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PROGRAMMES OF TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE: REPORT OF
THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL

Statement by the Executive Chairman of
the Technical Assistance Board at the
530th meeting on 20 October 1958

Mr. Chairman,

This is the eighth occasion on which I have appeared before the Second Committee of the General Assembly to make a report on the year's progress of the Expanded Programme of Technical Assistance. The story which I had to tell seven years ago was an account of extremely modest beginnings in field operations and in organizational arrangements. Each successive year since then there has been something new to report concerning the development of the work and its extension to an increasing number of countries and territories seeking assistance; concerning the evolution of the administrative organization required to conduct a combined operation in which several international agencies were taking part, and the grave financial problems with which it had been from time to time beset. The story which I am able to tell today is in some ways the most encouraging that I have so far presented to you; but, as you will see, it is by no means free from problems and anxieties.

Once again I am able to report that the amount of technical assistance rendered through the Expanded Programme has continued to increase, and that there is good reason to believe that this quantitative achievement has been accompanied by an improvement in the quality of the work. However, before describing the progress of our activities during the last twelve months, I must refer to three developments which will be of great significance for the future course of the

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Expanded Programme. One is, of course, the creation of the Special Fund, which should lead to the fulfilment of much which has been inspired and encouraged by the Expanded Programme over the last few years. Another is the establishment provisionally and on a small scale experimental basis of an International Administrative Service which will make it possible for the United Nations to help certain Governments which are in need of additional administrative personnel on a continuing basis. Lastly, I must draw your attention to the decision of the General Conference of the International Atomic Energy Agency to seek the approval of the Economic and Social Council to its participation in the Expanded Programme and membership in the Technical Assistance Board.

These developments should result in a great enrichment of the resources of the international organizations serving less developed countries, and all of us who are concerned with the administration of the Expanded Programme have been preparing ourselves to co-operate with the new services in every possible way. The new situation presents an invigorating challenge to new thinking and to the devising of new methods of attack on the still formidable problems of economic under-development.

1957 Programme

The Committee has before it the report of the Economic and Social Council which followed the examination by the Technical Assistance Committee of the report by the Technical Assistance Board on activities in 1957. 1957 proved to be a good year. When I spoke to this Committee a year ago, I thought that the programme might reach the level of \$31 million. When the accounts were closed, they showed a total of \$31.5 million - about \$1 million above the highest previous year.

This was possible because voluntary contributions, provided by eighty-four Governments, also reached a new record of nearly \$31 million. It is worth noting that recipient Governments provided an additional amount of \$2.2 million in the form of local cost payments and that these Governments incurred expenses on their own account more than double the size of the direct expenses of the Expanded Programme. Thus, it would be possible to say that the total amount applied to activities connected with the Expanded Programme by United Nations agencies and recipient Governments themselves was in excess of \$100 million.

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During 1957 the services of the Expanded Programme reached 132 countries and territories in some form. The number of experts exceeded 2,500 or 7 per cent more than ever before. Fellowships were awarded to 2,061 persons, a slight drop from the preceding year. The amount spent on equipment and supplies was a little less than 10 per cent of the total programme of \$2.5 million.

The multilateral character of the Programme was shown again in the fact that experts came from sixty-seven countries and fellows were sent to seventy-five countries and territories for training. Equipment and supplies were purchased from more than fifty countries.

More important than the numbers, in my opinion, is the evidence that the quality of the programme continued to improve. The evaluation of projects which had been undertaken in 1956 was continued but broadened and, I believe, substantially improved. The method used in this evaluation constitutes a joint appraisal of technical assistance activities by Governments, participating organizations and Resident Representatives of the Technical Assistance Board. Although this exercise brought to light certain weaknesses, as it properly should, it presented on the whole a gratifying picture of successful accomplishment in a great variety of fields of work. Considerable progress has been made in co-ordination between various government departments in relating technical assistance projects to national development programmes, and in the co-ordination of these plans with other programmes of economic and technical assistance. Still further efforts are required in this respect. There seems no question but that the results under the country programming procedure are greatly enhanced where there is a well-considered national development plan, an effective unit for co-ordination, competent economic advice and an able Resident Representative to help in the co-ordination of activities.

Geographical distribution

In the distribution of technical assistance between different regions, there has been a notable increase in the proportion received by Africa, especially the newly-independent countries. For example, between 1954 and 1957, the total cost of the programmes for Ghana, Morocco, the Sudan and Tunisia rose from \$100,000 to \$734,000. In Asia and the Far East, there has also been some increase in programmes given to newly-independent countries, for example, the

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total assistance given to Cambodia, Laos, Malaya and Viet-Nam rose from \$185,000 in 1954 to \$750,000 in 1957. It cannot be said, however, that the increased support given to recently independent countries even approaches the needs of these countries for technical assistance of the sort which the Expanded Programme is providing elsewhere. Indeed, most of the shifts in the geographical distribution of effort which have been possible in the last two years have largely been accomplished with the help of contingency allocations furnished by the Working Capital and Reserve Fund.

Co-ordination with other Technical Assistance Programmes

An encouraging trend is evident in the way in which more and more Governments have been taking positive steps to ensure better co-ordination of the technical assistance which they receive under various programmes, including that of the United Nations. Such co-ordination is much more than a mere avoidance of overlapping or duplication. Many examples may be cited of projects under the Expanded Programme which were carried out with the direct participation, in one form or another, of programmes of technical assistance. For the Central Institute of Industrial and Scientific Research in Ceylon, the International Bank and UNTAA jointly supplied the director and chief engineer, Canada provided a technical librarian under the Colombo Plan, and the United Kingdom supplied equipment; the United States ICA furnished additional laboratory equipment, and the Asia Foundation supplied books. In Cambodia, assistance by WHO to the Royal School of Medicine was closely co-ordinated with work of the French Mission. In Yugoslavia, under a bilateral programme of the United Kingdom, short-term experts are being provided for the Management Training Center in Zagreb, within the framework of a programme under which the ILO supplies long-term experts.

These few examples illustrate the positive way in which co-ordination can be achieved. However, several countries have indicated that the different procedures of the various programmes for technical assistance tend to complicate the task of co-ordination, which is also often handicapped by the absence of national development plans, and effective - as distinct from formal - national co-ordination machinery. Much will depend on the efforts of the recipient Governments in extending the area of constructive co-ordination.

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Some significant results

It is often difficult to determine the total impact of any particular technical assistance project. Many take some considerable time to yield their full results. Nevertheless, in certain fields such as the improvement of techniques of production, it is sometimes possible to point to tangible results within a comparatively short time; for example, during 1957, an expert in the Philippines succeeded in identifying the cause of widespread disease of coconut trees, and this will undoubtedly result in considerable savings in one of the country's main industries. In Colombia, by the end of 1957, a training centre established under a Public Health Pilot Project Scheme had trained over sixty doctors, nurses and sanitary inspectors. In Jordan, after the advice of international experts had been put into effect, the total production of phosphate of 50,000 tons in 1952 increased to about 300,000 tons in 1957. An ultimate output of about one million tons is envisaged.

A significant phase of the work of the Expanded Programme is its contribution to capital investment and to the promotion of domestic and foreign trade. Thus, international experts are helping Burma to establish textile mills and to rehabilitate mines, Ceylon to erect sugar factories, Indonesia to build coastal ships, Pakistan to construct a power grid and the Philippines to expand steel mills and shipbuilding facilities. In some cases, projects assisted by the Expanded Programme will lead to millions of dollars worth of investments over the next few years. The work of a railway expert led to a purchase abroad by the Iranian Government of a million dollars worth of signalling control equipment. In Uruguay international experts have helped to promote a nationwide programme of agriculture and livestock production, which is closely related to the consideration of a loan for further development by the International Bank.

It is worth noting that the results of technical assistance are sometimes impossible to demonstrate effectively because they consist of negative advice. Vast sums can be saved by refraining from unwise expenditures. The work of the international economic advisers serving in the programme is highly appreciated by the Governments concerned, in this respect as well as for their positive contribution to the development of economic policy.

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1958 activities

I come now to the current year's activities. The picture for 1958 does not differ greatly from 1957. Voluntary contributions have increased slightly in total, even though there has been an adjustment in the matching provision attached to the largest contribution. The number of contributors this year will reach eighty-five or possibly eighty-six. I think it is most significant that thirty-five contributions have been increased above the 1957 level, some of them very substantially. Technical assistance actually "delivered", as measured by financial obligations, probably will be a little higher than last year, perhaps reaching \$32 or \$32.5 million.

The process of rationalizing and improving methods and procedures is continuing, in such matters as the salary and allowance arrangements for project personnel, the awarding and administration of fellowships, currency management, and programme planning and implementation.

Continuous development in the legislation and practice of the programme made it necessary to revise the description of the programme contained in what has come to be known as the "Green Book". Accordingly, a new version of the Green Book was produced, and copies distributed to all member delegations earlier this year. The pamphlet includes a compilation of the legislative provisions currently governing the programme. Although this in no sense replaces the actual resolution, it provides easy and useful reference to the basic legislation of the programme. The text is available in English, French and Spanish. Another aid to Governments and administrators of the programme has been provided by the compilation of a loose-leaf Project Handbook. The first edition was distributed early in the year, and a revised version, including 1958 project descriptions, is now being reproduced.

The Contingency Fund

The 5 per cent contingency authorization which is provided by the present legislation is again proving to be extremely helpful in providing a necessary element of flexibility in coping with unforeseen and urgent requirements. A full report on the use of this authority will be given to the Technical Assistance Committee at its next meeting but I might mention a few examples.

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Initial planning on the multipurpose Mekong River Development has been carried forward by this means and has, I believe, been an important contribution at this stage to a project which offers so much hope for Laos, Cambodia, Viet-Nam and Thailand. Another use of an entirely different sort occurred early in the year when locust infestation threatened large areas in the Middle East. It was possible on less than 24 hours' notice to provide funds to FAO to play its role in a concentrated effort to fight this threat to the crops and welfare of the peoples of that region. Mention has already been made of the use of the contingency authority to provide additional funds to meet the special needs of newcomers to the programme - especially recently independent countries.

Country programming

Experience with country programming indicates that, although the system is basically sound, modification might be desirable to provide additional flexibility at certain points and to permit more constructive planning and utilization of resources on the part of both recipient Governments and the participating organizations. The Technical Assistance Board is currently engaged in a study of this question in the light of this year's experience. The results of this study will be reported to the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination and ultimately to the Technical Assistance Committee and the Economic and Social Council.

Some administrative problems

As you will notice from the report of the Economic and Social Council which is before you, the Technical Assistance Board and the Technical Assistance Committee are also studying the possibility of improving the local cost system, particularly in the direction of rationalizing and simplifying the method of assessing and collecting local cost payments.

A good deal of attention is also being given to the most appropriate method of meeting administration and operation services costs of the programme. This review involves not only the Technical Assistance Board and the Technical Assistance Committee but also the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions and the governing bodies of the participating organizations.

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One of the questions under consideration is whether the "overhead" costs should be met in greater measure or in full from the regular budgets of the organizations. This is a question for Governments to decide through the several governing bodies, but perhaps I might be permitted to observe that, to the extent that these costs can be met from regular budgets, the voluntary contributions from the Expanded Programme can be applied more fully to the field programme in the less developed areas.

Outlook for 1959

Looking ahead to 1959, my comment will seem like an echo of statements I have made to this Committee in early years - the programme has continued to grow and to improve but we are fearful for the future. Experience has taught us that, along with our fears, we should have a degree of confidence that interested Governments by their actions will again provide solutions to enable the programme to continue to grow and develop.

Nevertheless, I must report that there are certain financial difficulties ahead of us. At the Pledging Conference last week, considerable encouragement can be drawn from the fact that seventy-seven Governments made definite pledges and several others indicated that pledges would be forthcoming. Fourteen Governments have announced that their contributions in 1959 would be higher than this year. Further adjustment in the matching provision of the largest contributor, however, leaves us with some doubt as to whether the total of contributions can be maintained at the 1958 level. In such a case the plans which have been drawn up for 1959 will have to be curtailed to some extent. We had hoped that the steady growth in the resources of the programme might again advance modestly, and had planned the 1959 programme accordingly. It will be disappointing if these hopes cannot be fulfilled.

May I call your attention at this point to resolution 701 (XXVI) of the Economic and Social Council for your consideration and for such action as the Committee may consider appropriate. In the operative part of this resolution, the Economic and Social Council:

"1. Expresses the hope that the Expanded Programme for 1959 will be executed at a moderately higher level than that of 1958;

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"2. Requests the General Assembly to encourage Governments to continue to contribute to the Expanded Programme in amounts that will provide for the gradual expansion of the programme."

The growing recognition of the practical usefulness of technical assistance in many countries and territories is leading to many more requests from countries already receiving help than we can respond to within present financial limits. The participation of the International Atomic Energy Agency will certainly produce many requests for help and, in the absence of increased funds, this will mean that there will be fewer resources to continue to provide help in fields in which we are now working. Last, but not least in importance, the special claims not only of the newly-independent States but of such States yet to be born in the next few years are claims to which the United Nations family should not be slow to respond with imagination and generosity.

The human story

The report which I have given to you today has inevitably been an exercise in facts and figures and the livelier human aspects of this worldwide enterprise have barely been touched upon. Yet, it is the many men and women from so many lands who serve this programme who make a living reality of the somewhat dry administrative and financial business which it is my duty to recount to you. Country programming for 1959 which had recently been completed was the combined work of thousands of local officials in the various government departments of receiving countries, and of their opposite numbers, as it were, in the international organizations and the field offices of the Technical Assistance Board. I am glad to have this opportunity of thanking the representatives of so many of the countries we serve for the co-operation which we receive from their colleagues at home - not least from those who are helping us on their side to make co-ordination effective. Of the field representatives of the TAB (including correspondents), who now cover fifty-five countries and 85 per cent of the total field programme, there is little to add to what I said of them in my statement to you last year. They play an increasingly effective role in the management of the Expanded Programme, and they stand ready to help the Managing Director of the Special Fund, as he may call upon them, in every

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practicable way. I must thank the representatives here of the countries in which our field officers serve for the excellent co-operation and support which they have received in carrying out their important and often delicate task.

As I reported to the Technical Assistance Committee in Geneva, it has been my good fortune again this year to see the programme in action and to meet many of the international experts serving in a dozen or more countries. Again it has been an inspiring experience which has left me even more respectful than before of the quality of human endeavour which is devoted to our work in the less developed countries. Professional skill and experience are essential ingredients in good technical assistance, but they do not suffice. Imagination, adaptability, resourcefulness, and, above all, patience and a certain humility in face of the imponderables in human experience - these are the qualities which make for success in this work. And it is surprising how many of our experts display most if not all of these qualities in carrying out their difficult tasks. We should certainly salute them with respect and, above all, give them the support which is necessary for the effective conduct of their work.
