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ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR LATIN AMERICA

STATEMENT BY THE OBSERVER OF THE FOOD AND AGRICULTURE
ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS

MR. RAYMOND ETCHEATS

Mr. Chairman:

I am here as an observer and I feel some hesitation in taking the floor. My job should be merely to provide you with some information about the activities of the Food and Agriculture Organization in Latin America. At the beginning of this conference I circulated a report (document E/CN.12/9) to delegates, summarizing our first modest efforts to raise the standards of nutrition of the population of this vast continent and of the Caribbean area, by the development of agricultural production and the rational distribution of foodstuffs.

Nevertheless, with your permission, I will outline our methods and the theory on which our work is based, with particular emphasis on regional work, the effectiveness of which depends to a great extent on the co-operation of the governments represented here and of the Economic Commission for Latin America.

If you glance through the first few pages of our report, you will see that, in addition to the technical conferences already held, it is planned to hold others in Latin America during the course of this year or at the beginning of next. They are the second phase of our work to achieve international co-operation in the field of food and agriculture.

The first phase is a survey made on the spot by FAO officials, in contact with the governments and the regional technical colleges, to decide which problems call for the most careful study. For instance, the conference at Teresopolis, which was made possible by the hospitality and effective assistance of the Brazilian Government, was preceded by a tour of investigation by the FAO Director of Forestry and Forest Products. In the same way, the Anti-Locust and the Infestation Conferences will be preceded by technical surveys made on the spot by FAO experts with the

* This document is a revised translation of the original which was issued in Santiago de Chile.

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assistance of experts from the local administrations. The problems of nutrition which will be discussed at Montevideo shortly, were worked out in the same way.

In this connection I have pleasure in expressing our gratitude to the Governments of Brazil, Colombia, Peru and Uruguay in particular for the generous assistance they have given and are continuing to give the Food and Agriculture Organization in the organization of these conferences.

The third phase is that of action, the work of implementing the resolutions adopted by the conferences. Delegates familiar with the work of the Terezopolis Conference know what has been done along these lines both by governments and by the Food and Agriculture Organization. Let me mention one resolution which has special importance here as it deals with collaboration between the Food and Agriculture Organization and the Economic Commission for Latin America. After requesting governments to submit to the Food and Agriculture Organization reports on their most urgent requirements of material for the better development, utilization and protection of their forest resources, the Conference suggested "That the lists and reports be reviewed and co-ordinated by the Food and Agriculture Organization in close consultation with the Economic Commission for Latin America or other appropriate international agency with the object of preparing a clear and coherent statement of the needs of Latin America and of directing the attention of all agencies concerned to the specific requirements of the Latin-American Countries".

The problems which are being or have been studied by Latin-American experts are world problems, and it is a matter for congratulation that a Conference on Forestry and Forest Products in Latin America should have preceded a similar conference in Asia, that the conference on infestation can take advantage of the experience recently acquired in Europe, that the Nutrition Conference at Montevideo has at its disposal the results of the Baguio Conference (in the Philippines), and that Latin-American fisheries experts are in a position to examine the structure and operation of the Indo-Pacific Fisheries Council.

The search for regional solutions must not prevent direct collaboration between the FAO and governments. The delegate of Venezuela is better qualified than I to tell you about the FAO Mission to Venezuela. Generally speaking, the FAO Missions to Greece, Poland, Siam and Venezuela have been very different. Our Mission in Greece was very general in character. On the other hand, the scope of our Mission to Venezuela, as you can see from the report, was very clearly laid down. They have this in common:

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they were sent at the request of the governments concerned, and were not only successful in making people aware of the problems involved and sometimes leading to the adoption of remedial measures in member countries, but also greatly strengthened the relations between member governments and the Food and Agriculture Organization.

Mr. Chairman, I do not wish to exceed my rights by raising questions which will be discussed later. However, it is impossible to separate the work of the Food and Agriculture Organization from the world food crisis and the work of the World Food Council, to which the delegate of Chile referred in such generous terms.

While listening to the speeches of delegates, I have been impressed by the way in which a general tendency towards planning is making itself felt in Latin America. Not only have delegates referred to the past and present situation, but they have also made special mention of their plans and programmes for economic development as the only cure for the world food crisis. I have been pleased to note that particular importance is attached to agriculture in this field.

In preparing the programme of work of the next Conference of the Food and Agriculture Organization, the World Food Council has taken this development into account and has decided that the main objective of the annual conference of the FAO should be the co-ordination on a regional and world level of plans and programmes for the production and distribution of agricultural products. The Secretariat of the Food and Agriculture Organization is now busy making arrangements for the Conference. Governments have been requested to send detailed reports on their plans and programmes to FAO headquarters before 1 July. May I, Mr. Chairman, take this opportunity to urge Governments, through the delegates to this Conference, to give us their support so that the work we have undertaken can be successfully completed? Only they can give us the information which will enable us to provide a complete picture of world food and agriculture in November.

We realize the difficulties. We know that every agricultural plan is based on statistics and that agricultural statistics are notoriously unreliable. However, we are prepared to give Governments all the assistance we possibly can. Missions have already been sent out to organize the 1950 agricultural census, with the full co-operation of the Inter-American Institute of Statistics. Moreover, as a long-term prospect, the FAO attaches great importance to the establishment of training centres for agricultural statisticians. The delegate of Mexico, who has so
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enthusiastically devoted himself to the improvement of agricultural statistics in his own country and, through the Food and Agriculture Organization, throughout Latin America, has played a great part in this work and knows all the details of it.

A statement of the functions and activities of the Food and Agriculture Organization in Latin America would be unfair and incomplete without special mention of the admirable work accomplished by the National Food and Agriculture Organization Commissions. It would also be unfair and incomplete were I to omit to mention the cordial welcome and perfect co-operation I have received in this country from the Chilean National Food and Agriculture Organization Commission and from its chairman, Mr. Barraza Quiroga.
