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E C L A C

Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean

REPORT OF THE SEVENTEENTH SESSION OF THE
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

(United Nations Headquarters, New York, 28 June 1984)

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A. ATTENDANCE AND ORGANIZATION OF WORK

Place and date

1. The seventeenth session of the Committee of the Whole of the Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLA) was held at United Nations Headquarters, New York, on 28 June 1984.

Attendance

2. The session was attended by representatives of the following member States of the Economic Commission for Latin America: Argentina, Bahamas, Barbados, Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, France, Grenada, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Netherlands, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Spain, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Uruguay and Venezuela.

3. Representatives of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA) also participated in the meeting.

4. A representative of the secretariat of the Caribbean Community also attended.

Election of officers

5. The Committee of the Whole elected the following officers:

Chairman:	Peru
First Vice-Chairman:	Argentina
Second Vice-Chairman:	Trinidad and Tobago
Third Vice-Chairman:	Nicaragua
Rapporteur:	Spain

B. AGENDA

6. The Committee of the Whole adopted the following agenda:

1. Election of officers
2. Adoption of the agenda
3. Report of the Eighth Session of the Caribbean Development and Co-operation Committee (CDCC), Port-au-Prince, 6 to 12 June 1984
 - a) Programme of work of the CDCC for the biennium 1986-1987
 - b) Other matters

/4. Matters

4. Matters to be brought to the United Nations Economic and Social Council for consideration
 - a) Calendar of conferences of ECLA
 - b) Decisions and recommendations adopted by ECLA at its twentieth session (Lima, 29 March to 6 April 1984)
5. Request by the Government of El Salvador that that country be treated as a least developed country for the purposes of General Assembly resolution 2768 (XXVI)
6. Support for the economic development of Central America.

C. SUMMARY OF DEBATES

7. The Chairman, after thanking members, on behalf of his country, for honouring him with the chairmanship, commended the great spirit of co-operation that had prevailed among countries of the region at ECLA's twentieth session held recently at Lima, at which the problems of the world economic crisis and in particular, that of the external debt had been considered in depth.*/ On that occasion, two important resolutions had been adopted on long-term development policies for the region and adjustment policies and renegotiation of the external debt, respectively; at the request of the Caribbean countries, it had been agreed to recommend to the Economic and Social Council de designation "Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean" as the new name of the Commission; the admission of the United States Virgin Islands and the British Virgin Islands as associate members of ECLA had been approved; and the admission of Portugal as a full member of the Commission had been recommended.

8. After reviewing other resolutions adopted at the twentieth session, the Chairman recalled that, on that occasion, the programme of work of the Caribbean Development and Co-operation Committee (CDCC), a subsidiary organ of the Commission, had been left pending until such time as that Committee approved the objectives and components of its own work programme. That task had been accomplished at the CDCC's eighth session (Haiti, 6 to 12 June) and the Committee of the Whole must now ratify the programme of work adopted at the CDCC's session for subsequent consideration by the relevant United Nations bodies. The Committee of the Whole might also, at the request of the CDCC, take note of the report of the CARICOM meeting on population held in Saint Lucia in May 1984 in order to bring it to the attention of the International Conference on Population to be held in Mexico in August 1984. The Committee of the Whole must also set the dates for the Latin American Regional Preparatory Meeting for the forthcoming World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace, and consider the request of the Government of El Salvador that that country be treated as a least developed country for the purposes of resolution 2768 (XXVI).**/

*/ See document E/CEPAL/SES.20/G.32.

**/ See document E/CEPAL/PLEN.17/L.2.

9. The Chairman ended his presentation by wishing the meeting every success.
10. The Executive Secretary of ECLA, Mr. Enrique V. Iglesias, reported briefly on events at the twentieth session of ECLA (Lima, 29 March to 6 April 1984), in particular on items relating to the economic crisis and its effects on the region. He drew attention to a number of events that had taken place since that meeting and described the activities which ECLA was carrying out to help countries solve their economic problems.

Report of the Eighth Session of the Caribbean Development and Co-operation Committee (CDCC), Port-au-Prince, 6 to 12 June 1984 (agenda item 3)

a) Programme of work of the CDCC for the biennium 1986-1987

11. The Director of ECLA's Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean presented the CDCC programme of work, as adopted by that Committee at its eighth session.*/ The Committee of the Whole adopted the programme of work without comment and, on the recommendation of the CDCC, decided to take note of the report of the Preparatory Meeting for the International Conference on Population held in Saint Lucia on 2 May 1984 (document E/CEPAL/PLEN.17/CRP.1) and to send it in its final form to the Secretary-General of the International Conference on Population (Mexico, August 1984).

Matters to be submitted to the United Nations Economic and Social Council for consideration (agenda item 4)

Calendar of conferences of ECLA

12. The Secretary of the Commission presented the calendar of conferences adopted by the Commission at its twentieth session, which appeared in annex 1 to document E/CEPAL/PLEN.17/L.3. A number of delegations asked about the Latin American Regional Meeting to Review the Implementation of the Plan of Action for Youth, which was to be held in Spain in 1985, and in particular about the costs involved in holding a meeting outside the region. The Secretariat recalled that, at the Commission's twentieth session, member countries had been informed that, if the meeting were held at Commission Headquarters in Santiago, the cost to ECLA would be approximately US\$ 25 000, and added that additional funds for that purpose were being sought from the Economic and Social Council. Any additional costs incurred as a result of holding the meeting away from ECLA Headquarters would have to be borne by the host country, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 31/140.

13. In this connection, it was pointed out that, at the twentieth session of the Commission, the Executive Secretary of ECLA had been asked to try to obtain extrabudgetary resources to ensure that the smaller countries members of ECLA could participate, since otherwise they might not be able to attend.

*/ Document E/CEPAL/CDCC/109 and Corr. 1 and 2, and E/CEPAL/PLEN.17/L.4.

14. It was agreed that the Latin American Regional Preparatory Meeting for the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women would be held at Havana from 19 to 22 November 1984.

Decisions and recommendations adopted by ECLA at its twentieth session (Lima, 29 March to 6 April 1984)

15. The Secretariat referred to the draft resolution which was to be presented to the Economic and Social Council on the composition, terms of reference and programme of work of the Economic Commission for Latin America, which appeared in annex 2 to document E/CEPAL/PLEN.17/L.3.

16. After an exchange of views on the new name for the Commission which is being proposed to the Economic and Social Council and on the corresponding acronyms in English, French and Spanish, it was agreed that the words "and authorizes the Secretariat to continue to use the acronym 'CEPAL' to refer to the Commission in Spanish" should be deleted from paragraph 1 of the draft resolution since it was considered unnecessary to emphasize in such a special way the consensus reached to that effect at the twentieth session. The draft resolution, thus amended, was included in annex 2 to the report.

17. It was also decided that the footnote to page 86 of the draft report of the twentieth session of ECLA should be deleted.*/

18. At the conclusion of the debate on this item, one delegation stressed the importance of ECLA's work in the Caribbean subregion which, in the past, had not always been given the attention it deserved.

Request by the Government of El Salvador that that country be treated as a least developed country for the purposes of General Assembly resolution 2768 (XXVI) (agenda item 5)

19. In opening consideration of this item, the Secretariat referred briefly to note E/CEPAL/PLEN.17/L.2, which contained a brief description of the main features of the recent economic performance of El Salvador. The representative of Venezuela then submitted a draft resolution on behalf of the delegations of Colombia, El Salvador, Panama, Spain and his own country, which proposed that international co-operation agencies should accord El Salvador the same treatment as that granted to the least developed countries included in the list approved by the General Assembly in its resolution 2768 (XXVI).**/ That proposal was prompted by the marked deterioration in the Salvadorian economy in recent years.

20. This statement was followed by several others. The delegations of Costa Rica, Guatemala and Honduras requested that their countries be included among the co-sponsors of the draft resolution. The representative of Honduras also

*/ Document E/CEPAL/SES.20/G.32.

**/ Conference Room Paper E/CEPAL/PLEN.17/CRP.3.

/said that

said that his Government would be submitting to a subsequent meeting of the Committee of the Whole a statement on his country's situation as a structurally least developed country in Central America, a situation which had been aggravated by recent economic trends, particularly since 1969, making it one of the three least developed countries in Latin America as a whole. The delegation of the United States of America, for its part, voiced its Government's support for the draft resolution.

21. The delegation of Nicaragua pointed out that, while it did not oppose the draft resolution, it wished to make a number of observations. It pointed out that both the draft resolution under consideration and the Secretariat note on which it was based recalled the precedent of a resolution adopted by the Committee of the Whole of ECLA on 28 September 1979 in connection with the case of Nicaragua.*/ The Nicaraguan representative said that, in his view, his country's socioeconomic and political situation in September 1979 had been far different from current circumstances in El Salvador and that any similarity was confined to quantitative indicators.

22. In regard to that draft resolution, the delegation of Cuba submitted the following statement to the Secretariat:

"We have also witnessed the introduction of a draft resolution on that subject by the delegation of Venezuela on behalf of a number of delegations. From a technical standpoint, this draft resolution does not appear to be political in nature. However, in view of the situation of war which exists in the fellow republic of El Salvador, it does indeed have political implications. The document submitted by the Secretariat, as well as the reference document E/CEPAL/MEX/1984/L.14, entitled "Centroamérica: evolución de sus economías en 1983" (preliminary version), provides conclusive support for that assertion. It is acknowledged in those documents that the economic and socio-political crises in that country tend to reinforce one another."

"Apart from the economic crisis which plagues Latin America as a whole and Central America in particular, the state of war in El Salvador would prevent the economic assistance requested in that draft resolution from reaching the great masses of the population in this fellow country. In view of the armed conflict there, the present government cannot be regarded as representing the will of the Salvadorian people."

"In preambular paragraph 4 of the draft, reference is made to the resolutions adopted in 1979 and 1982 by this Committee in order to aid Nicaragua and Bolivia, respectively. Although the figures might indicate that the statement in question is valid, the socio-political situations involved are entirely different. In 1979, the Sandinista National Liberation Front had just overthrown a dictatorship which had been repudiated worldwide, and the international community decided to make the necessary efforts to assist Nicaragua in the arduous task of rebuilding the country, whose economy had been seriously

*/ Document E/CEPAL/G.1093.

affected by war and by the natural disasters which it had previously suffered. In Bolivia, as in Nicaragua, there was no war at the time that resolution was taken to help heal that country's economy, which had been severely affected by the economic crisis. This is not the situation now being faced by El Salvador."

"Although our delegation wishes due recognition to be given to its viewpoints in the record and in the report of this meeting, it is not opposed to the will of the majority as expressed here and, accordingly, it will not oppose the adoption of this resolution without a vote. This should by no means be construed as an endorsement by our delegation, for the reasons given above."

"Lastly, Mr. Chairman, we hope that the adoption of this resolution will not be used for political ends or propaganda purposes, but that it will be scrupulously confined to the sphere of economic co-operation in accordance with the stated intentions of its co-sponsors. This does not imply tacit support for any of the parties to the conflict in that country."

23. The draft resolution was adopted.* /

24. The representative of El Salvador expressed appreciation for the support given by the delegations present and took the opportunity to reject some of the assertions made by the representative of Cuba, emphasizing that his country's newly-elected Government clearly represented the will of the majority, having come to power after a free and democratic electoral process which had been witnessed by observers from governments and international organizations.

25. The representative of France, speaking on behalf of the European Communities, expressed doubts as to the appropriateness of according least developed country treatment to some countries which were not in the same situation as those included in that category by the General Assembly. Such a step created confusion both as to the criteria governing classification of those countries and to the standards which donor countries and agencies must apply. She also voiced doubts as to whether the Committee of the Whole of ECLA was the most appropriate forum in the United Nations for discussing that item. The representative of Canada voiced the same opinion. Both delegations, France and Canada, nonetheless emphasized that their doubts must not be interpreted as opposition to a decision which had already been taken.

Support for the economic development of Central America (agenda item 6)

26. The debate on this item was based on a draft resolution co-sponsored by the delegations of Mexico and Nicaragua. A number of delegations expressed doubts as to the possibility of considering the draft, given the short time available for its consideration and subsequent discussion. Accordingly, following a brief recess, the delegations of the six Central American countries requested that the main elements of the draft resolution which they supported be reflected in the report of the meeting and appointed a spokesman, the representative of Nicaragua, to describe those main elements to the rest of the member countries of ECLA.

* / See section D.

27. Accordingly, that spokesman stated that all the countries of the region were undergoing a serious economic crisis and that efforts were being made at the regional and subregional levels and even with the assistance of the rest of the region to alleviate that situation. At the subregional level, he emphasized the importance of the Central American integration process and the need for the assistance of the international community in strengthening institutions arising out of that process. At the regional level, he recalled the recent establishment of the Action Committee in Support of the Economic and Social Development of Central America (CADESCA), which currently had a membership of 19 countries; urged the developed countries and international financing agencies to respond positively to the appeal for co-operation recently made by the CADESCA secretariat; and asked the ECLA Secretariat to support this newly-created body. Finally, he expressed the hope that the United Nations system and the specialized agencies would increase their resources and their activities aimed at Central America.

Location of the 21st session of ECLA

28. In his closing statement, the Executive Secretary of ECLA drew attention to the work being done by the ECLA Subregional Headquarters in Mexico to promote the development of the Central American region. He announced that the next session of the Committee of the Whole would be held in 1985 in Latin America, and that the Government of Mexico had offered to host the 21st session of the Commission, which would therefore take place in that country in 1986.

Closure of the meeting

29. The Chairman expressed satisfaction at the work done and, after thanking participants and the Secretariat for their contributions, closed the meeting.

D. RESOLUTIONS

472 (PLEN.17). SUPPORT IN RESPONSE TO THE EMERGENCY ECONOMIC SITUATION IN EL SALVADOR

The Committee of the Whole of the Economic Commission for Latin America,

Considering that El Salvador has for some time revealed certain characteristics proper to the least developed countries of the region,

Taking into account that due to adverse effects originating in the evolution of the international economy, added to the direct and indirect consequences of the conflict prevailing in the country, the Salvadorian economy has suffered a marked deterioration during the past five years, to the extent that the real per capita gross domestic product has receded to the levels already attained in 1981,

/Bearing in

Bearing in mind that to reverse this deterioration and to increase the well-being of the Salvadorian population, will require not only a special internal effort, but also ample support on the part of the international community,

Recalling the resolutions adopted by ECLA's Committee of the Whole on 28 September 1979 and 3 December 1982, which recommend, among other matters, that in view of the specific problems faced by Nicaragua on the one hand, and Bolivia, on the other hand, international agencies of co-operation should bestow on both these countries the same treatment accorded to the least developed countries included in the list approved by the General Assembly in its resolution 2768 (XXVI),

1. Requests the Secretary-General of the United Nations to invite all the specialized agencies of the United Nations system to allocate all possible resources to El Salvador and to expand their programmes for El Salvador to the extent necessary in their respective fields of competence and in close collaboration with the Government of that country;

2. Recommends that, although El Salvador is not officially listed in resolution 2768 (XXVI) of the General Assembly among the least developed countries, it be accorded, to the maximum extent possible, and until its situation returns to normal, a treatment equivalent to that already given in the past or to be given in the future to this group of countries;

3. Requests the Secretariat of the Commission, the Latin American Institute for Economic and Social Planning and the Latin American Demographic Centre to extend the fullest co-operation to the Government of El Salvador, in accordance with any requests which the latter may submit.

Annex 1

LIST OF DOCUMENTS

E/CEPAL/PLEN.17/L.1	Provisional agenda
E/CEPAL/PLEN.17/L.2	El Salvador: Main features of its recent economic performance
E/CEPAL/PLEN.17/L.3	Annotated provisional agenda
E/CEPAL/PLEN.17/L.4	Report of the Eighth Session of the Caribbean Development and Co-operation Committee
E/CEPAL/SES.20/G.32	Draft report (of the twentieth session of ECLA)
E/CEPAL/MEX/1984/L.14	Centroamérica: Evolución de sus economías en 1983. Versión preliminar (Spanish only)
E/CEPAL/CDCC/109	Draft Work Programme of the Caribbean Development and Co-operation Committee, 1986-1987
E/CEPAL/PLEN.17/CRP.1	Report of the Preparatory Meeting for the United Nations Conference on Population (Saint Lucia, 2 May 1984) - Prepared by the Caribbean Community Secretariat

Annex 2

DRAFT RESOLUTION PROPOSED BY THE ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR LATIN AMERICA
FOR CONSIDERATION BY THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL

RESOLUTION 1984/... ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR LATIN AMERICA:
COMPOSITION, TERMS OF REFERENCE AND PROGRAMME OF WORK

The Economic and Social Council,

Noting with satisfaction the results of the twentieth session of the Economic Commission for Latin America, held at Lima, Peru, from 29 March to 6 April 1984,*/

Having considered the decisions and recommendations adopted by the Commission at that session,**/

I

COMPOSITION AND TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE ECONOMIC COMMISSION
FOR LATIN AMERICA

1. Approves the designation "Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean" as the new name of the Commission, as recommended by the latter in its resolution 455 (XX);
2. Endorses resolution 452 (XX) of the Commission by which the latter welcomed the request of the Government of Portugal, and decides to admit that country as a member of the Commission;
3. Also approves the Commission's recommendation that the Spanish and French versions of the Terms of Reference and Rules of Procedure of ECLA should be amended by replacing the words "la región de las Antillas" by "la región del Caribe" and the words "la région des Antilles" by "la région des Caraïbes", respectively;
4. Decides therefore to make the relevant amendments to the Terms of Reference and Rules of Procedure of the Commission, in order to incorporate the decisions contained in paragraphs 1 to 3 of this resolution;

*/ See document E/CEPAL/G.1310.

**/ Ibid.

5. Takes note with satisfaction of ECLA resolutions 453 (XX) and 454 (XX) deciding to admit the British Virgin Islands and the United States Virgin Islands, respectively, as associate members of the Commission;

II

PROGRAMME OF WORK AND CALENDAR OF CONFERENCES

6. Endorses ECLA resolution 465 (XX) on the programme of work and calendar of conferences of the Commission, in particular the recommendations contained therein on the holding by ECLA of regional preparatory meetings for United Nations world conferences and on the allocation of additional resources for the holding in 1985 of a regional meeting to review the implementation of the Regional Plan of Action for Latin America and the Caribbean for the International Youth Year.