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## Third session

INCREASE TO TWENTY-FOUR OF THE NUMBER OF MEMBER STATES  
REPRESENTED IN THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCILReport of the Joint Second and Third Committee

Rapporteur: Mr. J. THORN (New Zealand)

1. On 24 September 1948, the General Assembly decided to include in its agenda the following item: "Increase to twenty-four of the number of Member States represented in the Economic and Social Council: item proposed by Argentina".
2. This question, proposed by Argentina, had also been included in the agenda of the second regular session of the General Assembly. It was referred at that time to the Joint Second and Third Committee, which considered it at its meetings held on 23 and 25 October 1947. After an extensive discussion, Argentina withdrew its resolution on the understanding that it reserved its right to introduce the matter at the following session of the General Assembly. The Committee then agreed not to take any further action on the proposal and recommended that no further action be taken by the General Assembly (A/448). The General Assembly approved that course at its 115th meeting.
3. The General Assembly, at the present session, again decided to refer the item to the Joint Second and Third Committee, which discussed it at its thirtieth, thirty-first, thirty-second and thirty-third meetings on 19, 20, 21 and 23 October 1948.
4. The Joint Second and Third Committee had before it a letter to the Secretary-General from the Argentine Ambassador to the United Nations (A/586) and draft resolutions proposed by Argentina (A/C.2&3/74) and Peru (A/C.2&3/76).

The operative part of the Argentine resolution provided that a general conference of the Members of the United Nations should be convened in accordance with Article 109 of the Charter for the purpose of reviewing Article 61, Chapter X of the Charter, relating to the composition of the Economic and Social Council, and increasing the number of its members to

twenty-four.

5. The supporters of the Argentine resolution urged that since the work of the Economic and Social Council was of the highest importance, as well as of great diversity and complexity, its membership should be more broadly based, so as to provide fully adequate geographical distribution. While the Charter contained no provision for permanent seats on the Council, it could be assumed that the five States which were permanent members of the Security Council would continue to be re-elected to the Economic and Social Council. The remaining thirteen seats were too few to allow of sufficient representation of other Members of the United Nations, the number of which, furthermore, had increased since the signing of the Charter. They urged that the increase would render the work of the Council more representative of the views of all the Members of the United Nations, and would enable more of the smaller countries whose economic and social needs were greatest, and whose potential contribution to the Council were important, to participate in its work; and would in both ways render the work of the Council more efficient and more acceptable to the United Nations as a whole.

It was further argued that the interest in and support for the United Nations which would be fostered by membership of the Council would be secured in a larger number of countries.

Reference was also made to the fact that the Bruce Committee of the League of Nations had, in 1939, recommended a Central Committee on Economic and Social Questions composed of twenty-four members.

6. Against the adoption of the Argentine proposal, it was argued that the present number of eighteen seats in the Council enabled the main regions of the world and the main economic and social systems, including those of countries at different stages of development, to be adequately represented. A larger number would not necessarily result in an increase in efficiency, but would be likely to slow down the work of the Council. While the interest and support of the Members of the United Nations as a whole was essential for the proper functioning of the Council, this was to be secured in other ways: reference was made to participation in subsidiary bodies and to the resolution previously passed by the Committee on this subject,\* and to Article 69 of the Charter conferring a right of participation on all Members of the United Nations in proceedings of the Council of particular concern to them. The number of members of the Council had been carefully  
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\* See resolution B in document A/711.

considered at San Francisco from the points of view both of the efficiency and the representative character of the Council, and had no specific relation to the number of the Members of the United Nations; neither the change, nor the conference to consider it envisaged in the resolution, was justified at the present juncture.

7. Procedural considerations: During the discussion in the Joint Second and Third Committee, a number of members expressed their views on the procedure proposed in the Argentine draft resolution, i.e. the convening of a general conference under Article 109 of the Charter. The Argentine representative suggested that such a conference could be called immediately after the close of a regular session of the General Assembly and that therefore extra cost could be eliminated.

The view was expressed that such a conference could not be limited to a single item; and also that it could not be bound in advance to acceptance or rejection of a specific proposal as envisaged in the Argentine draft resolution.

The view was also expressed that the simple procedure of Article 108, providing for amendment to the Charter by a vote of two-thirds of the Members of the General Assembly and ratification, in accordance with their constitutional procedures, by two-thirds of the Members of the United Nations would be preferable in the case of specific amendments such as that suggested in the Argentine draft resolution.

In view, however, of the introduction by the representative of Peru of a revised resolution, which was later adopted, the Committee did not make any formal expression of view on the procedural issues raised.

8. There was general agreement on the importance of securing the best working conditions for the Council and of giving full consideration to all proposals put forward to that end. A draft resolution was accordingly introduced by the representative of Peru, to the effect that the General Assembly noted with interest the concern shown by certain delegations for improving the working conditions of the Economic and Social Council and for associating with the Council's activities the largest number of members compatible with its efficiency, and recommended that Members should consider this problem, taking into account the discussions at the second and third regular sessions of the General Assembly, and communicate their suggestions to the Secretary-General. Seeing that the problem was regarded not as a specific but as a general one, this draft resolution was generally supported in the Committee, though one member pointed out that it might lead to automatic repetition of the same debate in the future.

The Peruvian representative accepted drafting amendments proposed by the Belgian representative.

9. The Joint Second and Third Committee, by 41 votes in favour to 1 against, with 1 abstention, adopted the following resolution and decided to recommend it for adoption by the General Assembly:

PARTICIPATION OF MEMBER STATES IN THE WORK OF THE  
ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

TAKES NOTE of the interest shown by certain delegations in improving the work of the Economic and Social Council and in associating with the Council's activities the largest number of members compatible with the efficacy thereof;

RECOMMENDS that Members of the United Nations should consider this problem, taking into account the discussions held during the second and third regular sessions of the General Assembly and communicate their suggestions to the Secretary-General.

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