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

Note by the Executive Secretary

1. In 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 General Assembly at its seventeenth session on the measures taken - or to be taken - on the strengthening of the secretariats of the regional economic commissions in order to enable them to discharge fully their responsibilities as executive instruments for the programmes of technical co-operation and to carry out these tasks effectively.

2. In compliance with this request, the Secretary-General submitted a report on the decentralization of the economic and social activities of the United Nations and the strengthening of the regional economic commissions to the above-mentioned session of the Economic and Social Council.<sup>1/</sup> In resolution 879 (XXXIV), the Council took note of the report and expressed its gratification with General Assembly resolution 1709 (XVI), and at the same time its confidence that the Secretary-General would continue to take further steps to carry out the process of decentralization in accordance with resolution 1709 (XVI), bearing in mind the views expressed during the debates<sup>2/</sup> of the Economic and Social Council at its thirty-fourth session.

3. The Secretary-General also submitted to the General Assembly at its seventeenth session another report<sup>3/</sup> on the same subject, with respect to which the Assembly adopted resolution 1823 (XVII). During the discussion of the relevant draft resolution, a statement on decentralization<sup>4/</sup> made by the Under-Secretary for Economic and Social Affairs to the Second Committee of the General Assembly was distributed.

4. In the above-mentioned resolution, the General Assembly reaffirmed the policy of decentralization as stated in its resolution 1709 (XVI) and requested the Secretary-General to proceed with this policy, taking into consideration the interests of States that were not members of any regional commission by adopting such measures as might be necessary to ensure that they would receive the same benefits as they would have received through membership in the regional commissions.

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<sup>1/</sup> See E/3643

<sup>2/</sup> See E/SR.1210-1213

<sup>3/</sup> See A/5196

<sup>4/</sup> See A/C.2/L.693

5. At the ninth session of the Commission, a note by the Executive Secretary on the decentralization of the economic and social activities of the United Nations and the strengthening of the regional economic commissions<sup>5/</sup> was distributed, and after taking note with satisfaction of its contents, the Economic Commission for Latin America, in resolution 210 (IX) of 13 May 1961, decided "to recommend to the Secretary-General that he proceed to carry out the projected decentralization and take steps to secure from the competent bodies of the United Nations the necessary resources for creating an operational technical assistance unit within the secretariat of the Commission, and to assign to it the specialized staff required to prepare and continue developing the technical assistance projects on the lines proposed by the Executive Secretary". In addition, the ECLA Committee of the Whole, at its eighth session (resolution 217(AC.50) of 16 February 1962), resolved to take note with satisfaction of resolution 1518 (XV) and 1709 (XVI) of the General Assembly and 793 (XXX) and 823 (XXXII) of the Economic and Social Council and "to express its gratitude for the measures ... adopted ... to decentralize United Nations economic and social activities and to strengthen the regional economic commissions". Similarly, it decided to "recommend to the Secretary-General that he take the necessary measures to ensure that the Commission's secretariat has the requisite authority and sufficient technical personnel at the appropriate time to enable it to fulfil its functions efficiently with regard to decentralization ... and to the services required of it by the Governments of member States in connexion with the selection, execution and evaluation of technical assistance projects".

6. At the current tenth session, the secretariat wishes to report on the present status of the decentralization of the economic and social activities of the United Nations as it affects the Economic Commission for Latin America.

7. Effective 1 September 1962, a Technical Assistance Co-ordinating Unit was established and began to operate at ECLA headquarters, Santiago, as an additional Division of the Commission, under the direct supervision of the Executive Office. Two professional posts have been envisaged for the initial stage of the Unit's activities, the position of Chief of the Unit being filled by an experienced programme officer transferred from New York Headquarters to

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5/ See E/CN.12/599

the Commission to become one of its regular staff members. It is expected that the other post will be filled before the middle of the year. On 1 January 1963 an auxiliary Co-ordinating Unit was set up in the Mexico Office of ECLA and is operating under the general supervision of ECLA headquarters at Santiago. Moreover, the Technical Assistance Recruitment Services at Headquarters in New York have sent an experienced personnel officer to ECLA to undertake the work of recruiting and engaging experts for the technical assistance projects in process of decentralization.

8. The ECLA secretariat at Santiago will administer the projects relating to the South American area, while the Mexico Office will be responsible for those relating to Mexico, Central America and the Caribbean. During the first stage of decentralizing technical assistance activities, ECLA will be responsible for the execution of regional projects, whether short-term such as seminars, short courses and working groups, or long-term such as the Latin American Demographic Centre, the Advanced School of Public Administration for Central America, the Central American Economic Integration Programme, the Regional ECLA/BTAO/WMO Water Resources Survey Group, the ECLA/BTAO/FAO Pulp and Paper Advisory Group for Latin America, and so on.

9. With respect to the regional projects of the United Nations Special Fund, since July 1962 ECLA has been administering the Latin American Institute for Economic and Social Planning, which has its headquarters at Santiago. It is hoped to embark shortly upon negotiations with the Special Fund authorities with a view to the administration by ECLA, through its Mexico Office, of the Central American Institute for Technological and Industrial Research, Guatemala City, Guatemala, and of any other project of the kind to be approved in future for Latin America. Within the limits of the resources available, ECLA is prepared to collaborate with the Special Fund in the task of carrying out the necessary consultations with the participating Governments during the formative stage of each regional project, and in obtaining the approval of the Governments for the Plan of Operations drawn up for these projects.

10. It is expected that, at a later stage, ECLA will be authorized and enabled to play a fuller part in the planning, administration and operation of the national technical assistance programmes of the countries of the region

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(country projects). Some progress has already been made in increasing ECLA's participation in the process of planning such national programmes specially those including advisory groups and specific projects in the fields of economic and social planning.

11. It is anticipated that twenty-one short and long-term regional technical assistance projects, costing in all 1,014,300 dollars, will constitute the total number of decentralized projects handed over to ECLA in the course of the the present year, fifteen of them with an estimated cost of 660,700 dollars, to be administered by the headquarters of the Commission at Santiago, and six, at a cost of 353,600 dollars, by the Mexico Office. The ECLA secretariat is responsible for making separate arrangements with Headquarters in New York for the decentralization of each of the regional projects included in the Commission's programme of work. The ECLA secretariat, in some cases, in furtherance of the work programmes of the subsidiary organs of the Commission and, in other cases, at the request of the Member Governments, draws up each plan of work and prepares the cost plans for each project. During the initial stage of planning, ECLA maintains close contact with the Governments concerned, with the United Nations Bureau of Technical Assistance Operations at Headquarters and with the substantive offices of the Commission and of Headquarters in New York. Once the projects have been planned and the relevant budget estimates prepared, the requisite agreement on their decentralization is concluded with Headquarters, and at the same time application is made for the necessary delegation of authority to put them into execution. This involves a wide range of technical and administrative activities. In the case of a seminar, for example, these activities include the writing of the technical studies, the preparation of the agenda, the issuing of invitations to participants, the selection of technical consultants or lecturers, the conducting of the seminar in co-operation with the host Government, the financial administration of the seminar, and the preparation of the final report.

12. A list of the regional projects to be handled by the ECLA secretariat in the course of the present year is appended to this document.

13. Decentralization implies, as can be seen, an appropriate degree of autonomy while maintaining at Headquarters the role of policy guidance and uniform financial and personnel administration. Subject to this central policy,

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freedom of action must be allowed to make it possible to place increasing emphasis on the provision of direct assistance for the solution of problems affecting the development of countries at a relatively less advanced stage of economic growth. The autonomy in question will be measured by the extent to which functions and authority are delegated at the substantive, financial and administrative levels and in regard to recruitment of the experts to be assigned to ECLA. As far as regional projects are concerned, some progress can already be said to have been achieved as regards administration, but the same is not true of the other levels mentioned. If ECLA is to administer general project funds in accordance with a predetermined budget, it must have authority to transfer funds within each project and from one project to another according to the needs arising in the course of their execution. Furthermore if the operation of decentralized projects is to be efficacious, it is essential that the ECLA secretariat be enabled to play a larger role in the recruitment of experts, particularly those recruited for short periods (up to a total of twelve months). It is most essential that the recommendations of ECLA for the appointment of experts for less than 12 months be taken fully into account and that they be acted upon speedily. The responsibility for the appointment of experts for longer periods - over a year - would remain with the Technical Assistance Recruitment Services at Headquarters, although this would not preclude ECLA's co-operation in the recruitment of candidates from the Latin American region.

14. The essence of successful decentralization is that the secretariat of the regional commissions must have sufficient authority to take immediate operational decisions, combined with sufficient means to implement them. This must be done in agreement with the governments concerned, and based on authority for alteration of the programme, financial amendments or emergency recruitment as may be required acting within the basic rules and regulations established by appropriate bodies responsible for over-all direction of the technical assistance programmes.<sup>6/</sup>

15. In the early months of 1964, the Expanded Programme for the biennium 1965-66 will have to be prepared, and the Bureau of Technical Assistance Operations and ECLA will then have to negotiate with the Governments of the region as regards the inclusion of projects in national and regional programmes. If ECLA is to fulfil important functions in the initiation, implementation and

<sup>6/</sup> See E/CN.12/599 (paragraph 6-d).

co-ordination of economic and social programmes and activities at the regional level, including appropriate technical assistance projects,<sup>7/</sup> it is hoped that the operational procedures for decentralization will be defined by Headquarters at an early date, so that the secretariat of the Commission may actively participate in the execution of the projects already approved and in the negotiation of those to be included in the technical assistance programme for the next two-year period. It is important for ECLA's work in the region that during the phase of preparation of each country's technical assistance programmes due attention should be paid to national economic and social development plans, especially those which ECLA has played an active part in drafting. From this point of view, national technical assistance programmes should be brought into line with the corresponding development plans, of which they should at the same time form an integral part. It is hoped that by means of unified action and close co-operation with the resident representatives of the United Nations Technical Assistance Board, co-ordination machinery may be established which will enable ECLA to provide Governments with technical assistance, at their own request, during the initial phase of preparation of country programmes, especially those bearing on economic and social development problems.

16. A number of regional technical assistance advisers in specific fields of activity have been attached to the ECLA secretariat, in addition to the permanent staff, as part of the process of strengthening the hand of the regional economic commissions. In 1962 there were five regional advisers attached to ECLA, as against one in 1961. An increase of another eleven regional advisers is envisaged for 1963, which will bring the total number to sixteen. Of these sixteen regional advisers fourteen will be attached to the Santiago office and two to the Mexico office. One of the main tasks of the regional advisers is to carry out, under the guidance of ECLA, mobile short-term missions and advise member Governments in the region, at their request, on specific problems related to the advisers' special fields. In addition, when a regional adviser visits a country, he generally holds discussions with the expert or experts assigned to the national programme on the technical problems bearing on his mission, thus providing the substantive support necessary for the success of their work. Furthermore, once effective co-ordination has

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<sup>7/</sup> See A/4776 (paragraph 110) and resolutions 793 (XXX) of ECOSOC and 1709 (XVI) of the General Assembly.

been achieved between the regional advisers and the experts assigned to national programmes, it is hoped that the former will increase their substantive assistance by making evaluations of and comments on the periodic reports that the latter have to submit.

17. In addition to these regional advisers, there are also a number of technical assistance experts attached to specific regional projects for which ECLA has the substantive responsibility either alone or in conjunction with certain United Nations specialized agencies. In this connexion mention should be made of one regional expert who is working with the ECLA/BTAO/FAO Pulp and Paper Advisory Group; three regional experts who are to work in 1963 and 1964 with the Regional ECLA/BTAO/UNO Water Resources Survey Group, together with a regional expert in hydrometeorology who has been attached to the Group for a number of years and whose post is financed from the technical assistance funds of the World Meteorological Organization; and eight lecturer-experts attached to the Latin American Demographic Centre (CELADE) at Santiago, Chile. All these regional experts are responsible to the ECLA office at Santiago. With respect to the ECLA office in Mexico, there are twelve regional experts working on the Central American Economic Integration Programme; five attached to the Advanced School of Public Administration for Central America (ESAPAC) at San José, Costa Rica, and two attached under the United Nations technical assistance programme to co-operate with the joint UNESCO/OAS/FAO/WMO/ILO Government of Mexico project on the Regional Fundamental Education Centre (GREFAL) at Patzcuaro, Mexico.

/ANNEX



ANNEX

LIST OF REGIONAL PROJECTS, UNDER THE REGULAR AND EXPANDED PROGRAMMES,  
WHOSE ADMINISTRATION AND OPERATION WILL BE DELEGATED TO ECLA IN 1963

	Cost (Dollars)	Regional advisers	Regional experts	
<b>ECLA - SANTIAGO</b>				
<u>Short-term projects</u>				
1. Seminar on the Development of the Chemical Industry in Latin America	32 500	-	-	
2. Seminar on Industrial Programming	38 000	-	-	
3. Seminar on Housing Administration	41 500 a/	-	-	
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	112 000	-	-	
<u>Long-term projects</u>				
1. ECLA/BTAO/FAO Pulp and Paper Advisory Group	10 500	-	1	
2. Regional ECLA/BTAO/WMO Water Resources Survey Group	36 000	-	3	
3. Trade Policy Course	34 000	-	-	
4. Latin American Demographic Centre (CELADE)	213 200 b/	-	8	
5. Regional Adviser in Technological Research for Industry	18 000	1	-	
6. Regional Textiles Adviser	23 000	1	-	
7. Regional Statistical Advisers	60 000	3	-	
8. Regional Advisers on Industrial Development	28 000	2	-	
9. Regional Public Administration Adviser c/	20 000	1	-	
10. Regional Housing Advisers	33 000	2	-	
11. Regional Adviser on the Andean-Indian Project	15 000	1	-	
12. Regional Advisory Group on Trade Policy	58 000 d/	3	-	
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	548 700	14	12	
<b>ECLA - MEXICO</b>				
<u>Short-term projects</u>				
1. Central American Budget Workshop	12 000	-	-	
<u>Long-term projects</u>				
1. Central American Economic Integration Programme (CAIP)	179 100 e/	-	12	
2. Advanced School of Public Administration for Central America (ESAPAC)	96 500 f/	-	5	
3. Regional Fundamental Education Centre (CREFAL)	33 000	-	2	
4. Regional Economic Adviser for the Caribbean	18 000	1	-	
5. Regional Community Development Adviser for the Caribbean	15 000	1	-	
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	341 600	2	19	
<u>Office responsible</u>	<u>N° of projects</u>	<u>Cost (Dollars)</u>	<u>Regional advisers</u>	<u>Regional experts</u>
ECLA - SANTIAGO	15	660 700	14	12
ECLA - MEXICO	6	353 600	2	19
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	21	1 014 300	16	31

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ANNEX (concluded)

Footnotes

- a/ Equivalent of this sum in Danish restricted currency. Technical assistance funds of the joint United Nations/Government of Denmark programme.
- b/ Includes funds of the Regular Programme (resolutions 200 and 418), the Ford Foundation and the Netherlands Government, which is financing the cost of an Associate Expert.
- c/ Attached to the Latin American Institute for Economic and Social Planning.
- d/ Financed with Contingency Funds of the United Nations Technical Assistance Board.
- e/ Includes funds of the Regular and Expanded Programmes.
- f/ Includes funds of the Regular and Expanded Programmes.