

United Nations**Nations Unies**

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**ECONOMIC
AND
SOCIAL COUNCIL****CONSEIL
ECONOMIQUE
ET SOCIAL**E/CN.12/103*
31 May 1949
ENGLISH
ORIGINAL: SPANISH

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR LATIN AMERICA
MESSAGE FROM DR. JAIME TORRES BODET, DIRECTOR
GENERAL OF UNESCO, TO THE SECOND SESSION OF
THE ECLA

This Document Received
by Airmail from
Date AUG 22 1949

On the occasion of your conference in Havana, I have pleasure in expressing to you my sincere appreciation of the work in which you are engaged and in stating that UNESCO, which has assiduously followed the work of the Economic Commissions for Europe and Asia and already established some fruitful contacts with them hopes that its collaboration with the Commission for Latin America may be equally useful.

The purpose which brings you together is in no way alien to the high aims of the Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization which I have the honour to direct. Indeed, the economic development of the countries which form the international community can only have firm and fruitful hopes for the lasting peace so greatly desired by the nations, if it aspires to achieve a harmony within which the cultural personality of each nation may express itself with dignity and within which technical progress is not the result of passing mechanical skill but the fruit of solid and real social evolution.

The Republics of Latin America, rightly anxious to improve their economic conditions, have given

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unmistakeable proof of their keenness at the same time to raise the educational and cultural standards which must form the horizon of the legitimate development which they are striving to attain. That being so, your work is indissolubly linked with the responsibility assumed by UNESCO, since economic development cannot be looked upon as a problem apart from the human realities which condition it and in doing so give it its real meaning and emphasize its full value.

According to my information, your Conference is to discuss the vast problem of technical assistance for the economic development of the Latin American countries. UNESCO, like the other Specialized Agencies, has taken part in the drafting of the plan provided for by the Economic and Social Council's Resolution of 4 March 1949. Both in the field of education (study fellowships and seminars, missions of experts and international technicians, organization of training courses, model plans for basic education, etc.), and in that of science, the contribution of UNESCO is far-reaching. I need only remind you that, in so far as the scientific side of technical assistance is concerned, the Conference called by UNESCO at Montevideo in September last, drew up a series of proposals which clearly demonstrate to what extent the balanced development of Latin America's resources will serve to improve living standards in that region.

The experiments in basic education which we have undertaken in various countries of the New World,

the study seminars we have sponsored, the Centre for Scientific Cooperation we have established in Montevideo, the regional office we plan to set up in Havana and the activities we have initiated for the creation of an institute for the study of the biological and social problems of the Hylean Amazon are, moreover, obvious signs of a very significant coincidence of efforts.

The plan for the study of the high mountain regions which is a part of UNESCO's Programme, is destined to provide interesting data concerning the economy of an important part of your hemisphere. The same will no doubt be true if the scheme to found a scientific institute for the arid zones, which UNESCO must try to promote, is realized.

Recently, at Montevideo, the Regional Conference of the International Labour Organization examined various plans for technical education and for the organization and development of labour. At this meeting in the Uruguayan capital the representatives of that body thus eloquently emphasized the cultural and educational aspects of these plans, thereby establishing a new basis of cooperation with the institution in whose name I now address you.

I do not think I am digressing from the subject of your discussions if I refer now to a situation which has been preoccupying UNESCO for some time: the shortage of paper in many parts of the world. At the FAO Conference held at Montreal at the end of April, I took the liberty of stressing the urgent need to increase

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production in order to supply the paper now lacking in many parts of the world. The wide circulation of newspapers, periodicals and publications is a matter of such fundamental importance not only for the cultural development of the peoples but also for better international understanding, that I dare to look for support from you in finding an equitable solution for this problem.

These words of mine are no more than a mere outline of the obvious points of contact which in my opinion exist between the plans we are entrusted to carry out. It may be that UNESCO, with its experience in basic education, is exceptionally well fitted to strengthen the relations between culture and economics. Without firm foundations it would be impossible to build up and maintain the cultural atmosphere essential to the understanding in which world peace must be established. But without constant respect for the highest cultural values, mere emphasis on economic factors would probably result in the neglect of those values and might end in substituting the idea of interdependence, which after all is a mechanical idea of balance, for the idea of solidarity which implies a much deeper harmony - that of conscious universal brotherhood.

In greeting you today, I do no more than give public expression to the interest with which UNESCO is following the course of your deliberations and to its cordial wishes for the success of your work.