television and other media of information, because of their function of conveying information, play an important role in determining the reactions of peoples and nations to each other,

Whereas the efforts of the United Nations can succeed only as the peoples of the United Nations are able to receive information about the United Nations and its associated organizations so that they may be able to understand and support its objectives and activities,

NOW, THEREFORE, THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Desiring to affirm the principles which should be observed and which domestic law and international agreements for the protection of freedom of information should endeavour to support,

PROCLAIMS this Declaration of Freedom of Information to the end that the peoples of the United Nations may enjoy free interchange of information and ideas:

Article I

Everyone has the right to seek and convey information and ideas

The right to know and the right to seek the truth are inalienable and fundamental rights of men.

Article II

All Governments have the responsibility to pursue policies under which the free flow of information will be protected

The right to observe, gather and transmit news within countries and across frontiers should be assured.

Article III

Media of information should be employed in the service of the people

No Government or public or private agency should have a monopoly on all means of disseminating news and ideas. There should be a diversity of sources from which the individual may choose freely. Neither public nor private interests should have any such control as to deprive the individual of this freedom.

Article IV

All media of information should report honestly and in good faith

They should strive to ensure the accuracy of their reports and should respect the reputation of individuals. It is their high privilege and responsibility to provide the basis on which enlightened opinion can be formed.

Article V

The rights and freedoms proclaimed above should be universally recognized and respected

They should be subject only to such limitations as are determined by law solely for the purpose of securing due recognition and respect for the rights and freedoms of others and of meeting the just requirements of morality, public order and the general welfare in a democratic society.

OTHER QUESTIONS

742 (XXVIII). Concentration of activities of the United Nations in the economic, social and human rights fields, and control and limitation of documentation

The Economic and Social Council,

I

Having reviewed the report of the Secretary-General entitled "Observations on the Work Programme of the Council in the Economic, Social and Human Rights Fields,"⁷⁶

Noting that the review of the work programme by the Secretary-General is a continuing process and is not designed primarily to bring about financial savings but to enable the Council to consider how best to use the limited resources available in the light of changing requirements,

1. *Approves* the efforts to achieve a greater concentration of activities in economic, social, and human rights fields as set forth in the above-mentioned report;

2. *Requests* the Secretary-General to prepare annually a similar report for the consideration of the Council, at its summer session;

3. *Requests* its subsidiary bodies to utilize existing studies or publications where possible or where they can be adapted to the purposes of the work programme concerned;

4. *Further requests* these bodies, whenever possible, to accept the Secretary-General's time schedule for the completion of studies, provided they can be completed in the most economical way within a reasonable period of time;

5. *Approves* the annex to the present resolution;

II

Having taken note of General Assembly resolution 1272 (XIII), of 14 November 1958, on control and limitation of documentation, designed to avoid duplication and unnecessary documentation,

⁷⁶ *Officials Records of the Economic and Social Council, Twenty-eighth Session, Annexes, agenda item 4, document E/3274.*

Recalling that in response to this resolution the Council requested⁷⁷ its subsidiary bodies to include this question in their agenda,

Noting that the reports of its subsidiary bodies contain descriptions of the various measures taken,

Noting further that it has itself taken decisions in the past, as part of its efforts to achieve a greater concentration of activities, which have resulted in control and limitation of documentation, and will continue to keep this question under review,

Considering that a primary objective of control and limitation of documentation should be to ensure the distribution of documents in all the working languages of the Council within the six weeks' time-limit,

1. *Calls the attention* of its subsidiary bodies to the fact that the problem is a continuing one and should be constantly borne in mind and reviewed;

2. *Requests* the Secretary-General to prepare, for inclusion in the report of the Council to the General Assembly at its fourteenth or fifteenth session or in the report which he has been requested to make under General Assembly resolution 1272 (XIII), a summary of the action taken by the Council and its subsidiary bodies pursuant to that resolution;

3. *Further requests* the Secretary-General to ensure the distribution, in good time, of documents in all the working languages of the Council.

*1089th plenary meeting,
31 July 1959.*

ANNEX

Merger of the Technical Assistance Administration with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs

1. The Council expresses its appreciation of the importance and timeliness of the merger of the Technical Assistance Administration with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs. It agrees with the Secretary-General that the merger should gear more effectively the research and information activities of the

⁷⁷ *Ibid., Resumed Twenty-sixth Session, Supplement No. 1 A, E/3169/Add.1, p. 2.*