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COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS  
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DEVELOPMENT OF THE WORK OF THE UNITED NATIONS FOR WIDER OBSERVANCE OF,  
AND RESPECT FOR, HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS THROUGHOUT THE  
WORLD; AND ANNUAL REPORTS ON HUMAN RIGHTS

Comments of Member States received by the Secretary-  
General under Economic and Social Council  
resolution 501 C (XVI)

France

(Letter dated 22 January 1954 to the Secretary-General from  
the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the French Republic)

In reply to your letter SOA 317/07 (1) of 10 August last, I have the honour to inform you that the French Government has studied with interest the proposals in documents E/CN.4/L.266/Rew.2, E/CN.4/L.267/Rev.1 and E/CN.4/L.268, concerning methods of reinforcing and expediting United Nations action in the field of human rights.

The French Government's keen interest in international instruments of this kind is shown by the bill which it has recently laid before the National Assembly for the ratification of the European Convention on Human Rights. It is in favour of the conclusion of international agreements guaranteeing universal respect for human rights as defined in the Universal Declaration of 10 December 1948. It is aware, however, that the preparation of universal agreements will take some time and therefore considers that the question of the progressive and effective achievement of the ideals set forth in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights should be studied forthwith on an international level, preferably in the first instance by the Commission on Human Rights.

The French Government considers, in particular, that the communication to the United Nations by all States, without distinction or discrimination, of reports on the progress made and difficulties encountered in their efforts to promote the rights and freedoms of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights would be an important step to that end

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It is therefore in agreement with the substance of the proposal in document E/CN.4/L.266/Rev.2 but reserves the right to propose amendments with the primary object of easing the heavy burden on the Commission on Human Rights and the Economic and Social Council.

The French Government furthermore observes that specialized agencies have been set up in order to give concrete and practical form to international co-operation in the economic and social spheres and that one of the objects of such co-operation is the promotion of universal respect for human rights. Duplication must therefore be avoided and no new organizations should be established in fields where specialized agencies or other special United Nations organs are already active.

The necessary mechanisms for making studies on certain particular aspects of human rights or providing technical assistance in the form of advisory services for Governments which request them appear to be already available to Member States. It may be noted that:

- (a) The Commission on Human Rights is empowered by its mandate to make special studies of various aspects of human rights and to request that such studies be prepared by the Secretary-General, who may call in such experts or consultants as he thinks necessary;
- (b) The Economic and Social Council may adopt the procedure which it has already used in the case of, for example, trade union rights and discrimination in education, and request the competent specialized agencies to devise measures or carry out the necessary surveys in order to ensure respect for particular rights or freedoms or to combat specific violations of such rights or freedoms;
- (c) The various technical assistance programmes, particularly that of advisory functions in the social field, which is dependent on the United Nations Technical Assistance Administration, are able to provide for Governments which so request services calculated to consolidate fundamental freedoms and to promote respect for human rights within the framework of the economic development and social progress of their populations.

Furthermore, you will no doubt be aware that the French Government has always considered that international action in the field of technical assistance must constitute a cohesive whole which will continue to be administered in accordance with the objects and principles defined in the resolutions of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council, its various aspects being closely co-ordinated and integrated into the national development plans. Consequently, the French Government considers it desirable to make every effort to maintain this unity of action and to avoid the separate implementation of particular programmes.

In the light of the foregoing considerations, the French Government wishes for the time being to reserve its position with regard to the proposals in document E/CN.4/L.267/Rev.1 and E/CN.4/L.268.

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