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PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND FINANCE FOR DEVELOPMENT
IN THE 1980s

Report of the Secretary-General

INTRODUCTION

1. This report is submitted in response to Economic and Social Council resolution 1977 (LIX) of 30 July 1975, in which the Council requested the Secretary-General to formulate programmes for the improvement of public administration and finance required to further national development objectives, and to consider the feasibility of measures for forecasting specific public administration and finance objectives for the 1980s and of initiating steps for formulating them. The resolution further requested that the Fourth Meeting of Experts on the United Nations Programme in Public Administration and Finance review these matters and the integrated United Nations Programme in Public Administration and Finance.

2. The Fourth Meeting of Experts took place at Geneva from 29 September to 7 October 1977. Nineteen experts from different parts of the world were invited to the Meeting. ^{1/} It was also attended by representatives of the regional commissions, specialized agencies, non-governmental organizations, and other international bodies.

3. The Meeting had before it a number of papers prepared by the Secretariat on various topics. Based on these and its own deliberations, the Meeting unanimously adopted its report entitled "Public administration and finance for development in the 1980s" (E/1978/11/Add.1). The Secretary-General is pleased to transmit the report of the Meeting to the Economic and Social Council with the following comments on the major issues raised therein.

I. NATIONAL OBJECTIVES AND ACTION PROGRAMMES

4. The Meeting has recommended to the Council and to the General Assembly:

(a) That developing countries be requested (i) to adopt national objectives for public administration and finance for development in the 1980s; (ii) to formulate action programmes for the realization of those objectives; and (iii) for that purpose, to pay special attention to the objectives and recommendations contained in its report;

(b) That the national objectives for public administration and finance for development for the 1980s, as well as the supportive international co-operation measures be incorporated in the international development strategy for the third United Nations development decade.

5. The recommendations contained in paragraph 4 (a) above are based on the recognition that institutional and managerial capabilities of developing countries in most cases continue to lag behind the increasing requirements for such

^{1/} The experts who attended were from Colombia, Finland, France, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Iran, Jamaica, Malaysia, Mexico, Pakistan, Senegal, Somalia, United Kingdom, United States of America, USSR and Yugoslavia.

capabilities as a result of changes in national and international concerns for their development, and that future-oriented and planned strategies are needed to improve public administration and finance for development. The measures formulated by the Meeting for consideration by the developing countries (paras. 1-7 of the report) represent problems common to most such countries, and their implementation can greatly contribute to improving the pace and quality of national development.

6. The Meeting also recommended that the national objectives for public administration and finance for development in the 1980s, as well as the international supportive measures be incorporated in the international development strategy for the 1980s. Such a course of action would reaffirm the importance of institutional and managerial elements which have often remained neglected in the calculus of development.

7. The proposed course of action will also be in conformity with the spirit of General Assembly resolution 32/179 on the role of the public sector in promoting the economic development of developing countries. The resolution, *inter alia*, requested the Secretary-General to "identify, based on national requirements, international measures required to support national public administration, finance and management for the development of the developing countries". The Secretary-General is further requested to submit the first progress report on the implementation of the resolution to the General Assembly at its thirty-third session, through the Economic and Social Council at its second regular session in 1978.

8. Upon approval of the Meeting's recommendation by the Economic and Social Council in principle, the Secretary-General will submit proposals on national objectives for public administration and finance for development in the 1980s, as well as international supportive measures, to the pertinent United Nations bodies for their consideration and, in due course, incorporation in an international development strategy for the third United Nations development decade.

II. SURVEY OF CHANGES AND TRENDS IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND FINANCE FOR DEVELOPMENT

9. The Meeting recommended to the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination, the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly that the Secretary-General be requested to monitor changes and trends in public administration and finance on a continuous basis and publish results for use by national authorities and international agencies. This is extremely important if the Secretariat is to carry out its duties stipulated or implied in General Assembly resolution 32/179 and the relevant decisions of the Council, and also to contribute to the continuing review and appraisal activities requested by the legislative bodies.

10. The Division of Public Administration and Finance of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, under its currently approved work programme and various Economic and Social Council resolutions, has made a modest start in bringing out a survey of recent changes and trends in public administration and finance for development. The first such survey, based mainly on review of available government publications and other materials and reports, covered changes and trends in public

administration and finance for development up to 1976. It was submitted to the Fourth Meeting of Experts and is now being revised in order to incorporate their comments before sending it for publication and wider circulation.

11. Further improvement and systematization of the Survey will depend upon a number of factors, the most important of which is the collaboration of national Governments in supplying the necessary information. For this purpose, and in accordance with the recommendations of the Meeting of Experts (para. 12), it will facilitate the task of the Secretariat if the Economic and Social Council were to request the Member Governments of the United Nations to designate a single point of contact in their countries from which the Secretariat could obtain the necessary information.

12. A related recommendation of the Meeting of Experts is the development by the Public Administration and Finance Programme of strong linkages with national authorities, regional and subregional institutions and global organizations engaged in similar pursuits, with a view to establishing a fully participatory process for the identification and analysis of emerging problems, to obtain relevant information, to disseminate results of its research activities, and to evaluate their impact. The Secretary-General believes that implementation of these recommendations will greatly enhance the utility and effectiveness of the Secretariat activities in the field of public administration and finance for development.

III. WORK PROGRAMME IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND FINANCE FOR 1980-1983

13. The Meeting has proposed that the work programme in public administration and finance for 1980-1983 be in accordance with the recommendations contained in its report. The thrust of these recommendations is that the United Nations continue, strengthen and appropriately reorient its research and technical co-operation activities to support changing national objectives and measures for improving public administration and finance for development.

14. A number of important proposals of the Meeting cannot be carried out within the resources available at present. Among the major recommendations in this category are the following:

(a) Co-ordination by the United Nations of international co-operation activities in public administration and finance (paras. 10 and 13);

(b) Convening of an international ministerial conference on public administration and finance (para. 11);

(c) The establishment of a temporary commission on accounting and auditing standards and techniques (para. 16);

(d) The convening of a working group on new modalities, including technical co-operation among developing countries, for delivery of technical assistance services in public administration and finance (para. 17);

(e) Organization of meetings and conferences on major issues to disseminate research findings and lessons of technical co-operation, as well as to promote exchange of information among senior administrators and political leaders (para. 18).

15. The Secretary-General would be pleased to submit detailed plans of action on these proposals, after the views of the Council have been made known.

16. The recommendation of the Meeting on enlarging the public administration and finance programmes of the secretariats of the United Nations regional commissions has been brought to their attention.

17. The Meeting has proposed the establishment of an intergovernmental functional committee for the programme, comparable to similar other bodies for different programmes, to assist the legislative bodies in their tasks. However, in a letter dated 11 November 1977, the Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee on the Restructuring of the Economic and Social Sectors of the United Nations System, conveyed to the Secretary-General the hope of the informal Contact Group of that Committee that, in pursuing this particular recommendation of the Expert Group Meeting, the Secretary-General would bear in mind (a) the consensus in the Committee that the Economic and Social Council should progressively assume direct responsibility for performing the functions of its subsidiary bodies, which would accordingly be discontinued or, as appropriate, regrouped, and (b) that the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination had decided to review the public administration programme in depth at its eighteenth session. Following the decision taken by the General Assembly in its resolution 32/197 to restructure the economic and social sectors of the United Nations system on the basis of the recommendations of the Committee and the Economic and Social Council, the Council itself is in the process of implementing the resolution as far as its own organizational set-up and methodology are concerned. Consequently, the Secretary-General recommends that no action be taken on this proposal at this stage.

IV. NEXT REVIEW OF THE PROGRAMME

18. The Meeting also recommended that the next review of changes and trends in public administration and finance for development and of the integrated United Nations Programme take place not later than 1979. It stated that "One of the major tasks of the meeting [which it recommended should take place not later than 1979] should be the consideration of measures required specifically to meet the public administration and finance requirements of the developing countries to implement the international development strategy for the 1980s" (para. 23). However, a new international development strategy is not expected to be completed and adopted by the General Assembly until 1980, with effect as from 1 January 1981. Thus, there appears to be no reason for holding the next meeting before the end of 1979. Moreover, there is no provision for the meeting in the budget already approved for 1978-1979.
