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President: Mr. Juan I. COOKE (Argentina)

Present:

The representatives of the following countries: Argentina, Australia, Belgium, China, Cuba, Czechoslovakia, Ecuador, Egypt, France, India, Norway, Pakistan, Turkey, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Venezuela, Yugoslavia.

Observers from the following Member States: Brazil, Dominican Republic, Indonesia, Israel, Mexico, Netherlands, Poland.

The representatives of the following specialized agencies: International Labour Organisation, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, International Monetary Fund, World Health Organization, World Meteorological Organization.

Organization and operation of the Council and its commissions and amendment of rule 82 of the rules of procedure of the Council (Council resolutions 414 (XIII), 442 (XIV), 443 (XIV), 445 I (XIV), 512 A (XVII) and 530 (XVII), and General Assembly resolution 735 (VIII)) (E/2541, E/2542, E/2598, E/2623 and Add.1, E/2625) (continued.)

[Agenda item 29]

1. Mr. HSAI (China) said that his delegation had followed with keen interest the Secretary-General's efforts to improve the efficiency of the Secretariat's work, particularly in the economic and social fields. It was well known that the Secretariat had been organized before any experience had been acquired, and the staff got together in haste. A general review of its organization and work was therefore long overdue. Indeed, in an organization of the size of the United Nations, periodic review of the internal structure was not only desirable, but imperative. Gratitude was due to the Secretary-General for his courageous leadership and for the painstaking way in which he had approached a difficult task.
2. The Chinese delegation wholeheartedly endorsed the two principles of rationalization and flexibility which the Secretary-General had expounded in his statement to

the Council on 30 March 1954 (E/2598, annex), for it was beyond doubt that they would conduce to a more economical and efficient use of the Secretariat.

3. On that same occasion the Secretary-General had stated: "It is, however, the third angle of approach that is obviously of most direct concern to the Council—namely, a review of the substantive tasks falling upon the Secretariat. Without such an examination of the substantive work to be performed, the possibilities of a streamlining of the staff leading to substantial economies are bound to be quite limited." The review which the Secretary-General had conducted with the assistance of the responsible members of his staff must have afforded him a clear picture of the Secretariat's operations, and his recommendations were therefore based upon a real understanding of the situation. The Chinese delegation endorsed most of the Secretary-General's recommendations and would comment on them in the Co-ordination Committee.

4. In the meantime, it wished to express unqualified approval of the Secretary-General's decision to fuse the Economic and Social Affairs Departments, which would lead to better co-ordination and greater economy by eliminating the need for endless liaison between the two departments at all levels. Co-ordination between the new department and the Technical Assistance Administration would now become direct instead of triangular. The Secretary-General thought that the fusion would also mean closer co-ordination between the work done at Headquarters and that of the regional economic commissions, but it was not clear whether the secretariats of the latter would be able to carry out some of the tasks of the new department relating to regional social affairs.

5. The duration of the Council's sessions and its heavy agendas had become a serious problem, and his delegation was in general agreement with what had been said on the matter and was prepared to support any proposal that would result in a concentration of effort without adversely affecting the Council's primary responsibilities. His delegation had consistently held that the number of problems which might come within the Council's purview could be increased indefinitely, some of them being as old as human society itself; but with the limited resources at their disposal the Council and its secretariat must concentrate on the more immediate and urgent problems, such as the promotion of the economic and social development of under-developed countries.

6. Mr. AZMI (Egypt) commended the efforts of the Secretary-General to find a solution to the problem raised in the agenda item under discussion.

7. The salient feature of the notes by the Secretary-General (E/2541, E/2542, E/2598) and of his oral state-

ment at the 796th meeting was his desire to ensure harmonious co-ordination amongst the Council's various organs and also between the Secretariat and the Council. The opportunity afforded the Council by a study of those documents to practise what some called self-control and others called self-criticism would provide a clearer view of the future and produce fruitful results. Again, the forthcoming review of the Charter, to be undertaken by the General Assembly in 1955, lent even greater immediacy to the question of the reorganization of the Council and its commissions.

8. At the present stage of discussion, he did not wish to deal with the substance of the proposals made by the Secretary-General and by the various speakers in the debate; he would state his position in the Co-ordination Committee. Meanwhile, he supported, in their general substance, the views expressed by the United Kingdom representative at the 796th meeting, and would merely draw attention to the following points, which he considered fundamental. First, the Council's working methods. These affected the sessions of both the Council and the standing commissions. Secondly, the clear demarcation line to be drawn between the powers of the specialized agencies and those of the Council's functional commissions. Past experience had shown the danger of allowing confusion to reign in regard to the respective roles of the functional commissions and the specialized agencies, and the need to co-ordinate their activities for the smooth running and efficiency of the Organization as a whole. Thirdly, the question of the functional commissions. It had sometimes been found in the past that the Council did not show a sufficiently understanding disposition towards its functional commissions and sub-commissions, which had nevertheless been set up by it and might have expected it to exhibit a more paternal attitude.

9. He hoped that the discussions on the agenda item in question would give the lie direct to the rumours recently published in *Le Monde*, according to which the reorganization of the Council was to be used to restrict the powers of a particular regional commission, since it was feared in certain quarters that the Commission concerned might be expanding a little further than was considered necessary.

10. Again, the statement by the Secretary-General had raised a procedural question—namely, what form discussions would take when an important question concerned several committees simultaneously. In such a case the Council would have a choice of two methods. First, it might set up a joint committee of the Co-ordination Committee and one of the committees concerned (Technical Assistance Committee, Economic Committee, Social Committee). Secondly, the President could allow the other committees sufficient time between meetings to enable their members themselves to attend the meetings of the Co-ordination Committee with a view to participating in discussions directly concerning the committee of which they were members.

11. In conclusion, he wished to stress the unreality of the view expressed by the Secretary-General in his statement and echoed by several other speakers, that the main difficulties facing the world of to-day were of

an economic or social nature. In his opinion, world peace could only be assured by solving the political difficulties. That fact had emerged clearly at the Geneva Conference, which was running concurrently with the Council's session in another wing of the Palais des Nations.

12. Mr. SEN (India) expressed gratification at the presence of the Secretary-General, whose interest in the subject under discussion was well known and whose views would be given the closest attention.

13. Although detailed discussion must clearly be reserved for the Co-ordination Committee, it was to be hoped that a general debate might be useful and in the end save time. It had so far revealed more or less general agreement on the objectives to be sought, but a great divergence of view as to method. As one who had attended many previous sessions, he must warn the Council not to be oversanguine of results. Many of the matters now before it had been considered at length in the past, and the possibility must be faced that again no substantial improvement would be achieved.

14. The United Kingdom representative's suggestion, made at the 796th meeting, that many items could better be discussed by the specialized agencies certainly merited close examination; but it should be remembered that the Council's efforts to devise a procedure whereby it could obtain a general idea of their work without entering into technical matters had not so far been entirely unsuccessful. In any event, the views of the specialized agencies should be heard on the subject.

15. His delegation agreed with the Secretary-General's views about the need to limit documentation, and hoped that in the future there would be no more cause for complaint about delays in receipt, particularly in distant countries with inadequate means of communication.

16. He believed that the number of functional commissions might profitably be reduced, and in particular was in favour of abolishing the Fiscal Commission and transferring its functions to another body.

17. The Co-ordination Committee must give very serious consideration to the question of a permanent advisory commission on international commodity trade, since it would be futile to deny that very little progress would be made unless the United States, the largest single consumer of primary products, was prepared to co-operate.

18. In conclusion, he suggested that the Council had reached a stage in its existence when any hasty or piecemeal effort to reorganize its work would be unprofitable. Nor should it minimize the very real achievements of the past eight years.

19. Mr. FENAUX (Belgium) congratulated the Secretary-General on his very valuable communications to the Council, and thanked him for showing, by coming to Geneva, how much importance he attached to the Council's work.

20. The Council's task in the matter under consideration was no simple one, and called for a comparison of the various points of view and critical scrutiny of the proposals submitted. Since that was a matter for the

Co-ordination Committee, his delegation would confine itself during the general discussion to giving some indication of the general lines of its attitude.

21. It would like, in the first place, to draw attention to the remark made towards the end of paragraph 3 of the introduction to the note by the Secretary-General (E/2598) that "there is a limit to what can be handled effectively by the organization . . .". That was a fact that could not be sufficiently stressed, in view of the strictly limited nature of the resources, both human and financial, at the disposal of the United Nations. A choice must therefore be made amongst the various programmes of study and action and amongst the various publications. An order of importance must be established for the services of the Secretariat and an order of urgency for the action to be undertaken by the Assembly and the Council. Considerable efforts had, as a matter of fact, already been exerted in that direction in recent years. Priorities had been fixed and a waiting list drawn up, while the question of concentrating efforts and resources and the problems of documentation and co-ordination had been accorded particular attention. But much remained to be done in order to achieve proper rationalization, more particularly in economic and social activities—a remark which applied with particular force to some of the specialized agencies.

22. Among the happy suggestions made in the Secretary-General's note (E/2598), the Belgian delegation wished to single out the proposals for a reduction in work of lesser importance, the recognition of the full responsibility of specialized agencies for particular tasks clearly within their mandate, the taking-over of certain specialized studies by competent private institutions, the elimination of clear cases of duplication of effort, such as certain work carried out simultaneously by the United Nations and the regional economic commissions, the less frequent dispatch of questionnaires to governments, the less frequent publication of certain periodical reviews, the discontinuance of unnecessary studies, and the need to shift the emphasis from general research to activities directly related to "the formulation of policy and to economic development". In that connexion, his delegation particularly appreciated the remarks on international action in the field of human rights and the protection of minorities contained in paragraphs 21 and 22 of the Secretary-General's note (E/2598).

23. In the matter of priorities, the Belgian delegation accepted the principle laid down by the Secretary-General that the "overriding objective of the total economic and social programme of the United Nations" should be "the promotion of the economic and social development of under-developed countries" (E/2598, paragraph 4), though it must not be forgotten that the United Nations was a universal organization at the service of the whole of mankind.

24. The proposals for the reorganization of the Secretariat made by the Secretary-General in his note (E/2598) had the approval of the Belgian delegation, which had no wish to restrict the Secretary-General's powers under the Council's decisions where the organization of work and the employment of the Secretariat's staff and resources were concerned. It felt, however, that it was

important to avoid certain pitfalls in reorganizing the Secretariat. Rationalization of United Nations activities must in no way detract from the truly international and universal character of the Organization; co-ordination must not be confused with concentration; and the independence of the specialized agencies must be respected within the limits of a general body of rules, as required, for example, by the establishment of technical assistance programmes. The regional economic commissions must preserve their individuality. The fullest possible use should be made of the European Office of the United Nations, which had proved its worth. The four-year programme of conferences should be consolidated, since the experiment had been a definite success. The provisions of the rules of procedure regarding languages should be strictly observed, and documentation should not be cut at the expense of one of the official or working languages.

25. In addition, very great caution should be used in asking universities or national institutions to undertake research work, so as to avoid the possibility of one-sided information. Certain non-governmental organizations, however, were truly international in structure and excellently equipped to brief the United Nations and help it in its work. The Institute of Administrative Sciences and the Union of International Associations were pertinent examples.

26. The Belgian delegation also wished to utter a warning against the unwise discontinuance of certain activities recently taken over by the United Nations following the absorption of intergovernmental organizations, which were no longer there to resume any tasks abandoned by the United Nations. A case in point was the International Penal and Penitentiary Commission, in whose work his Government had been particularly interested.

27. With reference to the reorganization of the Council and its commissions, he said that the Belgian delegation, like those of the United Kingdom, the United States and France, was in favour of shorter sessions, less heavy agendas, concentrated subjects, an agenda containing few but vitally important items, specific proposals, the elimination of purely academic, abstract and ideological debates, a reduction in documentation, fewer draft resolutions and a distinction between questions of crucial importance and matters of ordinary routine.

28. With regard to the Council's sessions, his delegation had been favourably impressed by the Argentine representative's suggestion, made at the 796th meeting, concerning the advisability of preparatory meetings before the Council's regular sessions.

29. In the Belgian delegation's view, the maintenance of the functional commissions could be justified only in so far as they fulfilled the needs of international co-operation in the economic and social field. Those commissions too must be subjected to the discipline of priorities and must manifest the realistic spirit that was needed to improve and raise the level of the working of the Council. Lastly, they should always stay within their own purely technical orbit.

30. The object of the proposed reorganization was to give greater prestige to the work of the Council and its subsidiary bodies. Hence governments should be re-

presented by distinguished figures, who should not be made to waste time by unnecessarily long sessions or pointless debates.

31. As far as the Council Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations was concerned, his delegation reserved the right to submit suggestions when that Committee itself came to examine the claims put forward by the Conference on Non-Governmental Organizations. It considered that the consultations of non-governmental organizations with consultative status should be made more effective and that the exchanges of views between the representatives of those organizations and the members of the Committee could be rendered more fruitful. To that end, the subject of the consultations must be known early enough to enable the countries which were members of the Committee to be represented by experts on the matters to be dealt with.

32. Lastly, the Belgian delegation supported the United Kingdom delegation's opinion, given at the 796th meeting, that the Council should reconsider its role, which was principally one of co-ordination, and should develop into a more living organism and re-direct its economic and social activities; in short, that it should continually revise its policy in that sphere. His delegation also endorsed the general tendency shown in the Secretary-General's notes and comments, and, in particular, his statement that the principal aim was not economy, but the greatest possible efficiency. It further supported the French representative's suggestion, made at the 796th meeting, that the Secretary-General should be asked to submit a yearly message to the Council on the situation in fields within its competence.

33. The Belgian delegation reserved the right to make detailed comments in the Co-ordination Committee.

34. Mr. KUMYKIN (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that the question under discussion was of extreme importance inasmuch as the Council was one of the foremost organs of the United Nations, being concerned under the Charter with vital economic and social problems. The Council could not discharge its functions efficiently unless its work was properly organized, and that was primarily a problem of selecting the questions to be dealt with. Clearly, different problems would emerge as world conditions changed and as the Council's work evolved, but, in his view, at the present time and in the near future the Council should concern itself with the following issues: the promotion of international trade and economic co-operation; the improvement of standards of living and employment; the promotion of economic development in under-developed countries; technical assistance to under-developed countries; human rights and the status of women; and, finally, international co-operation in the educational, scientific and cultural spheres.

35. If the work of the Council and its subsidiary bodies were concentrated on the most pressing problems and if resources were not dispersed over too wide an area, better results might be expected and the Council would gain in authority and prestige.

36. His delegation agreed with many of the points put forward by the Secretary-General. His presence during

the present discussion would undoubtedly be beneficial and should constitute a precedent for the future.

37. In his statement at the 796th meeting, the Secretary-General had referred to self-criticism, but another kind of criticism was also needed, since the Council's work did not entirely depend on itself. The Council's agenda and the whole programme of its subsidiary bodies and Secretariat were often overloaded with questions of comparatively minor importance that were of interest only to a small number of governments. It was a general rule for the agenda to contain at least thirty to forty items, yet the Council and its regional economic commissions had still not accomplished much by way of increasing international trade, encouraging economic co-operation, and raising standards of living and employment. The Social Commission, for example, had so far failed to tackle the problem of extending social insurance and social security schemes throughout the world.

38. His delegation agreed with the Secretary-General on the need to restrict both the number and the length of documents, many of which failed to do justice to the importance of the problems with which they purported to deal. One way of shortening documents would be to omit all purely formal references to earlier resolutions and decisions.

39. It was to be hoped that the Council's work would be given more practical direction, and his delegation would study carefully any proposals to that end submitted in the Co-ordination Committee.

40. In conclusion, he stated that his Government would be prepared to participate in a permanent advisory commission on international commodity trade, which should be a useful body. The proposals made by the Argentine Government in its comments (E/2623) might form the basis of a decision on the question at the present session.

41. Mr. MONTOYA (Venezuela) associated himself with previous speakers in welcoming the presence of the Secretary-General. He would, so far as possible, avoid repetition of points already made.

42. So far as his delegation was concerned, the Council was the most important organ of the United Nations. Attempts had already been made, with varying success, to reorganize its working methods; and so far, during the present session, little had been said that was altogether original. The Council would have to fortify the faith of governments and ministers, and combat an impression that it was a kind of debating society which had a plethora of documents to deal with. Before it could adopt a more human and less technical approach, there had to be some limitation in the scope of its work. On the other hand, his delegation would in general not favour reducing the number of functional commissions and transferring their tasks to some other organ of the Council.

43. He agreed strongly with the desire for a reduction in the number of documents, and urged that those distributed should be sent out well before the session. The permanent representatives in Geneva should receive copies of all documents; the additional expense would be more than compensated. He would deal later with more specific proposals.

44. Mr. CORKERY (Australia), regretting that the leader of his delegation was not present at the moment to present its general point of view, said that his delegation entirely approved the way in which the item under discussion was being dealt with, and welcomed the suggestions made both orally and in writing by the Secretary-General.

45. It must not be forgotten that the Council had considerable successes to its credit. There had been a compelling desire immediately after the war to deal with several urgent and large-scale problems. Some of the alleged shortcomings no doubt had their origin in the fact that an attempt had then been made to do too much too quickly. There had not always been sufficient correlation of individual activities with general aims.

46. His delegation agreed with the Secretary-General in believing that economic welfare and social justice, which the Council could do so much to promote, were an essential basis of peace. Activities which did not lead so directly as others might have done to the achievement of those objectives would be discussed later in the Co-ordination Committee. The Secretary-General had described the general aim underlying his plans for reorganization. Those plans should not be stated in too great detail for the moment, since flexibility would be needed in carrying them through. His delegation was in favour of adopting a simple resolution inviting the Secretary-General to proceed on the lines the latter had outlined in some detail (E/2541).

47. Mr. ENGEN (Norway) stated that his delegation fully endorsed the point of view expressed by the Secretary-General at the 796th meeting. It believed with him that the economic and social development of the under-developed countries was one of the organization's main aims, but was at the same time aware that the prosperity of the more developed countries was essential to the improvement of the living standards of the others.

48. There were two main reasons why in actual fact the Council was not, as it should be, a policy-making body. First, it was too much concerned with detail; perhaps the extension of its activities to so many fields had been inevitable in the early stages of a body of its type. Secondly, for it to be a policy-making body, its membership should include to the greatest extent possible representatives who were policy-makers in their own countries. With the present organization, the attendance of such representatives was scarcely possible. At home, only a digest of the work with which the Council dealt in detail would be put forward for decision by Cabinet Ministers.

49. Apart from the question of concentrating, by order of priority, on specific tasks, the Council would have to escape from the present rigid and cumbersome pattern of the sessions it held twice yearly. Those sessions resembled in some ways the meetings of a national assembly; in others, the meetings of a technical committee; and in yet others, the meetings of a board of directors.

50. After reviewing various suggestions that had been put forward, he said that his delegation believed greater use could be made of the permanent delegations, which might well be able to dispose of many items between

sessions. In that way, the ground could be cleared for at least one high-level policy-making session.

51. The present method of dealing with the reports from the specialized agencies was far from satisfactory. Of the sixty or so items on the agenda for the seventeenth and eighteenth sessions, about ten, representing more than 20 per cent of the total documentation, were agency reports. That very valuable information should be examined at one of the briefer sessions to which he had referred; it need not necessarily come up for consideration every year, but the activities of the agencies could in that way be reviewed with greater profit from the point of view of co-ordination. He would conclude by saying that the emphasis he had laid on the Council's shortcomings should not be allowed to obscure the respect his Government felt for the Council and its achievements.

52. Mr. NUÑEZ PORTUONDO (Cuba) said he had not intended to speak in the general discussion, but as most other delegations had spoken he would not wish silence to indicate a lack of interest on the part of his delegation or his Government. The various documents circulated and the proposals made orally by the Secretary-General had been studied with great interest. His delegation would await the discussion on specific proposals before going into details, but would in general support any procedure which would help to relieve governments of some of the load which their international obligations involved.

53. Mr. NOZEK (Czechoslovakia), after referring to the Secretary-General's proposals and his reports to the present and preceding sessions on the organization of the Council, said his delegation shared the point of view expressed by the Soviet Union and other delegations that the Council should be freed of minor and less important questions, so that it could devote its time to the main world economic, social and cultural problems. Time was often frittered away on questions of no real significance; specific questions, taken out of their fundamental context, were placed on the agenda. Not only was time wasted, but the standing, and hence the effect, of the Council's discussions and recommendations, were impaired. While, however, each line of activity should be related to the Council's objectives as a whole, the practice of merging questions of principle or of fundamental interest, when each fully merited individual consideration, should be avoided. International problems were at present so complex and so closely inter-related that the Council would have to decide which could be taken together within a broad framework, and which demanded individual treatment.

54. The working methods of the Council and its commissions were obviously closely related to the way in which the programme of work of the Secretariat and of each session was prepared and carried out; in that connexion, he would say that only documents which were absolutely necessary should be prepared and distributed.

55. To perform the work entrusted to it under the Charter, the Council would have to draw a clear distinction between the main problems and less important topics. It should give priority to the question of promoting

international trade and co-operation; the development of the under-developed countries; technical assistance; human rights and, in particular, matters relating to the status of women; to methods for combating unemployment; and, generally, to measures which aimed at improving social and economic standards.

56. At the thirteenth session, his delegation had indicated its belief that certain existing commissions, making little or no contribution to the achievement of the Council's aims, might be abolished; others might be set up to help deal with certain economic and social problems. At the seventeenth session, his delegation had supported the Argentine proposal for a permanent advisory commission on international commodity trade, and had replied in the affirmative to the Secretary-General's verbal note of 17 May 1954 on the subject.

57. Czechoslovakia took an active part in the work of the Economic Commission for Europe, which, especially during recent months, had helped in a very positive manner to increase international economic co-operation and trade; that was one way in which existing economic problems could be solved. His delegation believed that the regional commissions should be given still greater opportunities of aiding the Council in the fulfilment of its obligations under the Charter.

58. He would deal with matters of detail during the discussion in the Co-ordination Committee.

59. Mr. TRUJILLO (Ecuador) recalled the Council's decision, taken in 1951 (resolution 414 (XIII)), for a fundamental reform of the structure of the Council and its commissions. The presence of the Secretary-General at the present session was evidence of a desire for a further revision. His delegation approved the Secretary-General's proposals, and, in particular, those set out in paragraph 5 of the Secretary-General's note (E/2598). One point of detail in connexion with the suggestion for reducing the number and length of documents was that attention might also be paid to the way in which those documents were written. Some were a great deal longer than they need be, because of the practice of quoting at length various resolutions and giving very long references. A great deal of that type of reference, if considered essential, could be relegated to a bibliography.

60. A somewhat similar problem had arisen at the tenth Conference of American States, held in Caracas at the

beginning of 1954. All international organizations tended to grow to monstrous dimensions, to attempt to do too much and to sacrifice more important to less important work. His delegation agreed with the Secretary-General that such bureaucracy had to be brought under control, and was convinced that any economy achieved should come from increased efficiency, but was not in itself the object of the reorganization. It should not be forgotten, however, that much of the social action undertaken by the Council was something new in world history. The detailed discussion in the Co-ordination Committee would no doubt lead to practical suggestions. His delegation would be glad to collaborate with the Secretary-General in giving effect to them.

61. Mr. SARPEN (Turkey) felt there was not much left to be said in the general discussion at that stage. As suggested by the Secretary-General and previous speakers, it was wise, in an organization so complex as the Council, to take stock of the developments that had occurred during its several years of activity. For the moment, the problem of reorganization could be considered under two main heads: first, the organization and work of the Secretariat and, secondly, the organization and operation of the Council and its commissions. His views on the first subject were well known to the Secretary-General. His delegation believed that the matter should be left largely to the latter's discretion. It should incidentally be noted that, on the whole, the work of the Secretariat had been satisfactory.

62. The question of the organization and operation of the Council should be approached with caution. His delegation had been somewhat alarmed to hear some representatives speaking of fundamental changes. If the Council had not always been as free from shortcomings as might have been hoped or expected, it must be remembered that the United Nations too had not always lived up to what had been expected of it. The reason for that lay not in the organization itself, but in the prevailing international situation.

63. His delegation would listen to the subsequent discussions with an open mind, but would treat with caution any suggestion for far-reaching changes.

The meeting rose at 4.05 p.m.