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DECENTRALIZATION OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL ACTIVITIES
OF THE UNITED NATIONS AND STRENGTHENING OF THE REGIONAL
ECONOMIC COMMISSIONS

Report of the Secretary-General

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ABBREVIATIONS

ECA	Economic Commission for Africa
ECLA	Economic Commission for Latin America
ECAFE	. . . . .	Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East
ECE	. . . . .	Economic Commission for Europe
TARS	. . . . .	Technical Assistance Recruitment Service
OAS	. . . . .	Organization of American States
IDB	. . . . .	Inter-American Development Bank
FAO	. . . . .	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
ESAPAC	. . . . .	Escuela Superior de Administración Pública en America Central
UNICEF	. . . . .	United Nations Children's Fund

A. INTRODUCTION

1. By resolution 1709 (XVI) of 19 December 1961, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report to the Economic and Social Council at its thirty-fourth session and to the Assembly at its present session:

"on the new organizational measures taken, or to be taken, to enable the secretariats of the regional economic commissions to discharge fully their responsibilities as executive instruments for the programmes of technical co-operation, and on the strengthening of those secretariats as required for the effective execution of the above tasks".

2. In response to this request, the Secretary-General submitted to the Council a report^{1/} which was considered together with the annual reports of the regional economic commissions. In resolution 879 (XXXIV) the Council took note of the Secretary-General's report, expressed gratification at General Assembly resolution 1709 (XVI) and expressed its confidence "that the Secretary-General will continue to take further steps to carry out the process of decentralization in accordance with General Assembly resolution 1709 (XVI), bearing in mind the views expressed during the debate^{2/} of the Council at its thirty-fourth session".

B. THE SECRETARY-GENERAL'S APPROACH

3. The Secretary-General hopes to meet the wishes of the Council and of the Assembly for further development of the role and resources of the regional secretariats by pursuing vigorously the action outlined in his report to the Council. In that report, the Secretary-General stated that he viewed decentralization in the perspective of a global strengthening of the Organization's

^{1/} E/3643. In addition, the Secretary-General, pursuant to paragraph 5 of the same resolution, has taken steps to keep the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions currently informed of the actions taken and actions contemplated by him.

^{2/} E/SR.1210-1213. See also the statement made by the Under-Secretary for Economic and Social Affairs at the 1213th meeting of the Council and circulated as document E/L.965.

economic and social activities, a conception which precludes approaching the task as a one time operation, and implies that it should be treated as a continuing process. Furthermore, since the Secretary-General has to apply the limited human and financial resources available to him to giving effect to a growing body of resolutions calling on the Secretariat, both at Headquarters and in the regions, to intensify current work and undertake new tasks, it is imperative that he take full advantage of the possibilities offered by the regional secretariats and that activities at Headquarters and in the regions be made complementary and mutually supporting.

4. The United Nations Development Decade has stimulated further the quest for greater efficiency along these lines. As indicated in the above-mentioned report, among the new as well as traditional functions of the Secretariat, some can only be discharged centrally. Similarly, the need for a world-wide approach or the scarcity of qualified personnel in certain cases militate in favour of some pooling of resources at Headquarters. But, with the emphasis placed on operational activities at the country and regional level, the allocation of responsibilities and resources among Headquarters and the regional secretariats is changing in favour of the latter, limited only by the scarcity of qualified and experienced personnel, which, in turn, necessitates their flexible use in connexion with country and regional projects.

5. In his report to the Council, the Secretary-General reviewed the steps taken or envisaged to increase the participation of the regional secretariats in technical assistance activities, to strengthen further their role and to provide them with commensurate administrative support. In the three months which have elapsed since that report, progress has been made towards the decentralization of regional technical assistance projects included in the 1961-1962 programme. Further, in the preparation of the 1963-1964 programme, provision has been made for the delegation of responsibility to the regional secretariats with respect to the implementation not only of regional but also of some country projects, as well as some Special Fund projects. The technical assistance co-ordination and related units set up in the ECA, ECLA and ECAFE secretariats have been staffed through the assignment of experienced programme officers from Headquarters. In the case of the ECE secretariat, the transfer, as of 1 September 1962, of the Geneva technical

assistance office to the Office of the Executive Secretary, and the move of the Technical Assistance Recruitment Service from Paris to Geneva, should ensure the involvement of the ECE secretariat in operational activities, and the mobilization of its experience and knowledge for the recruitment of experts from European countries.

6. The Secretary-General's budget proposals for 1963 include provisions for the strengthening both of the substantive and administrative units of the regional secretariats; in addition, it is his firm intention, with the limits of the over-all appropriations for 1963, to so programme their use as to allocate more of the resources at the regional level. For instance, the programme of expanded advisory services in the field of industrial development submitted to the Council^{3/} by the Secretary-General and the Commissioner for Industrial Development, provides for a regional industrial panel in Bangkok, for several regional experts in selected branches of industry in Santiago de Chile and for a few short-term consultants in Geneva.

7. On the occasion of their meeting with the Under-Secretary for Economic and Social Affairs in Geneva, during the thirty-fourth session of the Council, the Executive Secretaries discussed decentralization in terms of possibilities and requirements for increased action at the regional level. In the following paragraphs, the Secretary-General has attempted to supplement the information presented in his report to the Council by outlining what is being done and envisaged in the main fields of activity for maximizing the contributions of the regional secretariats to the Organization's work for economic and social development.

C. FISCAL AND FINANCIAL QUESTIONS

8. The regional secretariats began to play an active role in this field some ten years ago, with the submission of basic conceptual work carried out at Headquarters on the organization and use of budget data for effective correlation with economic development planning to a series of regional workshops for study by government specialists and for implementation in national budget management. Initially the

^{3/} E/3656 and Add.1.

substantive preparation of the workshops was the responsibility of Headquarters staff, but recently the regional secretariats have assumed an increasing role in the preparation of studies more particularly related to developments in the regions. This trend has been especially pronounced in Latin America, where the ECLA secretariat has acquired extensive experience through the inclusion of work on budget reform in the task of the joint ECLA/OAS advisory groups which have been serving in a number of countries in the past five years. So far, three budget workshops have been held in Latin America and in Asia and the Far East and the first workshop for Africa took place in 1961. A joint effort is now undertaken by the ECLA secretariat and Headquarters to establish an integrated system of planning, budgeting and government accounting and to include specialists in accounting in the ECLA advisory groups.

9. In the tax field decentralization has also proceeded fastest in Latin America through the work of the ECLA/OAS advisory groups and through the joint ECLA/OAS/IDB programme, which organized a Latin-American Conference on Tax Administration in Buenos Aires in October 1961 and is planning a Tax Policy Conference to be held in Santiago de Chile late in 1962. Prior responsibility in those undertakings rests with the regional sponsors, while Headquarters contributes papers to the conferences, participates in their proceedings and, in the case of the advisory groups, assists in the substantive backstopping of tax experts. Headquarters assistance is also given to the ECLA secretariat for the work on the tax aspects of the Central American Economic Integration Programme.

10. In Asia and the Far East, considerable work in taxation has been undertaken over the past year through the outposting of staff from Headquarters, including a major study on public finance included in the ECARE Survey for 1960. The ECARE Working Party on Economic Development and Planning, which is to meet in Bangkok in October 1962, will consider the role of fiscal policy in the financing of economic development and it is intended to devote a subsequent session of the Working Party or of the Conference of Asian Economic Planners to the subject of tax reform in the countries of the region, drawing again on the active co-operation of Headquarters staff. In Africa, a regional fiscal adviser will soon be appointed to serve in Addis Ababa both for rendering assistance to Governments in the region in the field of tax policy and administration and for working on the regional aspects of Headquarters studies.

11. Regional co-operation in the carrying out of projects which are of Headquarters' concern because of their inter-regional scope and importance will include the study of the European situation with respect to the financing of industrial projects in less developed countries, to be undertaken in the ECE secretariat, and participation by the regional secretariats in the preparation of the selective studies evaluating the results achieved by economic, legal and administrative means in the promotion of the flow of private capital requested under Economic and Social Council resolution 922 (XXXIV) on the subject. In the preparation of the third report on progress in land reform,^{4/} which was submitted to the thirty-fourth session of the Council, Headquarters had the benefit of three country studies on the financing of land reform prepared under the supervision of the ECA, ECAFE and ECE secretariats, respectively.

D. INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT

12. Shortly after taking up his duties in June 1962, the Commissioner for Industrial Development had an opportunity, on the occasion of the thirty-fourth session of the Council in Geneva, to consult with the Executive Secretaries and responsible officials of all four regional economic commissions. Following these consultations, the Commissioner set forth the regional requirements for a strengthening of advisory services in a memorandum^{5/} to the Council.

13. In that memorandum, supplementing the Secretary-General's report^{6/} to the Council on the Headquarters requirements of such strengthening, both of which documents are available to the General Assembly, further emphasis is placed on co-operation between Headquarters and the regional secretariats for the formulation and execution of mutually supporting projects and, as indicated in paragraph 6 above, a considerable strengthening of the regional establishments is proposed for enabling the latter to cope with the increased workload entailed by additional tasks which can best be undertaken at the regional level.

^{4/} E/3603.

^{5/} E/3656/Add.1.

^{6/} E/3656.

14. The secretariat of ECA has engaged in the preparation of a preliminary survey of industries in the region intended to throw light on the prospects for, and implications of, industrial development in the region over the next ten years, as well as to serve as a basis for a long-range programme of work. More detailed studies are envisaged regarding the feasibility of specific projects and it is foreseen that over-all industrial surveys may prove necessary. The professional staff of the ECA secretariat is being built up and strengthened to assume substantive responsibility for the formulation and implementation of technical assistance projects and for the provision of advisory services to Governments.

15. In Asia and the Far East a considerable expansion of the work of the regional secretariat is contemplated in such sectors as chemicals, metal and engineering, building materials, petroleum and small-scale industries, with the help of a group of high-level experts advising Governments on specific questions and policy issues and organizing regional seminars and meetings intended to bring together government officials and specialists concerned with industrial problems. At a recent symposium on petroleum resources, a discussion on petroleum industries based on natural gas was organized in co-operation with Headquarters. Even closer co-operation is relied upon for the conduct of a seminar on basic chemical industries and for the holding of a seminar on iron and steel industries which is to take place in 1963. A seminar on the production of fertilizers will also be held in 1962 in co-operation with FAO.

16. In Latin America, the intention is also to add to the existing staff of economists and engineers specialists in such fields as engineering, chemical, iron and steel and textiles industries, with a view to forming teams able to deal in each sector with highly technical problems at the request of Governments. Greater and more systematic co-operation of government and private agencies concerned with industrialization in the countries concerned will be sought so as to help carry out the projects to the stage of practical action and make possible the simultaneous undertaking of a greater number of projects. Special attention is being directed at the challenging problems posed by the Latin American schemes of economic integration in the field of industrial development and the ECLA secretariat is assuming responsibility for the following projects to be carried out in the near future: a seminar on various aspects of industrial programming,

an expert meeting on industrial promotion policies, a seminar on the adaptation to Latin American conditions of techniques used in industrialized countries for the manufacture of machinery and industrial development, and an expert meeting which will discuss and evaluate the basis for a co-ordinated Latin American programme for the development of the main chemical industries.

17. In Europe, the ECE secretariat will have the co-operation of Headquarters for assisting such less developed countries and territories as Cyprus, Greece, Malta and Turkey in the study and solution of industrial development problems and, in turn, will help Headquarters to mobilize the knowledge and experience available in the industrialized countries of Europe for the benefit of less developed countries in other regions. In addition to assisting in the recruitment of industrial experts for the Secretariat staff or for technical assistance assignments and in the organization of seminars in less developed regions, the ECE secretariat will undertake studies of the possibilities offered by Europe for the financing of industrial projects in less developed countries and for the marketing in Europe of manufactured goods from those countries.

18. The activities outlined above are conceived within the framework of the Industrial Development Centre which is designed to ensure a maximum degree of co-operation and co-ordination between the substantive units at Headquarters and in the regional secretariats and for sharing responsibilities among them in a manner most conducive to their efficient discharge in the light of continuing exchange of opinions and review of experience. They must be viewed in relation to a considerable strengthening of the establishment at Headquarters so devised as to intensify basic research and technological studies as well as to constitute a reservoir of knowledge and experience and a pool of expertise which can be used flexibly in all regions and areas to meet specific government requests.

E. NATURAL RESOURCES

19. United Nations activities in that field have long been characterized by the existence of distinct programmes at Headquarters and in the regional secretariats.

20. Thus the ECAFE secretariat is very active in the field of water resources development and, through its Bureau of Flood Control and Water Resources Development,

it exercises substantive responsibility for the various projects concerning the Mekong Basin, including Special Fund projects; it has also an important programme of work in rural electrification and several projects related to geology and the development of mineral resources. The ECLA secretariat is engaged in water resources surveys and is studying electrification problems, while the ECE secretariat is carrying on work on energy questions and is extending its research into water pollution problems.

21. The activities of the regional secretariats are expanding as a result of the decentralization of all regional projects concerned with natural resources, while work at Headquarters on water, energy and mineral resources problems is also increasing, owing to the need to build a central reservoir of knowledge and experience to support a manifold increase of operational activities, especially with respect to Special Fund projects. Except for Africa, however, where the ECA secretariat is building up an active section on natural resources and preparing seminars on electrification and groundwater development with the help of Headquarters, substantive co-operation and co-ordination need to be intensified through travel and possibly exchange of staff.

F. PROJECTIONS AND PROGRAMMING

22. United Nations work on economic projections and programming is being intensified in accordance with various United Nations resolutions, the most recent of which are General Assembly resolution 1708 (XVI) of 19 December 1961 and Economic and Social Council resolution 924 (XXXIV) of 3 August 1962. A major feature of United Nations activity in response to these resolutions is an integrated approach, by which the work programmes on projections and programming at Headquarters and in the regional economic commissions are formulated as parts of a larger whole rather than as purely independent sets of projects, so that each programme can contribute with maximum effectiveness to United Nations objectives in these fields.

23. Closer co-operation and continuing co-ordination between Headquarters and the regional secretariats in the planning and execution of the work programmes will be effected through the Economic Projections and Programming Centre, established at Headquarters in June 1962, and it is envisaged that the secretariats of the commissions or the newly-established regional institutes for economic development,

as appropriate, will serve as regional focal points for United Nations work on projections and programming. The setting up of the Centre should ensure not only a most rational distinction between the functions which can be most effectively performed at Headquarters and the tasks which are best pursued in the regions, but also interregional collaboration maximizing short-run flexibility in the disposition of staff and enabling one unit at Headquarters or in one region to lend expert assistance to another as current needs may suggest. Functions likely to be discharged under central auspices include the promotion of a unified methodological framework for research and the determination of prospects and targets for various sectors of the world economy; on the other hand, functions which can be most efficiently discharged at the regional level include area research and advisory and training services for Governments.

24. Recent activities in which collaboration between Headquarters and regional units has played a valuable role include the meetings of experts on economic projections held in New York in June 1962, and on economic planning held in Geneva in August 1962. Staff members of the regional secretariats attended these meetings, which were convened in the framework of the Economic Projections and Programming Centre, with the participation of consultants from different regions and from countries at different stages of economic development; the presence and assistance of the regional staff not only facilitated a helpful exchange of views and a joint evaluation of the projects undertaken at Headquarters and in the regions but also provided a sound basis for continuing co-operation in their execution. Similarly, a meeting of experts on projections for countries in Asia and the Far East, convened by the ECAFE secretariat in August 1962, was attended by a staff member from Headquarters who assisted in the discussions concerning the planning of projections work in that region within a common United Nations framework, and who also visited the ECA secretariat on a similar mission.

25. Staff members of the regional commissions will also attend the second meeting of experts on economic planning which is to take place in New York in the early part of 1963, and it has been arranged that research on planning problems and techniques by Headquarters and the ECE secretariat will be so conducted as to permit the publication, in the next issue of the Economic Survey for Europe, of a comparative study of the practices in centrally planned and advanced private

enterprise economies in Europe, while a special study on the problems and techniques of planning in less developed countries will be featured in the next World Economic Survey.

G. PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

26. The growing importance of public administration in the process of economic and social development, enhanced as it is by the access to independence of numerous countries, requires a prompt and significant strengthening of the ability of the Organization to meet government needs in that field. As a first step, the Secretary-General has requested appropriations from the General Assembly for adding to the establishment at Headquarters, which had been stationary for many years, so as to enable it to backstop properly an increased volume of operations and to support efficiently the activities of the regional secretariats, whose ability to respond immediately to government requests has, for its part, been strengthened by the appointment of regional advisers under the programmes of technical co-operation.

27. The ECA secretariat has been provided with posts for one regional consultant, one associate regional consultant and four regional experts in personnel administration and training, organization and methods, fiscal administration and customs administration respectively; the fourth and the sixth posts were filled by mid-year, an expert is being recruited for the third and it is expected that the others will not remain vacant beyond the end of 1962. Keeping in close contact with the Division of Public Administration, this personnel is to advise the Executive Secretary of ECA and his staff, to play a major role in the programming and co-ordination of technical assistance projects in public administration, and to advise Governments directly or through more specialized experts. Prior to taking up his post, the regional adviser in customs administration acted as chief instructor and director of a three-month course in customs administration arranged in Lagos for twenty customs officials of West African countries under the aegis of ECA.

28. In Asia and the Far East, one regional consultant in public administration and one regional expert in customs administration were appointed by mid-year in Bangkok. The latter expert is assisting in the organization of the third

session of the ECAFE working party on customs administration scheduled for October 1962 in Bangkok, which will study plans to establish an institute for training customs administrators. The regional consultant in public administration has assumed the leading role in the preparation of the Asian Seminar on Central Services to Local Authorities, which is to be held in New Delhi in 1963, under the joint sponsorship of the United Nations and the Eastern Regional Organization for Public Administration, in such a manner that it has been possible to delegate to ECAFE the authority to make decisions on substantive as well as administrative aspects of the project.

29. In Latin America, one post of regional adviser in public administration was established and it was arranged that, in addition to his advisory functions and participation in technical assistance programming, the expert will lecture and teach public administration in the new Latin American Institute for Economic and Social Planning established under the aegis of ECLA. Among the major regional projects being decentralized is that of the Escuela Superior de Administración Pública en America Central (ESAPAC) which for over five years was under guidance and supervision by Headquarters. The training and the seminars offered in ESAPAC have become part of ECLA's programme for Central American economic integration and the ECLA secretariat has now assumed responsibility for carrying on the undertaking, with Headquarters limiting its role to substantive support on specific aspects.

H. SOCIAL AFFAIRS

30. Regional economic commissions have become concerned with social problems only recently, but the emphasis placed on balanced economic and social development, and the steps taken some years ago to establish social affairs divisions in the regional secretariats, have contributed to make decentralization possible in the social as well as in the economic field and it is in both fields that regional activities have steadily expanded, with a parallel increase in the demand for supporting services from Headquarters which puts a heavy strain on the resources of the latter.

31. With respect to social development planning and research, an important operational project of current interest is the Meeting of Experts on Social Development Planning in Asia and the Far East, which is scheduled for April 1963; responsibility for this project has been delegated to the ECAFE secretariat, with assistance from Headquarters for its preparation. On the other hand, it has not yet proved possible to decentralize effectively the preparation of the chapter on Asia for the forthcoming 1963 Report on the World Social Situation, because of the need to rely primarily, in this major research project, on a global review of a large number of subjects drawing upon a wide variety of published materials. In Latin America, the ECLA secretariat has prepared original studies on the social aspects of economic development and of economic integration with the assistance of seconded Headquarters staff and those studies were drawn upon for projects carried out at Headquarters.

32. In demography, the scope of the work of the Secretariat has been widened through an extension of regional activities accompanied by exchange of technical material and experience with Headquarters, participation of Headquarters personnel in regional projects and contributions from the regional secretariats to inter-regional projects carried out at Headquarters. Thus, the plans and preparatory work for the 1963 Asian Population Conference are being developed by the ECAFE secretariat in close co-operation with Headquarters, which is contributing personnel and preparing technical papers for the Conference. The same co-operation obtains for the Seminar on Population Problems in Africa, organized by the ECA secretariat and to be held late in 1962, and for the establishment of two sub-regional demographic research and training centres in Africa which will be counterparts of the existing demographic centres in Latin America and in Asia and the Far East. The ECLA secretariat has been engaged in an expanding programme of research and advisory services on the demographic aspects of problems of economic and social development planning and programming in close co-operation with the Latin American Demographic Centre.

33. In community development and social welfare, substantive responsibility was delegated to the regional secretariats, with appropriate guidance and assistance from Headquarters, for seven regional community development and

social services seminars, workshops and conferences held in 1961 and the early part of 1962. With respect to country projects, the increasing reliance on the regional secretariats is exemplified by their involvement in technical consultations with Governments and UNICEF field officers for the preparation of project plans in social services and community development for submission to the Executive Board of UNICEF. As for research in community development, of the twelve projects undertaken since 1960, three were carried out at Headquarters in consultation with the regional secretariats, two were undertaken jointly and the remainder either initiated in the regions or delegated to them. In its research related to social services, Headquarters had relied on information of regional origin, with particularly effective co-operation from the ECA secretariat, whose work programme includes projects planned in close co-operation with Headquarters.

34. Regarding housing, building and planning, the ECA secretariat already has a nucleus of staff which enabled it during the past year to carry out a survey of self-help housing and to have a workshop on urbanization, with the assistance of an expert and a staff member assigned from Headquarters; the main documentation for a Meeting of Experts on Housing Problems in Africa to be held early in 1963 is being prepared in Addis Ababa with substantial help from Headquarters and from the ECE secretariat. Headquarters staff also helped the ECAFE secretariat in a survey of self-help housing methods and with a seminar on the provision of community facilities in relationship to housing. In Latin America, activities are conducted mostly through a special arrangement with OAS, but with some participation of Headquarters which continued to lend substantive support to the Inter-American Housing Centre as well as to the Housing Sub-Committee of the Central American Economic Co-operation Committee. In Economic and Social Council resolution 903 C (XXXIV) establishing a standing committee on housing, building and planning, the Council invited the regional commissions to strengthen their activities in that area and to co-operate fully in the work of the Committee; consultations between Headquarters and the regional secretariats have been initiated to study the ways and means to meet the wishes of the Council in anticipation of the first meeting of the new Committee which will be held in January 1963.

I. STATISTICS

35. Activities in this field have been strengthened at the regional level, both substantively and operationally, in the course of a gradual and continuing process of decentralization initiated several years ago.

36. The appointment of regional statisticians on the manning table of each of the regional commissions was the first of a series of steps taken to make this possible. The regional statisticians have responsibility for regional seminars, expert working groups, training centres and other group activities for which operational and administrative authority is delegated to the Executive Secretaries.

37. A development which has already proved its usefulness on two continents, and is about to be extended to a third, is the appointment, through the use of technical assistance funds, of regional statistical advisers attached to the statistical services of the regional economic commissions. In 1958, the United Nations was the recipient of a Ford Foundation grant which made possible the setting up of a UN/FAO Regional Census Programme of assistance to Governments in Asia and the Far East largely carried on by regional census advisers. While substantive responsibility for the project, including the recruitment of advisers, remained with Headquarters, the ECAFE regional statistician was assigned the responsibility for co-ordinating and programming the work of the advisers, in consultation with United Nations and FAO headquarters. The experience gained in the operation of this project has made it possible to extend the system to other areas. It found particular application in Africa where five regional statistical advisers have joined the ECA statistical advisory service and are at work in co-operation with ECA staff on the tasks set for the "Five-Year Statistical Survey of Africa", which aims at assisting Governments in developing their statistics to a satisfactory level. The advisory service operates as a single unit under which regional projects are supervised and short-term advisory missions organized in response to requests from Governments. In addition to their main function of providing short-term assistance in specialized fields of statistics, an important task performed by the service is assisting Governments in the planning of their technical assistance requirements for experts, fellowships and other assistance in statistics.

38. A marked increase in statistical training activities in Africa has been made possible largely because of the active role of the regional secretariats in developing and co-ordinating these activities. The programme includes the training of middle-grade statisticians as well as training at the professional or university level, for which purpose training centres were established in co-operation with African Governments, with technical assistance funds providing fellowships, and limited amounts of equipment, as well as the services of directors for the centres. Appointments of the directors have here again been made from Headquarters, with the agreement of the Executive Secretary of ECA, whereas, by means of a delegation of authority, selection of fellows and all administrative arrangements are made by ECA in consultation with the directors of the centres.

39. In all regions, the staff of the regional commissions, in particular the regional statisticians, make a substantial contribution toward supporting the work of statistical experts assigned to individual countries in the technical assistance programme. Because there is at Headquarters a range of experience in statistics not duplicated at regional commission secretariats, primary responsibility for the work of these experts remains centralized at Headquarters. However, the secretariats of the regional commissions are in the unique position of being able to relate their particular regional experience to the experts' tasks and for this reason experts are encouraged to keep in touch with the regional statistician as well as with Headquarters on substantive problems encountered.

40. Noting that advances in the technique of electronic computation would not only permit speedier and more efficient processing of international data, but also give access to the full range of the data to a degree not previously possible, the United Nations Statistical Commission, by resolution II (XII), requested the Secretary-General to establish a centre attached to the United Nations Statistical Office, for the collection and publication of international data on external trade, and to arrange for the processing of the data by electronic computer. By drawing upon the work of Headquarters in this field, the regional secretariats will obtain the material required to show not only the trade statistics of their respective regions but also the place of those regions in the various channels of world trade as a whole, thus strengthening their ability to analyse regional economic problems in an accurate perspective.

J. TRADE

41. The division of labour between Headquarters and the regional secretariats in this field, which is not yet significant in terms of government requests for technical assistance but in which basic research is assuming increasing importance, follows closely the requirements of the work programmes of the trade committees of the regional commissions as distinct from those of the work programme of the Commission for International Commodity Trade and of the various commodity meetings, which are serviced by Headquarters.

42. A major project, which will require consultations between the Secretary-General and the Executive Secretaries and co-operative work of Headquarters and regional staff, is the preparation of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, in the spirit of resolution 917 (XXXIV), by which the Council resolved to convene the Conference and requested the Secretary-General "with the assistance of the regional economic commissions, to prepare for consideration by the Preparatory Committee appropriate documentation and proposals for such a Conference ...".
