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REGIONAL STRUCTURES OF THE UNITED NATIONS

Note by the secretariat

The secretariat has pleasure in transmitting to the representatives attending the sixteenth session of the Commission the attached document relating to agenda item 8 which contains the comments by the Secretary-General on the decentralization of United Nations economic, social and related activities and the strengthening of the regional economic commissions.

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REPORTS OF THE JOINT INSPECTION UNIT

Report on the decentralization of United Nations economic, social
and related activities and the strengthening of the regional
economic commissions

(JIU/REP/74/5, July 1974)

Addendum

Comments by the Secretary-General

1. This JIU report is concerned with the question of the need to decentralize United Nations economic, social and related activities from Headquarters to the field and to strengthen the regional commissions, in order to make the Organization as a whole and the commissions in particular, more effective in their response to the different development problems and requirements of the various regions and subregions of the world. It is a topical, perceptive and thought-provoking document based, obviously, on careful research and investigation. The Inspectors have made a valuable contribution towards the effort to improve United Nations performance in these areas.

2. The subject of the report is, of course, not a new one in the United Nations. Since the beginning of the 1960s, the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly have, in several resolutions, proclaimed and affirmed decentralization of the United Nations activities in the economic, social and related fields to the commissions to be United Nations policy, and have laid down a number of guidelines and measures required to carry out this policy. In a sense, this report is an assessment of the extent to which this policy has been implemented to date. In order to obtain the full impact and appreciation of the report, it would be necessary to read it in toto. A summary of the main findings and conclusions of the Inspectors, is, however, contained in section XI of the report.

3. By way of an initial comment, the Secretary-General agrees with the basic thrust of the JIU report concerning the need to decentralize to the commissions those substantive and administrative responsibilities that will enable the commissions to function in accordance with the wishes of the General Assembly and the Council. The range and complexity of economic and social problems currently facing the world call for a more co-ordinated and concerted response which can only be achieved if both the commissions and Headquarters begin to play more effectively their respective roles in accordance with established policy and guidelines. The Secretary-General is, therefore, prepared to initiate that process of internal consultations between Headquarters and the commissions towards that end.

Comments on the specific recommendations

Recommendation I: Co-ordination of work programmes

4. This recommendation urges the development of mutually agreed on and effective measures to ensure that the work programmes of the United Nations Headquarters offices, including UNCTAD and UNIDO, and the regional commissions are better co-ordinated; and that consultations to this end should be held at all stages of the evolution of the programmes or projects. It is the feeling of the Inspectors that global or interregional activities should, as far as possible, be preceded by subregional and regional (or intercountry) activities on the same topic; and that interregional or global components of subregional or regional (intercountry) activities should normally be the responsibility of Headquarters' offices. Similarly, subregional and regional (intercountry) activities should, wherever possible, be planned to serve as inputs to interregional and global activities on the same topic; and subregional or regional (intercountry) components of interregional or global activities should normally be the responsibility of the commissions.

5. The Secretary-General concurs with the recommendation of the Inspectors with the view to ensuring a more effective co-ordination of work programmes between Headquarters and the commissions. He believes that the regional commissions not only need be fully informed but should also actively participate in what should in effect be a joint effort to accomplish agreed objectives. Through direct contacts between heads of corresponding substantive units at Headquarters and in the regional commissions, some measure of joint programming is already being achieved in, for example, the statistics programme. With the introduction of a new system of programme budgeting and medium-term planning in the United Nations as a result of General Assembly resolution 3043 (XXVII) it is necessary that full consultations should take place between Headquarters, including UNCTAD and UNIDO, and the regional commissions on the main thrust of the activities to be carried out within a plan period in order to develop an integrated medium-term plan which should preferably indicate an order of priorities within the projected level of resources.

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Following the approval by the General Assembly, at its twenty-seventh session, of a proposal made by the Secretary-General, a small planning programme and evaluation unit was established within the Budget Division. It has been given primary responsibility for the preparation of the second United Nations medium-term plan, currently in progress. This has provided an opportunity for substantive units at Headquarters to analyse in parallel with theirs the work programmes of the regional commissions, thus, it is hoped, leading to better co-ordination of programming. While it is anticipated that the preparation of the third medium-term plan may encompass a more complex system of reciprocal consultations between Headquarters and regional units, much of the effectiveness of the process will depend upon the conclusions reached by the Working Group on United Nations programme and budget machinery established by the General Assembly at the twenty-ninth session, which will review the intergovernmental and expert machinery dealing with programmes and budgets, and the decisions reached thereon by the General Assembly at the thirtieth session.

6. On the basis of recommendations made by the Administrative Management Service (AMS), programme planning or programme co-ordination units have been or are being established at Headquarters (including UNCTAD and UNIDO) and in the regional commissions. The Resources and Programme Planning Office, established in the Department of Economic and Social Affairs in February 1973, has as one of its specific responsibilities the preparation of the Department's medium-term plans and their co-ordination with those of the regional commissions.

7. The clear directive given by the Economic and Social Council in its resolutions 1896 (LVII) and 1911 (LVII) regarding adjustment, reorientation and adaptation of the programmes of work of the regional commissions and all organizations, institutions, subsidiary bodies and conferences of the United Nations system towards the implementation of the Declaration and the Programme of Action on the Establishment of a New International Economic Order adopted by the General Assembly in its resolution 3202 (S-VI) provides a basis for concerted action in the attainment of well-defined objectives and priorities.

8. The goal of attaining improved programme co-ordination has been given an added impetus as a result of experience acquired during the last few years in the preparations for, and follow-up to, a number of United Nations conferences on subjects of urgent concern to the world community. These include conferences on the environment and population. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) has established offices of regional co-ordinators at the headquarters of regional commissions to ensure follow-up of the recommendations of the Human Environment Conference and the decisions taken at the Governing Council of UNEP. Regional meetings are being organized with the assistance of UNFPA to delineate the responsibilities of the regional commissions in fulfilment of the objectives included in the

World Population Plan of Action. Similarly, conferences like the World Conference of the International Women's Year, 1975, the Conference on Human Settlements in 1976 and the Conferences on Water and Desertification in 1977 call for close consultations and co-operation between Headquarters and the regional commissions during the preparatory process. A meeting was convened in December 1974 of officials responsible for work in the area of water resources, both at Headquarters and in the regional commissions, to agree on an appropriate regional contribution to preparatory work to be undertaken for the United Nations Water Conference.

9. Improved programme co-ordination has also been facilitated by taking advantage of the presence of representatives of regional commissions at sessions of the policy-making bodies concerned with the various programme areas, such as the Committee on Natural Resources, the Commission for Social Development, the Statistical Commission and the Population Commission. Furthermore, in the preparation of the medium-term plan, 1976-1979, and the programme budget, 1976-1977, for the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, particular stress has been laid on co-ordination with the regional commissions in the implementation of specific programme activities.

10. While agreeing with the recommendation of the Inspectors, the Secretary-General wishes to draw attention to a number of considerations which will have an effect on giving it a practical shape. While it is logical to use regional activities as inputs to global activities, it is not always appropriate that global or interregional projects flow out of regional projects. It is necessary to look at specific instances and to prescribe specific approaches. For example, the world-wide comparability of statistics and the development of common methodologies and standards frequently require initiation and co-ordination from the centre, though in consultation with the regions and with adaptation to specific needs in the regions. It could not be accomplished simply through an additive process of regional activities. Equally, sometimes it may be easier and more economical to develop certain studies and methods at the centre and adapt them to the regions, than to develop them in a region and then adapt them to other regions and the centre. There are special difficulties in carrying out and reporting on research into current conditions: it is sometimes impossible to use earlier work as a straight feed-in to later work. Moreover, the timing of various legislative meetings at which such topics are discussed - usually determined by other considerations - sometimes rule out any simple sequential treatment of the work. The stress on "consultations" should properly be coupled with prerequisites and means, such as prolonging the programming period to allow for all the consultations to take place (with the possible danger of programme proposals becoming out of date or overtaken by events), and for the provision of adequate travel funds and staff time.

Recommendation II: Advisory services

11. This recommendation calls for a review of the institution of interregional advisers as well as for a redefinition of the respective functions of interregional and regional advisers and a more sophisticated evaluation of their work. It emphasizes the need for a clear delineation of the respective criteria for the recruitment of interregional or regional advisers and a careful scrutiny of the qualifications of all candidates to such posts. The recommendation also calls for a strengthening of the regional advisory services through an increase of regional advisers and a reduction of the numbers of interregional advisers, who should be used only for assignments of a clearly "global" nature. It is also recommended that Headquarters and the commissions should be jointly involved in the recruitment of members of the multinational interdisciplinary development advisory teams (UNDAT) and that, once a team has been set up and established, it should be placed under the direct supervision of the regional commission concerned. Any guidance in respect of the operations or management of the team should be exercised by Headquarters, in the light of agreed standards and criteria, through the commission.

12. The main thrust of this recommendation is acceptable to the Secretary-General. The need for closer co-ordination between interregional and regional advisory services is generally agreed upon. The functions of the interregional advisers should be complementary to and not competitive with those of regional advisers. In taking decisions on establishing posts of interregional advisers, this consideration should invariably be borne in mind. While the main task of both regional and interregional advisers is to respond to country requests for assistance, interregional advisers provide greater flexibility in areas of a highly technical nature where requests may be expected from all regions and when to provide such advisory services at the regional level may be both uneconomical and a duplication of effort.

13. While agreeing with the Inspectors that the reports of the interregional advisers be sent to the regional commissions concerned, the Secretary-General would like to point out that in certain areas this is already being done. There is no doubt that an improvement in the flow of information and consultation between Headquarters and the regional commissions at the substantive level will keep to a minimum the possibilities of overlapping and duplication with regional advisers. It may also be of advantage that whenever possible and as part of the travel arrangements within the region, provision should be made for interregional advisers to visit and brief the staff in the regional commissions and, where appropriate, other organizations in the United Nations system on the results of their work. In those cases where regional commissions have regional advisers available but with relatively little experience, they should participate in the missions of the interregional advisers and undertake some of the preliminary and follow-up work for such missions.

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14. The Secretary-General fully endorses the view of the Inspectors regarding the need to make the work of the regional advisers more effective. The suggestion that regional advisers of one commission could be loaned out on a quid pro quo basis to another is to be welcomed, as such an arrangement could facilitate a mutual exchange of experience among regions. However, a constraint in the implementation of this suggestion is the language factor. The effectiveness of regional advisers may be enhanced if they were to assist only a limited number of countries, especially the least developed which lack sufficient qualified specialists.

15. Both regional and interregional advisers can provide effective assistance only if they are supported by research and development work done within the units to which they are attached. They serve as channels for transferring the experience and expertise available at Headquarters and in the commissions', secretariats to the countries in need of assistance and, in turn, for bringing the feedback from those countries to enrich the research work to be undertaken by staff members. One commission has noted in this context that it is almost impossible to avoid a working relationship between a regional adviser and staff in the substantive division he is attached to, who in turn are responsible for providing orientation, guidance and substantive support to the work of the adviser. This working relationship sometimes leads to the adviser being involved in the work of the division relating to its normal activities, such as action-oriented research which assists in the rendering of advice to Governments. The question of whether or not the interregional or regional advisers are employed on any assignments other than those for which they are specifically recruited or are under-utilized could be examined from time to time with the assistance of AMS. In this connexion, it might be mentioned that it is planned to introduce shortly a regular periodic reporting system for all project personnel, including advisers, which would lead to a better assessment of the quality of their performance.

16. The Secretary-General concurs with the Inspectors' recommendation that the criterion of "field presence" should be enforced more strictly than has been the case to date as regards regional and interregional advisers. It should, however, be borne in mind that the "field presence" requirement of an adviser's performance may at times prove costly and misleading if, for example, field visits are unnecessarily extended or unwarranted field assignments undertaken simply for the purpose of enhancing ratings.

17. Recruitment of interregional advisers is initiated by the Technical Assistance Recruitment Service (TARS) only at the specific request of the Office of Technical Co-operation in consultation with the substantive office concerned and in accordance with the procedure especially established for the purpose. The job descriptions which accompany the requests define clearly the proposed functions and

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responsibilities of the interregional advisers. Appointments are made by TARS in close consultation with and the full consent of the substantive office on the basis of the evaluation made by the latter on the candidate's suitability from the standpoint of professional competence and on the assessment made during interviews with the candidates conducted normally by the European or North American regional office of TARS and/or by the UNDP resident representatives.

18. Similarly, regional advisers from outside the respective regions are recruited by TARS at the specific request of the regional commissions. The candidates are evaluated by the regional commissions, and it is only those whom the commissions consider suitable for the particular assignments and whom the interviewers recommend who are ultimately appointed.

19. Scrutinizing the qualifications of candidates and interviewing them to ensure that their qualifications conform to the requirements specified in the relevant job descriptions are important steps in the recruitment operation.

20. The Secretary-General is in basic agreement with the recommendations of the Inspectors regarding the substantive, operational and administrative decentralization of UNDAT to the regional commissions once they are set up and established. As for recruitment, TARS has been in correspondence with one of the regional commissions concerning the delegation of authority for recruitment, from within the region, of experts required for one UNDAT with the intention of extending later such authority with respect to other UNDAT in that region. For this purpose, TARS has suggested the introduction of procedures similar to those followed under the existing decentralized arrangements applicable to regional adviser posts whereby it would be possible to recruit, without reference to Headquarters, from within the region personnel required for UNDAT for the initial period of 12 months and to extend appointments up to a total of 12 months at levels 1-5. It is intended to apply, as appropriate, the same procedures with respect to UNDAT in other regions. Recruitment of team leaders would continue to remain the responsibility of TARS after the candidate has been agreed upon by Headquarters and the regional commission concerned. As regards substantive guidance to be provided by Headquarters in respect to decentralized UNDAT, agreed standards and criteria would be worked out as suggested by the Inspectors.

Recommendation III: Training projects

21. This recommendation is addressed to the need for more co-operative and mutual consultation with the commissions in the management of training programmes, including workshops, seminars, study tours, fellowships and other regional seminars. It is suggested that, to the extent possible and in accordance with the agreed standards and criteria, the commissions should take full charge of all regional and subregional fellowship projects; and that, in co-ordination with Headquarters, the commissions should organize and service all regional and subregional training projects that are programmes by Headquarters. This recommendation is acceptable to the Secretary-General.

Recommendation IV: Operational programmes and projects funded by extra-budgetary resources

22. The Inspectors believe that the commissions should play a more active role in identifying, initiating and formulating regional and subregional programmes and projects. They also propose that, subject to certain qualifications, all regional and subregional operational projects of which the United Nations proper is at present or may in the future become executing or participating agency should, as a matter of principle, be fully decentralized to the commissions, which should be designated directly. The Secretary-General agrees with these proposals, which he is already starting to implement in accordance with part II of Economic and Social Council resolution 1896 (LVII).

23. With regard to country projects for which the United Nations is or will be the executing or participating agency, the Inspectors call for an active involvement by the commissions in all stages of the implementation of those country projects of a multidisciplinary nature or that have a direct bearing on regional or subregional activities in the same field. The inspectors have also proposed criteria which may be used for consideration to be given on a selective basis to the decentralization of country projects. The Secretary-General also agrees with these recommendations.

24. Equally acceptable to him is the Inspectors' observation that the commissions should have such a share of UNDP overhead funds as is commensurate with their actual contribution to the projects decentralized to them.

/Recommendation V:

Recommendation V: Relationship between the regional commissions and other United Nations bodies

The regional commissions and UNDP

25. In order to strengthen the relationship between the commissions and UNDP, the Inspectors have made a number of specific suggestions. They include an institutionalized arrangement whereby the executive secretaries are consulted on matters of overall UNDP policy and programming; regular consultative meetings at least once a year between the executive secretaries and the directors of the regional bureaux; an appropriate liaison arrangement at the regional level aimed at improving rapport and communication between UNDP and the commission; and the provision to the commissions of the good offices and services of the resident representative in those countries where the commissions do not have subregional offices. The Secretary-General believes that these suggestions would undoubtedly be of benefit to the work of the commissions.

26. This recommendation is the subject of separate comments by the administrator of UNDP.

The regional commissions, UNCTAD and UNIDO

27. Within the framework of the general principles proposed by the Inspectors regarding the co-ordination of work programmes, they recommend that the various co-ordination practices already established by UNCTAD and the regional commissions and by the latter and UNIDO should be perfected and institutionalized as appropriate. The Secretary-General concurs with this recommendation.

28. UNCTAD attaches the greatest importance to the achievement of its objectives at the regional level, and to that end, co-operation with the regional commissions is being strengthened so as to ensure a mutual reinforcement of activities and an effective cross-fertilization of ideas. It should, however, be noted that, while the commissions approach questions from the point of view of their own regions, UNCTAD's tasks are of a more global nature.

29. It should also be pointed out that both UNCTAD and the regional commissions have responsibilities in the trade field which go far beyond the mandate given to the International Trade Centre in Geneva. Therefore, the placing of emphasis by the Inspectors on trade promotion should not be taken to imply that decentralization between UNCTAD and the commissions would be limited to this field. UNCTAD intends to implement as effectively as possible the relevant provisions of the International Development Strategy and of the Declaration of Action on the Establishment of a New International Economic Order in co-operation with the regional commissions.

30. As for relations with UNIDO, it should be noted that industry divisions have also been established in ESCAP and ECWA.

Regional commissions and other United Nations bodies

31. The Secretary-General is satisfied with the current trend and state of co-operation between the regional commissions and other United Nations bodies. For example, UNICEF has expressed its willingness to explore ways of extending co-operative arrangements with the commissions in order to ensure a full co-ordination of programmes entrusted to the commissions and those financed by UNICEF. In the past, co-operation between UNICEF and the commissions included the exchange of information and participation in the meetings sponsored by the commissions that were of interest to UNICEF. Currently, this organization is undertaking a management survey intended, among other things, to re-examine the feasibility of further decentralizing its operations along the lines discussed in this JIU report.

32. As regards co-operation between regional commissions and UNEP, it should be recalled that the General Assembly in its resolution 2997 (XXVII) on institutional and financial arrangements for international environment co-operation, recognized specifically the role of the regional commissions in the implementation of environmental programmes in view of the particular need for the rapid development of the regional co-operation in this field. While the basic module of the UNEP programme is the ecological region which does not coincide with the geographical coverage of the regional commissions and in some cases cuts across two or three of them, there are a large number of common economic and social factors within each regional commission's area affecting man's interaction with his environment. Since its inception, UNEP has taken steps to establish close co-operative relations with the regional commissions including through the appointment of regional representatives and the approval of several projects under the Environment Fund for implementation by the regional commissions as co-operative agencies.

33. Another example is the collaboration between the commissions and the Office of Public Information. The latter has embarked on decentralizing to regional levels its production work and increasing the regional component of its programmes. In this connexion, emphasis is being placed on strengthening the information services of the commissions and on maintaining a close liaison with them.

/Recommendation VI:

Recommendation VI: Administration and management

34. The Inspectors recommend that, subject to a regional commission's acceptance of the decentralization of an activity (or component thereof) and to the observance of agreed criteria, standards, rules and guidelines, such decentralization should include all responsibilities related to its substantive and administrative backstopping. Only the recruitment of internationally recruited staff should continue to be the responsibility of Headquarters, acting in close consultation with the commissions. The procurement of office supplies and equipment should likewise be delegated to the commissions; and subject to the usual contracting procedures, that of project supplies and equipment should be delegated to the commissions as far as practicable. The residual authority of Headquarters in all other respects should be confined to broad co-ordination, control over the observance of said agreed criteria, standards, rules and guidelines and to the Secretary-General's statutory responsibilities for overall financial and administrative control over all United Nations activities, generally. Accordingly, the decentralization of any activity (or component thereof) to a commission should be accompanied by the allotment to it of resources, including overhead funds, commensurate with its responsibilities.

35. The Secretary-General is in broad agreement with this recommendation. As regards purchasing and contracting, he believes that as much authority should be delegated as can be exercised with efficiency and economy of operation by the commissions. Financial rule 110.16 (b) (iii) delegates to the executive secretaries of the economic commissions for Asia and the Pacific, for Latin America and for Africa full procurement and contracting authority for individual requisitions, or a series of requisitions, up to the amount of \$10,000. Only individual purchases or contracts in excess of this amount need be referred to Headquarters. Consideration is being given to the amendment of this rule to increase authority to act locally. The existing delegation of authority and the proposed increase in the limit is based on the recognition that local procurement often results in a more rapid availability of the items desired as it permits immediate delivery of items in the available market, and, for those to be procured from abroad, it eliminates the time required to send requisitions to Headquarters and to ship the goods to the region. It reduces the administrative work both in the field and at Headquarters and the volume of stocks of supplies Headquarters needs to carry. Even within the present limit, the commissions frequently request Headquarters to do the purchasing for them. The reason for this can be attributed to the possibility of obtaining a lower price, unavailability of the item locally or inability of the procurement staff of the commission to handle a particular case.

36. There is an implied criticism in the report on the absence of a special unit in the Purchase and Transport Service in the Office of General Services to meet the requirements of the regional commissions. It should be clarified that the Headquarters procurement function is organized on the basis of specialized commodity or equipment fields rather than geographically. It has been proven that the most efficient way to handle procurement is to have specialists in various fields, such as vehicles, paper and office equipment. Furthermore, contrary to what might appear to be the Inspectors' impression, the volume of purchase orders handled at Headquarters for the regional commissions is not sufficiently large to warrant creation of a separate unit.

37. As regards training of staff to handle procurement in the regional commissions, five have already been trained at Headquarters. The Office of General Services has made a standing offer to the commissions that it will train staff at any time they can be assigned by the commission to New York for a period of six months to a year.

38. The Inspectors further recommend that the Secretary-General should take the necessary steps to relocate, through secondment or rotation, the professional and support service staff that may be required in a regional office. The Secretary-General agrees with this recommendation. There is no doubt that an exchange of staff between Headquarters and the field is necessary, inter alia, to widen experience of the staff concerned and to foster a better understanding of the regional situations at Headquarters and of Headquarters' policy by the field. This question was discussed at the meeting of the executive secretaries in January 1974 where general agreement was reached on the principle of rotation of staff as among the regional commissions and between the regional commissions and Headquarters. Modalities to give effect to this agreement are at present being worked out. However, any such scheme can only be implemented if there is no insistence on total regionalization of the staff.

39. The Inspectors also recommended that, in the event that a vacancy in a commission cannot be filled by a fully qualified person otherwise than by temporarily setting aside certain recruitment criteria, the executive secretary should be authorized to recommend the recruitment of such a person nevertheless, on a short-term contract not exceeding two years. This dispensation should apply only to professional posts requiring technical expertise.

40. The current system for recruitment of professional staff accomplishes the same purposes as are envisaged by the Inspectors' recommendation. When neither the commission nor the Office of Personnel Services can locate candidates with the required qualifications, the commission may modify the qualification requirements, in order that candidates can be found. As pointed out in the report, notification to the Office of Personnel Services of a pending vacancy well in advance is an absolute necessity if professional vacancies are to be kept to a minimum.

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41. The report also refers to delays in recruitment in technical assistance experts and the factors contributing to such delays. Although there has been some discernible improvement in this respect, much remains to be done. As part of its continuing effort, the Office of Personnel Services plans to resort to advertisement more frequently in the future. At the same time, the Office of Personnel Services is also proposing a major organizational change in the Technical Assistance Recruitment Service (TARS) to facilitate, on a systematic basis, the prospecting for and interviewing of candidates from those geographic regions in which it does not as yet have regional offices.

Recommendation VII: Organizational

42. This recommendation covers three points:

(a) The commissions are advised to begin considering in good time the reorganization of their internal structures, placing emphasis on strengthening those units of their secretariats concerned with programming and management of technical co-operation activities and the general improvement of co-ordination of their various offices;

(b) The redefinition of the functions of the Regional Commissions Section in the Department of Economic and Social Affairs at Headquarters;

(c) The question of upgrading the posts of the executive secretaries.

43. The Secretary-General's comments on the first point are covered under paragraph 6 above. As for the second point, at the time of its review of manpower utilization in the Department of Economic and Social Affairs in 1973, the Administrative Management Service considered the role and resource requirement of the Regional Commissions Section in the Department. The AMS concluded that with the Resources and Programme Planning Office and the Departmental Administration and Finance Office assuming responsibilities for programme planning, development and co-ordination with the economic and social areas, and for administrative and financial control matters respectively, the functions of the Regional Commissions Section were not as extensive as formerly. It recognized, however, that the Section should be retained with the existing level of staff and continue to serve as a focal point and expeditor for regional commission matters. With regard to the last point, the Secretary-General is prepared to review the level of the posts held by the executive secretaries.

/Recommendation VIII:

Recommendation VIII: General

44. In accordance with recommendation VIII, the Secretary-General is prepared to initiate a process of internal consultation and discussion between Headquarters and the commissions on the ways and means of giving effect to those recommendations that will ultimately be accepted and to report thereon to the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council.