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UNITED NATIONS TELECOMMUNICATIONS SYSTEM

Report of the Fifth Committee

Rapporteur: Mr. O.P. Machado (Brazil)

1. The General Assembly, on 20 November 1947, adopted resolution 158(II), directing the Secretary-General to take all steps necessary to ensure that the United Nations could proceed with negotiations in progress for obtaining the wave-lengths (frequencies), call-signs, rights and privileges necessary for the operation of a United Nations telecommunications system, and to report and submit appropriate recommendations to the General Assembly at its third regular session. In accordance with these instructions, the Secretary-General, on 11 October 1948, presented a report (A/676) informing the General Assembly that all initial technical and administrative measures had been taken to obtain allocations of wave-lengths for the United Nations, and urging that the General Assembly should, at its present session, give approval in principle to the general plan for a United Nations telecommunications system as outlined in document A/335, though without, at this time, a special appropriation of funds for the implementation of the plan or any portion thereof. Particular stress was laid by the Secretary-General on the necessity of the United Nations having a technical plan upon which to base its case for an allocation of frequencies, this, in turn constituting an essential prerequisite for the establishment of its own radio broadcasting facilities and the overcoming of the present complete dependence of the United Nations on the generosity of certain Member States. The Secretary-General accordingly presented for the consideration of the General Assembly a draft resolution embodying all the action which he believed it was necessary to take at this time without a special appropriation of funds.

2. In accordance with instructions given by the General Assembly at its 154th meeting, held on 24 September 1948, the Fifth Committee, at its 150th and 151st meetings, examined the Secretary-General's report and recommendations.

3. It was the consensus of opinion of the Fifth Committee that, in principle, the United Nations should have its own radio facilities and to this end the representatives of the United Nations should be in a position to negotiate successfully at the Telecommunications Conference at Mexico City which would decide the allocation of frequencies. The majority of the Committee, however, was equally concerned that the General Assembly should not, at this time, commit itself, directly or indirectly, to the adoption of any specific plan having important financial implications. It was therefore the sense of the Committee that any resolution adopted should be primarily for the purpose of authorizing the Secretary-General to negotiate for frequencies without committing the United Nations to any financial obligation, leaving open for the time being any decision as to the scope and nature of the plan which might eventually be adopted. In the light of these general considerations, amendments to the draft resolution presented by the Secretary-General were proposed by the delegation of France, the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. Accordingly, at the 150th meeting of the Committee, the Chairman suggested that these three delegations should consult together with a view to the submission of an agreed joint text. Such a text was presented to the Fifth Committee at its 151st meeting and was approved by 28 votes in favour to 1 against, with no abstentions.

4. The Fifth Committee, therefore, decided to recommend to the General Assembly the adoption of the following resolution:

UNITED NATIONS TELECOMMUNICATIONS SYSTEM

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

APPROVES in principle the establishment of a United Nations telecommunications system;

REAFFIRMS the United Nations position as an operating agency in the field of international telecommunications and calls upon all Member Governments to support at all international telecommunications conferences the requirements of the United Nations for frequencies and services envisaged in the report of the Advisory Committee on United Nations Telecommunications (A/335);

AUTHORIZES the Secretary-General to present to the General Assembly at its regular session of 1950 such recommendations as he deems necessary to establish a United Nations telecommunications system.
