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AD HOC COMMITTEE ON THE ORGANIZATION AND  
OPERATION OF THE COUNCIL AND ITS COMMISSIONS

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE EIGHTH MEETING

Held at Lake Success, New York,  
on Monday, 16 April 1951, at 10.30 a.m.

CONTENTS:

Organization and operation of the Council (Conference Room Paper No. 3)  
(continued)

<u>Chairman:</u>	Mr. SANTA CRUZ	President of the Economic and Social Council
<u>Members:</u>	Mr. BRENNAN	Australia
	Mr. ALMEIDA	Brazil
	Mr. CHANG	China
	Mr. DEVINAT	France
	Mr. RAJAN	India
	Mr. SAKSENA	
	Mr. CHERNYSHEV	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
	Mr. CORLEY SMITH	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
	Mr. LUBIN	United States of America

<u>Also present:</u>	Mr. AZKOUL	Lebanon
<u>Secretariat:</u>	Mr. OWEN	Assistant Secretary-General in charge of the Department of Economic Affairs
	Mr. YATES	Secretary of the Economic and Social Council

ORGANIZATION AND OPERATION OF THE COUNCIL (Conference Room Paper No. 3)  
(continued)

The CHAIRMAN said that, in connexion with the question of the reorganization of the Council itself, the Ad Hoc Committee had before it two series of proposals, those of the United States of America and the United Kingdom, contained in Conference Room Paper No. 3, and those of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

Furthermore, the Lebanese representative had requested a hearing by the Ad Hoc Committee, as he was authorized to do under the rules of procedure.

At the invitation of the CHAIRMAN, Mr. Azkoul (Lebanon) took his place at the Committee table.

Mr. AZKOUL (Lebanon) was glad that the important question of the organization of the Council and its commissions was undergoing an overall examination.

The Lebanese delegation had concerned itself with the matter two years previously and had submitted two memoranda on it. He recalled the views which the Lebanese delegation had put forward in that connexion at the eighth session of the Council.

On the over-riding question of the Council's sessions, the Lebanese Government had submitted various solutions. One solution would be for the Economic and Social Council to remain permanently in session, like the Security Council. Limited periods would have to be reserved for the examination of certain definite problems requiring the presence of important persons, while the examination of routine questions, which would be dealt with by the permanent representatives, could be spread out over the rest of the year. In that way it would be possible to have a series of meetings devoted to social questions, another to economic questions and so on. Another solution would be <sup>to increase the number of</sup> sections held

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by the Council each year. Since the normal length of a Council session was about six weeks and an adequate interval must be retained between two sessions, it would seem that if a decision was taken to increase the number of sessions, that number would have to be raised to three. The proposals made to the Ad Hoc Committee, to that effect had undoubted merit, since they would make it possible to lighten the work of the Council and to make provision for sessions of a technical character; thus, one session would be set aside for economic questions and another for social questions, while the third, which would precede the General Assembly, would necessarily be mixed. Should the Council be unwilling for budgetary or other reasons, to accept either of those two solutions, a possible third solution, and a more practical one, would be to set up an interim committee of the Council, consisting of all the Council members, on which the members of the permanent delegations would serve. The interim committee would meet when the Council was not sitting and would be able, for example, to hold a session before each session of the Council or again between the Council's sessions. It would be instructed to make a preliminary examination of all matters which, in the opinion of the Council, acting on recommendations by the Agenda Committee, were not sufficiently urgent or had not been studied in sufficient detail to be dealt with directly by the Council, and to formulate recommendations on them.

From a general point of view, it should be pointed out that the Economic and Social Council would in future be forced either to sit permanently or to set up an interim committee of that kind if it wished to get through all its work and, particularly, fulfil its obligations under Article 65 of the Charter, concerning the assistance which the Economic and Social Council might give to the Security Council.

A reorganization of the Agenda Committee's methods of work and in particular a strengthening of its authority in connexion with the choice of items for the Council's provisional agenda would enable the work of any one session to be at the same time lightened and concentrated.

One means of giving the Agenda Committee real authority so that its recommendations would meet with a favourable reception in the Council itself, would be to raise the number of members from five to eighteen and, in any case, if it must remain smaller, to ensure that its recommendations anticipated the Council's decisions by being based upon instructions from the governments of States members of the Council. Governments ought therefore to communicate their observations on the provisional agenda to the Agenda Committee, which would take them into account in formulating its recommendations. In order to make it easier for governments to submit comments, the Agenda Committee might well meet six weeks before the opening of each session, in order to draw up a list of provisional recommendations concerning the provisional agenda, which would then be communicated to the governments of States members of the Council. One week before the Council session opened, the Agenda Committee would hold its second meeting, during which it would amend the provisional agenda, on the basis of the comments communicated in the meantime by governments, and would address its recommendations to the Council. Within the framework of that system, the question of the composition of the Agenda Committee would lose its importance. No doubt the method proposed would not entirely eliminate discussions on the agenda in the Council itself, but it would simplify them considerably.

In reorganizing the Council care should also be taken to enable it to fulfil its obligations under Article 65 of the Charter which provided that the Economic and Social Council might furnish information to the Security Council and should assist it upon request. The Ad Hoc Committee should therefore consider that important problem and study ways and means of enabling the Economic and Social Council to comply with that provision, bearing in mind more particularly that the Security Council was a permanent body entitled to request the assistance of the Economic and Social Council at any time.

His delegation attached great importance to the principle of equitable geographical distribution within the Council and its subsidiary bodies. It was regrettable that that principle was not respected by the Council's functional commissions in regard to the representation of the Arab States which constituted a coherent regional group and, in fact, represented several other States not yet Members of the United Nations. That group should surely

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have at least one representative in the Council and in each of its commissions, particularly as those bodies were at present dealing with technical assistance to under-developed countries and their economic development, and the Arab States were countries of precisely that type. The Arab group was, however, represented on only five of the nine functional commissions, whereas other countries, which represented only themselves, sat on three, four and even six different commissions.

Finally, he was strongly in favour of maintaining the Sub-Commission on Freedom of Information and of the Press which was dealing, under its terms of reference, with one of the fundamental freedoms and hence performing one of the most important functions of the United Nations.

Mr. BRENNAN (Australia) said that the value and timeliness of some of the proposals for the reorganization of the Council submitted to the Ad Hoc Committee would depend on what changes were made to the organization of the Council's commissions and sub-commissions. That applied, more particularly, to the proposal to increase the Council's annual sessions from two to three. His delegation would therefore reserve its Government's position in regard to the views set forth in paragraph 1 of Conference Room Paper No. 3, prepared by the United States and the United Kingdom delegations, until it had acquainted itself with the general plan for organizing the Commissions and was satisfied that it was really likely to simplify and improve the work of those bodies.

His delegation wondered, in regard to the United States and United Kingdom proposals, whether it was wise to provide in advance for a rigid division into two parts of the Council's first session. There was a danger that the two parts of the session might finally be separated by a certain period and actually develop into two separate sessions, which would be most inconvenient for the small delegations. It might suffice to say that discussion on substance during that session of the Council, which would extend only to social questions, would begin on a date fixed in advance and could be preceded by a debate on routine work which could be interrupted, if necessary, to permit the discussion on substance to begin on the date arranged.

/The CHAIRMAN

The CHAIRMAN appreciated the interdependence of the recommendations on the re-organization of the Council and more especially of the recommendations on its commissions and sub-commissions but did not foresee any difficulty. The authors of the proposals had also made known their suggestions regarding the Council's subsidiary bodies and it was clear that in stating its views on the organization of the Council every delegation would bear in mind the changes it wished to be made in the structure of the Council's commissions.

Mr. CORLEY SMITH (United Kingdom) pointed out that although his delegation had helped to draft Conference Room Paper No. 3, that document did not correspond in every respect to the views of the United Kingdom delegation on the changes to be made in the Council's organization. It was merely an attempt to permit the drafting of provisions which might be acceptable to the majority of the Committee's members. The Committee should not accept any formal proposal before a comprehensive discussion on the re-organization of the commissions had taken place. When his delegation had proposed a special session on social questions it had hoped that there would no longer be any need for the Social Commission. In the same way, if it were decided to hold a special session to consider economic matters, it should be possible to abolish the Economic, Employment and Development Commission. As to the other questions, his delegation felt that it should be possible to find a solution satisfactory to all. It would not matter whether social questions were discussed before or after routine items; what mattered was that the documentary material should be read in good time so that governments would be able to study it, and that the dates of the sessions should be known well in advance to enable experts to be notified and given sufficient time to study the questions to be discussed.

Mr. LUBIN (United States of America) thought that regardless of what decisions were adopted on the re-organization of the commissions, the number of the Council's sessions would be of little importance provided a definite calendar could be established. He asked the Australian representative whether he thought that if all the present commissions were retained there would still be a need for three sessions of the Council.

Mr. BRENNAN

Mr. BRENNAN (Australia) thought a change in the structure of the Council's commissions would mean that the Council would have to assume heavier responsibilities, as it would then itself have to consider problems at present dealt with by the commissions. More meetings would therefore have to be held. However, merely increasing the number of meetings without altering the structure of the Council and its commissions would not only fail to improve the quality and distribution of documents but might even have the opposite effect.

The CHAIRMAN understood that the total number of meetings would not be increased but that they would be more evenly distributed over the year.

Mr. CORLEY SMITH (United Kingdom) hoped it would be possible to reduce the number and length of meetings. Meetings usually lasted longer when representatives were overworked or had not had sufficient time to study the items on the agenda.

Mr. CHERNYSHEV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that the general debate should be closed. His delegation had already explained its reasons for thinking that one session of the Council would suffice and he requested the Committee to discuss the USSR proposal in the following form:

"The Economic and Social Council should hold each year a single session of approximately four weeks." \*

Mr. ALMEIDA (Brazil) approved the proposals contained in Conference Room Paper No. 3, which seemed to offer a solution for the essential problems connected with the functioning of the Economic and Social Council.

Mr. DEVINAT (France) would like some clarification of Conference Room Paper No. 3. Assuming that the Social Commission were maintained, he asked how it would be possible to consider social questions at the beginning of the year before the Social Commission's report had been submitted. He wanted to know whether the Council, at that session, would consider all social questions or only certain questions of principle which could be discussed independently of the Commission's report.

/Mr. CORLEY SMITH

\* provisional translation.

Mr. CORLEY SMITH (United Kingdom) said that too often the Council had been forced into a cursory examination of certain matters which might have been deferred until a later date. It should therefore proceed in an orderly and methodical way. The work hitherto undertaken by the Social Commission might be in future entrusted to ad hoc bodies meeting, if necessary, towards the end of the year. The meetings of the Council's subordinate bodies should be timed to fit in with the Council's work, and not vice versa.

The CHAIRMAN observed that the Social Commission's report constituted only a small part of the Council's activities in the social field.

Mr. DEVINAT (France) thanked the Chairman for his explanation but pointed out that he had mentioned the Social Commission as only one example; his earlier remarks applied equally to the other subsidiary organs. He conceded that a session devoted to important policy matters at the beginning of the year would have the advantage of lightening the agenda of the summer session. If routine matters were to be discussed, however, he did not see how that could be done before the Commissions had had an opportunity to consider them.

The CHAIRMAN noted that it had been proposed in Conference Room Paper No. 3 that the third session should be devoted to a review of the reports of the specialized agencies and of the subordinate bodies of the Council. There were, however, certain other questions in the social field which the Council might discuss without prior consideration by one of its subordinate bodies. The division of the first session into two parts, one for the discussion of social matters and the other for current business, would greatly facilitate the Council's work. At that first session, questions arising directly out of resolutions adopted some time earlier by the General Assembly could be considered.

Mr. CORLEY SMITH (United Kingdom) said that his delegation understood the term "subordinate bodies" to refer not to the existing Commissions, but to the organs which the Council might decide to establish in future.

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It should be possible for the Council to organize its work in such a way that it could consider a reasonable number of social items at the beginning of the year.

Mr. CHANG (China) said that it was the view of his delegation at that stage that the recommendations contained in the working paper presented by the United Kingdom and United States delegations should be submitted to the Council. He did not think it necessary, however, to take a vote on those recommendations; the views put forward by the members of the Committee and the reservations made by some should simply be recorded in the Committee's report to the Council.

Referring to sub-paragraph (v) of paragraph 2 of the recommendations (Conference Room Paper No.3), he suggested that it should state clearly that the Council should adopt a new programme of work on a trial basis "for the years 1952 and 1953". That statement might help to resolve some of the difficulties to which the representatives of Australia and France had referred.

With regard to the various subjects in the related groups mentioned in sub-paragraph (iii) of paragraph 2, it was important to distinguish between consideration of routine matters and of questions involving fundamental principles.

As provided in sub-paragraph (1) of paragraph 2 of Conference Room Paper No. 3, the place of meeting of the Council's regular sessions was to be fixed by the Council at its summer session. In that connexion, sessions for the discussion of diverse subjects should not be held away from Headquarters so as not to compel many important Secretariat officials to travel abroad when it was not absolutely necessary.

Finally, the third regular session of the Council should be devoted to consideration of "problems of co-ordination and priority" and that no reference should be made to the reports of "certain specialized agencies and subordinate bodies of the Council". As it stood, the suggested programme appeared to prohibit the Council from discussing those reports during its first two regular sessions.

/Mr. CORLEY SMITH

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Mr. CORLEY SMITH (United Kingdom) said he could agree to the Chinese representative's suggestion to specify the period during which the Council's new programme would be in force.

With regard to the distinction to be established between the various groups of subjects, the United Kingdom delegation felt that what mattered was to fix definite dates for discussion of major questions. Routine items could be discussed before or after, depending on which was more convenient, since they would normally be considered by the members of the permanent delegations.

With regard to the reports of the specialized agencies, the United Kingdom delegation, in submitting its recommendation, had assumed that the reports of some specialized agencies like the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development or the International Monetary Fund would be examined by the Council during the session devoted primarily to economic items. He would have no objection, however, to adopting the wording suggested by the representative of China.

Mr. LUBIN (United States of America) thought it would be better to retain the wording used in the working paper so that the specialized agencies, which were not represented on the Committee, could be sure that the Council would discuss their reports at one of its sessions.

In reply to a question from Mr. SAKSENA (India), the CHAIRMAN pointed out that the general debate on the reorganization of the Council itself might be considered closed but that delegations were still free to submit proposals in writing on the subject.

He added that he could not be present at the afternoon meeting or at the following morning's meeting and suggested that the Committee should appoint the representative of India as acting Chairman, as the Vice-President of the Council was a member of the Indian delegation.

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 1.30 p.m.