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QUESTIONNAIRE FOR THE STUDY ON REGIONAL STRUCTURES

M70-2597

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IntroductionAuthority

1. The attached questionnaire has been prepared by the Secretary-General in response to the request contained in resolution 1553(XLIX) of the Economic and Social Council, which reads as follows:

"The Economic and Social Council,

Considering the note by the Secretary-General on the terms of reference and financial implications of the proposed preparatory study on regional structures, 1/

Emphasizing the necessity of taking into full consideration the views of the States of the respective regions individually and collectively within the framework of their regional economic commissions,

Bearing in mind the fact that problems of regional co-operation vary from one region to another,

1. Requests the Secretary-General to prepare, in consultation with other organizations of the United Nations system a questionnaire on the various aspects of regional structure and to forward it to the Governments of member States with the request that they send their answers to their respective regional economic commissions;
2. Requests the executive secretaries of the regional economic commissions to prepare reports on the basis of the answers to the questionnaire and to submit them to the regional economic commissions at their next annual session in order to elicit comments from Governments;
3. Requests also the Director of the United Nations Economic and Social Office in Beirut to prepare a report on the basis of the answers to the questionnaire received from Governments covered by the Office and to submit it to the Secretary-General;

1/ E/AC.24/L.379. This note reads in part as follows:

"1. The existing regional structures are the result of decisions taken over a long period of years of the Council and the General Assembly and the legislative organs of the specialized agencies and are based on a variety of political and substantive considerations. To bring about a rationalization of these structures will inevitably require a long process of discussion and negotiation at the government level.

"2. In order to prepare the ground for ECOSOC consideration of this complex question, the Secretary-General proposes to arrange for a thorough study of all aspects of rationalization of regional structures..."

4. Further requests the executive secretaries of the regional economic commissions to submit their reports, together with the comments of Governments, to the Secretary-General;

5. Also requests the Secretary-General to report to the Council as early as possible and not later than at its fifty-second session the results of the preliminary inquiry and to recommend concrete measures."

Background

2. In framing this questionnaire, the Secretary-General has taken into account, after consultations with the executive heads of the specialized agencies and other organizations of the United Nations system, the executive secretaries of the regional economic commissions, and the Director of the United Nations Economic and Social Office in Beirut, inter alia, the following developments that immediately preceded the adoption of resolution 1553(XLIX).

3. The question of rationalization of the regional arrangements and structures of the United Nations system has been thrown into sharp relief by the Study on the Capacity of the United Nations Development System. The Study "does not provide for any formal structure at the regional level at the present time. This does not imply lack of awareness of the importance of the regional or sub-regional approaches or of decentralization to regional or sub-regional levels, but a reluctant recognition that the heterogeneity of current arrangements for regional representation of the various components of the United Nations development system totally precludes, in present circumstances, any effective means toward integration of the various elements making up United Nations development co-operation, which the Study considers imperative for the expansion of capacity....." (DP/5, Chapter VII, paragraph 112).

4. At the sixth session of the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination, the Secretary-General proposed to arrange for a study on regional structures. The Committee formulated its comments as follows: "A study of the administrative and substantive aspects of regional organizations should cover the role of the regional economic commissions, their progress and impediments to progress in fostering economic co-operation and integration as well as their part in technical assistance and pre-investment activities. It should also examine the relations between the commissions and regional and sub-regional groupings, both

economic and political outside the United Nations system, in addition to reviewing their prospective functions in respect of the Second United Nations Development Decade." (E/4877, paragraph 24).

5. After consideration of the Capacity Study, the Governing Council of UNDP invited the Economic and Social Council "to consider at its forthcoming summer session arranging an immediate inquiry into problems of the regional and sub-regional structures within the United Nations system which have a bearing on the improvement of the capacity of the United Nations development system". (paragraph 67 of Consensus).

6. When the matter was considered at the Joint Meetings of ACC and CPC, on 2-3 July 1970, a general agreement was expressed "that the present regional structures were not ideal and a much greater degree of uniformity could be achieved.....". "It was, however, pointed out that the subject was a complex one involving the definition of geographical, cultural, and economic 'regions'. In some instances, specific technical considerations had to be taken into account, while in another the nature of the organization which was based on international agreements would require a transitional period were it to be modified." (E/4886, paragraphs 20-21).

Functional requirements

7. The existing regional arrangements within the United Nations system are set out in tabular form in the annexes referred to in paragraph 13. Beyond geographic structures and physical arrangements, attention must also be devoted to the functions of the regional structures and the relationships among them. The essential aim must be to enhance the effectiveness of regional arrangements so as to respond in greater measure to the needs and wishes of the countries belonging to the regions which these arrangements are designed to serve. The very objective of effectiveness may, however, require departures from a uniform pattern^{1/} - for example, in cases where physical or technical factors dictate arrangements which bear no necessary relationship to political, economic, or cultural affinities, or again in such fields as epidemiology which may involve special groupings of countries for concerted or complementary activities.

^{1/} e.g., the World Bank Group has two Permanent Missions in Africa (Eastern Africa - Nairobi, Western Africa - Abidjan) broadly reflecting linguistic situations. These missions, besides being responsible for developing closer ties between the Bank and African member Governments, can, on request, help these Governments to identify and prepare projects for Bank financing in the agriculture, education and transportation sectors.

Constitutional obligations

8. In addition, certain regional structures are provided for in the constitutions of certain organizations or in international agreements, including elections to offices on the basis of regional quotas, and these could only be modified by amending these international instruments in accordance with the procedures therein provided for the purpose.^{2/}

Regional organizations outside the United Nations system

9. As indicated in paragraph 4 above, the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination has drawn attention to the role of regional and sub-regional groupings, political and economic, outside the United Nations system. The activities of such groupings may be of relevance to the rationalization of regional arrangements for the activities of the United Nations organizations in the economic and social fields and are, therefore, factors which the members of such groupings may wish to bear in mind in preparing their replies.

Aims of the questionnaire

10. The existing geographic structural arrangements of the United Nations and the specialized agencies for carrying out activities at the regional level, including policy formulation and operational activities, have been established over a period of years and shaped by constitutional requirements, policy decisions and practical necessities. These arrangements lack uniformity and it is generally acknowledged that, viewed as a whole, they involve certain practical disadvantages. One of the purposes of the questionnaire, therefore, is to ascertain Governments' views on the desirability of changes in geographical structures and on what basis such changes should be made.

^{1/} Thus, in the field of health, whereas the delineation of geographical areas and the location of regional offices are decided upon by the WHO legislative and executive organs, the existence and nature and functions of the regional organizations comprising WHO are provided for in the Constitution of that organization. Particular arrangements exist for WHO's region of the Americas, under the provisions of Article 54 of the WHO Constitution and of the agreement between WHO and the Pan American Health Organization, signed on 24 May 1949. (See also para. 7 above).

11. However, significant improvements would be possible through arrangements among the regional intergovernmental bodies of the United Nations and the specialized agencies and among the respective secretariats without these necessarily having to be accompanied by geographic structural changes. Therefore, a no less important purpose of this questionnaire is to ascertain what improvements might be introduced in these working relationships.

Relevant documentation

12. It may be of assistance to Governments in preparing their replies to the questionnaire to refer to the description of regional arrangements contained in the report of the ACC on Co-ordination at the Regional Level (E/4335 and Add.1), a copy of which is appended for convenience of reference as well as to the report on "the clear and comprehensive picture" prepared for ECPC (E/AC.51/GR/L.6, Chapter I) and Appendix Three to the Capacity Study (DP/5). So far as the United Nations is concerned, reference is made to the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council dealing with the role of the regional economic commissions.^{1/}

13. In order to facilitate the task of Governments in replying to the questionnaire in the light of the existing situation, the following information including charts and maps is appended:

- (a) Membership of the United Nations and the specialized agencies;
- (b) Membership of the regional economic commissions;
- (c) Membership of regional organizations, committees, and conferences of specialized agencies;
- (d) Chart of the location of headquarters of regional economic commissions, regional, sub-regional and area offices of the specialized agencies and United Nations programmes.

^{1/} Including General Assembly resolutions 1709(XVI) and 1823(XVII) and Council resolutions 793(XXX) and 1442(XLVII).

QUESTIONNAIRE

1. What is your Government's view of present regional arrangements and structures of the United Nations, its subsidiary organs and of the specialized agencies? ^{1/}

2. What modification, if any, including changes in the definition of regional groupings and the location of regional centres of such groupings would your Government suggest? Unless your Government favours the delineation of identical regional groupings for all organizations in the United Nations system, please differentiate, taking into account paragraphs 7 and 8 of the Introduction, between modifications desired in arrangements for:
 - (a) General purposes, i.e., over-all economic and social purposes, and
 - (b) Special purposes, e.g., special technical fields such as civil aviation, telecommunications and meteorology.

3. Should there be one or several centres of activities of the United Nations, its subsidiary organs and of the specialized agencies in the region (a) for general purposes; (b) for special purposes? ^{1/}

4. Does your Government favour action at the sub-regional level for the different purposes mentioned above? What are your Government's suggestions in this regard?

5. What steps would your Government favour to obtain greater co-ordination in international activities at the regional level with special reference to the objectives contained in the International Development Strategy for the Second United Nations Development Decade (General Assembly resolution 2626(XXV))?

^{1/} Please refer to material listed in paragraph 13 of the Introduction.

6. What measures would your Government favour to ensure fuller implementation of the General Assembly and ECOSOC resolutions bearing on the enhancement of the role of the regional economic commissions, particularly ECOSOC resolution 1442(XLVII) ?

7. Paragraph 5 of the Consensus states that "it is recognized that the Government of the country concerned has the exclusive responsibility for formulating its national development plan or priorities and objectives. Individual developing countries should have, at their request, assistance from the United Nations, including the regional economic commissions and the United Nations Economic and Social Office in Beirut, in the general field of planning and from the specialized agencies in sectoral planning." In the light of the above, what are your Government's suggestions regarding the way in which the regional secretariats should play a more active part in the United Nations development co-operation cycle, as described in the Consensus (E/4884), in particular with respect to assisting in the planning and programming of technical co-operation country programmes? ^{1/}

8. What suggestions does your Government have in order to achieve closer co-operation and co-ordination between the regional secretariats and the specialized agencies in the planning and implementation of work programmes including, where appropriate, the formulation of joint regional development programmes and in the joint preparation of sectoral and inter-sectoral undertakings?

^{1/} See also the report of the meetings of the Executive Secretaries of the regional economic commissions held in 1970 (E/4859, paragraphs 32-37).

9. At present the regional economic commissions participate regularly in regional conferences as well as technical meetings organized by specialized agencies and vice-versa. In addition to such existing arrangements, would your Government favour periodic discussions in the regional economic commissions, in co-operation with the specialized agencies concerned, of broad sectoral topics with a view to promoting a closer relationship between sectoral policies and activities and over-all regional development policies?

10. Insofar as the relations between regional structures of the United Nations system and the regional organizations not directly within that system are relevant to the purposes of this inquiry, has your Government views on this subject that it wishes to express?