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NOTE BY THE SECRETARIAT ON THE RESOLUTION OF THE ECONOMIC AND  
SOCIAL COUNCIL RELATING TO THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE  
AD HOC COMMITTEE OF EXPERTS TO EXAMINE THE  
FINANCES OF THE UNITED NATIONS AND  
THE SPECIALIZED AGENCIES

In compliance with resolution 1264 (XLIII), adopted by the Economic and Social Council on 3 August 1967, the secretariat has pleasure in drawing the attention of the Committee of the Whole to the recommendations of the Ad Hoc Committee of Experts to Examine the Finances of the United Nations and the Specialized Agencies, in so far as the implementation of these recommendations by ECLA is concerned. The text of the resolution and that of the Ad Hoc Committee's report (A/6343) have been distributed to Governments by Headquarters, and Documents Section has a few copies available for reference purposes.

The report of the Ad Hoc Committee contains a number of recommendations on budget preparation, presentation and performance, the budget cycle, standardization of nomenclature, programme planning and evaluation, and co-ordination. In all these fields, measures are being adopted throughout the United Nations and will undoubtedly have favourable repercussions on ECLA's finances, since in such respects the secretariat follows the instructions it receives from Headquarters. It is worth noting, however, that ECLA anticipated one of the recommendations of the Committee, for it has been presenting a two-yearly programme of work, with clear indications of the order of priority established for each project, since 1963.

Resolution 1264 (XLIII) expressly requests the subsidiary bodies of the Council to make a more careful review of questions relating to conferences and documentation, and of the terms of reference of their own subsidiary bodies, all of which points were also touched upon by the Committee of Experts.

With regard to methods of work and calendars of conferences, the situation of ECLA is no different from that of the United Nations as a whole. Between 1963 and 1967 the number of days in the year on which meetings were held rose from fifty-seven to 146; on the other hand, virtually no increase took place in the number of supporting staff. As a result, there is a certain time-lag in the distribution of documents and, although nearly all meetings are now organized on a bilingual basis,

it is impossible to translate all the documents into both the languages used. Unquestionably, the number of pages in the documents could be reduced if they were thoroughly revised and condensed but that would entail increased personnel resources.

The over-loaded calendar of conferences often means that the regular work of the Commission has to be relegated to a secondary place, sometimes because it is precisely the substantive personnel that have to deal with both aspects of ECLA's activities, and sometimes because the editorial, typing and reproduction services are unable to cope with the volume of work.

It would be very difficult for the secretariat of the Commission to reduce the number of meetings without the co-operation of the Governments of states members, since each conference or seminar is the outcome of a decision adopted by representatives of Governments through the organs of the General Assembly, in the Economic and Social Council, and at ECLA's annual sessions. Other meetings originate in requests from the Office of Technical Co-operation (OTC) or from specialized agencies which solicit the co-operation of the ECLA secretariat in seminars on topics of common interest. Since ECLA is the only United Nations agency which has a properly equipped conference room in Latin America, and a team - however small - of personnel to service meetings, there is naturally a growing tendency to apply for its collaboration in the conferences held in the region.

The secretariat has done and is doing all it can to reduce the volume of documentation. For instance, since 1966 summary records have been prepared only for the sessions of the Commission and of its Committee of the Whole. Another innovation introduced in 1967 consisted in preparing all the original summary records in Spanish, a procedure which considerably lightened the public information work and cut down the number of information documents from fifty-nine at the eleventh session (1965) to thirty-five at the twelfth (1967).

As regards the publications programme, for three years now the principle followed has been to print only studies of general interest, i.e., those that are of concern to the whole of Latin America, and to issue country studies in mimeographed form, sometimes for sale. Private publishing firms have also been encouraged to print the Commission's mimeographed documents.

The Commission has been holding biennial sessions since 1951, while the Committee of the Whole meets every other year. The sessions of the Commission have been gradually shortened, and they now last only about ten days, barely allowing time for the discussion of a heavy agenda. The session of the Committee of the Whole last about three days, and are held at the headquarters of the Commission. The subsidiary bodies of ECLA are the Trade Committee and the Central American Economic Co-operation Committee. The first of these does not meet at regular intervals, but only when the nature and importance of the questions submitted for its consideration so require, and its sessions have sometimes been timed to coincide with a session of the Commission. The regular sessions of the Central American Economic Co-operation Committee are held, under its rules of procedure, once a year, and its sub-committees meet only when necessary in order to deal with matters within their competence. The Economic Commission for Latin America is one of the regional economic commissions that have fewest subsidiary bodies.

In compliance with the request expressed in operative paragraph 3 (d) of resolution 1264 (XLIII), the statements contained in the present document will be included in the annual report. Furthermore, any comments that delegations to the present session of the Committee of the Whole may wish to formulate will be incorporated in the report of the session, for submission to the Economic and Social Council.