

UNITED NATIONS
ECONOMIC
AND
SOCIAL COUNCIL



GENERAL

E/CN.4/403
4 April 1950

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS

Sixth session

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL RIGHTS

Communication received from the Director-General of the
International Labour Office

The Secretary-General has received the following communication, dated 30 March 1950 from the International Labour Office:

"Sir,

"The Governing Body of the International Labour Office at its 110th Session (January 1950) noted that the Commission on Human Rights has requested that you prepare a survey of the activities of other bodies of the United Nations and specialised agencies in matters within the scope of Articles 22 - 27 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights for the purpose of enabling the Commission to determine what action it should take in these fields, in particular for the inclusion of these subjects either in the Covenant of Human Rights or in later Conventions.

"In these circumstances the Governing Body considered whether it should express any views on the extent to which the Covenant of Human Rights, or other later Conventions to be adopted by the United Nations, should deal with matters referred to in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which fall within the scope of the International Labour Organisation.

"The Governing Body noted that the Articles in question deal with economic and social rights such as the right to social security, the right to work, the right to equal pay, the right to just and favourable remuneration, the right to form and to join trade unions, the right to rest and leisure, the right to adequate standards of living (including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood), the right of motherhood and childhood to special care and

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assistance and the right to education, including technical and professional education.

"The Governing Body again wished to draw attention to the extent to which the implementation of certain of these provisions falls primarily within the sphere of responsibility of the International Labour Organisation. It pointed out that all of these questions are of such a character that legal obligations relating thereto cannot in the nature of things be expressed in the form of simple principles. Any such obligations would have to take the form of detailed provisions which would necessarily overlap with those of the existing International Labour Conventions, or of further International Labour Conventions which are likely to be adopted in the future.

"The Governing Body has accordingly asked me to request you to transmit to the Commission on Human Rights the above statement of its views, and to inform the Commission of the action taken by the International Labour Organisation in regard to these various matters and of the action in prospect. The "Survey of the activities of bodies of the United Nations other than the Commission on Human Rights, and of the specialised agencies, in matters within the scope of Articles 22-27 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights" (E/CN.4/364), which you have submitted to the Commission on Human Rights at its Sixth Session, contains an excellent account of the action hitherto taken by the International Labour Organisation. The representative of the ILO at the meeting of the Commission on Human Rights will be available to give information to the Commission as desirable on action in prospect by the International Labour Organisation on these various matters.

"You will recall that in respect of a number of these matters the Economic and Social Council has adopted resolutions referring them to the ILO for consideration and action. For example, in regard to the question of equal pay for equal work the Council has, in Resolution 121 (VI), asked the ILO to take action and subsequently, noting that the question had been placed on the agenda of the 33rd Session of the International Labour Conference (June 1950), referred certain documentation to the ILO in Resolution 242 (IX) for its consideration in connection therewith. In respect of trade union

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rights the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly had both adopted resolutions requesting the ILO to proceed with the drawing up of the Freedom of Association and the Protection of the Right to Organise Convention which was adopted by the International Labour Conference in 1948. The Council also in Resolution 239 (IX) requested the ILO to proceed on behalf of the United Nations in accordance with its relationship agreement, as well as on its own behalf, with the establishment of the Fact-Finding and Conciliation Commission on Freedom of Association, the establishment of which was proposed by the Governing Body in June 1949. This Fact-Finding and Conciliation Commission was accordingly established by the Governing Body in January 1950. The Council, in Resolution 277 (X), noted with approval the action taken by the Governing Body in this matter and accepted on behalf of the United Nations the services of the ILO and the Fact-Finding and Conciliation Commission as established by the ILO. Furthermore the Council at its 10th Session referred to the ILO without preliminary debate in the Council the question of 'International Reduction of Working Hours as a Consequence of Rising Labour Productivity' for such action as the ILO may consider necessary."
