



ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL

Resumed Forty-eighth Session

OFFICIAL RECORDS

*Thursday, 14 May 1970,
at 3.40 p.m.*

NEW YORK

President: Mr. J. B. P. MARAMIS (Indonesia).

AGENDA ITEM 6

Teaching of the purposes and principles, the structure and activities of the United Nations and the specialized agencies in schools and other educational institutions of Member States (E/4762 and Add.1)

1. Mr. HAMID (Assistant Secretary-General for Public Information), introducing the report of the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the Director-General of UNESCO (E/4762 and Add.1), said that it covered the period from 1964 to 1969 and contained information provided by the Governments of eighty-one countries on measures taken to implement General Assembly and Economic and Social Council resolutions on teaching about the United Nations in their educational institutions and adult education programmes. The large number of replies had made it possible to obtain a broad geographical view of the current state of teaching about the United Nations and some of the replies provided detailed information about the teachers programmes in the individual countries. However, not all Member States had sent replies, and those received varied considerably in scope. The amounts of supporting material submitted had also varied. It had therefore been difficult to present accurate information in comparative form, especially since there were wide differences in the countries' educational systems and stages of development. It was, nevertheless, evident that there were increasing efforts in many countries to extend and improve teaching about the United Nations at all levels of education and to include the study of the United Nations as a part of the regular school curriculum.

2. There was also an increasing tendency to orient school programmes towards education for international understanding. The replies indicated that UNESCO's Associated Schools Project, which had been in operation since 1953, had made a notable contribution in that regard. It was noteworthy that such teaching, which had been most prevalent at the secondary school level, was gradually being extended to the primary level—an important trend, since most of the world's children received no education after attending primary school. Teaching about the United Nations and its related agencies in higher educational institutions, however, was still unsatisfactory in most countries, being mainly confined to studies in specialized fields. Since leadership in national and world affairs was for the most part assumed by university graduates, it was to be hoped that more action would be taken at the university level to provide teaching and research on United Nations subjects.

3. Attention needed to be focused in most countries on improving teacher training in that field; more short courses

and seminars for teachers already in service should also be organized. The valuable work being done by non-governmental organizations, such as the World Federation of United Nations Associations and the World Confederation of Organizations of the Teaching Profession, could be expanded.

4. There were still considerable gaps in the supply of suitable teaching materials. In the developing countries, the shortage of basic information in a form and language appropriate to the area concerned was particularly acute. The problem had been stressed in the 1964 report to the Council and, in implementation of Council resolution 1012 (XXXVII) of 27 July 1964, the Office of Public Information (OPI) had, since 1965, provided an average of twelve fellowships each year for textbook authors or educational broadcasters from developing countries to enable them to study the work of the United Nations at first hand so that they could prepare materials for use in educational programmes. From 1965 to 1969, five seminars for that purpose had been held under the Triangular Fellowship Programme, including three for textbook authors, in 1965, 1966 and 1967, and two for radio and television broadcasters, in 1968 and 1969, planned and conducted by OPI in close collaboration with UNESCO. Nineteen textbooks on the United Nations family had subsequently been written by the seminar participants and more than 2 million copies had been published in Member States, without cost to the United Nations. More textbooks were now in preparation. The two seminars for educational broadcasters were proving equally productive. It was recommended that the United Nations and UNESCO should continue their fruitful collaboration in that field.

5. Paragraphs 8 to 15 of the report gave details of important actions taken by the international community having a direct bearing on teaching about the United Nations, particularly in regard to human rights. In view of those many-sided activities, it seemed especially important that the efforts being made should be closely co-ordinated at the national and international levels to ensure their maximum impact and effectiveness.

6. The work of educational authorities and teachers in many countries for the development of education about the United Nations, and the work of the non-governmental organizations in that field, was greatly appreciated. The latter's activities had included the organization of teachers' seminars, and conferences, the production of educational materials and the planning and execution of extra-curricular activities. The contributions made by the World Federation of United Nations Associations and the World Confederation of Organizations of the Teaching Profession deserved special mention; it was hoped that those and other non-governmental organizations would continue to expand and intensify their efforts and thus make the purposes and

activities of the United Nations family more widely known and better understood. It was also hoped that Member States would continue the progress noted in the present report.

7. Mr. DE SILVA (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) said that when UNESCO had agreed to associate itself with efforts to promote teaching about the United Nations family it had been aware of the problems involved in having that topic introduced into school curricula. However, considerable progress had been made in recent years. UNESCO's experience in serving the Member States had shown that, in general, while neither teachers nor students were particularly interested in the structure of the United Nations and the specialized agencies, they were anxious to learn of the goals which the United Nations family had achieved. As General Assembly resolution 2567 (XXIV) made clear, if it was desired to teach more about the United Nations family, more information must be provided about the aims pursued and the objectives achieved. Efforts must be made to introduce such teaching in order that all children, upon leaving school, would have some awareness of the United Nations and its work. In his view, the report confirmed that, despite the shortcomings mentioned, the United Nations and the specialized agencies had been successful in promoting education about the United Nations family. However, much remained to be done and UNESCO, which felt that teaching about the work of the United Nations should be more closely related both to school programmes and to civic and moral education, was determined to increase its efforts to achieve the goals outlined in the report.

8. Mr. HAMBRO (Norway) said that, as stated in his country's reply reproduced in document E/4762, teaching about the United Nations system was compulsory in Norwegian elementary schools and lectures on the subject were accordingly involved in the teacher-training curriculum. Special efforts were being made to stimulate young people's interest in the problems and aspirations of the world's less developed areas. The active and efficient Norwegian United Nations Association, with the help of the Government and voluntary organizations, played an important role in providing the public with information about the United Nations; he himself had participated actively in those endeavours. He wished to pay a tribute to the United Nations Information Office in Scandinavia for its work in that field. As far as he knew, United Nations activities were given greater press coverage in Norway than in any other country.

9. From time to time, the failures and unfulfilled expectations of the United Nations, particularly in regard to the maintenance of peace and security, had led to disillusionment and criticism. Such criticism, which was based on insufficient knowledge of the true role of the United Nations, could more appropriately be directed towards Governments. At the same time, generalizing on the brighter aspects and glossing over harsh realities would not enhance the Organization's prestige. The aim should be to present, in so far as possible, an objective and politically unbiased picture; only in that way could the Organization benefit from the support and criticism of enlightened opinion. The observance of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the United Nations should lead to wider public understand-

ing and support of its work and aims. Although the replies of States in document E/4762 indicated that, in general, progress was being made, no efforts should be spared by Governments, the United Nations and voluntary organizations to expand and improve information and education about United Nations affairs, for without the interest and support of world opinion the Organization would be doomed to failure.

10. During the discussion in the Council, at its forty-eighth session of the mobilization of public opinion in favour of the second United Nations Development Decade, his delegation had described the measures being taken in Norway. Resolution 1477 (XLVIII) reflected the importance the Council attached to mobilizing public opinion in the developed and developing countries in connexion with the Second United Nations Development Decade. The United Nations family had a special obligation to offer assistance in this connexion to the developing countries, in view of their limited resources.

11. He had made only general observations because the report had been made available too late for detailed study. Although his delegation was aware of the difficulties facing the Secretariat in preparing documentation, caused in part by the tardiness of Member States in furnishing required material, it felt that technical reasons such as lack of staff and facilities were not acceptable excuses for delays. As the recurring problem of delays in receiving reports and background documentation was becoming increasingly serious, it felt that the six weeks' rule applying to advance documentation should be strictly observed in future even if it meant that consideration of a particular item had to be postponed. The Council would have an opportunity to discuss the problem at its forty-ninth session, and his delegation hoped that a satisfactory solution would be found.

12. Mr. MOJSOV (Yugoslavia) said that the teaching of young people about the purposes and work of the United Nations and the specialized agencies was of the greatest importance for international understanding and his country whole-heartedly supported action to encourage it. The report showed that progress had been made both in the number of parties engaged in such teaching and in the quality of the teaching materials they used. Teaching about the United Nations was increasingly becoming an integral part of education in many countries, and there was a tendency to attribute ever greater importance to the role of the United Nations in the solution of the most pressing problems of the day—the maintenance of peace and security, disarmament, decolonization and development. In his delegation's view, that trend reflected the growing interest of youth in the crucial issues of peace and security. Significant progress was being made in teacher training in the field of education about the United Nations. Specialized seminars and summer courses seemed to offer a particularly useful means of providing such training. The preparation of special teaching materials was also important; there were still unsolved problems in connexion with that matter, particularly in the developing countries. A useful practice, which should be encouraged, was the exchange of materials and the holding of seminars for authors and broadcasters from the developing countries.

13. It was clear from the replies of Governments that the most outstanding success in teaching about the United Nations had been achieved in secondary education. It was essential that universities should expand their activities and that more seminars on that subject should be organized. Extra-curricular programmes, such as those of United Nations clubs, while they could not take the place of systematic educational programmes, had some advantages over the latter and offered wide possibilities for involving young people and adults in teaching about the United Nations. In that connexion he paid a tribute to the work of the specialized agencies, particularly UNESCO, the non-governmental organizations and the World Association for the United Nations.

14. In Yugoslavia, information on United Nations activities was provided in primary and secondary schools, and United Nations clubs were active in those schools and in the universities. The clubs organized meetings and student exchanges with other countries. Extra-curricular educational institutions, such as workers' universities, provided teaching about the principles, structure and activities of the United Nations under adult education programmes on history, economic and social sciences and international relations. Such institutions, together with the trade unions and the United Nations clubs, organized activities to commemorate United Nations anniversaries in the workers' organizations. Faculties organized research projects and seminars, and mass communications media gave thorough coverage of United Nations topics.

15. The occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the United Nations should give new impetus to teaching about the United Nations, with increasing emphasis on objective presentation of current problems.

16. Mr. TAIHITU (Indonesia) observed that teaching about the purposes, principles and activities of the United Nations had made an impact in the twenty-three years since the adoption by the General Assembly of resolution 137 (II). Owing to improved mass communication media and education, the youth of the present time were in a better position than their predecessors had been to undertake the principles of the United Nations. Yet they had only to contemplate what was happening in the world, whether at home or abroad, to realize how inadequately those principles were being implemented. In that connexion, he felt that teaching about the ideals of the United Nations should be focused on the provisions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the subsequent United Nations Declarations, all of which—particularly the Declaration on decolonization—aimed at implementing those provisions.

17. Mere familiarity with the basic structure and instruments of the United Nations would not, however, lead to a better world. To impress upon the young the ideals of human brotherhood was a task which could not be left to the schools alone. A child's outlook was influenced by many other factors, including the home, religion and the impact of mass media; although the child could be instructed on human rights in school, the example set by his parents and teachers was vital to the development of his sense of values.

18. Due regard should also be paid to adult education. In that connexion, his delegation whole-heartedly supported the Secretary-General's remarks, in the introduction to his annual report to the twenty-fourth session of the General Assembly on the work of the Organization, concerning the idea of an international university,¹ which it felt that the United Nations, after twenty-five years, was qualified to establish.

19. Mr. AZEVEDO BRITO (Brazil) endorsed the Norwegian representative's remarks regarding the delay in the circulation of document E/4762.

20. The report gave ample grounds for optimism; replies from governments showed that considerable progress had been achieved in communicating to youth the basic message of the United Nations, its purposes and its principles. That was a welcome development, for the Organization's future was linked to the understanding by youth of its ideals. The orientation of teaching about the United Nations, however, would always have to be grounded in the political, social, cultural and historical experience of each country.

21. Brazil, as one of the original signatories to the Charter, had a deep allegiance to the United Nations. Owing to its federal structure, its teaching programmes varied in detail from region to region, but a common emphasis on the significance of the United Nations and its specialized agencies was readily apparent. Although its educational programmes on the United Nations were already extensive and detailed, his Government was considering widening their scope in the context of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Organization.

22. Mr. GORSE (France) said that, had the report been circulated earlier, it would have been useful to compare it with replies from Governments in the 1964 report² so as to determine whether there were grounds for the optimism expressed during the current debate. The basic question was whether the present turbulent idealism of youth could find expression in co-operation with the United Nations or within some other framework. Youth was interested in the positive aspects of United Nations activities, and paragraphs 114 and 115 of the report were especially revealing in that connexion. The Security Council and the General Assembly, as the two organs most in the public eye, were all too often the only organs whose activities were known to the public at large. As they were the organs in which international tensions were most frequently reflected, the potential of the United Nations for positive achievement, as evidenced by the work of its other bodies, was often overlooked. That circumstance made the work of non-governmental organizations in teaching about the United Nations all the more important.

23. Teaching about the United Nations at the primary and secondary levels in his country was satisfactory. Special efforts were made to mark particular events such as the anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

¹ See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Twenty-fourth Session, Supplement No. 1A*, paras. 196 and 197.

² *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, Thirty-seventh Session, Annexes*, agenda item 33, document E/3875 and Add.1-3.

and a national committee had been set up to prepare a programme for the Organization's twenty-fifth anniversary, which would consider such aspects as the use to be made of mass media. The Ministry of Education had prepared printed matter for use on the same occasion. He emphasized the importance which his Government attached to the prime role of the United Nations, namely, combating under-development—a positive role in which the idealism of youth could be brought into play.

24. Mrs. DE APARICIO (World Federation of United Nations Associations) said that General Assembly resolution 137 (II) was still highly relevant; the Secretary-General's report showed that, despite the progress achieved by some Governments, knowledge of the purposes, principles and achievements of the United Nations had by no means been sufficiently widely disseminated. Her organization recognized the importance of the Secretary-General's quinquennial reports, which were essential as an indication both of achievements and of serious lacunae in teaching about the United Nations. It was axiomatic that the United Nations could not fulfil its purposes without the support of informed public opinion. For that reason, her organization considered the prosecution of its activities essential. That entailed continuing the organization of regional seminars devoted to teaching about the United Nations (twenty-two had taken place between 1964 and 1969, supported by UNESCO, the host State and participants, and organized according to regional linguistic groupings) and the organization of summer schools at Geneva, with participants from all parts of the world, which were supported by UNESCO, a number of foundations and private persons and the participants themselves (six had been organized in the period under review).

25. Each association belonging to her organization adapted its activities to local circumstances, often with the direct help of UNESCO, OPI and local Information Centres. Such assistance, particularly that from OPI, was of considerable importance. The education authorities in several Member States had established direct relations with United Nations associations, with the result that, while teaching about the United Nations might not be institutionalized everywhere, activities in that field by non-governmental organizations were officially authorized and, in some instance, even supported. The need for teaching about the United Nations at all educational levels was fully accepted and every effort should be made within the United Nations system—particularly by UNESCO—and within national educational circles to make it more effective. Sceptical attitudes towards the work of the United Nations changed radically under the impact of reliable information.

26. One main obstacle to teaching about the United Nations was ignorance of the meaning and philosophy of the Organization. If the various bodies within the United Nations system were to be used for the purposes for which they had been established, the peoples of the world must have a basic knowledge of their structure. Another obstacle was conservatism in educational programmes; despite the practical work of her own and other non-governmental organizations and OPI, it was extremely difficult to change attitudes. Two further obstacles were a lack of audio-visual teaching aids and the rigidity of school programmes.

27. It was plain that, despite the progress achieved, increased and continuing efforts were necessary in teaching about the United Nations, which was a contribution to international understanding. The relevant section of OPI should be expanded and the significance of the potential contribution of information centres should be recognized.

28. More detailed information on her organization's activities was to be found in its latest report.

29. Mr. BLAU (United States of America) said that education was a matter for the several states in his country. In addition, people jealously guarded their right to educate their children as they saw fit and there was, therefore, a marked trend towards further decentralization of education. Nevertheless, interest in teaching about the United Nations was general. In primary schools, the tendency was to avoid institutional questions and to promote international understanding by teaching about the cultures and ways of life of other nations. At the secondary level, increasing emphasis was placed on institutional questions. Such teaching activities had not overcome problems arising as a result of concentration on the political aspects of the United Nations which, related as they were to deep-seated and intractable problems, gave rise to a feeling of frustration. His delegation therefore had joined others in urging the Secretary-General to emphasize positive achievements by the United Nations in, for example, the economic and social fields. In that connexion, it was to be hoped that there would be close co-operation between the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the Office of Public Information in connexion with the Centre for Economic and Social Information.

30. His delegation attached great importance to the subject-matter of the Secretary-General's report but wondered whether, given the large number of items before the Council, the item now under discussion should remain on its agenda. The General Conference and the Executive Board of UNESCO were better able than the Council to assume responsibility for providing guidance on teaching about the United Nations. He thought that the Council should take note of the report and suggest to UNESCO that it should assume such responsibility. He wished to make it clear, however, that his delegation would expect the present co-operation between OPI and UNESCO to continue undiminished, and that the division of labour between the Secretariats of the United Nations and UNESCO should not change.

31. Mr. MANI (India) said it was clear from the remarks of the Assistant Secretary-General for Public Information that there was no room for complacency where the dissemination of knowledge about the role of the United Nations and the specialized agencies was concerned. In that connexion, his delegation regretted that it would be impossible for representatives to make specific, detailed comments on the report of the Secretary-General owing to its late distribution.

32. Much of the difficulty in teaching about the United Nations resulted from the dearth of appropriate teaching materials, especially simple, illustrated reading material in local languages designed for actual class-room use. He pointed out that the teaching materials used in Western

countries were not always suitable for the developing countries. That situation could be alleviated if the network of United Nations information centres was expanded and all centres were supplied with large quantities of class-room materials in local languages.

33. The quality of teaching about the United Nations could be improved in a number of ways. One possibility was the organization of additional seminars and workshops for teachers on the role of the United Nations and its specialized agencies in solving the problems confronting mankind. Summer courses could be offered to teachers to train them in integrating teaching on the United Nations into the context of the normal curriculum. Consideration should also be given to the granting of additional fellowships to educators from the developing countries to enable them to come to Headquarters to study the activities of the United Nations at first hand; UNESCO might be able to provide assistance in that regard. Co-operation between UNESCO and the United Nations in the field of education should be further intensified.

34. On the occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the United Nations, educational materials about the Organization's activities would be published in eighteen languages; his delegation hoped that some of them would be Asian languages. He suggested that the majority of those materials should be sent to teachers in the developing countries so that they would be in a better position, during the coming year, to impart to their students a knowledge of the activities of the United Nations and the specialized agencies over the past twenty-five years.

35. Mr. TARASOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said it was unfortunate that the voluminous report of the Secretary-General could not be given detailed consideration in the short time available. It was particularly regrettable that it had been circulated so late in English and that no Russian translation had been made available.

36. The report made clear the great importance most Governments attached to the matter under consideration. The greatest difficulty encountered in that connexion was that, while nearly all the world's peoples regarded the United Nations as the primary instrument for the maintenance of international peace and security, they were largely ignorant of its role in solving the economic and social problems of the international community. It was apparent from the report that the Office of Public Information and the secretariats of UNESCO and other specialized agencies had done a great deal of useful work in connexion with the dissemination of information on the activities of the United Nations system, and it was essential that these efforts should be carried on and strengthened. However, the importance of avoiding duplication could not be over-emphasized, particularly in view of the significant expenditures involved. He observed in that connexion that the primary responsibility in the field of education lay with the Member States themselves.

37. Educational authorities in his country attached special importance to the work of the United Nations system, which was systematically dealt with in technical, secondary and higher education programmes, and in programmes for adults. Both the schools and the information media devoted

a great deal of time to educational activities relating to the purposes and principles of the United Nations and its invaluable work in such fields as human rights, the progressive development and codification of international law, the prevention of racial discrimination, the development of international legal principles concerning friendly relations between States, and the struggle against nazism, colonialism and imperialist interference in the affairs of States. Soviet citizens took a keen interest in the affairs of the United Nations and tried to keep abreast not only of the deliberations of the Security Council and the General Assembly but also of the economic and social development activities of various United Nations bodies. The national United Nations Association played an important co-ordinating role in that regard. In the secondary and vocational schools, United Nations activities were dealt with in specific courses, as well as in the context of courses on modern history. In institutions of higher learning, they were treated in courses of general education on international problems, while special courses, offered by faculties of economics, literature, journalism and arts, universities and research institutes, went into greater detail. The efforts of educational institutions received valuable support from the United Nations Information Centre in Moscow.

38. The twenty-fifth anniversary of the United Nations provided an excellent opportunity to review the past successes and failures of the Organization with a view to improving its work. It should serve as an occasion for giving new impetus to educational activities designed to acquaint the general population with United Nations activities. In the USSR, a special conference had been held on that subject at Patrice Lumumba University, with the participation of students from Asia, Africa and Latin America, as well as the Soviet Union itself.

39. On the occasion of the hundredth anniversary of the birth of Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, celebrated by the citizens of the USSR and progressive people throughout the world, the Soviet Academy of Sciences, in co-operation with the national United Nations Association, had held a seminar on the United Nations and Lenin's peaceful foreign policy, at which such matters as the right to self-determination, disarmament, the principles of peaceful coexistence and social progress had been discussed.

40. The lofty task of teaching the purposes and principles of the United Nations must be approached with unswerving dedication, but it would be harmful and misleading to dwell on mere abstractions. It was no less essential to speak out against violations of those principles, such as imperialist aggression in South-East Asia and the Middle East, the crimes of racism and *apartheid* and the suppression of national liberation movements. In that connexion, the report reflected the continuing discrimination against a number of countries, due to the efforts of certain States Members, which resulted in their exclusion from the United Nations and the specialized agencies, as if the international community had no interest in seeing that the principles of the United Nations should become a universal reality.

41. In conclusion, he expressed the hope that intensified efforts to inform the world's peoples about the work of the United Nations would, in the future, inspire them to work yet harder to strengthen international peace and security.

42. Mr. HAMID (Assistant Secretary-General for Public Information), referring to the point raised by the United States representative, explained that the report was the product of fruitful co-operation between the United Nations and UNESCO. While education *per se* was indeed the responsibility of UNESCO, the question under consideration referred specifically to the United Nations and the specialized agencies. It was the duty of the Office of Public Information to report on all the activities of the United Nations and its agencies, whereas UNESCO's information services dealt only with general cultural, scientific and educational activities.

43. One of the basic tasks of the Office was to encourage national education authorities to increase teaching about the United Nations. As an example, he cited the case of the Director of the Information Centre at Teheran, whose untiring efforts—and mastery of the Persian language—had led the Government of Iran to incorporate teaching on the United Nations into its educational programmes from the primary to the university level. Similar efforts were aimed at non-governmental organizations. It was particularly important that the leaders of the future should be conversant with the work of the United Nations, and the Organization and UNESCO were working in close co-operation towards that goal.

44. Mr. DE SILVA (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) said that, in so far as the item under consideration was concerned, the relationship between the United Nations and UNESCO was almost

symbiotic, with the parent body providing guidance and instructions, while UNESCO served as a highly specialized instrument. The debate in the Council highlighted its genuine interest in supervising the development of teaching about the United Nations. The real need was for more ideas, not larger budgets, to assist Governments in developing their own programmes.

45. As an example of the way in which non-government organizations could make an important contribution at no cost to the United Nations, he noted that an educational organization based in the United States was about to distribute to some 1,800,000 educators copies of a folder describing the entire range of educational activities carried out within the United Nations system.

46. While he understood the desire of some representatives to streamline procedures, he hoped that UNESCO would continue to receive the extremely useful guidance of the Council.

47. The PRESIDENT suggested that the Council should take note of the report of the Secretary-General (E/4762 and Add.1) and should request the United Nations and UNESCO to prepare a further report on the subject to be submitted in 1975 and to continue their co-operation in the field of teaching about the United Nations.

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 6.10 p.m.