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FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION

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Mr. Chairman:

It is a matter of great satisfaction for me to address, on behalf of the Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, this Second Session of the Economic Commission for Latin America where all the Latin American Governments are represented.

Each one of them has contributed to the development of the agriculture of the world. Each has played a part in feeding and clothing not only the populations of this region but also those of other countries that belong to the Organization I have the honour to represent. Latin America is, above all, a continent of boundless opportunity. In this region, although topography and climate are in some parts hostile to the endeavours of man, it is true to say that on the whole the natural resources have hardly been tapped at all. There is immense scope for developing the agricultural and other riches of the area. Indeed, of all the less-developed regions of the world, this is the most favoured and the one in which progress could be made most rapidly. For not only have we vast resources of nature but we also have the unique resources of the people who inhabit Latin America.

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The importance of Latin America in the agriculture of the world would by itself justify the interest that the Director-General of FAO takes in this meeting. Indeed, there are a series of problems in world food and agriculture which can only be examined by considering the interdependence between this and other regions. The prices of commodities, the patterns of trade in agricultural products, the relations between industry, agriculture and finance; the migrations of agricultural workers, can only be satisfactorily treated on a world basis. Nor can agricultural science be considered in narrow boundaries, whether they be of a country or of a region. The progress that is made here must benefit other parts of the world, and, similarly, scientific development in other parts of the world must contribute to raise the levels of nutrition of the consumers and to improve the efficiency of the producers of Latin America.

There is, however, another reason, and I believe, a more important one, that justifies FAO's interest in Latin America. Studies of agricultural science, of the economics of production and distribution would be of little avail if they were not followed up by action. Action is the prerogative of governments but FAO can and must help the governments in the implementation of their decisions to foster agricultural development and to raise the levels of living of the populations under their respective jurisdictions. As was pointed out by the delegate of Mexico at the first session of the FAO Conference in Quebec, the Organization has to collaborate

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with each individual country associated in FAO in order to solve specific problems which are not necessarily common to all nations but which are, nonetheless, prerequisites of better living standards throughout the world. Within its limited funds FAO has endeavoured to fulfill these two broad functions. It is our hope, that thanks to the supplementary funds which could be made available if the project now under consideration on technical assistance for economic development were to be adopted, more will be done in 1950 than in 1949.

It is too early at this stage to discuss in detail the advantages that could be derived from this technical aid programme. The FAO considers technical aid to be of vital importance and has submitted to the United Nations Administrative Committee on Co-ordination a comprehensive report setting out the specific programmes which the Organization recommends should be undertaken during the first two years. It deals with the technical aid that the Organization could give to agriculture, forestry and forest products, fisheries, nutrition and food management, rural institutions and services, and agricultural economics and statistics. Much of the work of the Organization and much of its effectiveness depends on the decisions that will be taken in respect of this programme by the Economic and Social Council and by the governments concerned.

In the meantime FAO has given aid in Latin America along the lines fixed by its conference and council.

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I would not like to take too much time of the conference by reporting at length on what has been done in 1949 and what our programme is for the future. Last year, in a statement which was circulated at the first meeting of ECLA, mention was made of our most important projects. I should like to refer very briefly to them and report on the programme made.

Two meetings to be held under the auspices of FAO covering two important fields of work of the Organization were scheduled at that time. A regional nutrition conference was held in Montevideo in July 1948. The conference passed a series of recommendations with the purpose of guiding governments, private institutions, and individuals in initiating and carrying out sound nutritional policies within their respective spheres of action. As a follow-up, visits have been made by technicians of the Nutrition Division of FAO into several Latin American countries. I am happy to be able to say that many countries have already taken practical measures which have been reported to the organization. It is proposed, furthermore, to hold another conference in 1950 in order to review on a regional basis the progress made and to enable the governments to communicate to each other the results of the nutritional policies they have followed.

Another important meeting held in Latin America under the auspices of FAO was the Palmira meeting on storage of grains. Delegates will note in the ECLA/FAO Joint Working Party report that the losses of foodstuffs incurred especially in tropical areas, owing to inadequate storage

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facilities, are impressive. The report of the Palmira conference shows how great these losses are and also makes suggestions as to how they could be avoided. The main result that the conference has achieved has been to draw the attention of the governments and the people to the all-important question of losses of food in storage and infestation control. FAO is also endeavouring in this connection to assist governments in their plans to deal with infestation control. Technical experts have been sent into Guatemala, Costa Rica, El Salvador, and Mexico, where they have advised and consulted with governments on problems of locust control. It is also proposed to carry out a comprehensive demonstration programme on infestation control in the tropical areas, to which technicians of the countries concerned will be invited.

In the field of fisheries plans are under way for the establishment of regional fisheries councils in Latin America similar to the council established last year for the Indo-Pacific Area. The purpose of these councils is to encourage the development and proper utilization of fisheries resources through international collaboration. An officer of FAO's Fisheries Division has visited the countries of Latin America and has had consultations with the governments on this particular point. In addition, on several instances advice has been given on specific fisheries projects.

The work of FAO in planning the programme of the 1950 world census of agriculture has been discussed at length in many other meetings and in particular at the conference held in Rio de Janeiro on the Census of the Americas.

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I will therefore not deal in detail with this point. In preparation for the census, and also in order to help the governments to improve their statistical services, we have initiated and participated in the establishment of a series of training centres. At the end of 1948, in collaboration with the Mexican Government and with the co-operation of the United Nations Statistical Office and the Inter American Statistical Institute, as well as with the help of 16 Latin American governments and of the government of the United States, courses were given in Mexico City on agricultural and population censuses, general statistics, agricultural statistics. A training centre has recently also been created in Guatemala with relation to census methodology in which FAO is participating by sending two of its staff members as instructors. The latter are sent at the present moment in Guatemala. In addition, early in July, a meeting will be held in Bogotá, under FAO auspices, of technicians in charge of the preparation of the 1950 census.

In the field of forestry and forest products a conference was held in Teresopolis from the 19th to the 30th of April 1948. Following the decisions taken at that conference, and at the Fourth Session of the FAO conference, the Latin American Forestry and Forest Products Commission, was established in Rio de Janeiro. This Commission will pursue action toward the establishment of a Forestry and Forest Products Research Institute of Latin America for the development of improved current statistical information on forest resources and products, the organization of immigration of technicians and skilled workers, and the adoption of

specific programmes for the procurement of modern forestry equipment. It will also study possibilities for the development of forestry combines and for the introduction of silvicultural methods suitable to Latin American countries, and it will assist governments in strengthening forest services and establishing training centres for foresters and timber technicians.

I hope, before the end of this conference, to give this commission some indications on the results of the first meeting of the Latin American Commission on Forest and Forest Products, which took place in Rio in the course of last week.

At the fourth session of the FAO conference it was recommended that a meeting should be held in Latin America on Agricultural Extension with special reference to social and cultural backgrounds and with the co-operation of the Inter-American Institute of Agricultural Sciences. The general objective of the meeting will be to provide for an exchange of opinion and information on problems of agricultural extension and related educational approaches to improved agricultural production, marketing, transport, and other cognate activities.

It will be designed to promote a diagnosis of the needs to be met and the problems and difficulties to be overcome, in the economic, social and cultural environment of participating countries and an exchange of experience on educational methods which have been attempted, and to stimulate interest and action in the separate countries.

I have only listed those activities of the Organization in Latin America which are of general interest to all the

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governments. Technicians of the Organization have visited countries or are proposing to visit them in order to help them on specific technical matters. For instance, at the request of the Government of Bolivia, a technician has been sent to that country in order to undertake a preliminary review of the problems involved in improving the production and storage of quinoa (*), which is an important element of the diet of the populations concentrated at high altitudes in the Andean countries; it is also proposed, at the request of Guatemala, to send an expert on agricultural mechanization and an oilseeds expert to that country. Similarly, agricultural technicians are about to be sent to Nicaragua, at the request of that country's Government. Experts have been sent to different member countries at the invitation of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development. Such is the case in Peru where an irrigation expert was sent, Costa Rica where a fisheries expert was sent, and Colombia where an expert of FAO is to join the International Bank mission to that country.

There was another item which was brought to the attention of the first session of the Economic Commission for Latin America in order to implement Resolution 103/VI of the Economic and Social Council on co-ordinated action to increase the production of foodstuffs by the elimination of supply shortages. The Commission requested the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the Director-General of FAO to set up a Joint Working Party between the Secretariats of both Organizations. The Working Party

(*) Pronounced Keen-wa.

was established on October 20 and the Members have worked for six months in a spirit of understanding and of full co-operation. I wish, on behalf of the Director-General, to thank the Executive Secretary of the Commission and his staff for all they have done to bring this first common endeavour to good effect. The preliminary report of the Joint Working Party has been distributed to the delegations. I commend the suggestions that have been made to the attention of the governments and on behalf of the Director-General of FAO I can assure you that FAO will give the governments, on their request, assistance in carrying out those suggestions which require help from international organizations.

Looking at the future, I would go so far as to say that the main problems the governments of this region must face are related to food and agriculture. I have heard here the long-forgotten expression of "unmarketable surpluses". Yet the recent studies which have been made by FAO in collaboration with the governments concerned show that on the whole Latin America remains a region where the average per capita intake is too low. This is a cruel paradox and a challenge that governments must face. Indeed, as early as in 1943, at the Hot Springs Conference this was already among the preoccupations of the governments which were to form FAO. It was agreed that nations "should progressively adjust the allocation of agricultural resources to conform to a long-term co-ordinated production plan for the best use of their resources on a world scale, based on better diets for their own people and on the international demand for nutritionally better food". It

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was also emphasized that FAO should seek to "contribute to international collaboration, both on a regional and on a world basis, in the field of agricultural production".

FAO has done so, by (SEA Stats Ybooks Commodity Bulletins, etc.).

On a world basis the Conference of FAO is the principal forum for a review by all the member nations of FAO of the situation and outlook for production, trade in and consumption of those agricultural commodities which widely affect the interests of producers and consumers. On a regional basis, the Fourth Session of the Conference of FAO recommended that there should be pre-conference regional meetings in order to enable the governments to co-ordinate their plans on a regional basis in order to ensure adequate treatment of these plans prior to their being discussed at the full session of the Conference on a world basis.

I have been instructed by the Director-General to announce that he is going to convene a regional Pre-Conference Consultation for Latin America in the latter half of September. I also wish, on his behalf, to thank the Ecuadorian Government for having offered to be host of this important meeting, at Quito.

I think that the delegates will agree, in the light of the remarkable picture of the economy of Latin America which has been drawn by the Secretariat of the Commission, that FAO's Latin America Pre-Conference meeting is important and timely. In broad terms, the following points will be examined:

1. A review of the current food and agricultural position of the region in light of consumption levels and deficiencies, recent shifts in the utilization of land resources, the domestic and foreign demand for farm products, agricultural prices, recent migration and settlement, general economic conditions as they affect agriculture and marketing and other factors.
2. A review of the important world-wide changes that have taken place and are taking place in food production and trade; and discuss how such changes are likely to affect agriculture in Latin American countries and what measures might be taken to develop and maintain an expanding and prosperous agriculture.
3. An examination of the 1950/51 food production, trade and consumption targets or goals and the programmes that governments have or will undertake to achieve them. This examination will seek to determine whether these targets and programmes, if achieved, will satisfy the food needs of the region and the export demand; whether the several countries are overstressing particular commodities that are likely to lead to surpluses; and whether these forward-looking programmes will require outside assistance in the form of technical help, larger supplies of machinery, fertilizers and other production requisites and credits.
4. The formulation of suggestions on how FAO can be of greater assistance to Latin American countries in the development of their agriculture, in the improvement of distribution and trade in agricultural products, and in attaining better levels of nutrition for their people.
5. Determination of what regional food and agricultural problems should be given special attention by governments and by international organizations, and decide which of them can be handled within the region and which problems or issues should be taken up at the Annual Conference of FAO.
6. Consideration of ways and means whereby governments, especially those with very limited resources, can develop a more comprehensive and timely fund of knowledge of international economic affairs as related to food and agriculture, and can utilize such knowledge more effectively in formulating and executing agricultural programmes and policies.

A large part of FAO's work is related to the Latin American governments which form a very important part of the Organization's membership, because FAO is convinced

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of the paramount importance of developing the agricultural wealth of the region. The governments of Latin America desire to bring about better living conditions of their own people and this, in the first instance, requires more food, which, fortunately, they can very readily produce for themselves, given modern techniques.

Secondly, these governments are embarking on programmes of industrial development which will inevitably necessitate the importation of a far larger volume of heavy equipment than hitherto. How are these materials and equipment to be paid for? Essentially they must be paid for by the export of raw materials and agricultural products. There is no question but that Latin America can contribute a far larger quantity of food to the deficit areas of the world.

It is therefore with this dual purpose of raising the nutritional standards of the people of Latin America and helping the Region to earn the foreign exchange which it will increasingly need that I, as a representative of the Director-General, would urge you to direct greater attention than ever before to your agricultural problems.

Mr. Chairman, we take pride in the fact that FAO is the first agency of the United Nations to have been created after the war. But before other younger organizations even existed, our policy was one of close collaboration with all the technical or political bodies seeking the welfare of mankind. When closing the first conference of FAO in Quebec in 1945 the Chairman of the conference, the Honorable L. B. Pearson, now Canadian Secretary of State for External Affairs, spoke enlightening words that I commend to your attention and that now, like then, set the basic principles

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for our work.

"In a world where science has blown to unrecognizable dust particles all the old concepts of national rights and national security, human welfare remains, or should remain, as always, the first objective of governmental action. We can be proud, therefore, that welfare, not warfare, has been our concern at this conference and we have, I hope, made our contribution to promoting it. It will, however, be a negligible contribution unless others are made in more difficult fields. FAO cannot stand alone There is an interdependence to all sound international effort."



