

PREPARATORY COMMITTEE FOR THE
INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON
HUMAN RIGHTSPREPARATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
ON HUMAN RIGHTS IN 1968

(Extracts from the provisional records of the twentieth session
of the General Assembly)

Note by the Secretary-General

For the convenience of the Preparatory Committee for the International Conference on Human Rights, the Secretary-General submits herewith extracts from the provisional records of the 1369th, 1370th and 1371st meetings of the Third Committee and of the 1404th plenary meeting of the twentieth session of the General Assembly, which bear directly on the questions of (a) the Functions of the Preparatory Committee, (b) the Preparation of the Conference, (c) the Purposes of the Conference, (d) the Participation in the Conference, and (e) the Financing of the Conference.

Statements made on other activities to be undertaken during the International Year for Human Rights or statements merely drawing attention to the importance and the character of the Year have not been included in this note.

A. As to the functions of the Preparatory CommitteeJamaica

"He drew attention to the three specific tasks assigned by Economic and Social Council resolution 1074 E (XXXIX) to that Conference, which, if it was to serve the cause of human rights effectively, should be prepared most carefully and with the participation of highly competent persons. The Preparatory Committee should also make a thorough study of the problem of financing. Some delegations had agreed to the convening of a conference only on condition that a preparatory committee was

set up. One delegation had also emphasized the need to prepare for the conference in a calm atmosphere and had pointed out that the preparatory work would be of a technical nature and free from all political considerations." (A/C.3/SR.1369, p. 4)

Nigeria

"The Committee must be widely representative if it was to arrive at a satisfactory statement of the Conference's purposes, and that was one of its main duties. It must, for example, decide to what extent the Conference should be concerned with carrying out the aims of resolution 6 (XX) of the Commission on Human Rights and also decide how the Conference could make a lasting contribution to the cause of human rights." (SR.1369, p. 15)^{1/}

Senegal

"... It would be the task of the preparatory committee 'to complete the preparation for the International Conference on Human Rights'." (SR.1370, p. 14)

United States of America

"Operative paragraph 11 as adopted stated that the preparatory committee would 'organize and direct the preparation of the necessary evaluation studies and other documentation'. She understood those words to mean that, in making arrangements for the conference, the preparatory committee would co-operate with the Secretariat in the usual way, i.e. it would provide direction regarding the subjects to be covered in the various studies, but would not direct the preparation of the studies to the extent of taking over the executive functions which properly belonged to the Secretariat." (SR.1371, pp. 9-10)

B. As to the preparation of the Conference

Jamaica

"It had been pointed out that objective and impartial technical studies and analyses ought to be made before such an evaluation; the preparatory committee would direct those studies and a United Nations organ - UNITAR - had already

^{1/} Here and below this abridged symbol of the summary records of the Third Committee is used.

stated its readiness to co-operate in the technical studies. At the same time the review of progress would entail the assembly of documentation, in which the Secretariat would have to help. However, the whole group of programmes would be placed under the preparatory committee's control." (SR.1369, p. 18)

The Netherlands

"He attached great importance to the International Conference, but considered that its terms of reference should be precisely defined and that it should be very carefully prepared and steps taken to ensure that it was not exploited for purposes of political propaganda." (SR.1370, p. 9)

C. As to the purposes of the Conference

Argentina

"All delegations would agree with the need to appraise the work that had been done over twenty years." (SR.1369, p. 16)

Canada

"In his delegation's opinion, the proposals before the Committee - that for the International Year and that for the conference - should be of specific and practical help in promoting respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms."

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"In the first place, his delegation naturally recognized that the conference and related programmes would have to examine and evaluate the objectives aimed at and the techniques and procedures used by the United Nations in connexion with human rights. In its opinion, however, it was more important to perfect those procedures than to clarify the rules; in addition it was necessary to avoid the waste of effort involved in drawing up a complete list of developments relating to human rights in various countries; that was an impossible and thankless task, and a risky one as well.

"Secondly, the Conference could usefully review the interrelations which should exist between the Universal Declaration, the two Covenants and the related declarations already in existence, with a view to evaluating the unity, direction and pace of implementation of the over-all United Nations programme. The

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objective would be not so much to make a compilation as to appraise the general approach adopted by the United Nations in that sphere of activity and, perhaps, to study the possibility of co-ordinating the major human rights activities within the United Nations systems itself, of harmonizing the policies and activities of the various United Nations organs and bodies concerned with human rights, and of directing them towards common goals.

"Thirdly, his delegation would like the Conference and the programmes to have the maximum public impact, while at the same time laying the foundations for sure and, if possible, lasting progress. In that connexion, advantage should be taken of the educational role which the United Nations played through its agencies; as already mentioned by the representatives of Iran and Venezuela, detailed consideration should be given to ways of enlisting the co-operation of educational institutions, learned societies, foundations, non-governmental organizations, artistic groups, and so forth, and encouraging them to devise study courses in the field of human rights. The energies and resources of intellectual circles should be used more fully than in the past, especially for research and investigation and in order to familiarize the public with the ideals of human rights. Through those circles, new ideas might emerge, without which it was virtually impossible to make any practical progress. The idea of organizing conferences of educators and information media experts certainly warranted further exploration."

(SR.1370, pp. 5-6)

Ecuador

"The International Conference... would be particularly conducive to the achievement of further progress in the field of human rights, since it would shed light on the problems involved in the practical implementation of those rights."

(SR.1370, p. 8)

India

"The international conference not only would dramatize the observance of the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, but would also help humanity in the task of reviewing the progress which this Organization has made in the field of human rights during the past twenty years."

(A/PV.1404, p. 6)

Jamaica

"The essential purpose of the conference would be to review the progress which had been made in the field of human rights, so as to make a lasting contribution to the cause of those rights. The conference would also evaluate the effectiveness of the technical methods so far used by the United Nations to promote human rights." (SR.1369, p. 18)

Mauritania

"The Mauritanian delegation whole-heartedly supported the holding of an international conference on human rights with the purpose of removing the scourge of racial discrimination in all its forms." (SR.1369, p. 14)

The Netherlands

"In particular, there should be a searching inquiry into the effectiveness of the methods employed by the United Nations in the field of human rights, and special emphasis should be placed on the need for proper co-ordination of the activities and policies of the various organs of the United Nations and the specialized agencies in the field of human rights. His delegation supported the suggestion submitted by the Committee on the International Year for Human Rights in paragraph 166 of its report, namely, that the Conference should consider the question of strengthening the executive power of the United Nations in the field of human rights. It also proposed that the Conference should consider the possibility of an expansion of the Organization's functions as a body responsible for carrying out investigations and giving advice in the field of human rights. In addition, it advocated the setting up of permanent machinery to consider cases of violations of human rights, a procedure which would obviate recourse to ad hoc solutions improvised under the pressure of events." (SR.1370, pp. 9-10)

Nigeria

"The Conference should consider what progress the United Nations had made in human rights since the adoption of the Universal Declaration and appraise the effectiveness of its methods. It should also prepare a programme of steps to be taken after the celebration of Human Rights Year." (SR.1369, p. 15)

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Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

"The Soviet delegation unreservedly supported the holding of an international conference on human rights in 1968 and hoped that it would help to widen and deepen international co-operation." (SR.1369, p. 13)

Uruguay

"The Conference should not merely adopt symbolic texts, but should rather seek to ensure the implementation, not only of the principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, but also, and above all, those of the Charter itself." (SR.1370, p. 12)

D. As to the participation in the ConferenceCanada

"His delegation hoped, of course, that Governments would send to the conference qualified experts who normally concerned themselves with human rights in their respective countries." (SR.1370, p. 5)

France

"However, while his delegation had, from the outset, recognized the usefulness of the idea of convening an International Conference on Human Rights, to which reference was made in the nine-Power amendment (A/C.3/L.1318), it nevertheless regarded it as a complex and delicate undertaking whose scope would have to be defined and which would call for very careful preparation. Should it be a Conference of plenipotentiaries, a Conference of experts similar to the World Population Congress, or something between the two?" (SR.1369, pp. 11-12)

E. As to the financing of the ConferenceUnited Kingdom

"... His delegation reserved its position on the question of the financial implications of the resolution just adopted until it had a clearer idea of the precise implications of the adoption of the eleven-Power amendments." (SR.1371, p. 10)

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United Republic of Tanzania

"It considered that... the expenses of the conference should be met from the regular budget of the United Nations and should not be a matter for study by the preparatory committee. He therefore dissociated his delegation from the two relevant parts of the proposal (A/C.3/L.1313/Rev.2)." (SR.1371, p. 11)

United States of America

"She hoped that the resolution just adopted could be implemented with a minimum of financial expense to the United Nations. She would read with interest the proposals of the preparatory committee regarding the means of defraying the expenses of the conference. Her delegation had no doubts as to the value of holding the conference but wished merely to interject a note of caution regarding its financing." (SR.1371, p. 10)
