MCONGHIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA
Executive Committee
Nineteenth meeting
Arusha, 23-25 October 1978

THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE - A BRIEF REVIEw

Since the last meeting of the Conference of Ministers held at Kinshasa from 24 February to 3 March 1977, the Executive Committee has functioned as a committee of the whole, since it had not been able to agree on the distribution of seats within the subregion following the decision taken by the Conference to enlarge the membership of the Executive Committee.

The secretariat had been requested to study the question and submit sagestions as to its solution to the Executive Committee at its seventeenth meeting. During the seventeenth meeting of the Conmiittce held at Arusha (United Republic of Tanzania) from 10 to 12 October 1977; no solution was found to the problem because neither of the suggestion e made by the secretariat (see document E/CN.14/. ECO/121) gained any consensus and the secretariat was further requested to conduct a study on the usefulness or otherwise of the Executive Committee.

I: Before making any suggestions therefore, the secretariat wishes to present below a brief review of the Executive Committee.

Composition of the Committee as established at the ninth session of the Commission
Commission resolution 188(IX) of 10 February 1969 establishing the Executive Committee provided that this organ was to be composed as follows :
"(a) The Chairman, the two Vice-Chairmen and the Rapporteur of the session of the Conference of Ministers;
(b) Two representatives from each subregion, each office bearer of the Conference of Ministers being regarded as representing the subregion
in ss in which his country is situated;
(c) Two African members of the Economic and Social Council, one representing the English-speaking and one the French-speaking countries;
(d) Two African members of the Governing Council of the United Nations Development Programme, one representing the English-speaking and one the French-speaking countries.

No one country may have more than one representative on the Executive Committee. The Chairman of the Conference of Ministers shall be the Chairman of the Executive Committee。"

## Meetings

The Executive Committee meets at least twice a year The Chairman of the Executive Committee may in special circumstance and after consultation with the Executive Secretary of the Commission summon an emergency meeting of the Executive Committee. The Chairman of the Executive Committee may invite all African members of the Economic and Social Council and of the Governing Council of the United Nations Development Programme to attend meetings of the Executive. Connititee when appropriate。

## Functions

(a) To assist the Executive Secretary in the implementation of the resolutions of the Commission and the work progranme of the secretariat;
(b) To provide a Hink between the secretariat ${ }_{\text {d }}$ member States and the subregions; in this connexiong to consider reports of the subregions and their operational programmes, to assist the Executive Secretary in ensuring the full commitment and involvement of member States with regard to subregional activities and to foster and co-ordinate the activities of intergovernmental organizations;
(c) In consultation with the secretariats to recommend effective ways and means of fostering closer co-operation between the Commission and the United Nations bodies and various international organizations interested and involved in deyelopment efforts in Africa;
(d) To assist the secretariat to establish close working relations with the African permanent representatives at the United Nations, as well as the African members of various international organizations so as to keep them fully informed of the problems affecting economic and social development in the African region;
(e) To bring to the attention of member States the activities of other internationat organizations which may affect the exonomic and social development process of African countries;
(f) In liaison with the Executive Secretary, to strengthen the cordial relations existing between the Commission and the political organs of the Organization of African Thity (such as the Council of Ministers and the Assembly of Heads of State and Governnent) by means of regular consultations with the secretariat of the Organization of African Unity;
(g) To make reports to the Conference of Ministers in the most appropriate manner:

Revised composition of the Executive Committee as established at the tenth session of the Commission

Initially, in accordance with resolution 188(IX) estabiishing the institutional machinery of the Commission, the office bearers of the Conference of Ministers were to serve in the same capacity on the Executive Committee. However during the tenth session of the Commission and first meeting of the Conference of Ministers held at Tunis in February 1971, the Conference of Ministers decided inter alia that the Executive Committee should elect its own officers, with the reservation that the Chairman of the Conference of Ministers should be the Chairman of the Executive Committee.

It was also decided that the membership of the Executive Committee should be increased to 16 and that as often as possible member States ohould be represented by ministers at meetings of the Executive Committee.

## Term of office

The term of office of the members of the Executive Committee is normall the two years' interval between sessions of the Commission. However, with regand to the position of African representatives on the Economic and Social Council and the Governing Council of UNDP, their term of office as members of the Executive Committee depends upon the duration of their membership in those bodies.

## - Distribution of seats

Out of the 16 members of the Executive Committee, some arrangement had to. be worked out for the selection of African representatives on the Economic and social Council and the Governing Louncil of UNDP for membership on the Executive Committee. Commission resolution 188(IX), dealing with the institutional machinery 4. of the Commission, specifically made provision for two African members from the. --Economic and Social Council (one English-speaking and one French-speaking) and, two African members from the Governing Council of UNDP (one English-speaking and one French-speaking). Subregional representation on the Executive Comattee as such was thus limited to 12 members, while the remaining four members were African members from the Economic and Social Council and the Governing Council of UNDP. As there are four subregions, the distribution among thase subregions was three directly elected members from each subregion. As regards the foür members from the Economic and Social Council and the Governing Council of UNDP they were to be distributed equally among the four subregions. It was recommended that care should be taken to ensure a proper linguistic balance in the distribution of seats among the subregions and the members from tbe Ecencmic and Social - Council and UNDP.

During the periods 1973/75 and 1975/77, the membership of the Executive Committee was as follows :

## Central Africa

1973/1975
United Republic of Cameroon Burundi
Gabon
Reme
$1975 / 1977$
United Republic of Cameroon
Burundi
Gabon
Zaire


## West Africa

Ghana
Nigeria
Senegal
Maidi.
Togo

Gambia
Ivory Coast
Senegal
Liberia

Since the Tunis session held in 1971, the number of States members of the Commission has risen from 40 to 49. At its fourth meeting held at Kinshasay, Zaire, from 24 February to 3 March 1977, the Conference of Ministers dectded unanimously to enlarge the Executive Committee to take account of the emergence of newly independent African States on the international scene. It was accordingly agreed that the Committee be enlarged from 16 to 24 or more.

After a Iong debate, the Conference unfertunately could not reach a consensus on the distribution of the 24 seats among the four existing subregions. The Conference therefore decided
(a) That all member States would be represented on the Comittee until the seventeenth meeting scheduled to be held in Arusha in October 1977;
(b) That the Executive Secretary of ECA should study the question and. submit suggestions as to its solution the Executive Committee at its seventeenth meeting.

Accordingly at the seventeenth meeting of the Compittee held at Arusha in October 1977, the secrelariat made the following three proposals for consideration:

## First proposal

North African subregion : 4 menbers
Hest African subregion : 7 members
Central African subregion : 6 members
East African subregion :


## Second proposal



In the discussion which ensued the following positions' were taken by drit various representatives :
(a) One group favoured the adoption of a temporary arrangement by which the Committee would remain a plenary committee until the next meeting of the Conference of Ministers in 1979 in order to give the Committee time to see how well it functioned as a committee of the whole;
(b) Another group felt that it might be difficult to obtain a quorum for a plenary committee. This group also had misgivings about the financial burden which travel to two meetings a year would impose on some countries;
(c) Some representatives suggested that it might be sufficient for the Committee to meet only once a year.

It was finally decided that the Committee should remain a committee of the whole until the next meeting of the Conference of Ministers and that in the meantime, the secretariat should now conduct a study on the usefulness or otherwise of maintaining the Committee.

The secretariat has therefore observed the situation carefully and wishes to make the following comments :
(a) Whereas the decision-making organ of the Commission, the Conference of Ministers, meets on a biennial basis, new developments in world affairs occur at such a speed that uagent decisions have to be taken;
(b) Between two meetings of the Conference of Ministers the Executive Committee would, under present arrangements, have to hold four regular meetings, which imposes a heavy financial burden on member States;
(c) When the Executive Committee as limited in the decision of 13 February 1971 meets to discuss matters of great interest to all member States it is frequently attended by other member States in the quality of observers;
(d) It might be of interest to the Committee to know that among the five regional commissions established by the United Nations, three (the Economic Commission for Europe, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, and the Economic Commission for Hestern Asia) have their sessions on n annual basis and that so far only the Economic Commission for Latin America and ECA hold biennial sessions.

The present position now is, therefore, that the Committee meets in plenary four times every two years. In the light of this fact and of the points set out above the secretariat is of the view that the most economical arrangement which removes the present anomaly, eliminates the problem of membership of the Committee and at the same time enables the Commission to cope with rapid changes in intraAfrican and international developments requiring its attention would be the restoration of the practice of an annual Conference of Ministers.

