



**ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL**

*Twenty-first Session*

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Agenda item 13:

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 ..... 75

*President:* Mr. Hans ENGEN (Norway).

*Present:*

The representatives of the following countries: Argentina, Brazil, Canada, China, Czechoslovakia, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, France, Greece, Indonesia, Netherlands, Norway, Pakistan, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Yugoslavia.

Observers from the following countries: Bulgaria, Chile, Hungary, Israel, Mexico, Philippines, Poland, Romania.

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

**AGENDA ITEM 13**

**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/2837 and Corr.1 and 2, E/L.708, E/L.709)**

1. Mr. KATZIN (Deputy Under-Secretary for Public Information) said that the Secretary-General had received forty-two replies to the request he had transmitted to Member States in accordance with Council resolution 446 (XIV); detailed reports had also been received from the United Nations Information Centres. The replies indicated that progress had been made throughout the world with regard to teaching about the United Nations and the specialized agencies. All countries had tried to introduce such teaching in some form in their school curricula but in most cases they had not found it possible to organize a regular course of study. Two major difficulties had been encountered: the lack of adequate preparation of the teachers and the lack of suitable teaching materials to be used in the schools. Most Member States apparently looked to the United Nations and the specialized agencies to help them to overcome those difficulties, particularly in so far as teaching materials were concerned. In its conclusions the Secretariat stressed that the teaching in question was primarily the domestic responsibility of Member States but that the United National Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), in collaboration

with the United Nations, should make every effort to assist States in the production of the necessary material and in the training of teachers.

2. Mr. CHENG (China) said that his delegation had been most interested in the report of the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the Director-General of UNESCO (E/2837 and Corr.1 and 2), which made it clear that progress had been achieved at all levels, with the possible exception of adult education. The major difficulties were those to which the representative of the Secretary-General had referred, and the United Nations and the specialized agencies could undoubtedly do much to help in that connexion. His delegation fully endorsed the recommendations set out at the end of the report.

3. His Government had done its best to promote teaching about the United Nations and the specialized agencies. Since 1952 the Ministry of Education had asked all schools to include teaching about the activities of international organizations in their curricula so that the young people would learn what those organizations did to further international understanding and co-operation. Such teaching was given in the primary and secondary schools and in the universities. A non-governmental organization, the Chinese United Nations Association, was responsible for adult education in that sphere. It acted as a centre for the dissemination of information on all questions connected with the United Nations, printing and distributing documents and holding monthly meetings at which international affairs were discussed. United Nations Day and Human Rights Day were officially celebrated throughout the country.

4. Mr. MUNANDAR (Indonesia) said that his Government was convinced of the need to teach the peoples of the whole world about the purposes and principles, the structure and activities of the United Nations and the specialized agencies, and that it had taken steps to ensure the dissemination of such information. The question was particularly complex in Indonesia, however, as the number of illiterates was still very high and the Government's main preoccupation was to promote the general education of the masses. The Government had promulgated an Education Act, proclaiming that the purpose of education was to train men and women who would be conscious of their responsibilities as citizens towards their community and mankind as a whole. Teaching about the United Nations and the specialized agencies was naturally included in the programme, but there were many difficulties. Nevertheless, the Ministry of Education had set up a committee to conduct certain experiments and, in particular, to study the possibility of expanding the teaching to promote international understanding. The programme was still in the initial stage in the secondary schools and, given the general educational situation, could not yet be extended to the primary schools.

5. The recommendations in chapter IV of the Secretary-General's report (E/2837) were certainly very use-

ful but they should be considered in the light of the limited possibilities in new countries; his delegation would welcome any recommendations that would help the countries concerned.

6. Mr. SCOTT FOX (United Kingdom) reminded the Council that in its resolution 446 (XIV) it had recognized that teaching about the United Nations and the specialized agencies was "essential to the fulfilment of the purposes of the United Nations Charter." His Government fully endorsed that point of view and had made every effort in recent years to spread knowledge about the work of the international organizations. In 1952 the United Kingdom National Commission for UNESCO had set up a Committee for Education in Schools which included among its tasks the encouragement of teaching in schools to promote international understanding, with particular emphasis on the aims and activities of the United Nations and the specialized agencies and the principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The experiments carried out in various schools had proved so encouraging that they had immediately been extended to other schools. Other activities which were taking place in the United Kingdom were described in his Government's reply to the Secretary-General. It must be emphasized, however, that teaching about international organizations was a matter for individual schools to decide and that there could be no question of its being undertaken by direction of the Government.

7. He paid a tribute to the work of the non-governmental organizations in teaching about international organizations. The United Kingdom United Nations Association had a record in that field of which it could well be proud. It seemed to him that the main role of non-governmental organizations, as envisaged in the Charter, was to provide a contact between the peoples of the world and the United Nations. That involved two aspects: firstly presenting to the United Nations the views of different sections of public opinion and, secondly, explaining the work of the United Nations to the people. The Council was dealing with the second aspect, in which connexion the role of the non-governmental organizations could be of paramount importance.

8. Generally speaking, his delegation agreed with the conclusions in the report, although it had some doubts about the recommendations for action (E/2837, para. 319). Recommendations 1 and 2, in particular, were presented in such a form that it would be difficult for certain countries with decentralized educational systems to accept them. In the United Kingdom, it was the local educational authorities and the schools themselves which decided school curricula; the central Government had no power to intervene. The dissemination of education about international organizations was primarily a matter for the countries concerned; as stated in paragraph 315 of the report, the United Nations and UNESCO had neither the authority nor the desire to interfere in any way with the educational systems of Member States.

9. He felt that caution should be exercised with regard to recommendations 3 and 4. The United Nations and UNESCO were already doing a great deal to encourage teaching about international organizations by supplying documentation, granting scholarships and holding seminars. It was of course desirable to expand such activities, but it should not be forgotten that many countries had not yet solved the serious problem of illiteracy. For many years to come, UNESCO's work should there-

fore stress fundamental education, and there was reason to fear that UNESCO's resources would not allow of its undertaking in addition such an ambitious programme as the one outlined in recommendation 3.

10. The United Kingdom delegation felt, however, that the United Nations and UNESCO might still develop their activities which promoted teaching about international organizations within reasonable limits. It felt, in particular, that there was a need for materials specially prepared for various school levels, as mentioned in recommendations 3 (a) and 4. Such assistance might be granted within the current budgets of the United Nations and the specialized agencies.

11. The draft resolution of which the United Kingdom was a co-sponsor (E/L.708), reflected the points he had made. It provided for the publication of another report in 1960. Rapid progress could not be expected in that field and a report covering a four-year period would certainly be of greater value than a report on a shorter period.

12. Mr. MACKAY (Canada) said that his delegation supported the draft resolution submitted by Ecuador, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and the United States (E/L.708). The commendation of UNESCO and the non-governmental organizations was certainly justified; the educational departments of Canada owed a great deal to the activities of those organizations. However, it should not be forgotten that Canada was a federation and the Federal Government could not oblige the Provinces to use the material prepared by UNESCO or the non-governmental organizations. It could, however, ensure that the different Provincial authorities gave assistance to the United Nations Association in Canada, which distributed United Nations documents. There were also Canadian Federal Government information and educational services which distributed such documents direct to the educational institutions.

13. The Canadian delegation supported the Secretary-General's recommendation that the specialized agencies should supply more material, provided that that could be done within the limits of their present budgets. The material which had been supplied up to the present was of the greatest value and had been much appreciated. It was important to inform the rising generation of the purposes and operation of the United Nations and UNESCO. Non-governmental organizations could make a considerable contribution to such public information work.

14. Mr. OLIVIERI (Argentina) said that he had studied with interest the report by the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the Director-General of UNESCO. To achieve the purposes of the Charter, it was essential to gain the support of world public opinion and, for that purpose, to distribute information on the activity of international organizations. Educational establishments were in a particularly favourable position for carrying out such a task.

15. The Argentine delegation would support any proposal which would facilitate the distribution of information about the United Nations and the specialized agencies and it would vote for the joint draft resolution (E/L.708).

16. Mr. FOMIN (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) wished to supplement the data relating to the Soviet Union in the Secretariat's report (E/2837). Teaching about the United Nations was given in all

Soviet schools. It was specially linked to the study of international relations, international law and international economic problems, in the faculties of law and history and elsewhere. The same teaching was given by means of monographs, booklets and other works which the educational establishments made available to students and teachers and which were to be found in all libraries, side by side with the Charter, the resolutions, summary records and various other documents published by the Secretariat. The Press and radio also helped to spread information about the United Nations. The association in the USSR for the dissemination of scientific knowledge organized public lectures, in Moscow and elsewhere, on questions relating to activities of the United Nations. In connexion with the tenth anniversary of United Nations Day and Human Rights Day, a large number of lectures and exhibitions had been held in the Soviet Union, in particular at the United Nations Centre in Moscow, which distributed documents to educational establishments, organized exhibitions, discussions and lectures, and showed films about the United Nations.

17. A United Nations Association had been formed in Moscow in March 1956, including representatives of trade unions, scientific groups and practically every level of the population. The Association had adopted a charter and had decided to apply for affiliation to the World Federation of United Nations Associations.

18. The Soviet Union considered it essential and useful to continue the work and would therefore vote for the draft resolution (E/L.708).

19. Mr. GLOZAR (Czechoslovakia) said that in Czechoslovakia the history of the United Nations was taught in all schools and was also included in various extra-curricular activities. International youth camps were organized in various parts of the country and a large number of young Czechoslovaks were exchanging correspondence with foreign youngsters. Teaching about the United Nations was also part of the regular university curricula, especially those of the social science, law and technical faculties. The Czechoslovak United Nations Association encouraged the distribution of information on international organizations and gave film shows on the subject. Human Rights Day and United Nations Day were celebrated in all schools. The Press and the radio also participated in the celebrations.

20. It would be extremely helpful if the Secretary-General and the Director-General of UNESCO submitted a report similar to document E/2837 to a future session of the Council. The Czechoslovak delegation would vote for the draft resolution.

21. Mr. PEDERSEN (United States of America) noted with satisfaction that a large number of countries had replied to the Secretary-General's requests for information. He expressed the hope that teaching about the United Nations would become increasingly widespread and that further progress in that field would be recorded in the next report.

22. Like the United Kingdom and some other countries, the United States had a decentralized educational system. The state governments and the local authorities were mainly responsible for education. There were also a large number of private schools. The teaching given about the United Nations was not the result of pressure from the Federal Government but was due mainly to local initiative. The Office of Education in

Washington had therefore had to make a special effort in order to obtain the information requested in time. It had sent letters to the chief school officers of all the States and many local school officials, to private educational establishments and to a large number of national organizations concerned with international questions. The immense amount of material received showed that people all over the country were interested in teaching and learning about the United Nations.

23. Such teaching was constantly being extended, as was shown for example by the increase in the number of local committees for the celebration of United Nations Day, of groups participating in the celebration, and of requests for information about the United Nations.

24. As an example of the work being done, he drew attention to the information contained in the Secretary-General's report (E/2837, para. 22) on the importance given to such teaching in New York State, and gave details concerning the media generally employed in teaching about the United Nations, which included discussion groups, reports by pupils, diagrams, films, criticisms of various statements, the organization of "model" General Assemblies, talks on the different international organizations, essay contests, etc.

25. Many schools and institutions had made suggestions with regard to the type of material they required. Many periodicals, including the UNESCO publication, *The Courier*, were already of the greatest use, but school-teachers, scoutmasters, librarians and others were always on the lookout for cheap and attractive booklets for children of the elementary grades. Simple and abundantly illustrated books for the elementary and junior school grades, and short and attractive booklets on the United Nations and the specialized agencies suitable for use at elementary levels would also be useful. Such teaching would be easier to give and more effective if there were documents of every kind, adapted to the different age groups, and check lists of such documents and material about the United Nations.

26. As the Secretary-General had pointed out (E/2837, para. 315), the writing, publication and distributing of teaching materials in the final form in which they were to be used in schools was a domestic responsibility. There was, however, a function which the United Nations could perform—as mentioned in operative paragraph 6 of the draft resolution before the Council (E/L.708)—that is, the preparation of materials on the United Nations suitable for use at various age levels. Educational establishments and voluntary organizations could use a large amount of material, but there should be no question of indoctrinating the children or making propaganda in favour of the United Nations. On the contrary, any material to be prepared should be carefully selected and should be factual, explanatory and objective. It was for the Member States to encourage the study of the United Nations "through appropriate means," as stated in operative paragraph 4 of the draft resolution.

27. He agreed with the United Kingdom representative that a chief role of the non-governmental organizations was to establish contact between the United Nations and the public. The World Federation of United Nations Associations, in particular, had very important work to do in that connexion.

28. Lastly, he urged that Governments should be given more time to reply to Secretariat requests for information. It took time to send questionnaires to all

the educational establishments, to analyse their replies and to draw up a report. When the next report was being prepared, it would be better if Governments could receive the Secretariat's request for information at the beginning or by the middle of 1959, and that the period to be covered by the report should end at least six months before the report was to be submitted.

29. Mr. DIAZ ORDOÑEZ (Dominican Republic) observed that his country had been one of the first to introduce into school programmes teaching concerning the United Nations and the specialized agencies, in particular UNESCO. That teaching had been given a still larger place in the new curricula drawn up in 1954-1955. Teaching on the United Nations was also given in the universities, including the faculty of law of the University of Ciudad Trujillo. Excellent results had been obtained so far and the students were now much better acquainted with the aims and purposes of the United Nations. The Dominican Republic also celebrated United Nations Day and Human Rights Day.

30. He would therefore wholeheartedly support the joint draft resolution (E/L.708).

31. Mr. HAUCK (France) explained that the aim of education in France had always been to give the pupils not merely a practical and technical training but a general liberal culture. Education had long been based on the study of classical antiquity and the values derived therefrom throughout the centuries. Without abandoning the classics, the teachers of today were well aware of the existence of a modern humanism and considered that in the present era an "*honnête homme*," in the seventeenth-century meaning of the term, should be acquainted with the world about him. Hence teaching on the purposes, the principles and the work of the United Nations naturally formed a part of educational curricula; there were no courses exclusively concerned with the United Nations but the spirit of international co-operation of the United Nations permeated the teaching of history, geography, civics and philosophy. Obviously any modern teaching of history must deal with the efforts that were being made to avert war; nor could geography be taught without reference to economic questions, under-developed countries and technical assistance programmes, while the teaching of civics must include the questions raised by the renunciation of some part of their sovereignty by the countries which formed the international community.

32. Special efforts were made in France on the days which were of particular significance to the United Nations and requests by the thousand for material needed for the celebration of United Nations Day were received by the Centre national de documentation pédagogique from members of the teaching profession. That remark applied also to the overseas territories administered by France. The Government did its utmost to co-operate with benevolent and non-governmental organizations which were trying to spread knowledge of the principles and activities of the United Nations. The United Nations Association in France and its university group had organized a seminar, which had been very successful, and a competition for posters concerning the aims of the United Nations and of UNESCO. All those activities served a useful purpose, for it was obviously important to interest not only school pupils but also public opinion—to wit, the adult population—in the work of the United Nations and the other international organizations.

33. The French delegation would gladly vote in favour of the joint draft resolution (E/L.708). Nevertheless, in view of the great importance it attached to the non-governmental organizations, it had seen fit to submit an amendment (E/L.709), which was in fact a textual reproduction of a paragraph of Economic and Social Council resolution 446 (XIV) concerning the question with which the Council was now dealing. It might be feared that the amendment would entail considerable expenditure but in the opinion of the French delegation the proposal would involve no new financial implications and could well be put into effect without exceeding the resources at the disposal of the Secretary-General.

34. Mr. TRUJILLO (Ecuador) remarked that the duration of an institution depended on the reputation it gained for itself and its work. Hence, ever since the inception of the United Nations, statesmen had concerned themselves with the question and had considered means of spreading knowledge of the Organization and an understanding of its importance in history.

35. Teaching of the purposes and principles of the United Nations comprised a theoretical aspect and a practical aspect. Teaching at the theoretical level was quite well organized and lessons on the United Nations were included in the curricula for primary, secondary and university education. In the primary schools the teaching consisted mostly of description and explanations of the nature of an international organization. At the secondary-school level the lessons were more advanced and dealt with the standards and principles applied in the international institutions. In the universities, teaching concerning the United Nations dealt with the Charter and the historic aspects of the Organization. True, the United Nations had been in existence for only ten years, but it was the logical successor of the League of Nations, which had been, not a failure but a first step, and it was difficult for the time being to do more at the theoretical level than to explain what the United Nations and the specialized agencies were and what they represented, and to keep them before the public.

36. At the practical level, the positive work done by the United Nations and the specialized agencies was very little known. Neither school pupils nor the general public were taught how the international organizations worked. He had therefore been deeply interested by the remarks made by the United States representative on the subject of the practical action taken and the arrangements made in his country to acquaint both school and university pupils and the general public with the purposes and principles of the United Nations. Incidentally, it was worth mentioning that the largest girls' school in Ecuador had started a programme in co-operation with UNESCO.

37. The public should also be informed on questions relating to the United Nations.

38. In his opinion teaching on the United Nations should be given in conjunction with history and particularly with geography; although the small countries were acquainted with the history and geography of the great Powers, the reverse was not true, and the whole world should of course be equally well known. Furthermore, all countries should endeavour to amend their administration in such a way as to enable it to receive, analyse, understand and adapt all the documentation and the studies made by the international organizations, and particularly by the specialized agencies. All too frequently the multifarious and interesting studies pro-

duced by those agencies were simply filed away by some administrative department and lost sight of.

39. In the spirit of the remarks he had made, the delegation of Ecuador had joined in sponsoring the draft resolution (E/L.708). It was ready to support the amendment submitted by the French delegation (E/L.709).

40. He hoped that in their next report the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the Director-General of UNESCO would be able to show that progress had been made.

41. Mr. BOZOVIC (Yugoslavia) observed that the report by the Secretary-General and the Director-General of UNESCO clearly showed how teaching of the purposes and principles of the United Nations was given in Yugoslavia; he would merely add that a programme of scholastic reform was being carried out and there would be an extension of such teaching, the value and necessity of which were recognized by all the members of the Council.

42. Any differences there might be in the experience gained and the results obtained in different countries were due less to differences of approach and of good will than to differences of means. The report amply demonstrated that the Member States had made considerable efforts to give teaching on the principles and purposes of the United Nations in their countries, and that they all encountered certain difficulties which, although domestic, could yet be solved by international action. The Secretary-General and the Director-General of UNESCO pointed out that among the obstacles to the organization of an effective programme of teaching about the United Nations was the lack of personnel and of suitable teaching materials. They recommended the organization of seminars and in-service courses in the different areas of the world, and the giving of guidance and assistance to teachers' organizations and educational authorities for the development of courses and programmes.

43. In his view national or regional seminars for journalists, teaching staff and students should be organized. The United Nations information centres could play a larger part by placing the necessary documentation at the disposal of the various countries; for that purpose they should be allowed greater latitude. The report showed that the lack of documentation was particularly acute in the under-developed countries and that the United Nations was ready to help in collecting and distributing the necessary teaching materials.

44. The Yugoslav delegation had merely made a few suggestions and was confident that the Secretary-General would bear them in mind, together with those made by other delegations, when making arrangements to put his own proposals into effect.

45. It would support the joint draft resolution (E/L.708).

46. Mr. AHMED (Pakistan) considered that the welfare of the peoples of the world depended on the strength of the United Nations. Teaching of the purposes and principles of the United Nations was therefore included in the curricula of schools in Pakistan from the primary to the university level. All the text books of the elementary classes contained essential ideas about the United Nations. In the universities, the United Nations was studied along with history and international affairs. Meetings, informal discussions, debates, film shows and

other activities were organized; the results obtained would be even better if more teaching material was available.

47. His delegation approved of the objectives which the Secretary-General and the Director General of UNESCO had in mind but, as the educational system was not the same in every country, it had certain reservations regarding some of the mandatory recommendations.

48. It would vote in favour of the draft resolution before the Council.

49. Mr. CARAYANNIS (Greece) was pleased to note from the Secretary-General's report that the United Nations and its activities were arousing growing interest throughout the world. In Greece teaching of the purposes and principles of the United Nations was a normal part of the curricula of social studies in secondary schools. Greece's experience in that field was borne out by the information in the report: the training of the teachers was inadequate and there was not enough teaching material. Some United Nations publications could be very useful in that connexion if they were translated into the languages of the countries concerned. His delegation paid a tribute to the national United Nations associations and to the World Federation for their efforts to promote teaching of the purposes and principles of the United Nations.

50. It was prepared to vote in favour of the draft resolution (E/L.708) and the amendment submitted by the French delegation (E/L.709).

51. Mr. SCHURMANN (Netherlands) agreed with the other members of the Council that dissemination of information on the activities, purposes and principles of the United Nations was a very important question. The measures adopted in the Netherlands in that connexion were described in the report which the Netherlands Government had transmitted to the Secretariat.

52. On behalf of the sponsors of the draft resolution he accepted the amendment submitted by France (E/L.709).

53. Mr. CARNES (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) stated that UNESCO was happy to note the progress made in recent years in various Member States in teaching about the United Nations.

54. It was the duty of UNESCO, under its Constitution, to promote mutual understanding among peoples. It was within the larger context of education for international understanding and co-operation that UNESCO had embarked upon most of its activities relating to the teaching of the purposes and principles of the United Nations. To cultivate sympathy, respect and mutual understanding among peoples was an indispensable prerequisite for such teaching. For that purpose UNESCO was using a variety of methods such as the publication of pamphlets, the granting of fellowships, the organization of study conferences and seminars, and the promotion of special projects in Member States at their request. Over the past twelve months, UNESCO had tried, in its publication *The Courier*, to present wide coverage of the various activities of the United Nations and the specialized agencies, concentrating on world economic and social questions such as the peaceful uses of atomic energy, refugees, arid zones, the status of women and technical assistance. Since 1952 UNESCO had endeavoured to assist the non-

governmental organizations and its own national commissions rather than to undertake the organization of large international study conferences. Under the scheme of co-ordinated experimental activities in the schools of Member States, initiated in 1953, a group of selected secondary schools in different countries was carrying out a series of special projects designed to increase knowledge of world affairs and to promote international understanding, with emphasis on the purposes and activities of the United Nations and its specialized agencies and the principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The experiment would undoubtedly provide interesting information on the relative effectiveness of the different methods. At the beginning of 1956, ninety institutions in thirty countries had been associated with the programme, and it was intended to increase the number to 125 during the next two years. It had been ascertained that so far the most successful method was to deal with a particular

subject to which the United Nations was devoting its attention or to study a particular area. By that method the pupils could study political, economic and social questions on which the United Nations and the specialized agencies were working. As was pointed out in the report, the preparation of the teachers left much to be desired and the teaching material was inadequate. The report made certain recommendations in that connexion and he assured the Council that UNESCO would study them closely, as also any other proposal which might be made, when its next two-year programme came before the General Conference in November.

55. He would like to assure the United Kingdom representative that UNESCO continued to devote most of its education budget to the promotion of free and compulsory education and of fundamental education, but that teaching about the United Nations activities was considered to have its importance, too.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.