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President: Mr. George DAVIDSON (Canada).

Present:

The representatives of the following States: Brazil, Canada, Chile, China, Costa Rica, Finland, France, Greece, Indonesia, Mexico, Netherlands, Pakistan, Poland, Sudan, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Yugoslavia.

Observers from the following States: Albania, Argentina, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Ethiopia, Ghana, Haiti, Hungary, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Laos, Liberia, Libya, Morocco, New Zealand, Philippines, Portugal, Spain, Tunisia, United Arab Republic.

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

The representative of the International Atomic Energy Agency.

AGENDA ITEM 10

Non-governmental organizations (E/3100)

REPORT OF THE COUNCIL COMMITTEE ON NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS ON APPLICATIONS FOR HEARINGS (E/3100)

1. Miss PELT (Netherlands), Chairman of the Council Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations, presented the Committee's report on applications for hearings (E/3100).

The report was adopted.

AGENDA ITEM 6

Consideration of the establishment of an Economic Commission for Africa (E/3052, E/3086 and Add.1, E/3093, E/3095)

2. The PRESIDENT recalled that the Council had decided (999th meeting) to invite the African States Members of the United Nations but not members of the Council to participate in the discussion of agenda item

6. He welcomed the representatives of Ethiopia, Ghana, Liberia, Libya, Morocco, Tunisia and the United Arab Republic.

3. The representatives of Spain, Italy and Portugal had also asked to be allowed to participate in the discussion. If there was no objection, he would ask the Secretariat to make the necessary arrangements.

It was so decided.

4. Mr. OSMAN (Sudan) gave a brief historical survey of the question, emphasizing how urgent it was to establish an Economic Commission for Africa. He presented the draft terms of reference (E/3093) which the African States had prepared in order to assist the Council in its discussions. Except for a reservation by Liberia on paragraph 5, the draft represented the unanimous views of its sponsors. They had been guided by the General Assembly debates on the subject, the sense of which was summarized in the preamble to resolution 1155 (XII), and had based their draft on the terms of reference of the other regional economic commissions and the practices that they had established over the years; in addition they had tried to adapt the terms of reference of the Economic Commission for Africa to the conditions prevailing in that continent.

5. He felt obliged to explain certain essential points, as the United Kingdom had presented draft terms of reference (E/3095) based, except with regard to the question of membership, entirely on the terms of reference of the Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East (ECAFE), and ignoring some of the most valuable provisions of the terms of reference of the Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLA) concerning economic development.

6. The African States believed that the Commission's objectives should include the promotion of social development as well as economic development. They were convinced that that was in accord with the policy previously followed by the United Nations and they had therefore expressly included a reference to social development in paragraph 1 of their draft (E/3093). It was true that no such reference appeared in the terms of reference of ECAFE and ECLA. Nevertheless everyone knew that since their inception those two Commissions had, with the Council's approval, engaged in social activities and even established divisions of social affairs.

7. It was very difficult to draw a dividing line between the economic and social spheres. In resolution 1161 (XII), on balanced and integrated economic and social policy, which the General Assembly had adopted on the same day that it had recommended the establishment of the Economic Commission for Africa (resolution 1155 (XII)), the Assembly itself had recognized that "problems of economic and social development interact upon each other". Furthermore, the metropolitan Powers which had established the Commission for Technical Co-operation in Africa South of the Sahara had not

excluded social development from its terms of reference. In expressly giving the Economic Commission for Africa—a continent more retarded in its development than any other part of the world—the right to intervene in social questions, the Council would merely be acknowledging the requirements of reality. It went without saying that the Commission's social activities should not overlap with the activities of the specialized agencies.

8. With regard to the membership of the Commission, the African States had been guided by the principles underlying the terms of reference of ECAFE. It should be noted that, as in the case of the other regional economic commissions, the proposed terms of reference would not compel any of the countries mentioned in paragraph 5 to join the Commission; those countries would simply be invited to become members but they would be free not to exercise their right.

9. In extending the invitation to the United States and the USSR, the African States—with the exception of Liberia which had formulated certain reservations—had considered that the inclusion of those two great Powers would strengthen the Commission and assist it in carrying out its tasks in the best possible circumstances. In admitting those two countries to membership they had merely followed the example of the other regional commissions. The provision regarding voting by non-African countries was taken from the Lahore agreement, which had been arrived at as a result of experience and was now applied in ECAFE with the Council's approval.

10. The draft terms of reference prepared by the African States and the United Kingdom draft differed also on the question of the associate members and their right to vote. The African draft was based on the original terms of reference of ECAFE as adopted in 1947 (Council resolution 37 (IV)). The African States believed that the correct decision would be to follow a policy in the case of the Economic Commission for Africa similar to that which had been followed for ECAFE, all the more since the number of Non-Self-Governing Territories in Africa was far greater than it had ever been in Asia. The African States were, however, prepared to study any suggestion which might be made in that connexion.

11. In so far as the Commission's relations with non-governmental organizations were concerned, the African draft was somewhat broader than the United Kingdom draft. The African draft was based not only on the terms of reference of the other regional commissions but also on a study of their practices, which were of long standing and had been noted by the Council every year. It would seem no more than proper that well-established practices which had proved entirely satisfactory to all concerned should be fully recognized in the terms of reference of the Commission.

12. In so far as the co-ordination of work with inter-governmental bodies which were independent of the United Nations was concerned, it was clear that the Commission could not lay down any hard and fast rules. The African States had believed that the Commission was bound to develop as had the commissions that had been established earlier. For that reason the African States had included in their draft a provision for the possible establishment of sub-regional offices in due course.

13. He hoped that the Council would study the question of the establishment of an Economic Commission for Africa in the same spirit of understanding and co-operation as that which had prompted the Sudanese delegation and that the Commission would be able to hold its first session as early as possible, not later than the end of 1958. It was indeed time to come to the help of the unhappy peoples of Africa and to give them the means to develop the vast untapped resources of their continent and thus raise their economic, social, health and cultural levels.

14. Mr. SCOTT FOX (United Kingdom) said that his delegation was entirely in favour of the establishment of an Economic Commission for Africa and hoped that the Commission would be set up at the earliest possible date. Such a body would be really valuable only if the Powers responsible for the administration of territories that were still non-self-governing could take full part in the Commission's work. For its part the United Kingdom had formally undertaken to safeguard the current and future interests of the territories which it was leading progressively towards self-government; its obligations towards them were inescapable.

15. It was first necessary to reach agreement regarding the terms of reference for the new Commission. The United Kingdom delegation had submitted a draft (E/3095) for the consideration of the Council which was based on the terms of reference of ECAFE. The economic problems of Africa were in many ways similar to those of Asia and the Far East and therefore it seemed that similar means should be sought for solving them especially as the terms of reference of ECAFE had proved satisfactory.

16. The United Kingdom delegation had closely studied the draft terms of reference submitted by eight African States (E/3093); that text differed from the terms of reference of ECAFE and the United Kingdom proposals on only a few points. Some of those differences were, however, very important. Thus in paragraph 1, setting forth the fields of activity of the Commission, the United Kingdom delegation would prefer to adhere to the terms of reference of the other regional economic commissions and avoid specific mention of social affairs. No such mention had been made in the terms of reference of the other economic commissions, and that had in no way prevented them from dealing with economic activities having social implications, as for instance community development.

17. With regard to the membership of the Commission, the United Kingdom delegation attached the greatest importance to the principle that no distinction should be made between African countries and countries having responsibilities in Africa but that all members should have exactly the same rights. In addition his delegation believed that countries which had no direct responsibilities in Africa should not be called upon to join the Commission. A list of such countries would be difficult to draw up, and such a course might bring extraneous issues into the Commission's work.

18. The United Kingdom agreed with the African States that associate members should be admitted on presentation of their applications by members responsible for their international relations; it attached importance to the principle of having an initial list, though

the list might perhaps be completed by the Council at its twenty-sixth session. It would also be advisable to follow the procedure which had worked well in ECAFE and to give associate members the right to vote and hold office in subordinate bodies of the Commission.

19. In connexion with paragraph 11 of the United Kingdom's draft (E/3095) he stated that it seemed preferable to restrict arrangements for consultation with non-governmental organizations to those non-governmental organizations which had been granted consultative status with the Council and so once more to follow the practice of the other regional commissions.

20. Paragraph 12 of the United Kingdom draft was slightly different from the equivalent paragraph (paragraph 11) of the African States' draft as the former stated that the Commission would ensure liaison not only with other organs of the United Nations and with the specialized agencies but also with other inter-governmental organizations in the region.

21. He was very pleased to note that the African States had, like the United Kingdom, proposed that the Council should fix the headquarters of the Commission on the basis of the Secretary-General's recommendations on the matter (E/3052, paras. 44-50).

22. In conclusion he stressed that the spirit with which the Commission would be animated in its work would be even more vitally important for the success of its work than the decisions of the Council.

23. Mr. COSIO VILLEGAS (Mexico) felt that the question of the establishment of an Economic Commission for Africa was a particularly delicate one in view of the manner in which it had been brought before the Council. The General Assembly had submitted it direct to the Council for consideration (resolution 1155 (XII)), which meant that the Council must make a preliminary study of it and also take a final decision. Furthermore, the General Assembly's resolution was so urgent that the freedom of action of the Council was greatly hampered, for its work had to be completed at the current session. In fact, he supposed there were only two courses open to the Council: either to receive draft terms of reference from one or more delegations and discuss them in plenary session; or else, following a general debate, to appoint a committee which, within a prescribed time limit, would submit the draft to it for discussion and approval in plenary session.

24. Though the Council might derive some profit from a comparative study of the draft terms of reference, it would nevertheless come up against a major drawback, namely the presence among its members of only one representative of the nine African States and only two representatives of the six Powers administering territories in Africa. Moreover, there would be no opportunity of hearing speakers from the African colonies and Trust Territories.

25. Reviewing the development of the question since March 1946, when the Cuban representative had stressed the need to help in the reconstruction of North Africa and Ethiopia, he recalled that in 1951 the Philippine delegation had proposed that a commission should be set up to promote economic progress in Africa. The Philippine draft, ^{1/} which had been ably and

carefully phrased, had met with opposition from the metropolitan Powers, which had pointed to the fact that there was no unity on the African continent, that action had already been taken there on an international scale, that the United Nations was active there and that remarkable progress had been achieved over the past fifty years.

26. At that time there had been only four independent African States, but that figure had risen to nine in the six years following the submission of the Philippine draft. Moreover, new factors had come into play; in particular, the usefulness of services rendered by the regional economic commissions to under-developed countries had become apparent and it was no coincidence that all the sponsors of General Assembly resolution 1155 (XII) belonged to that group of countries. But the most important development of all had undoubtedly been the national impetus, one of the most striking phenomena of modern times.

27. That was the reason for the almost unanimous adoption of resolution 1155 (XII). The need for the establishment of an Economic Commission for Africa had therefore been accepted in principle and all that there remained for the Council to do was to decide how to establish it. Although the reasons put forward against the Philippine proposal had lost much of their force, certain observations made at the time were still valid and should be kept in mind. He instanced the USSR delegation's recommendation that representative bodies of local populations should be consulted and the desire of the metropolitan Powers that the Commission's work should not overlap with that of other United Nations organizations and inter-governmental agencies operating in Africa.

28. During the discussions prior to the adoption of General Assembly resolution 1155 (XII) some Member States had suggested that the Commission should perform the following tasks: the study of the production potentials of the African continent so that its resources could be better utilized; assessment of the economic problems and of ways of solving them; and co-ordination of research and policies of economic development. The great importance of the part to be played by technical assistance in Africa, particularly in view of the dearth of skilled staff, had been stressed, but few suggestions had been made regarding the composition of the Commission, possibly because of the very general nature of the discussion or possibly because the question seemed a delicate one.

29. It was rather difficult to decide to what extent the experience of existing economic commissions could be applied in the circumstances; the Secretary-General and the executive secretaries of the commissions should be consulted on that point, but certain lessons could already be drawn from that experience. His delegation felt that the active and constant collaboration between the Governments of a region had ensured the success of the work accomplished by the economic commissions, even when the strong influence exerted in certain cases by extra-regional economic interests was taken into account.

30. Two other important aspects of the question should also be considered. First, economic and social progress went hand in hand and so the new Commission would have to operate in both fields. The doubts expressed in that connexion eleven years before were no

^{1/} See Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, Thirteenth Session, Annexes, agenda item 2, document E/L.183.

longer valid since the interdependence of economic and social problems was now recognized.

31. Secondly, there was increasing agreement that regional commissions should turn from purely theoretical work to more practical measures, and that technical assistance must therefore play an important part in their activity. In that connexion, the experience of ECLA ^{2/} could be drawn upon.

32. The Council should also see to it that there was collaboration between the new Commission and the United Nations other bodies or African institutions, both inter-governmental and private, with similar aims. The vast African continent had been exposed to modern civilization for less than a century and comprised only a few countries that could provide the Commission with the assistance it must have. However,

^{2/} See Official Records of the General Assembly, Twelfth Session, Annexes, agenda item 29, document A/C.2/196.

such recently created inter-governmental organizations as the Commission for Technical Co-operation for Africa South of the Sahara and the Scientific Council for Africa South of the Sahara had already completed studies and work which would certainly be of use to the Commission.

33. Finally, he wished to deal very briefly with the composition of the Commission, always a very delicate problem. His delegation had no preconceived ideas on the point, but it did have principles, which, fortunately, had been expressed publicly and officially in the United Nations; it hoped that when the Commission's statutes were being drawn up, full consideration would be given to the obligation assumed by Members of the United Nations under Article 73 of the Charter to recognize the principle that the interests of inhabitants of the region were paramount.

The meeting rose at 12.55 p.m.