



Tuesday, 15 July 1952, at 2.30 p.m.

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*President:* Mr. S. Amjad ALI (Pakistan).

*Present:* The representatives of the following countries:

Argentina, Belgium, Canada, China, Cuba, Czechoslovakia, Egypt, France, Iran, Mexico, Pakistan, Philippines, Poland, Sweden, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Uruguay.

Observers from the following countries:

Lebanon, Netherlands.

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, World Health Organization.

**Social activities (*continued*): (a) Development and concentration of the efforts in the social field of the United Nations and the specialized agencies (E/2291); (d) Preliminary report on the world social situation (E/CN.5/267, E/2247, E/2247/Add.1, E/L.408) (*continued*)**

[Agenda items 11 (a) and (d)]

GENERAL DEBATE (*continued*)

1. Mr. CARASALES (Argentina) said that although the report on the world social situation (E/CN.5/267) had been received too late for the competent services of his government to reach any conclusions on it, the Argentine delegation had certain comments to make on the text.

2. The Argentine delegation considered the report a very important document despite its preliminary nature, for it gave the first realistic picture of certain aspects of the world social situation.

3. Its shortcomings might be taken as evidence of the difficulties which had confronted the Secretary-General in preparing the report. The Secretariat had been unable to undertake original surveys but had been limited to the data already available to the United Nations, notwithstanding the fact that adequate statistics were generally not available for the under-developed countries, on which it would have been most helpful to have received up-to-date information. There was therefore one practical consideration to be drawn from the report: it was essential to give those countries all possible assistance in establishing statistical services so that their need might be ascertained and assessed accurately. His delegation was certain however that the defects due to the preliminary nature of the report would be corrected in the future.

4. The report painted a frightening picture of the social conditions in which much of mankind lived. It stated that half the population of the world was underfed, that in proportion to the total population available food supplies had decreased since the Second World War, and that current food production was 6 per cent less than during the pre-war period. That was a very grave situation which could be remedied by bringing new land under cultivation and by increasing the yield of acreage planted with food crops. Those objectives would be achieved more easily, however, if equitable international commodity prices were established, for the farmer would then be able to approach the two suggested solutions in a different spirit.

5. The report also drew attention to the striking differences in health conditions throughout the world. In the under-developed countries the average life expectancy was less than 40 years as against 60 to 70 years for the more advanced countries. The infant mortality rate varied from 300 per thousand to 20 per thousand and

many areas of the world were constantly ravaged by diseases. The vicious circle of disease, under-production, poverty, poor health services and disease should at all cost be broken. It was unthinkable that certain countries should continue to be beset by diseases amenable to treatment, particularly when the *per capita* cost of such treatment was in many cases infinitesimal.

6. His delegation felt that the report took a very restricted view of housing problems and failed to show the necessary relationship between housing in the strict sense of the term and the problem of town planning. In the world of today, however, the building of the modern industrialized city should be viewed as an integral whole and that viewpoint should prevail in future reports on housing.

7. The current world housing situation as described in the report was most alarming. In Europe, for example, at double the pre-war rate of construction—and construction had not reached that pace—it would take over 20 years to meet the housing needs of Europe. Conditions were even worse in many other places.

8. Data on housing needs in the under-developed countries were almost completely lacking. Although his delegation did not endorse the description given in the report of a typical working-class home in Latin America, there was no doubt that the problem confronting the under-developed countries had reached extraordinary proportions. It might therefore be well for the Council, when it discussed the General Assembly resolution on housing (537 (VI)) and the related recommendations of the Social Commission, to seize the opportunity to adopt measures for a solution of the problem.

9. Chapter II of the report, concerning world population and population trends, put forward important conclusions but his delegation thought further attention could have been given in that section to certain aspects such as the influence of geography, economic activity and other factors on the distribution of population.

10. Although the report on the world situation might not be complete, it put the problems so clearly that no one in future could plead a lack of information on or unfamiliarity with social problems in the world as an excuse for failing to act. It was clearly the Council's duty to devote its attention primarily to those problems. As the report indicated, the peoples in many areas of the world had awakened from centuries of lethargy and were aware that their conditions, which were far from satisfactory, could be improved, and they were looking to the United Nations for help. Their trust in the United Nations should not be betrayed.

11. The most arduous task lay before the under-developed countries, which must pack the progress of centuries into a very short space of time. He would not repeat what had been said during the debate on technical assistance, but the report brought out the striking importance of suitable assistance at the right time in the development of the less advanced regions.

12. Living conditions were not perfect in any country and therefore every State should do its utmost to improve the standards of living of its people. The Argentine Government had done a great deal in that direction. For example, public health measures taken between 1946 and 1951 had resulted in reducing the mor-

tality rate from 9.5 to 8.5 per 1,000. The rate of death from tuberculosis, which was indicative of a nation's general health and well-being, had dropped during the same period from 73 to 48 per 100,000. While the birth-rate continued to rise, the infant mortality rate had dropped to 68 per 1,000 by 1951.

13. In the field of education under the first five-year plan, the Argentine Federal Government had built numerous schools of all grades; school attendance had increased from 1,250,000 to 1,500,000, while budget appropriations for education had increased fivefold.

14. With a view to increasing food production, machinery imports had been stepped up. The Government was also promoting the development of agricultural co-operatives and the manufacture of agricultural machinery. In the five-year period from 1946-1951 about 1 million hectares of land had been brought under cultivation.

15. Argentina had its own housing problem, which was due to the migration of the rural population to urban areas and to immigration. The Federal Government had, however, made vigorous attempts to solve the problem by promoting housing construction and encouraging building loans.

16. The progressive nature of Argentine labour legislation was well known, for the rights of the worker were set forth in the Constitution. The worker lived in an atmosphere of full employment where the labouring classes were respected and where work was viewed as indispensable to the satisfaction of the spiritual and material needs of the individual and the community and as the basis of the prosperity of the nation. In addition, the Eva Perón Social Welfare Foundation rendered generous, effective and timely social welfare assistance to the needy.

17. The steps taken by the Argentine Government to better the social conditions of its population were based on the fundamental principle of social justice, which meant something more than an equitable relationship between wages and prices. It reflected the principle that the people's standard of living must be raised and the dignity of the individual and the worker recognized and implied the encouragement of culture and development of a social conscience in the people, enabling the family and society as well as the individual to enjoy in peace and harmony all the material and spiritual benefits to which they were legitimately entitled.

18. He had cited those achievements of the Argentine Government to show what could be accomplished at the national level. In addition, however, it was the duty of the United Nations, and in particular of the Economic and Social Council, energetically to promote fruitful and speedy action to help in solving the tremendous problems described in the report, for unless some solution was found no firm and lasting basis for international peace could be achieved.

19. Mr. GOROSTIZA (Mexico) congratulated the Secretariat and the agencies which had collaborated in preparing the report on the world social situation on the excellent job they had done.

20. A scientific study of world social problems which would show the necessity for the preparation of integrated development programmes had been urgently

needed. It had also been essential to see how the international community could act on social conditions in a specific country and to explain the necessity for international co-ordination of the action of governments in the social field. The report, the first of its kind, therefore served a vital need, despite its limited scope. It was understandable that a preliminary report could not include a study of the various existing social systems and spiritual ideals but that it had to be restricted to those factors which related to standards of living. Although that approach had been adopted to ensure that the Council received a preliminary practicable working document, such omissions constituted a significant weakness in the document. No complete picture of the standard of living of the people could be achieved unless accounts were taken of the vital spiritual elements of that nation, which should be basic to any national or international remedial action.

21. Moreover, the conclusions arrived at in the report should be weighed in the light of the individual values attached by different States to certain factors relating to standards of living. Although his delegation understood that the preliminary report could not deal with such problems, it was gratifying to note that the Department of Social Affairs was conducting enquiries to determine scientific criteria on standards of living and that priority had been given to those studies. He hoped therefore that in the not too distant future the use of objective social criteria and other modern techniques of social research would make it possible to consider other non-materialistic elements in preparing a more authentic picture of world social conditions.

22. The general conclusions drawn in the report were frankly not encouraging. The gap between the advanced countries and the under-developed countries had increased since the Second World War to such an extent that more than half the population of the world was living in deplorable circumstances.

23. On the other hand, the report drew attention to the radical change in the world's awareness of those problems. The international community had come to consider the welfare of mankind as a matter for legislative action and not a pious moral obligation. The principle was firmly established that unsatisfactory conditions in one country affected the material well-being of every other State. The United Nations had paved the way for a philosophy of mutual assistance as the rule of international society. It had proclaimed that prosperity was indivisible and had assumed the duty of promoting higher standards of living through individual as well as collective action. That significant change in attitude was one of the most outstanding accomplishments of the twentieth century and one in which the United Nations could take pride.

24. Chapter II of the report was particularly useful as a basis for future studies for the presentation of data in brief, tabular form often clarified the true nature of the problems confronting a country. Mexico was a case in point. In that country there was an average of 13 inhabitants per square kilometre but as, mainly on account of the shortage of water, arable land represented only 5 per cent of the total, there were actually 164 rural inhabitants per square kilometre of land under cultivation. Those figures showed clearly the nature of the

problems confronting the Mexican Government and suggested possible solutions. Mexico must direct some of the rural population into industry and, through large-scale irrigation projects, increase the amount of land under cultivation.

25. The recent efforts made by Mexico to become an industrialized nation had resulted in a relative decline in the rural population. Whereas in 1940, 65 per cent of the population was engaged in agriculture, the figure currently varied between 50 and 55 per cent, despite the movement in the rural middle classes to return to the land as a result of substantial government investment in agriculture.

26. One of the gravest problems confronting Latin America, according to the report, was the fact that the land was owned by a relatively small part of the population, land ownership being traditionally linked to political and economic domination and social standing. The report noted, however, that the situation in Mexico was different. For the last quarter of a century an important programme of agrarian reform had been under way in Mexico which had changed the entire economic and social structure of the country. The great landed estates had been replaced by two types of agricultural holdings, the only types recognized by law; the small landowner who could not have more than 100 hectares of irrigated land, and the communal ownership scheme whereby the holdings belonged to the community as a whole. The latter were protected under the Mexican Constitution and could not be sold, mortgaged or otherwise encumbered. The land had to be used directly by the people of the community, who collectively exploited the water, pasture and forests on the land while the individuals of the community enjoyed the use of the arable land. Individual holdings had to be cultivated directly by the person benefiting from the crops and, like the community holdings, those plots could not be sold, mortgaged or otherwise encumbered. They reverted to the community if they were left uncultivated for two years in succession.

27. By 1945, almost 2 million persons had shared in the distribution of land to 20,000 communities. In 1940, 51 per cent of the farm population shared in the community holdings scheme. As a result of those reforms the rural middle class had been considerably strengthened and increased.

28. Mexico had passed through a period of social stratification and had become a very mobile society characterized by movements between classes. To illustrate the point, he said that from 1910 to 1940 the upper classes had declined 27 per cent, the middle classes had increased 104 per cent and the lower classes had decreased 8.5 per cent.

29. Perhaps the most hopeful perspectives were contained in chapter III, on health conditions, for in that field dramatic progress had been made in a few years, particularly in lowering mortality rates. The report drew attention to one very important fact in that connexion. In the developed countries, where there was practically no question of epidemics and where the people were in a relatively favourable position economically, the individual was directly responsible for improving his general health, save where preventive measures were taken on behalf of the entire community. In the under-

developed countries, however, the chief responsibility lay with the government. Usually the governments' first attempts were to combat epidemic diseases. Mexico had been particularly active in that direction and had had considerable success. An expanding social security system and the construction of hospitals and clinics had improved the health conditions of the people in most of the cities. The rural populations had at times, however, to depend on mobile health brigades because the distribution of the population and the lack of secondary roads made any other solution difficult. The University of Mexico was collaborating in the rural health programme by requiring students of medicine to work in rural communities for six months before receiving their degree.

30. As his delegation had pointed out, during the debate on the UNESCO report (617th meeting), the necessity for increased international co-operation on fundamental education, he would not reiterate his Government's views on the subject at that stage. Nor, as time was short, would he enter into detailed consideration of other useful chapters of the report which were particularly important for the under-developed countries but which had been commented on by other speakers. He merely wished to state that although Mexico had made satisfactory progress through advanced labour legislation towards improving working conditions, it had by no means solved the housing question in rural areas and the general problem of nutrition. In those fields much still remained to be done. Although food production had increased considerably, Mexico was still compelled to import foodstuffs and the diet of a large part of its population could not be described as among the best. In that, however, Mexico was not unlike many countries of the world.

31. At that point his delegation wished to make it clear that the Mexican Government did not attribute the social evils it had to combat to foreign exploitation, which was no longer to be found in Mexico. In including Mexico among the countries which he considered victims of foreign exploitation, the Polish representative had not taken into account the significance of thirty years of political and social struggle in Mexico and their effect on the economic liberation of Mexico. In fact, the situation was just the opposite of what the Polish representative had claimed. Mexico had received valuable assistance in many fields from its neighbours and in that connexion he referred to a statement made by the late President Roosevelt on 20 April 1943, during his visit to Mexico. The late President had emphasized the United States' awareness of the fact that Mexico had to develop its resources for the welfare of humanity, saying that the world knew the era had passed when the resources and the man-power of a country could be exploited for the benefit of foreign interests.

32. The report stressed the close connexion between economic development and social conditions, but that premise should not lead the Council to the erroneous conclusion that social evils pertained specifically to certain phases of economic development and that an increase in the material well-being of a nation would automatically eliminate them.

33. The economically advanced countries were beset with social problems which were unknown or much less acute in the under-developed areas. While the former

did not have epidemics of contagious diseases on a large scale, on the other hand, nervous, mental and other diseases had increased and the unity of the family in those countries had been undermined; as a result divorce and juvenile delinquency had increased. Technological and industrial developments had not apparently contributed in every case to enrich the personality of the individual: quite the contrary. In some instances they might be contributing to the development of mental and emotional patterns producing standardized individuals.

34. The Council should not lose sight of the opinions of eminent authorities that the most civilized societies of the present-day world were experiencing a decline in the level of moral conduct. While social conditions in the more advanced countries could not therefore be taken uncritically as a model, the defects of those societies to which he had drawn attention were neither a necessary consequence of economic progress nor an index of decadence and disintegration. Essentially, they were specific evils for which specific cures could be found.

35. The report on the world social situation and future reports could serve as a basis on which States could develop integrated programmes for the social advancement of their peoples. Then some day the world might achieve the ideals pursued by the Council in its efforts to better the living conditions of all mankind, and to permit the individual to live a full and rewarding life.

36. Mr. MICHANEK (Sweden) said that he had found the report to be interesting and at times even shocking because of the bold facts which it presented on current situation of mankind. The title was perhaps too official; the report was not an original scientific enquiry but rather a description primarily of the poverty, destitution and unhappiness prevalent in the world.

37. Although he too was glad to congratulate the authors of the report, he nevertheless sensed a certain unevenness in its different chapters. Chapter VIII, for example, was not so comprehensive as other chapters. Chapter VII, might have included some data on the important piece-work wage system. Most representatives could probably suggest further additions but, on the other hand, it had not been intended to compile an encyclopædia.

38. On the whole he was pleased to note that the information in the report was supported by statistical data. It was known that an enormous number of people could not read or write, but it was gratifying to find that the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization had been sufficiently courageous to estimate that the number of illiterates was almost equal to half the world's population. It was helpful to know that the World Health Organization considered that some 300 million people in the world suffered from malaria. He was, however, doubtful about the validity of the figures given in table I in chapter IX, as the internal purchasing power of the equivalent of \$US1 varied considerably in different countries. But it was useful to read that Asia, with over half of the world's population, had produced only 11 per cent of the world's income in 1949. It might be asked whether some of the calculations presented did not go further than the available basic information warranted. For example, it was doubtful whether sufficient personal statistics were available for the conclusion to be made that caloric require-

ments in Norway were 22 per cent higher than those in Japan. Again, some figures seemed to require reconsideration. In assessing the rural population per square kilometre of cultivated land, the Secretariat had apparently based its estimate for Sweden on a misunderstanding of the word "urban" as used in Swedish censuses. The authors of the report had been well aware of the lack of adequate and comparable statistics and it was gratifying that they had not deprived the Council of all figures for that reason.

39. The usefulness of the report was due primarily to the fact that, for the first time, it presented a summary of the basic data and considerations on which the different United Nations organs had based their work in implementing Article 55 of the Charter. Such a report was needed to show that conditions in wide areas of the world were such that concerted action to create conditions of stability and well-being were necessary for peaceful and friendly relations among nations. The report had great publicity value as far as the United Nations was concerned.

40. He was therefore pleased that the report did not only tell the story of starvation, illiteracy, disease and death in large parts of the world, but also gave facts and figures concerning the results achieved through national and international action. In table II in chapter III, for example, it was stated that the death-rate in 1938 had been 21 in Ceylon and 13.6 in Ireland, whereas in 1950 the figure for the two islands was the same. It was also gratifying to read in chapter VII, that the 48-hour week had become the normal standard in most countries and that some countries had advanced even further.

41. If the report was an appeal to well-to-do nations to take further steps in order to promote progress and development in less developed areas, it should also be considered as an appeal to under-developed countries to put forth every effort to overcome poverty, illiteracy and disease. Needless to say the promotion of better standards of living in a given area depended primarily on the efforts and resources of that area.

42. The report frequently referred to the favourable social conditions in Sweden, but any country was capable of attaining a similar social level provided it had the same opportunities to develop its resources and provided it had the good fortune to live in independence and peace for a long time so as to be able to build a sound democratic and legal structure. It might therefore be of value to other countries for him to quote from the experience of Sweden. Swedish censuses no longer included figures for illiteracy, because for a long time no illiteracy in the ordinary sense of the word had existed there. Sweden was reported to have the lowest infant mortality rate in the world and was among the very first as far as life expectancy was concerned. Although hours of work in Swedish industry were not as short as in some other countries, holiday conditions and the possibilities of making good use of leisure time were more favourable than in most other countries.

43. Sweden was blessed with a healthy climate and natural resources and had escaped the scourge of war within its borders for some 135 years. But not so long previously the Swedish people had suffered from poverty, under-employment, unhealthy labour condi-

tions, tuberculosis and alcoholism. Prior to the First World War, approximately 1,300,000 Swedes had emigrated because of the poor opportunities in their homeland. During the last 100 years, however, not only had industrialization brought wealth and better opportunities, but a new sense of common responsibility had spread among the people, promoted by great popular movements and thriving in a free and independent society with ancient and stable democratic traditions. Sweden had achieved its current social standard not only because of favourable historical and material circumstances, but also as the result of political action. For example, two hundred years previously, the first public hospital had been founded, and since then the promotion of the nation's health services was primarily a responsibility of the community. That did not mean that private initiative and voluntary effort had not played their part; on the contrary, privately initiated activities in many branches of the health and other social services had eventually been taken over, wholly or in part, by the public authority. There was almost universal agreement within Sweden and among the political parties that the social services should be public services available to all. Social legislation had in recent years been promulgated without serious opposition on the principal issues.

44. Since social services were expensive to maintain, Sweden was among the most heavily taxed countries in the world; it was estimated that its social services, excluding education, equalled about 10 or 11 per cent of the total national income. Expenditure on social services would no doubt be higher, if Sweden did not have to allot so much credit to defence. On the other hand, public services constituted only a small part of the complex conditions forming the standard of living of a people; nothing could contribute more to improving material well-being than increased production.

45. He did not mean to imply that social services similar to those in Sweden could easily be established in less developed countries if the public would only face its responsibilities and pay taxes high enough to ensure such services. Indeed not all of the social services provided in Sweden should be introduced into all other countries, as traditions, needs and living conditions varied so much. But development could probably be expedited if governments planned their social services more intensively at the same time as they planned their economic development. Economic development and social development were interdependent, as the Council's discussion had clearly shown.

46. The contribution which Sweden had made to the social development of the world was to evolve techniques, to report to international organs, to receive fellows and study groups, and to send out experts to assist other countries. But the greatest contribution which any country could offer to the social development of other countries was to be found under the items on the Council's agenda referring to economic matters.

47. The report was not and was not intended to be based on new or original research. It did not propose any new methods of overcoming the distress afflicting various areas. It clearly displayed the lack of adequate statistics, but did not contain any proposals for improving those statistics. Yet the Council could do no better

in implementing the wishes of the General Assembly, as expressed in resolutions 535 (VI) and 527 (VI), than to continue to co-ordinate efforts and resources, although it might achieve more in that connexion by postponing or eliminating some of its vaguer projects. The report of the Co-ordination Committee (E/2203) would offer the Council a new basis for concentrating and co-ordinating its activities. The report of the Social Commission (E/2247) provided the Council with an opportunity of preparing a programme of technical action for the United Nations in the social field and the report on the world social situation (E/CN.5/267) illustrated the need, expressed in resolution 527 (VI), for better statistics. The expert work on statistics was to be assigned to the Statistical Commission and the specialized agencies.

48. He agreed with the Canadian delegation (642nd meeting) that the supplementary report should deal with governmental action rather than with planning, although, the latter was necessary to achieve good results. New reports containing only minor amendments to the one before the Council did not meet any great need, although a new report would be useful after a certain time when facts and figures in the 1952 report became outdated. The Secretary-General should give notice to the Council at the time when a new report could be presented and properly discussed.

49. The report on the world social situation should be considered as a source of knowledge and inspiration for the future work of the United Nations in its endeavour to achieve and secure peace through economic development and social justice.

50. Mr. HSIA (China) congratulated the Secretariat and the Department of Social Affairs on the excellent preliminary report on the world social situation which, despite its limitations, was a compilation of much useful reference material. The report indicated certain unmistakable trends and formed a basis for later more extensive studies.

51. The authors had admitted to certain limitations. First, the report was not based on new or original research. Secondly, it gave an account of existing social conditions but not of governmental programmes to improve those conditions. Thirdly, it did not claim to cover the entire social field but paid particular attention to standards of living. No attempt had been made to analyse the various social structures, religions, beliefs, cultural patterns and values of human society. Strictly speaking, the second and third limitations were not limitations to be deplored. On the contrary, it was preferable to have a purely factual report on existing social conditions and not to examine programmes, governmental or otherwise. Again, there was little advantage to be gained from analysing differences in social structure.

52. He was particularly interested in chapter II, concerning population, as some had attributed the poverty and economic weakness of China to its over-population. Dr. Sun Yat-sen had held the opposite view and had been alarmed by the slow rate of growth of the population of China which had shown no appreciable increase for a period of nearly one hundred years from the middle of the nineteenth century. Mr. Hsia nevertheless agreed with the general conclusion in the report that the world's

population had been growing at an increasing rate and that the problem of supplying sufficient food was urgent and fundamental.

53. With regard to chapter III, concerning health conditions, there was no doubt that the control of mass diseases such as malaria, tuberculosis, hookworm and trachoma which involved a comparatively moderate outlay could produce spectacular results and far-reaching benefits.

54. Education had always occupied a very important place in the history of China. As the Belgian representative had pointed out, education was not an exclusively social matter, although it did have a social value, particularly in raising living standards. The great importance which the Chinese Government attached to education was illustrated by its current efforts in Taiwan (Formosa). During the Japanese occupation, the highest school attendance record in Taiwan had been 71 per cent of the children of school age as compared with a total average enrolment in 1950 of 81 per cent. Extra classes had been opened in all the schools in 1951. The number of students and institutions of higher learning showed a similar increase.

55. The sections of the report dealing with literacy, mass education, fundamental education and language instruction were of particular interest to China, which was very familiar with those problems. Many of the remarks in the report coincided with his country's own experience. Much of the effort in mass education was wasted unless what had been learned could be put to immediate and practical use. The discrepancy between the written and the spoken form of the language in China and, in particular, the existence of a highly complex form of writing ill-adapted to mass education constituted a serious obstacle to the anti-illiteracy campaign. Because of the simplicity of the Roman alphabet, it was much easier for a European to attain literacy than, for example, a Chinese, who had to memorize several thousand characters.

56. The report stated that, in the long run, better housing and community services could only be obtained within the framework of general economic and social advance, but he felt that educational advance should also be included. His delegation would not press for a second report in two or three years, because basic social conditions would not undergo any drastic changes in that time. If any important change did occur in a particular field, a special supplement to the report would suffice.

57. He was disturbed by the possible implication in the report that the solution of the tremendous social problems would depend, principally if not solely, on government action, national and international. He realized that the only alternative to governmental action would be the force of public opinion, which would mean slow educational progress and only gradual improvement of economic conditions. While he did not advocate undue delay in the solution of urgent social problems, he hoped that the Council would not encourage the establishment of all-powerful national governments which would dictate social policies and programmes.

58. The report unconsciously set certain social standards which it was allegedly desirable for the underdeveloped countries to attain. The report might have

indicated more clearly that standards of living and *per capita* incomes varied even within the same country and that climates, cultures, temperaments and occupations were important factors in standards of nutrition, housing and even education. An Asian might live out his life differently from, yet no less happily than, a European or American. The Council should beware of the tyranny of uniformity, which could be unhealthy. As Professor Toynbee stated in *A Study of History* in the histories of civilizations standardization was the master-tendency of the process of disintegration.

**Amendment of the rules of procedure of the Council and the functional commissions: memorandum by the Secretary-General (Council resolution 414 (XIII)) (E/2212, E/2255, E/2255/Add.1, E/2274, E/L.364 and Corr.1, E/L.364/Add.1) (continued)<sup>1</sup>**

[Agenda item 35]

**RULES 34 TO 37 OF THE RULES OF PROCEDURE OF THE COUNCIL AND RULES 29 TO 32 OF THE RULES OF PROCEDURE OF THE FUNCTIONAL COMMISSIONS**

59. Mr. RODRIGUEZ FABREGAT (Uruguay) introduced the amendment (E/L.364 and Corr.1) proposed jointly by Argentina, Cuba, Mexico and Uruguay, whereby rules 34 to 37 of the rules of procedure of the Council and rules 29 to 32 of the rules of procedure of the functional commissions would be amended to include Spanish as a working language. He stated that it was scarcely necessary to put forward other reasons than those which had already been adduced in the General Assembly in favour of the adoption of Spanish as a working language. He would not therefore defend the principle on which the joint amendment was based, but would comment on the factors affecting its adoption.

60. Spanish had been adopted as a working language in the General Assembly and the Interim Committee, and many of the documents of the Security Council and the specialized agencies were published in Spanish. The Economic and Social Council was almost the only United Nations body in which Spanish was not a working language.

61. There were certain essential facts which seemed to call for the adoption of Spanish as a working language. It was the language of one-third of the members of the United Nations and of four members of the Council. The representatives of the twenty Spanish-speaking countries which collaborated in the work of the United Nations wished to be able to work in their own language so as to be in a position to offer more effective and fruitful collaboration in the Organization's noble task. Obviously the populations of those countries would be in a position to co-operate more satisfactorily in the work if documentation in their native language was available to the Press, the radio and cultural centres, which could thus more easily diffuse a fuller knowledge of the aims and purposes of the United Nations. The fact that broadcasts for Latin America originating in other countries were made in the Spanish language proved how necessary it was that documents should also be made available in Spanish.

62. Two types of argument based on technical and on financial grounds had been advanced against the claim for the use of Spanish as a working language. In the first place, it was stated that the technical machinery of the United Nations would be unable to cope with the additional work involved. That argument had already been put forward in the General Assembly, but it had not proved an insuperable obstacle. There was no reason why the technical machinery should not be improved and indeed nothing should be allowed to stand in the way of progress.

63. Outlining the historical background of the question of the use of working languages in international organizations, he pointed out that a struggle had been necessary before English had been adopted as one of the basic languages of the League of Nations. In that case no financial considerations had been allowed to influence the issue and the decision to adopt French and English as the basic languages of the League had been founded on the universal prestige and standing enjoyed by those languages. During the organization of the United Nations, when it had been suggested that English alone should be a working language, the Spanish-speaking delegations had supported the adoption of French. There again the question of money had not been raised; the only factor to be taken into account had been the possibility of informing a larger section of the world's population of the lofty efforts of the United Nations and thus ensuring collaboration in its work.

64. In the process of evolution the turn of the Spanish language had come with its adoption by the General Assembly (Assembly resolution 262 (III)), and no one would suggest that the General Assembly should reverse its decision merely in order to save money. The benefits to be derived from the use of Spanish were infinitely more valuable than could be measured in monetary terms. There was no need to enlarge on the glorious history, the cultural achievements and the new horizons which had been opened up for the world by the Spanish-speaking peoples.

65. With regard to the question of expense, it was true that everything cost money, but all delegations were paying for the use of French and English as working languages in the Council. Commenting on the statement of financial implications submitted by the Secretary-General (E/L.364/Add.1), he suggested that those figures appeared to reflect a preconceived attitude with regard to the use of Spanish as a working language rather than an objective and accurate calculation. When the proposal for the adoption of Spanish in the General Assembly had been made in 1948, it had been said that it would cost about \$US2 million a year. His delegation had rejected the figure as exaggerated and had suggested that the actual cost would be much less than a quarter of that sum. Its attitude had proved perfectly justified since in fact only some \$US300,000 had been appropriated to cover the cost of the use of Spanish. That was in part due to the fact that the Spanish-speaking delegations had adopted a reasonable and compromising attitude and had suggested that the proposal should be implemented in a flexible, gradual manner. He hoped that the same procedure would be followed in the case under consideration.

<sup>1</sup> See 642nd meeting.

66. Referring once more to the financial implications (E/L.364/Add.1), he said he did not believe the use of Spanish in the Council could cost more than it did in the General Assembly, but in order to prove his point he would have to know the exact sum involved by the use of Spanish in the General Assembly. He pointed out certain defects in the calculation of the financial implications. Rules 38 and 39 of the Council's rules of procedure authorized the provisions of records, resolutions and other formal decisions of the Council in the official languages if requested by any delegation. Thus in accordance with those rules a certain number of documents were already being provided in Spanish. The calculation therefore should not be based on the cost of providing all the Council's documents in Spanish but on the difference between that cost and the cost of the documents already furnished in that language. It was obvious that a fairly large sum was already being spent on the publication of Council documents in the various official languages. Moreover, the financial implications provided the excessively large sum of \$US30,000 to be spent on travel on recruitment. People with a knowledge of the Spanish language were not so difficult to find and it should surely be possible to make use of the United Nations regional offices in various parts of the world to assist in the recruitment of the necessary staff.

67. It had been suggested that the question under consideration should first be referred to the Fifth Committee of the General Assembly, so that the expendi-

ture involved might be authorized before the adoption of the Council's decision. That was not, however, the usual procedure. When the Council wished to recommend that a session of one of its functional commissions should be held away from headquarters, it first made the recommendation and the expenditure was subsequently authorized by the General Assembly. Moreover, Article 72 of the United Nations Charter provided that the Council should adopt its own rules of procedure and rules of procedure covered the question of working languages. If the Fifth Committee had not been asked for its authorization before the adoption of English and French as the Council's working languages, there seemed no ground for treating Spanish in a different way. He therefore did not believe it was necessary for the Council to request permission from the General Assembly before taking a decision with regard to its working languages.

68. He pointed out the difficulties facing delegations which were unable to work with documents in their native language, particularly when dealing with technical matters and economic subjects.

69. Finally, he urged the Council to support the joint amendment (E/L.364 and Corr.1) submitted by the Spanish-speaking delegations, which were intended solely to enable them to collaborate more effectively in the magnificent work of the United Nations.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.