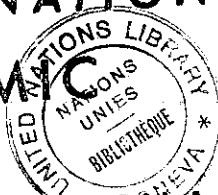


UNITED NATIONS
ECONOMIC
AND
SOCIAL COUNCIL



Distr.
GENERAL

E/5727/Add.1
27 May 1976

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

Sixty-first session

REPORTS OF THE JOINT INSPECTION UNIT

Report on the regional structures of the United Nations system

(JIU/REP/75/2)

Comments of the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination

Note by the Secretary-General

Addendum

The Secretary-General, with the concurrence of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, transmits herewith as an annex the comments of the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination on the above-mentioned report. It is the intention of the Secretary-General to submit his own comments on some of the recommendations contained in the report which were not covered by the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination.

Annex

COMMENTS OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE COMMITTEE ON CO-ORDINATION
ON THE REPORT OF THE JOINT INSPECTION UNIT ON REGIONAL
STRUCTURES

Introduction

1. In their report, the Inspectors have carried out a thorough and thoughtful analysis of the present regional structures of the United Nations system and have made recommendations intended to enhance the effectiveness of the system in responding to the needs and wishes of the countries of the regions in promoting their own economic and social development. They have studied three main aspects of regional structures, namely, (a) existing physical structures in each region; (b) existing co-ordination and co-operation practices among the organizations within and outside the system; and (c) the functions and responsibilities exercised by the regional structures. They have reviewed each of these aspects in the light of recent trends in international co-operation for development as reflected in the policy-level decisions of the various intergovernmental bodies, such as emphasis on a unified or integrated approach to development, the achievement of better co-ordination among the activities of the organizations of the United Nations system, and the need to make more rapid progress in decentralizing the economic and social activities of the United Nations system to the regional commissions. Moreover, ACC shares the pragmatic approach adopted by the Inspectors in reaching their judgements and recommendations and generally welcomes the judgements and recommendations they reached.

Structural changes and co-ordination practices

2. The ACC agrees with the Inspectors that the rationalization of physical structures is only a means to an end, namely, the promotion of a unified and integrated approach to the economic and social development of the countries of the regions. However, the most expeditious way of attaining that goal at the regional level is probably not through time-consuming efforts to establish common regional jurisdictions among the organizations and agencies concerned, but rather through steady efforts to harmonize at the programme level the work of those bodies and to improve existing arrangements with this end in view. It is believed that improvements in these regional arrangements would augment the capacity of the United Nations development system in terms of its over-all development activities and, particularly, would provide valuable inputs on behalf of the International Development Strategy and the new international economic order. The effectiveness of the co-ordination of economic and social activities at the regional level between the specialized agencies, on the one hand, and the regional commissions, on the other, should be increased through closer intersecretariat co-operation and greater harmony between sectoral development programmes and over-all economic and social development. In this process, maximum use should be made of the intellectual resources of the sectoral organizations.

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3. It must simultaneously be borne in mind that, while economic and social development is the principal concern of most United Nations organizations (and it is with this concern that the Inspectors have approached their task), there are many for which international regulation and standard setting are important elements of their work programme.

Decentralization

4. The major thesis propounded by the Inspectors, i.e., that a greater degree of authority and responsibility should be delegated to regional and country levels and that regional co-ordination of activities should be strengthened, is fully supported by ACC. However, while many of the measures they propose for the achievement of these objectives are consistent with developments now taking place and readily acceptable, others require consideration as indicated below because of their complexity and far-reaching implications.

5. The question of the delegation of authority and responsibility to regional offices has been dealt with in the report, in some instances at least, without sufficient attention being given to the differing conditions that prevail in each region and to the widely varying facets of the different technical problems for which organizations are trying to find appropriate solutions. Without prejudice to the need for further decentralization to regions and countries, it would seem opportune to adopt a more selective approach by which decentralization would be introduced in respect of specific activities, taking into account the diversity of regional and country needs which have to be dealt with on a region-by-region basis.

6. In this connexion, the complex interrelationships among global, regional and national activities would seem to require a somewhat deeper consideration than they have received in the report. The organizations of the United Nations system develop policies and standards at the global level and these guide their activities at the country level. Apart from activities directed towards regional problems, the solution of which requires common action by the countries of the region which are eminently within the province of regional bodies such as the regional commissions, these bodies also act as spokesmen for the Governments of the region. What is their role in relation to global activities? As noted by the General Conference of UNESCO, while greater powers of initiative and decision should be given to regional bodies, care should be taken that the implementation of this policy does not jeopardize the organization's world-wide character. An equally complex question arises in regard to the relationship between action at the regional level and activities at the national level. The latter are related to global activities, on the one hand, and the national development plans framed by the Government provide a mechanism through which the activities of the various organizations of the United Nations system can be co-ordinated (or even sometimes integrated) within the framework of the country programming process. There is no comparable decision-making centre at the regional level. There are instead a variety of regional bodies and institutions with varying geographical scope and sectoral or global responsibilities whose activities influence and are influenced by activities at both the global and the national levels. These factors highlight the complexity of the rationalization of regional structures and the need for a flexible approach to the problem.

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7. The report, none the less, constitutes a welcome addition to the several studies under way within the United Nations system on regionalization and decentralization of programmes and projects. It is, in fact, a sequel to other studies carried out by the Unit on the role of the regional commissions and a contribution to the continuing review of this question by the Secretary-General and to the report he will be submitting to the Economic and Social Council, as well as to related investigations being carried out by some of the specialized agencies. The report must also be considered in relation to other developments in the offing and, specifically, in relation to any judgements and conclusions which may be reached by the Ad Hoc Committee on the Restructuring of the Economic and Social Sectors of the United Nations System.

8. The organizations have provided below their joint comments on those recommendations that would have a system-wide impact; thus, there are no comments on recommendations 2, 6 (b) and (d), 13, 17, 21 and 23.

Recommendation 1

9. A review of the definition of regions and subregions and location of existing offices in each region and subregion should, in the context of the changing situation and the new responsibilities of the United Nations system, be undertaken by the organizations of the system, taking into account such guidance and advice as may be available from Governments and regional intergovernmental organizations.

10. Each organization should, in undertaking this review, take into account:

(a) The needs of the countries;

(b) The economic, social and political circumstances of each region and subregion;

(c) The objectives of the Second Development Decade and of the new international economic order;

(d) The application of the unified approach to development at the country, subregional and regional levels; and

(e) The desirability, as far as possible, of having a common definition of regions and subregions and of the identical location of regional and subregional offices.

Comments by ACC

11. The organizations mainly concerned regularly review their regional arrangements and agree that the criteria for such reviews established by the Inspectors should be taken into account for future reviews. In some cases, of course, account must likewise be taken of multinational activities in sectors such as fisheries which have established "regional dimensions" and which require special intergovernmental

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machinery. It must also be borne in mind that the role of Governments is not limited to that of giving guidance and advice. Governments, individually and jointly, have defined regions and subregions and decided on the location of regional offices; it goes almost without saying that they must support any proposals for changing them. The Inspectors have themselves pointed out that "the location of a regional office and, in some cases, its geographical coverage have not remained uninfluenced by political considerations" (para. 24).

12. In addition to these political considerations, the Inspectors enumerate many practical difficulties barring a systematic approach towards a definition of regions and subregions. Since these difficulties are based on a multiplicity of historical and programme factors, the present discrepancies will, as already indicated, take some time to be ironed out. In these circumstances, organizations support the approach recommended by the Inspectors in paragraph 338, namely, that the more patent anomalies and deficiencies which cause practical problems of programme co-ordination should be tackled first on a case-by-case basis. It is also essential that regional structures be adapted in a timely way to changing conditions. In this process, however, the geographical, sectoral and administrative considerations, which the Inspectors themselves stressed in paragraph 24, have always to be kept in mind. 1/

13. Finally, while it is recognized that a common definition of regions and the establishment of common locations of regional offices would offer many obvious advantages, the alternative approach, largely followed by the Inspectors themselves, of achieving closer co-operation at the regional level by focusing on and perfecting the functional arrangements for programme co-ordination holds out hope of producing quicker and more concrete results. In this connexion, satisfaction may be taken from the fact that the present disparities have not stood in the way of the adoption of broad policy guidelines by regional conferences or of joint action on specific problems in well-defined areas within regions (the Sahel and Bangladesh operations may be cited in this connexion) or of the participation of regional bodies and units in joint programming exercises at the country level.

Recommendation 3

14. (a) There should be further delegation of decision-making authority and responsibility from UNDP headquarters to the resident representative, on both

1/ In this connexion, it may be appropriate to recall a statement in the Secretary-General's earlier report on regional structures (E/5127, para. 24): "Such arrangements (this refers to arrangements for orderly co-ordination of regional and subregional activities) should not prevent the regional structures of the specialized agencies from reflecting the area requirements and their programmes, and the regional or subregional offices should be so located as to secure a maximum impact on their programmes. In brief, there seems to be agreement that, for special purposes in such fields as civil aviation, telecommunications, meteorology, health, etc., technical considerations should, on the whole, determine the location of offices and the nature of their operations."

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administrative and substantive matters relating to the preparation of country briefs and profiles, contacts and negotiations with Governments and the formulation and approval of programmes and projects;

(b) The resident representative should be better equipped for giving assistance to Governments, whenever sought, in the formulation of its national development plans by the posting to his staff of planning experts for specific periods, as necessary;

(c) The regional commissions should be brought actively into the processes related to country programming, particularly where multidisciplinary aspects are concerned; and

(d) The regional offices of those organizations of the system which are not, at present, involved in country programming should also be enabled to make their sectoral contributions to the latter, and practical arrangements to this end should be devised by UNDP in consultation with these offices.

Comments by ACC

15. Recommendations 3 (a) and (b) are addressed to UNDP, and ACC notes that UNDP has welcomed and given its support to them.

16. The organizations support recommendations 3 (c) and (d). The regional commissions could usually assist the UNDP resident representatives by providing planning experts from their secretariat for UNDP country programming exercises. In particular, the regional commissions could help Governments in preparing intercountry programmes in their respective regions. The regional offices of the agencies would also be ready to assist in these exercises, particularly those organizations that have found it possible to delegate to their regional offices sufficient capacity and authority for this purpose.

17. In the context of the collective effort of the United Nations system to achieve the desired goals of development, it is clearly necessary that the entire programme of work for each regional commission and for the other regional offices should be harmonized with one another and viewed within the framework of the total integrated process of country and intercountry programming. The developing countries' attainment of their intended targets of growth would undoubtedly be assisted by their utilizing fully the scope and opportunities provided by larger markets and by regional and subregional co-operation. Moreover, many of the schemes for regional and subregional co-operation, as encouraged by the regional commissions, naturally require appropriate counterpart action at the national level.

18. It is obvious that, with the increasing authority and capacity being vested in the regional commissions and other regional offices, the role that they could play in the country programming exercises will become an increasingly important one. For example, there could be periodic regional and co-ordination review meetings at the time of the periodic regional meetings of the UNDP resident representatives. The recent regional meeting of resident representatives in Yaoundé, United Republic of Cameroon, may be mentioned in this connexion.

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Recommendation 4

19. (a) As far as possible, the ILO, FAO and UNESCO regional minister-level conferences and regional or subregional conferences of a less institutionalized nature should be convened jointly by the organizations concerned and the regional commissions; and

(b) Both types of conferences should be jointly prepared for by the organizations concerned and the regional commissions through joint working groups or such other methods, as appropriate.

Comments by ACC

20. The objectives being sought by the Inspectors in paragraph (a) are clearly desirable and, in some cases, the recommendations could be carried out rather easily. In others, certain legal and practical difficulties would have to be overcome first. These difficulties differ from organization to organization and would have to be dealt with on a case-by-case basis.

21. Of course, the most important factor in the implementation of the recommendations of the Inspectors is the attitude of the Governments concerned. The ACC believes that Governments would support joint regional and subregional conferences if these would constitute the major regional forums for dealing with policy and programme issues in the sectors involved (agriculture, labour, education etc.).

22. Even without joint sponsorship, preparations for meetings of the regional commissions and for agency regional conferences could be more carefully co-ordinated and the conclusions and recommendations could also be implemented in a co-operative fashion.

23. Moreover, the policy guidelines defined at these regional conferences could be important inputs in the work of the regional commissions and of the appropriate global legislative bodies.

Recommendation 5

24. (a) As regards mutual attendance at intergovernmental meetings, preliminary annotated agenda should be prepared and circulated by the secretariat of the convening organization, with an indication of possible areas of interest to other organizations and a tentative time-table of discussions; the invited organizations should arrange the timing of their attendance with the convening secretariat; and

(b) An organization should, whenever possible, arrange to be represented by a sister organization at a given intergovernmental meeting.

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Comments by ACC

25. As regards recommendation 5 (a), it is agreed that the preliminary annotated agenda for the meetings should contain an indication of possible areas of interest to other organizations and tentative time-tables of their discussions. The tightening up of these arrangements could save a great deal of time and expense provided that each secretariat carefully co-ordinated the timing of attendance by representatives of other organizations and that each intergovernmental body co-operated fully in this effort. It is recommended that intergovernmental bodies should be regularly briefed by their secretariats with regard to this question.

26. As regards recommendation 5 (b), many of the smaller organizations in the United Nations system already follow the practice of being represented by sister organizations at intergovernmental meetings. It is agreed that this practice should be adopted, wherever practicable. On the other hand, there are, of course, limits to the extent that the official of one organization can adequately represent the technical concerns of another without spending too much time on briefings and general orientation.

Recommendations 6 (a) and (c)

27. (a) To promote teamwork and a unified and integrated approach to development among the organizations of the system at the regional level, those which have not already decentralized adequate authority and responsibility to their regional offices (i.e., United Nations, FAO and UNESCO) should move rapidly towards that position; and

(c) The extent of authority and responsibility decentralized to:

(i) undertake initial programme and project formulation;

(ii) participate with other regional offices in joint planning and programming;

(iii) execute subregional and regional programmes and projects; and

(iv) participate in programme and project evaluation.

Comments by ACC

28. There is general acceptance by all the organizations of the principle of decentralization as a means of increasing the impact and efficiency of programmes on behalf of developing countries. However, ACC understands that decentralization should be viewed as a gradual, co-ordinated and orderly delegation of authority and responsibility. Thus, while the policy of decentralization to regional and country levels is already in varying stages of implementation by many organizations in the United Nations system, there has been no abrupt shift of functions, authority and responsibility from Headquarters to the regional offices. In this

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evolutionary process, a special effort has been made to safeguard the global role and functions and the international character of the organizations concerned.

29. The Inspectors recommend that sufficient authority and responsibility should be delegated to regional offices to enable them to undertake the initial formulation of programmes and projects, to participate with other regional offices in joint planning and programming, and to execute subregional and regional programmes and projects, as well as to participate in programme and project evaluation. Many organizations feel that the implementation of this recommendation would have to be subject to the considerations dealt with in paragraph 39⁴ of the report, that is, the determination of those disciplines for which necessary expertise can be located in a region or regions and those which, because of their highly technical nature or the difficulty of finding experts, must be kept at Headquarters. This would be in keeping with a decentralization by programming and specialization by which each regional office is provided with an adequate level of expertise to deal with its particular regional problems. It is to be noted that the importance of such decentralization, as recommended by the Inspectors, has been repeatedly emphasized in the resolutions of the competent intergovernmental organs including the regional commissions and in the statements of their executive heads and that these resolutions and statements reflect the feeling that the present pace of decentralization of United Nations activities to the regional commissions is too slow.

30. Finally, there remains a need for a more comprehensive view as to how the United Nations system should function as a system at the regional level, bearing especially in mind that the regional commissions have work programmes in sectoral fields which are not covered by United Nations Headquarters but are the primary responsibility of specialized agencies or other United Nations bodies. While the Inspectors have dealt mainly with relations between Headquarters and regional offices, it is considered that the process of decentralization should also embrace appropriate delegation of authority and responsibility to the country level, specifically in respect of the formulation and management of development assistance programmes.

Recommendation 7

31. Decentralization of functions, authority and responsibility from the headquarters of an organization to its regional and subregional offices should be accompanied by an appropriate redeployment of professional staff and resources.

Comments by ACC

32. When there is such decentralization, ACC agrees that some appropriate redeployment of professional staff and resources would be necessary. Of course, the modalities of giving effect to the policy of redeploying staff would necessarily tend to vary from organization to organization. Moreover, this policy could even be taken further by increased decentralization to the country level.

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Recommendation 8

33. The regional commissions should be recognized as having team leadership and responsibility for co-ordination and co-operation at the regional level with the active support and co-operation of UNDP and the other regional offices.

Comments by ACC

34. The ACC agrees that, in principle, the regional commissions should be recognized as having a "team leadership role" at the regional intersecretariat level to be empirically defined and accompanied by appropriate co-ordination measures. The commissions could, in particular, co-ordinate intersectoral approaches to development at the regional level but leadership and operational responsibilities in specific sectoral fields which fall within the competence of specialized agencies or other United Nations bodies should remain with them. Moreover, the co-ordinating role in respect of technical co-operation activities should rest with UNDP.

Recommendation 9

35. The executive secretary of each regional commission should, in association with the heads of the UNDP regional bureaux, convene an annual regional review and co-ordination meeting to be held at the time of the annual regional meeting of UNDP resident representatives. From such meetings should emerge a framework for the regional programme which should be taken into account by each organization.

Comments by ACC

36. The ACC agrees that, although channels for interagency consultations already exist, arrangements for regular periodic consultations, as recommended by the Inspectors, could contribute towards making interagency programme co-ordination more effective. It would be unrealistic to suppose that these could by themselves provide a framework for "the regional programme".

Recommendation 10

37. The joint approach should also be applied to the execution of large multidisciplinary programmes and projects by the more extensive use of such devices as:

(a) The designation of an executive agency "in association" with another: subcontracting a programme or project or parts thereof to an organization other than the designated executing agency etc.; and

(b) The practice of having joint execution by two or more organizations, one of them being designated as "co-ordinating executing agency", and the manner, methods and stages of such an association being spelt out clearly in the project document.

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Comments by ACC

38. As is evident from the many examples cited by the Inspectors, a joint approach to the execution of multidisciplinary projects is already being followed in many cases. While, in some cases, arrangements of this kind have worked well, in others the experience with multidisciplinary projects jointly executed by two or more agencies has not been so favourable, inter alia, for reasons recognized by the Inspectors in paragraphs 42 and 43.

39. Nevertheless, it is intended to make even more extended use of the three methods of co-operation recommended by the Inspectors. For some multisectoral projects, consideration is being given to having each sectoral element carried out by the competent agency concerned, the necessary co-ordination linkage being the responsibility of UNDP or of another agency that is itself intersectoral in nature. In this connexion, it may be mentioned that, in line with Economic and Social Council resolution 1952 (LIX), the Secretary-General and the Administrator of UNDP have agreed upon arrangements whereby the regional commissions may function as executing agencies for UNDP regional and interregional projects. 2/

40. The various arrangements for co-operation in carrying out multisectoral projects usually work well when all departments have been closely involved in the negotiations that precede the establishment of a project document. On the other hand, when individual sectoral interests and priorities are not fully taken into account, the "loss of interest" mentioned by the Inspectors in paragraph 482 often results.

41. In suitable cases, perhaps, the concept of a "lead agency" might be applied to the execution of such projects provided technical competence is fully recognized in the choice of the "lead agency".

Recommendation 11

42. (a) There should be a broader participation than at present of organizations of the system, in particular of the regional commissions, in the evaluation of large country, subregional or regional programmes and projects, particularly, of a multidisciplinary nature; and

(b) The regional commissions should, as a rule, be invited to participate in the evaluation also of UNDP-funded subregional and regional projects.

The above recommendations apply to both mid-term and post-project evaluation.

Comments by ACC

43. Although programme and project evaluation has been receiving increasing attention in recent years in policy statements, in actual practice too little

2/ In this connexion, the comments of ACC under recommendation 8 are relevant.

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progress has been made towards developing a systematic approach to evaluation within the United Nations system. Most of the evaluation activities are centred around the mid-term review missions and, more recently, around the tripartite reviews organized at field level with the participation of the UNDP resident representative, the executing agency and the national authorities concerned. The crucial point in evaluation is not which organ or segment of the United Nations is represented but what criteria are used and to what extent the Government concerned is itself involved in the exercise as well as with the follow-up of the results of the evaluation.

44. So far as the mid-term project reviews are concerned, their basic purpose is to monitor progress in implementation, identify short-falls and take timely action to remove them. This purpose can be best served only if those organizations that are involved in the implementation of a project also take part in its evaluation. It is, accordingly, difficult to accept the suggestion that a regional commission (or, for that matter, any organization) should, as a rule, be invited to participate in the mid-term evaluation of UNDP projects regardless of the nature of such project.

45. The position is somewhat different in the case of a post-project evaluation which is designed to derive general lessons from the project and ensure follow-up action. In this regard, the association of the agencies or commissions in the evaluation of groups of projects in the same field could be helpful. But, obviously, a particular agency or organization need not be associated with all post-project evaluations. Such association will differ from project to project depending upon the general competence of the organizations concerned and the availability of the required expertise.

46. With these qualifications, it is agreed that the regional commissions should be increasingly associated with the evaluation of regional and subregional projects and programmes. This will generate a "feedback" between the commissions and UNDP that should help to secure an optimum utilization of scarce resources for developmental goals. The commissions could also be helpful in making the countries of the region more evaluation-conscious and in perfecting the methodology of evaluation for different types of projects.

Recommendation 12

47. Existing bilateral arrangements and mutual communication between the regional commissions and other organizations of the system and between the later inter se should be refined and improved and further arrangements should be devised where needed. Specifically:

(a) Communication between the regional commissions, the UNDP regional bureaux, UNDP representatives at the regional and country level and other regional offices should be improved; and

(b) Regional offices of other organizations and the headquarters of those organizations which have no such offices should keep the regional commissions

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fully informed of their activities, experience and the results of their studies and research. Methods should be developed for the automatic communication of all relevant material by a regional office/headquarters to the regional commissions and vice versa. To this end, methods, including the use of computers, may be devised to store and retrieve the required information.

Comments by ACC

48. The organizations agree that the existing bilateral arrangements for communications among their regional arms, including the regional commissions, should continue to be refined and improved. They believe that this should be done, however, without any automatic communication of material which could not be justified in terms of cost, time and paper flow. They consider that an increase in personal contacts, together with the exchange of documentation on a selective basis, would be the best way of achieving the objectives sought by the Inspectors.

Recommendation 14

49. Staff from other organizations of the system should be seconded, as necessary, to the regional commissions for finite periods and specific purposes.

Comments by ACC

50. The ACC supports this recommendation. Perhaps, there might also be some reciprocal out-posting of regional commission staff to agency regional offices.

Recommendation 15

51. Where such a practice does not exist at present, the executive secretary of a regional commission should meet regularly with the heads of other regional offices. Each region should decide upon the frequency and periodicity of such meetings in the light of such circumstances as the geographical and communications factors, the location of offices etc.

Comments by ACC

52. The ACC agrees with this recommendation. The ACC had endorsed the idea of having these meetings in October 1973 when it agreed that they should be called as required and that their informal character should be preserved. In at least one case, the executive secretary has already initiated such regular meetings with regional representatives to discuss matters of common concern.

Recommendation 16

53. Intersecretariat groups on particular topics could be set up in those regions where they do not exist at present and should meet periodically at the seat of

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the regional commission headquarters, such periodicity depending on the circumstances of each region.

Comments by ACC

54. The organizations agree that some greater emphasis should be placed on modes of co-operation that aim at joint efforts in interdisciplinary programme sectors. They, thus, support the recommendation that intersecretariat groups should meet more often in each region to discuss common problems and common approaches in one or another of these programme sectors.

Recommendation 18

55. The practice of having joint offices, as already established by some organizations in some locations, should be more extensively resorted to.

Comments by ACC

56. The ACC supports this recommendation. The extent to which the joint use of premises can be extended depends both on practical considerations and on the wishes of the Governments concerned. In at least one case, the Governments concerned have rejected proposals for amalgamation.

Recommendation 19

57. A study should be sponsored urgently by ACC in regard to the following:

(a) In those locations where there is a concentration of field offices of the United Nations system, their individual information services (where these exist) should be consolidated to constitute a single information centre for the whole system; and

(b) Such structural consolidation should be without prejudice to policy guidance and substantive inputs by the public information services at the various headquarters in respect of their particular sectors.

Comments by ACC

58. The Inspectors have proposed a study for the purpose of consolidating regional or field public information services of individual organizations into a single information centre for the whole system. The ACC is requesting the Joint United Nations Information Committee (JUNIC), which is one of its subsidiary bodies, to undertake such a study.

Recommendation 20

59. Each organization of the system should review its existing arrangements for

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co-operation with particular intergovernmental organizations outside the system and examine what further co-operative links and practices should be developed in the light of their current and future responsibilities;

(b) The regional commissions and the UNDP representatives at the regional and country levels should, well before the commencement of the programming exercises, obtain information from the various intergovernmental organizations about the latter's activities and programmes. This information should be circulated among the various other country, subregional and regional offices and taken into account in programme formulation;

(c) In the case of intergovernmental organizations which have no offices in the field, the headquarters of the organizations of the system concerned should obtain and circulate all relevant information; and

(d) Each organization of the system should, on a selective basis, review its present relationship with the non-governmental organizations with which it deems that co-operation would be mutually beneficial and enter into suitable arrangements; these need not be formal as in the case of intergovernmental organizations.

Comments by ACC

60. Many organizations already have extensive co-operative arrangements with intergovernmental organizations outside the system and with non-governmental organizations. Most of them also undertake periodic reviews of these arrangements in order to maximize mutual benefits from such co-operation as well as to explore possibilities of future joint ventures, and some hold meetings in which organizations outside the system work closely with those within the system.

61. It may be added that, in agreement with the Governments, UNDP representatives do involve, as appropriate, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations in country programming exercises and integrate their activities with UNDP programmes at the substantive level.

Recommendation 22

62. Where examination of a problem from a global point of view may benefit from the attendance of officials from the secretariats of the regional commissions, the latter should be included in the United Nations team at meetings of ACC and, as appropriate, of its subsidiary bodies.

Comments by ACC

63. The ACC accepts this recommendation and, in fact, the regional commissions already participate regularly in ECB and various other interagency meetings including those of the subsidiary bodies of ACC. However, inadequate financial resources have been the main constraint in extending this participation more widely.

UNITED NATIONS
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AND
SOCIAL COUNCIL



Distr.
GENERAL

E/5727/Add.2
22 June 1976

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

Sixty-first session

REPORTS OF THE JOINT INSPECTION UNIT

Report on the regional structures of the United Nations system
(JIU/REP/75/2)

Comments of the Secretary-General and the Administrator of the
United Nations Development Programme

Note by the Secretary-General

Addendum

1. The Secretary-General, in his capacity as Chairman of the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination, transmitted to the Economic and Social Council the joint comments of the ACC as approved at its session of 7-9 April 1976 on such recommendations in the above-mentioned report as would have a system-wide impact (E/5727/Add.1, annex).
2. The Secretary-General's observations on the recommendations addressed specifically to the United Nations (recommendation 2, 6 (b) and (d), 13, 17, 21 and 23) are annexed to the present note; these observations reflect the views of the United Nations alone. Annex 2 contains the comments of the Administrator of the UNDP on recommendations 3 (a) and (b) which deal with the activities of the Development Programme.
3. The Secretary-General has been informed by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions that the Committee will not submit at this stage its own observations on the JIU report on the regional structures of the United Nations system and on the related report on the decentralization of the United Nations economic, social and related activities and the strengthening of the regional commissions (E/5607 and Add.1 and 2). Since these reports were prepared the General Assembly, in resolution 3362 (S-VII) of 16 September 1975, established an Ad Hoc Committee on the Restructuring of the Economic and Social Sectors of the United Nations System. The Advisory Committee understands that the two JIU reports under reference and the comments thereon constitute part of the documentation available to the Ad Hoc Committee in its current deliberations. The Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly will presumably wish to pronounce themselves

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on the conclusions and recommendations of the Ad Hoc Committee rather than on those contained in the material which the Ad Hoc Committee will have examined in the course of its work. In the circumstances the Advisory Committee will revert to this question if the recommendations of the Ad Hoc Committee on Restructuring of the Economic and Social Council give rise to administrative and financial implications.

Annex 1

Recommendation 2

(b)(ii). The question of moving the North African subregional office of ECA from Tangiers will be studied in consultation with the member States of the subregion and the Commission itself.

(c). As regards the distribution of ECLA staff among subregional offices, various measures have been taken to reinforce some of them, especially those located at Rio de Janeiro, Buenos Aires and Bogotá. In the case of the Montevideo office, the staff will be strengthened on a temporary basis as and when required by the peak workload caused by the activities of the Latin American Free Trade Association. Since the submission of the Joint Inspection Unit report, the establishment of the Port-of-Spain office has been increased to the extent of an additional four professional and five local service posts for 1976/77. Finally, the question of transferring some of the staff of the Mexico office to Guatemala, and part of the Bogotá office to Lima, will be examined, although it must be pointed out that in both instances such fragmentation could lead to increases in expenditures.

(d). The question of the establishment of a subregional office to cover the area of the Pacific is under consideration by ESCAP. However, it should be pointed out that close co-ordination is maintained between ESCAP and the South Pacific Bureau for Economic Co-operation. The United Nations Advisory Team (UNDAT) for the South Pacific continues to provide assistance to the countries of the subregion.

It may be noted that over the years there has been a steady increase in the number of subregional offices. While this has been, on the whole, a desirable development, relating the work of the Commission more closely to the needs of the people and Governments within each subregion, the benefits of further increasing the number of these offices must be balanced off against the costs involved, as well as the disadvantages of fragmentation and the need which it would entail to increase the already complex co-ordination machinery.

Recommendation 6

(d). The delegation by ECA and ECLA to their subregional offices of authority and responsibility to enable them to perform specific functions and tasks is a matter dealt with legislatively by the Commissions themselves when they approve programmes of work. Within this framework, the Inspectors' recommendations will be followed. However, in certain cases this delegation has already been made.

Recommendation 13

(a). There is general agreement with this recommendation, concerning the enhancement of the role of the joint FAO/regional commission agriculture divisions..

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(b). Similarly, the recommendations concerning the role of joint UNIDO/regional commission divisions or units is accepted, and activities are under way in ECA and ESCAP which will lead to an increase in importance of the role of these units. The ECLA and UNIDO are in discussions concerning the role of the joint unit in that area.

Recommendation 17

This recommendation, which calls for liaison arrangements between UNESCO and UNICEF, on the one hand, and ECA on the other, is acceptable to ECA and, it is understood, to UNICEF.

Recommendation 21

The thrust of recommendation 21 is that the organization of the regional commissions reflect the three essential functions of the commissions, namely: (1) research, studies and analyses; (2) operational activities, and (3) co-ordinative and co-operative activities within the United Nations and outside. It also urges joint divisions for activities that relate to responsibilities both of the United Nations and other agencies or units of the United Nations charged with specialized responsibility.

There has been definite movement towards these objectives on the part of all of the regional commissions. For example, all of the regional commissions give organizational recognition to the three principal activities which JIU considers to be the principal responsibilities of the regional commissions. The movement toward more operational activities within the regions served by the regional commissions will take some time. Nevertheless, there has been some definite increase in both the concern for and actual participation in technical assistance projects. The UNDATs have been made primarily the responsibility of the three regional commissions that have UNDATs in their areas, and the commissions are being given increased responsibilities for carrying out UNDP projects. To give effect to this need and trend, all of the commissions have special units that are charged with the responsibility for giving direction to and managing technical assistance projects. With the exception of ECLA, these units are organized as a part of the executive secretary's office. ECLA has an Operations Division for this purpose.

All of the regional commissions, likewise, have organized to give central guidance and responsibility for developing and co-ordinating the commission's work programme. These units are organized as a part of the executive secretary's office and generally have not only responsibility for internal co-ordination and development of work programmes but co-ordination with other agencies within the system to the extent that their activities relate to those of the commission. Several of the commissions also sponsor co-ordinative meetings usually on an annual basis, of all United Nations agencies and organizations in the region with which the commission is responsible.

All of the regional commissions now have joint divisions with FAO that are concerned with the agriculture sector. Likewise, all but ECE have joint industry divisions with UNIDO.

Recommendation 23

The Secretary-General agrees with the Inspectors' view that the increased responsibilities and co-ordinating role of the regional commissions will have the effect of increasing the co-ordinating responsibilities of the United Nations (E/5727, para. 558). Obviously, the Secretary-General also agrees with the Inspectors' recommendation that the regional commissions should be accountable, on the intergovernmental side, to the Economic and Social Council, and on the Secretariat side, to the Secretary-General, as chief executive of the United Nations (E/5727, paras. 559 and 600), since this in fact represents the present position.

In view of the substantive role of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the work of the regional commissions must continue to have a direct link with the activities of the Department. That link should be provided by a machinery for co-ordination of the work of the regional commissions and Headquarters, which was mentioned in the Inspectors' recommendation. Part of this machinery is constituted by the Regional Commissions Section in the Department which ensures a continuous relation between the commissions and the Department. In addition, the Office of the Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, which is the central point for the Department's resources and programme planning, as well as for the review and evaluation of programme implementation, also serves as focal point for the Department in interagency co-ordination and as instrument of joint programme planning between the Department and other United Nations organizations and programmes, including the regional commissions. The above organizational relationships and distribution of functions conform with the views of Administrative Management Service in the context of its studies of the various units concerned. Consonant with this, the former Resources and Programme Planning Office (now part of the Office of the Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs), together with the Budget Division, initiated in 1975 arrangements for holding periodic meetings of programme planners and budget officers of the regional commissions and Headquarters, including those of UNCTAD and UNIDO, for the purpose of co-ordinating the planning of activities included in the proposed medium-term plan and programme budget.

It would therefore seem more logical and feasible for the Regional Commissions Section to continue in its present role as a focal point and expeditor for regional commission matters. However, the section could gradually emphasize its role in co-ordinating the implementation of the regional and interregional activities of the commissions with those of the Department under the medium-term plan and the programme budget.

Annex 2

COMMENTS OF UNDP ON JIU REPORT ON REGIONAL STRUCTURES NOT
INCLUDED IN ACC JOINT COMMENTS

Sections (a) and (b) of Recommendation 3 deal exclusively with UNDP activities. UNDP comments on these are as follows:

Recommendation 3 (a): There should be further delegation of decision-making authority and responsibility from UNDP headquarters to the resident representatives, both on administrative and substantive matters relating to the preparation of country briefs and profiles, contacts and negotiations with Governments and the formulation and approval of programmes and projects (paras. 235-236, 447-448, 459, 576 of the JIU report).

Comments: UNDP welcomes this support because its policy, based on the Consensus governing the present system of country programming, is to carry out maximum possible decentralization of decision-making authority to the field. This emphasis on decentralization has been reflected consistently both at the policy level in statements of Mr. Peterson and Mr. Morse and in concrete procedures touching all the areas of activity mentioned in the recommendation. The 1974 annual report of the Administrator states: "Almost every administrative effort geared to improving performance was tied to the systematic and progressive delegation of authority to the field." Specific measures which may be cited include: much greater reliance on the field for developing large-scale projects approved in principle by headquarters; the preparation by the resident representatives of programme management plans in order to ensure that progress in project preparation, approval and implementation is kept under continuing review at the field level; increasing the upper limit for project approval by resident representatives from \$100,000 to \$150,000 on the basis of the authority delegated to him by the Administrator; and the new decentralized method for budget formulation and revision and for the flow of financial data.

Mr. Morse's commitment to continuing decentralization and delegation of authority to the field level was most recently outlined in his address of 27 February 1976 to the Ad Hoc Committee on the Restructuring of the Economic and Social Sectors of the United Nations System. He stated:

"An obvious corollary of the Consensus and its 'country-centred' philosophy was the need to transfer a good many of the responsibilities and activities previously undertaken by UNDP Headquarters to the field level One aspect is the delegation of authority to the UNDP Resident Representative. The other, and the most fundamental, is the participation of developing countries in every aspect of the Programme - programming, project formulation and execution, evaluation and follow-up - and a far greater reliance on national services and personnel. Considerable progress was made in the last two years or so in the decentralization of UNDP In organizational terms both developments - the decentralization of UNDP and the increased involvement of national capabilities - clearly place the focus of UNDP's activities at

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the country level A good deal more can perhaps be done in this respect, but UNDP is undoubtedly now the most decentralized of all the United Nations organizations."

With regard to the suspension of decentralized authority to approve projects, this measure, necessitated temporarily by UNDP's financial situation, in no way reflected reversal of decentralization policy. In February the Administrator relaxed requirements on project information which the resident representatives furnish for headquarters approval and indicated that he intended to restore the delegated authority to resident representatives as soon as the financial situation becomes clearer, hopefully within 30 days. He has already restored customary authority for project approvals to the Directors of the Regional Bureaux.

Recommendation 3 (b): The resident representative should be better equipped for giving assistance to Governments, whenever sought, in the formulation of its national development plans, by the posting to his staff of planning experts for specific periods, as necessary (paras. 235-236, 447-448, 449-576).

Comments: The UNDP supports the recommendation. Since decentralization began a number of resident representatives' offices have been strengthened by the posting of planning experts and increased assistance in formulating national development can be provided upon request. In addition, UNDP assistance in planning is being carried out by Operational Assistance (OPAS) experts and experts attached to national projects, and Governments are currently being assisted as well by the Regional Planning Institutes supported by UNDP. Field offices will increasingly be making use of the resources available at the regional level, among them expertise from regional commissions and regional offices of other United Nations agencies as well as the assistance of United Nations Advisory Teams (UNDATs).

The comments of UNDP on the other recommendations of the JIU have been taken into account in the preparation of the joint ACC comments circulated under separate cover.