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PREPARATIONS FOR THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON HUMAN RIGHTS

Statement made by the Executive Director of the United Nations
Institute for Training and Research in the Preparatory Committee
for the International Conference on Human Rights on 20 May 1966

Mr. Chairman,

I am very glad of the opportunity to address this Committee which has the formidable privilege of preparing for an international conference that will doubtless be an important landmark in the history of efforts to ensure respect for human dignity and the dignity of peoples throughout the world.

I am addressing you because there has been some question as to the role which the Institute for Training and Research might play in the field of human rights generally, and particularly in preparing for the Conference which is planned for 1968.

Some very interesting suggestions were made to me some months ago, by Ambassador Richardson, Vice-Chairman of your Committee, and the distinguished representative of the Soviet Union has just given his views on the role UNITAR might play in research with regard to the protection of human rights. It is quite understandable that this question should be raised, because, from the very foundation of the Institute, and even before it came into existence, consideration was given to the idea of having it study measures to ensure respect for human rights. You may perhaps recall that the Secretary-General made such a proposal in his basic memorandum on the Institute. Later, the Board of Trustees recommended that the Executive Director should "undertake a study of the United Nations methods and techniques for the promotion and protection of human rights".

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At the last session of the General Assembly, several delegations expressed the view that the Institute might usefully undertake studies in that field.

It is for all these reasons that the research programme of the Institute, which is now in preparation and is to be submitted in a few weeks to the Institute's Administrative and Financial Committee, will give a large place to human rights questions. In view of the importance of the 1968 Conference, we will be very pleased if our studies can be of some use to it. We have therefore followed the work of the Committee very closely and we would be grateful if its members would indicate to us the type of studies they would like to have us undertake.

In this connexion, I should like to mention some possible subjects we are at present considering. First of all, we plan to prepare an over-all, comparative analysis of the measures taken at the international and national levels to combat racial discrimination. A serious study of this kind might provide some very useful guidance as to the most effective means of ensuring the elimination of racial discrimination.

Secondly, you might consider it useful, with a view to the 1968 Conference, if the Institute were to prepare a more general document defining certain basic problems which might be studied more intensively. Such a document, in addition to being of use to the Conference itself, might have a stimulating and to some degree catalytic effect on the efforts being made in this field by Governments, universities and research workers. We plan, in fact, to prepare a preliminary study of this type on the subject of apartheid for the seminar which is to be held at Brasilia in August of this year.

In mentioning these two specific projects we do not by any means intend to close the door on other suggestions. We are considering, ourselves, the possibility of carrying out studies of the special techniques by means of which human rights can be protected and we would be glad if the eminent experts assembled here could let us have their views. I would add that, although the Institute's resources are limited, it is in a good position to undertake studies in collaboration with institutes of higher learning and other official institutions. You are all well aware, I am sure, that it is not enough to condemn violations of human rights or even to propose plans of action, and that it is no less essential to study the problems scientifically and in depth so that the common effort may yield better results.

Naturally, in all this work, we will maintain continuous liaison with the Secretariat's Division of Human Rights with which we have relations of the greatest confidence.

In conclusion, may I say that I shall receive with interest and gratitude any comments or suggestions you may wish to make.
