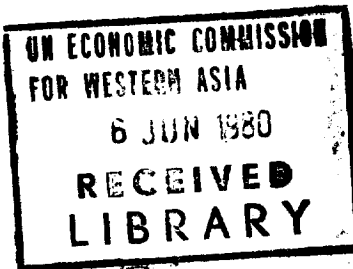




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Item 12 of the Provisional Agenda

ESTABLISHMENT OF SUBSIDIARY BODIES OF THE COMMISSION

Note of the Executive Secretary*

1. In follow-up to resolutions 63 (V) and 69 (VI) and subsequent to the initial consultations on the matter - which was reported upon the sixth session (E/ECWA/76) - further consultations were held with member States, Arab regional organizations and international organizations on the need and modalities for establishing subsidiary bodies of the Commission.

2. Consultation with member States

The main conclusions which can be drawn from the consultations with ECWA member States can be summarized as follows:

- (i) Member States acknowledge the need for establishment of standing technical subsidiary bodies of the Commission which they consider necessary organs for establishing priorities and formulating programmes of work;
- (ii) Member States consider that standing technical subsidiary organs in selected areas would enable the Commission to contribute in a more effective manner to global policy-making in areas of interest to the region;
- (iii) Member States consider that standing technical subsidiary bodies would constitute a tool for effecting regional harmonization, integration and standardisation;

* Previous reference to subject matter is contained in documents E/ECWA/58 and E/ECWA/76.

- (iv) Member States expressed the need for co-ordination between the Commission and Arab regional organizations and international organizations, particularly in those spheres of activities in which already standing subsidiary organs emanating from such Arab regional and international organizations are functioning;
- (v) Member States hold the opinion that any standing subsidiary bodies of the Commission should reflect expressed needs for regional co-operative action as embodied in approved programmes of work. They should also be the result of the Commission's accomplished work in the subject area. In this connexion, member States feel strongly that standing technical subsidiary bodies should not constitute a mere permanent institutional framework for existing programmes of the Commission. The latter would entail the establishment of 14 standing technical subsidiary bodies for the 14 programmes the Commission has at present. Hence, member States feel that adequate attention should be given to the establishment of ad hoc bodies to carry out specific tasks as formulated in approved programmes of work.

3. Technical Subsidiary Bodies and their role in programme formulation and implementation:

The establishment of technical subsidiary organs of the Commission would imply the institution of a two-level programme formulating and decision-making system. In this system, the annual session of the Commission would give policy guidance and specific instructions to its subsidiary organs, while these in turn would report and recommend to the annual sessions. More specifically, the annual session of the Commission would direct, supervise and formulate policies for the Commission as a whole by considering the activities of its principal subsidiary bodies; formulate policies orienting their work. In addition, the annual session would decide on activities to be undertaken in new fields, the establishment of new subsidiary bodies and consider the work programme of the Commission as a whole.

The sphere of activities of the standing technical subsidiary bodies would broadly speaking be determined by the annual session through the adoption of their terms of reference. Within these terms of reference, subsidiary bodies would review their activities in practical terms, determine the most urgent problems (priorities) and tasks to be performed (work programmes).

The above described two-level policy formulating system would obviously result in a programme of work which would reflect more fully the need of member States while at the same time the work would be reviewed in much greater detail than ever is possible at present and allow for the facilitation of the implementation of recommendations to a much greater extent. It would, undoubtedly, provide for increased opportunities in regional harmonization, integration and standardisation than at present.

Presently, in the absence of any technical subsidiary organs the commission's accomplishments are embodied in studies and reports prepared by the secretariat and reported upon mainly within the framework of its annual progress report. Only when separate technical agenda items were introduced - for example following expert-meetings on specific subjects - more detailed reviews of technical areas were carried out. Thus, with the increased momentum the programmes of the Commission are now gathering, the annual session would gradually convert itself into an expert-body in a variety of subjects. It is obvious that this cannot be considered an appropriate development. On the other hand, a large part of the Commission's activities would only receive the summary consideration within the context of the Commission's progress report. In such cases, the absence of technical subsidiary bodies can constitute a handicap for the development of regional harmonization and integration.

4. Regional inputs into global policy-making

Resolution 32/197 on restructuring of the social and economic sectors of the United Nations System calls upon regional intergovernmental organs to provide greater inputs into global policy-making.

Although the Commission did provide inputs to global policy-making processes (e.g. water resources, population, women development, TCDC, science and technology) through the organization of ad hoc regional meetings, it is considered that such inputs could be better organized through subsidiary bodies in areas where more or less a continuous process of global policy formulation is taking place (e.g. development strategy, new international economic order, international trade, transfer of technology). Hence, subsidiary bodies should be considered within this context as well and not only formulated around the concept of regional harmonization.

5. Establishment of Subsidiary Bodies in the light of other legislative organs in the Arab World

In the light of consultations that were held with the League of Arab States, the need for closer co-ordination with the various subsidiary bodies of the League was stressed. In this connexion, it was understood that a special Committee has been established for the purpose of restructuring and reorganizing the League's secretariat including its subsidiary bodies. The ECWA secretariat will follow closely the work of that committee and will provide the Commission with the outcome.

6. Establishment of Subsidiary Bodies in the light of the Commission's work programme priorities

Taking the various observations of member States as determining factors for the establishment of subsidiary bodies, the question of priority areas remains in the opinion of the secretariat a crucial factor to be considered. In this connexion, it should be noted that the Commission's priority areas for programming were established in early 1974 after the secretariat's programmes including their resources bases had already been established. Hence, existing programmes are not necessarily a reflection of these priorities and cannot, therefore, be considered a basis for decision-making as far as the establishment of subsidiary bodies is concerned. The secretariat believes strongly that the establishment of such bodies should be related to a review of the Commission's priorities.

7. The need for Subsidiary Bodies in light of recent legislative decisions of the United Nations

The occasion for reviewing the Commission's priorities arises from the recommendations of the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination (CPC) adopted at its nineteenth session (May 1979) on the subject of the process of programme planning in the United Nations. These recommendations were endorsed by the Economic and Social Council by its decision 1979/66 and by the 34th session of the General Assembly.

8. One of those recommendations reads as follows:

" There should be full involvement of intergovernmental organs in the formulation, consideration, review and evaluation of the plan during the regular cycle of their meetings. The effective participation of the central as well as sectoral, regional and functional bodies would require a longer preparation cycle for the plan and greater coordination in their calendar of meetings than at present ".

The Committee also recommended that the United Nations medium-term plan should cover six years (presently four years) and that the next medium-term plan should cover the period 1984-1989.

9. It is envisaged that the formulation and review period for the next medium-term plan should extend over a period of two years ending with its submission to the 37th session of the General Assembly in the fall of 1982.

In follow-up to the recommendations of CPC and General Assembly decision, the Secretary-General is submitting to the 20th session of the CPC in May 1980 a draft calendar pertaining to the formulation and review period of the 1984-1989 medium-term plan. Under this draft calendar it is conceived that the involvement of the Commissions would consist of two stages.

10. In the first stage and upon its preparation by the secretariat during the period November 1980-January 1981, the initial draft plan should be reviewed by a technical subsidiary body of the Commission during February - March 1981 as to express its view on this preliminary draft. Subsequent to this review and during the period April-August 1981, the secretariat (including Headquarters) would undertake preliminary coordination.

11. In the second stage, the Commission's annual session would review the draft plan in the light of observations of the technical subsidiary organ and the coordination requirements. This review would have to be undertaken during September-October 1981 requiring the rescheduling of the annual session of the Commission. When a rescheduling would not be possible, Headquarter suggests to establish an ad hoc body to review the draft medium-term plan on behalf of the Commission. After its review by the Commission or the ad hoc body established for that purpose, the draft medium-term plan would be prepared for submission to CPC, ECOSOC and finally to the General Assembly in the fall of 1982.

12. The new planning process to be decided upon this year thus calls for:

(a) The establishment of a technical subsidiary body to consider the initial draft medium-term plan 1984-1989 during the period February-March 1981;

(b) The rescheduling of the annual session of the Commission from April 1981 to September/October 1981 or the holding at that time of a special session of the Commission or the establishment of an ad hoc body review the draft medium-term plan.

13. The establishment of an Ad Hoc Body on the Medium-term Plan 1984-1989

Having considered the need for a review of the Commission's work programme priorities while taking into account the new institutional requirements for programme formulation as outlined above, the secretariat is of the view that the actual establishment of standing technical subsidiary organs of the Commission should be considered in conjunction with the review of the medium-term plan 1984-1989. Thus, the establishment of an Ad Hoc Technical Committee of Experts could serve for the purpose of reviewing the Commission's programme priorities as well as the need for subsidiary bodies and the new medium-term plan 1984-1989. The Ad Hoc Technical Committee would need to meet twice. The first time in February-March 1981 and the second time in September-October 1981 since it would seem difficult to reschedule the Commission's annual session from April to September/October 1981. It could be envisaged that upon its first review in February/March 1981, the Ad Hoc Technical Committee of Experts would report on the establishment of subsidiary bodies to the annual session of the Commission in April 1981.

14. Terms of Reference of the Ad Hoc Technical Committee of Experts

Upon review of similar organs in the United Nations System, the Secretariat recommends that:

- The suggested Ad Hoc Technical Committee of Experts shall consist of the principal or other senior government officials of member States who are concerned with economic affairs, planning and development and that it will be charged with:

(a) Assisting the secretariat in establishing the workprogramme priorities;

(b) Assisting the secretariat in the formulation of the 1984-1989 medium-term plan; and

(c) Recommending to the Commission measures to be taken to ensure the effective implementation of the 1984-1989 medium-term plan including the establishment of the required technical subsidiary bodies of the Commission. As provided for by rule 19 of the provisional rules of procedures of the Commission, the Ad Hoc Technical Committee would have the same rules of procedure as those of the Commission.

15. Financial Implications: Establishment of an Ad Hoc Technical Committee of Experts

Since no provision has been made in the programme budget 1980-1981 for the establishment of the suggested Ad Hoc body, supplementary estimates will need to be requested from the General Assembly. The organization of two meetings of this body during 1981 would entail financial implications to an amount of \$ 20,000. These estimates are based on General Assembly resolution 1798 (XVII) which states that experts representing their governments do so at the cost of these governments. The estimates, therefore, include only the cost of organizing the meeting.