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DECENTRALIZATION OF THE OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES
OF THE UNITED NATIONS

Note by the secretariat

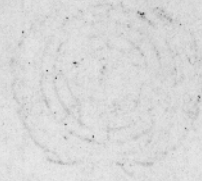
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UNITED NATIONS

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ORIGINAL SPANISH

1948
Economic Commission for Latin America
Research session
La Paz, Bolivia, 18-23 April 1948

MEMORANDUM OF THE OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES
OF THE UNITED NATIONS

Notes by the secretariat

At its thirty second session the General Assembly adopted resolution 32/197 on the restructuring of the economic and social sectors of the United Nations system. In chapter IV of the annex to that resolution, the regional commissions are recognized as "the main general economic and social development centres within the United Nations system for their respective regions" 1/ and it is stated that "appropriate arrangements should be made to enable the regional commissions to participate actively in operational activities carried out through the United Nations system".2/ It is further stated in that paragraph that "the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council should take measures to enable them to function expeditiously as executing agencies for intersectoral, subregional, regional and interregional projects" 3/ in areas which fall within their purview. Finally, it is stated that "the necessary authority should be delegated to the regional commissions and adequate budgetary and financial provision should be made for their activities".4/

These paragraphs of the annex to resolution 32/197 are in keeping with the decision taken on this question by the Governing Council of the United Nations Development Programme at its eighteenth session 5/ and with Economic and Social Council resolution 2043 (LXI), of 5 August 1976.

Subsequently, the Economic and Social Council in resolution 1978/74 of 16 August 1978 stated once again that the regional commissions should have greater possibilities of exercising, in consultation with the interested governments, the functions of executing agencies of the United Nations Development Programme.6/

1/ See paragraph 19.

2/ See paragraph 23.

3/ Ibid.

4/ See paragraph 26.

5/ See document E/5543/Rev.1, paragraph 111, section III.

6/ See operative paragraph 1.

/In turn,

In turn, the General Assembly at its thirty-third session decided that the regional commissions should have the character of executing agencies in their own right with respect to the categories of projects described in paragraph 23 of the annex to resolution 32/197, and in compliance with that paragraph requested the Secretary-General to take the necessary steps to this end,^{7/} and speed up, inter alia, the implementation of decentralization towards the regional commissions in the case of technical co-operation projects falling within the purview of paragraph 23 of the annex to resolution 32/197.^{8/}

As a first step in the implementation of the provisions of paragraph 23 of the annex to General Assembly resolution 32/197 and of resolution 32/202, operative paragraph 4, a meeting at United Nations Headquarters, New York, 25-29 September 1978 was attended by representatives of the Department of Technical Co-operation for Development (DTCD) and of the regional commissions, as well as by representatives of the United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations Fund for Population Affairs. The purpose of the meeting was to study criteria and decide on mutually acceptable dates for the decentralization of operational activities from Headquarters to the regional commissions.

In the course of these talks the importance became clear of strengthening co-operation between DTCD and the regional co-operations and thus make use of their accumulated experience and knowledge of the facts at the global level on the one hand and at the regional level on the other; and it was stressed that decentralization should be carried out in an expeditious and orderly manner, taking into account the interests of the countries participating in the projects to be decentralized.

During this initial stage of the process, agreement was reached on the transfer to the regional commissions from 1 January 1979 of full responsibility for the management of specific ongoing subregional and regional projects for which DTCD is currently responsible. For this purpose CEPAL and DTCD agreed on the following criteria for the decentralization of the subregional

^{7/} See resolution 33/202, section V, operative paragraph 3, 29 January 1979.

^{8/} Ibid., operative paragraph 4.

and regional projects from Headquarters to CEPAL: (a) that the project topic should be included in the CEPAL work programme; (b) that CEPAL should have carried out or currently be engaged in, or have plans to carry out in the immediate future, studies or research on the project topic and thus be able to provide intellectual, methodological and structural support prior to the operational activity in question; and (c) that CEPAL headquarters should have officials capable of providing the necessary technical support to the experts assigned to the project in question as well as the operational capacity to administer the project properly.

The above-mentioned meeting did not study the question of the decentralization of intersectoral and interregional projects which are also mentioned in paragraph 23 of the annex to resolution 32/197.

With regard to the designation of the regional commissions as executing agencies for subregional and regional UNDP projects decentralized from 1 January 1979 (again in compliance with the provisions of paragraph 23 of the annex to resolution 32/197) DTCD stated that this question fell within the sphere of competence of the UNDP Administrator, following consultation with the interested governments. It was therefore up to the UNDP Administrator to take the necessary steps to designate the corresponding regional commission as executing agency for the above-mentioned projects, even though the fact that full responsibility for these projects has been transferred from DTCD to the regional commissions as of 1 January 1979 de facto involves the designation of those commissions as executing agencies. As far as CEPAL is concerned, in accordance with the provisions of General Assembly resolution 33/202, in addition to this de facto status the commission should also be designated as an executing agency for UNDP in its own right. On previous occasions UNDP has already directly designated CEPAL as executing agency for various projects of a subregional and regional nature.

Although paragraph 23 of the annex to resolution 32/197 does not mention country projects, CEPAL, through ILPES and CELADE, is prepared to offer its services as an agency for regional co-operation in the case of country projects covering fields in which the CEPAL system has installed technical capacity which is widely recognized in the region, as in economic and social planning, and population and demography.

/Clearly the

Clearly the decentralization of operational activities from United Nations Headquarters to CEPAL and the consequent functions to be exercised as a UNDP executing agency for projects falling within the purview of paragraph 23 of the annex to resolution 32/197 will go hand in hand with the need to provide CEPAL with the additional resources needed to undertake those functions adequately and satisfactorily. The extent of this need will depend on the number of projects assigned to CEPAL as executing agency.

In view of the favourable course taken by the question of decentralization of United Nations operational activities to the regional commissions, and since the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council have reaffirmed that the regional commissions, in their own right, shall be UNDP executing agencies for intersectoral, subregional, regional and interregional projects, CEPAL proposes to step up its work of fostering subregional, regional and interregional co-operation in accordance with its mandates. To this end CEPAL will pay special attention to the activities defined as having priority by the governments concerned.^{9/}

^{9/} See Economic and Social resolution 1978/74, operative paragraph 2, 4 August 1978.

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