

ECONOMIC
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ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR LATIN AMERICA
Eighth Session
Panama City, Panama, 14 May 1959

Committee III

GENERAL BUSINESS

Rapporteur's report

The Committee on general business (Committee III) was set up at the first meeting of the eighth session of ECLA on 15 May 1959. The following representatives were unanimously elected officers:

Chairman:	Mr. Franco (Colombia)
Vice-Chairman:	Mr. Pons (Uruguay)
Rapporteur:	Mr. Georges-Picot (France)

The Committee held three meetings on 18, 20 and 22 May 1959.

It was discussed the following items on the agenda of the session:

14. Amendment of the Commission's terms of reference and rules of procedure. Note by the Executive Secretary (E/CN.12/509 and Add.1)

Background documents:

Amendment of the Commission's terms of reference and rules of procedure. Note by the Executive Secretary (E/CN.12/509 and Add.1)

13. Co-ordination with the Inter-American Economic and Social Council

Background documents:

Joint report by the Executive Secretary of ECLA and the Executive Secretary of the Inter-American Economic and Social Council on co-operation and co-ordination between the two secretariats (E/CN.12/515).

15. Programme of work and priorities

(a) Programme of work 1959-60

(b) Preparation for the appraisal of the programme for the period 1959

(c) Control and limitation of documentation

Background documents:

Preparation for programme appraisal 1959-64. Note of transmittal

by the Executive Secretary (E/CN.12/500)

Control and limitation of documentation. Note by the Executive Secretary
(E/CN.12/502)

It was manifest during the discussions that the delegations were in general agreement, and all the principal items considered were unanimously approved.

I. AMENDMENTS TO THE TERMS OF REFERENCE AND RULES OF PROCEDURE OF THE COMMISSION

A. Proposed amendments to the terms of reference of the Commission

The Committee first discussed two proposed amendments to the terms of reference of the Commission. At its twenty-sixth session, the Economic and Social Council had considered two proposals which are reproduced in document E/CN.12/509 (annexes I and II), and which had been the subject of draft resolution E/L.797 and of an amendment to this draft (E/AC.6/L.207). The Council had on that occasion taken the view that the regional economic commissions should be consulted before any decision was adopted in relation to the proposals in question.

(i) The object of the first proposed amendment to the terms of reference of the Commission was to add, as a new sub-paragraph (f) of paragraph 1, the following provision.

"In carrying out the above functions, deal as appropriate with the social aspects of economic development and the inter-relationship of the economic and social factors".

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In the course of discussion it became evident that there was a consensus of opinion in favour of the proposed amendment. Stress was laid on the difficulty of separating economic from social factors in the economic development process, since the ultimate aim of the latter was standards of living, which was in itself a social objective. At the same time, anxiety was expressed that all risk of duplication should be avoided in the work of the Commission and that of other bodies concerned with social questions throughout Latin America it transpired, however, that the terms in which the proposed amendment was drafted took this motive of concern sufficiently into account. A representative stressed that the term "social aspects" seemed to him too vague and that it might advantageously be replaced by the phrase "social and institutional aspects", which would draw more attention to the changes in the social structure inherent in economic development. Nevertheless, the final text was approved in its initial form, in order, on the one hand, to bring the terms of reference of the Commission into line with those of the other regional commissions and, on the other, to give them greater flexibility. The Committee was unanimously in favour of those additions to the terms of reference.

(ii) The object of second proposed amendment submitted to the Committee was to add to paragraph 3 of the terms of reference of the Commission the following provision, already adopted by the Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East (ECAFE) in its resolution 30 (XV):

/s/ The Commission

"The Commission shall establish appropriate liaison and co-operation with other regional economic commissions, in accordance with the resolutions and directives of the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly".

One representative pointed out that such a provision might suggest that relations between the regional economic commissions ought henceforth to be on a different footing from those maintained in the past, which was not the case. Nevertheless, he stated that he would raise no objection to the text in question.

The Committee unanimously decided to recommend that the text of the sub-paragraph be adopted.

b) Proposed amendments to the rules of procedure of the Commission

The Committee discussed two proposals put forward by the Economic and Social Council in connexion with the Commission's internal rules of procedure, the adoption of which would bring these rules into line with those of the Council and its functional commissions.

The aim of the first proposal was to formalize the practice whereby the Executive Secretary presented an estimate of the financial implications of a project before its approval by the Commission (E/CN.12/509, Part I). The second was designed to ensure that background documents should be distributed to the members of the Commission six weeks instead of thirty days before the opening of each session (E/CN.12/509, Part II).

(a) The Committee

(a) The Committee unanimously approved, as an addition to the Commission's internal rules of procedure, the text adopted by ECAFE on estimates of financial implications (E/CN.12/509/Add.1).

One representative stressed, however, that over and above the commitment to present to the Commission and estimate of the financial implications of every new project, as provided in the ECAFE text, it would also be desirable for the Executive Secretary to indicate to the Commission how far the cost of the project could be covered by credits already voted, by means of a reorganization of the work programme.

In the course of the discussion of the proposal that documents should be distributed to the members of the Commission six weeks before the commencement of each session, the secretariat pointed out that it would have great difficulty in meeting such a commitment, especially with respect to the annual economic survey. Its difficulties would be twofold. On the one hand, there would be a statistical problem, since data were often available only with a certain time-lag, but above all the secretariat's staff of translators was not large enough to enable documents to be punctually transmitted to Governments in the language of their choice.

With regard to the question of how far in advance documents should be distributed, the members of the Committee expressed the opinion that the time-limit should be changed from thirty days to six weeks, in order that such background material might be accorded the requisite attention, but they also emphasized that the resources of the ECLA secretariat's Editorial Section would have to be increased in order to place it in a position to

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meet the commitment under discussion.

One representative suggested that a possible way of finding the necessary resources might be to redistribute those available within the United Nations Secretariat.

The extension of the time-limit for the distribution of documents to six weeks was unanimously approved, in the form of an amendment to article 3 of the Commission's rules of procedure (instead of the text adopted by ECAFE and initially proposed to the Committee). A change in the number of copies to be distributed to each Government, from "two" to "three", was also approved.

II. CO-ORDINATION WITH THE INTER-AMERICAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL

The Committee considered a report prepared jointly by the Executive Secretaries of ECLA and of the Inter-American Economic and Social Council on co-operation and co-ordination between the two secretariats. The report stressed their constant desire to co-ordinate their activities and avoid the danger of duplication. It mentioned the various sectors in which such co-operation was already an established fact. In conclusion, the report stated that existing methods of co-ordination seemed satisfactory and that co-operation should be flexible and chiefly concerned with concrete projects of rather than based on rigid agreements making a clear-cut division between two secretariat's fields of activity. The Executive Secretary of IA-ECOSOC, speaking on the invitation of the Chairman, drew attention to the subjects dealt with in the report. The

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members of the Committee said that they were entirely satisfied with the existing measures of co-operation and co-ordination, as outlined in the report.

III. PROGRAMME OF WORK AND PRIORITIES

(a) Preparation for appraisal of the programme for 1951-64.

Acting upon the instructions of the Economic and Social Council, the secretariat of the Commission had prepared a document on the subject (E/CN.12/500), which was included in the general report of the Secretary-General of the United Nations to the Council. The document analysed the trends of surveys and activities undertaken since the establishment of the ECLA secretariat to date and then deals with the work prospects up to 1964.

The members of the Committee stressed that the report was both interesting and extremely useful and congratulated the secretariat on the form in which it had been prepared.

After the secretariat had stated that it had not intended to list all the programmes which it was proposing to carry out, but simply to prepare a list of the greatest possible number of programmes so that delegations might state which they thought to be the most important, various members of the Committee put forward a number of proposals, as follows:

to concentrate on three main subjects: economic development, the common market and industrialization;

to concentrate on the following subjects: trends and causes of inflation in Latin America, improvement of methods for preparing

/budgets, surveys

budgets, surveys of various industries and, in co-operation with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the study of agricultural commodities and studies on the proposed common market.

Other representatives drew attention to the need to give greater importance to the study of the following subjects:

- economic relations between Latin America and the rest of the world;
- problems connected with the organization of the international commodity trade;
- implications of Latin American customs systems;
- studies on mineral resources.

One representative maintained that some technical study and research should be carried out by the specialized agencies of the United Nations and other interested bodies. He added that there was also reason to hope that Governments would in the future be prepared themselves to undertake some of the work referred to in the report.

In all their comments, representatives considered only the general features of the work and not the establishment of priorities which must be fixed when the Commission prepared its annual work programme. During the discussion, they showed that they were in agreement with the general lines of the report and adopted unanimously a draft resolution in which they took note with satisfaction of the general purport of the report and requested the Economic and Social Council to give it the careful consideration it merited.

One representative called attention to paragraph 95 of the report,

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which suggested that the secretariat should be asked to undertake a task that could be performed by the Governments. The secretariat took note of the need to amend the report in respect of the point in question, and to inform the Council to that effect, while at the same time transmitting to it the other comments formulated.

As the report had to be submitted to the Council, the secretariat declared that there was no need for the Commission to make any pronouncement on the present occasion as to the financial implications set forth in the document.

(b) Limitation of documentation

The Committee considered the note prepared by the secretariat (E/CH.12/502) on the steps taken to limit documentation. The members of the Committee declared that on the whole they were satisfied with these steps; some representatives, however, emphasized that it would be useful for brief outlines of all speeches made at the meetings of the Commission or its Committees to be included in the summary records, as had formerly been the practice, since the information documents in which the text of statements appeared were not of an official character and supplies might be quickly exhausted. This proposal was unanimously approved.