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SURVEYS OF ECONOMIC CONDITIONS AND TRENDS

Note by the Secretary-General

1. With respect to the future publication of reports on world economic conditions and trends, the attention of the Economic and Social Council is called to the following statement which appears in paragraph 60 of the report of the fifth session of the Economic and Employment Commission:

"The arrangements which the Secretary-General has made for providing the Council and the General Assembly with current information on world economic conditions and trends aim at the publication of the World Economic Report in time for use during the debate on the world economic situation at the first session of the Economic and Social Council each year, while other studies and reports are to be made available in time for use during the discussion of economic items at the mid-year session of the Council and at the regular annual session of the General Assembly. These arrangements should work out well in practice, especially since they do not preclude the preparation by the Secretariat of special studies dealing with particular economic problems or with current aspects of world economic conditions should such studies be deemed advisable by the Secretary-General or should they be specifically requested by the General Assembly or by the Economic and Social Council."

2. The arrangements to which reference is made in the above statement are discussed in document E/CN.1/76. This document was prepared by the Secretariat in order to inform the members of the Economic and Employment Commission concerning the work of the Secretariat arising out of several recommendations of the Commission and those resolutions of the Economic and Social Council and of the General Assembly which relate to the terms of reference of that Commission. There is reproduced below that part of document E/CN.1/76 which deals with the future publication of the World Economic Report:

- "20. The main feature of the new arrangements described below is the plan to publish a World Economic Report only once a year, scheduled to appear at the beginning of the year instead of mid-year as was the case in 1949.
- "21. The publication of three separate surveys of world economic conditions and trends in the course of the year 1949 has already seriously interfered with the carrying out of other studies and has moreover resulted in a considerable amount of inevitable repetition.
- "22. As to the structure of the future annual reports on world economic conditions and trends, it had been the objective of the Secretariat heretofore, to present in its World Economic Report only one part (Part I) which was designed to deal with a world situation as a whole. The remainder of the report consisted of summaries of economic conditions in various regions of the world, based in large part on materials prepared by the secretariats of the several regional economic commissions, of special articles dealing with selected world economic problems usually prepared by the secretariats of specialized agencies within whose purview those problems lay, of another part which was designed to record briefly the activities of the various organs of the United Nations in the field of economic affairs, and of a chronology of major economic events which occurred during the year. The bulk of the resulting World Economic Report thus represented a compendium of information, mainly in descriptive form, covering a variety of subjects of current interest and usefulness, while Part I alone dealt with the highlights of the current world economic situation as a whole.
- "23. It is now contemplated that a single World Economic Report should be prepared to cover the year 1950 and that this report should confine itself largely to an expansion of what had heretofore been the scope of Part I of the report dealing with the world economic situation as a whole. The 1950 report would deal with the major economic developments in the period under review and would analyze economic situations in various areas of the world to the extent necessitated by the heterogeneous, although interconnected, economic changes that took place. The emergence of three regional economic commissions during the last two years and the development under their auspices of comprehensive annual reports covering the economic conditions within their respective regions appears to have made unnecessary the inclusion of descriptive regional summaries in the annual world report. The formal accounts of the activities of the various international organizations in the field of economic affairs, because they had of necessity to be in very condensed form and because they dealt with activities no longer current, turned out to be less useful than it was hoped they would be. For these reasons it is thought desirable to discontinue these features of the annual report, and it is of course likely that other changes may prove desirable as work on the report proceeds.
- "24. If this arrangement proves feasible and useful, it could be adopted as the new pattern. This would mean that one World Economic Report would be prepared each year so as to be available in time to permit the Economic and Social Council to use it in connexion with its debate on world economic conditions during the first session of each year. With respect to the mid-year session of the Council and the annual session of the General Assembly,

/other studies

other studies and reports will be so scheduled by the Secretariat as to provide them with materials useful in their consideration of the broad fields around which their interest in economic problems seems to centre - namely, the economic development of under-developed countries, the maintenance of full employment and economic stability, and developments in international trade. During these sessions of the Council and of the Assembly, they will also have available to them the annual economic surveys which are being prepared by the secretariats of the regional economic commissions."
