

JIU/REP/68/4



REPORT ON CO-ORDINATION AND CO-OPERATION AT COUNTRY LEVEL

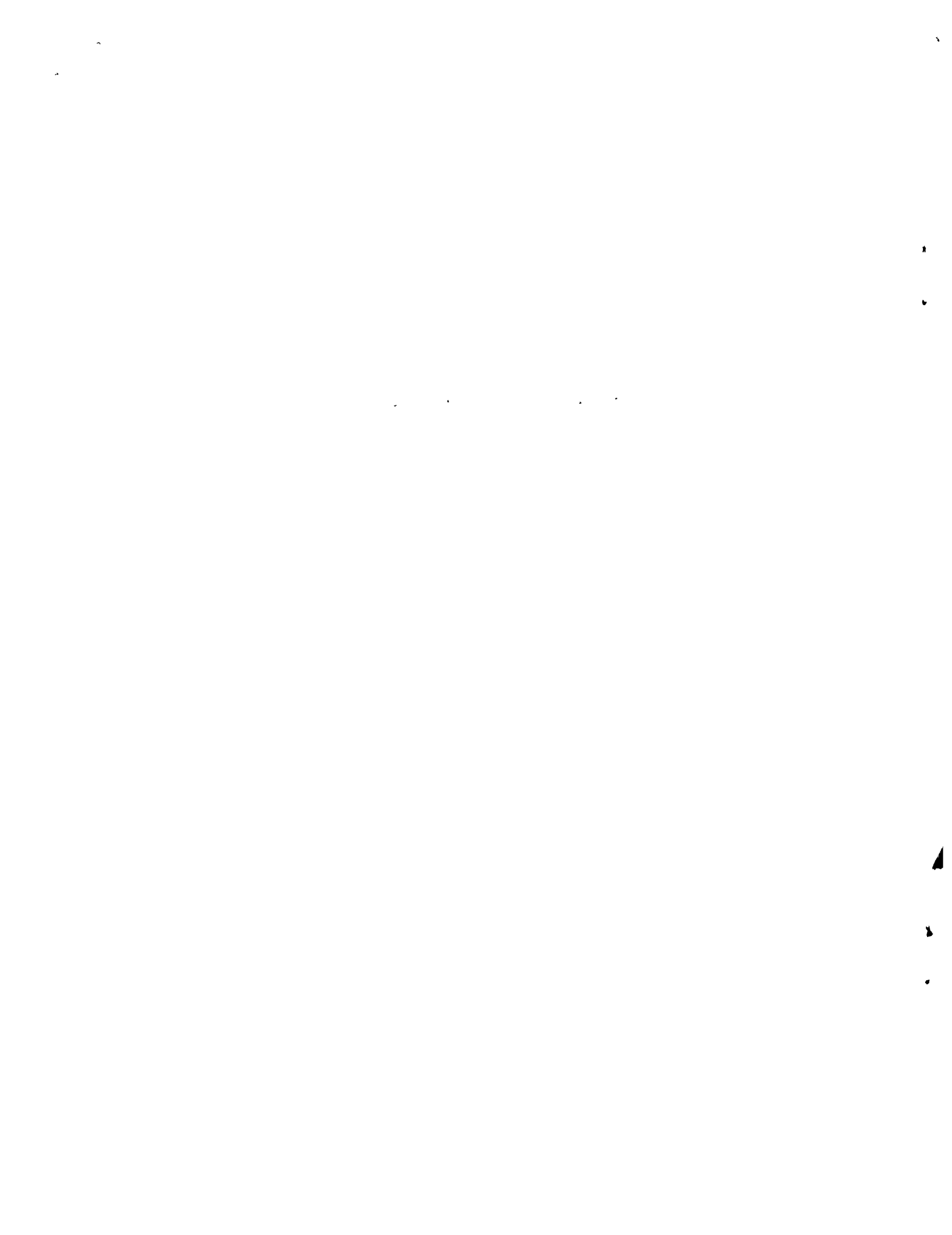
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CO-ORDINATION AND CO-OPERATION AT COUNTRY LEVEL

1. From its very inception, the United Nations recognized the importance of multilateral assistance in the economic well-being and development of vast regions of the world. Co-ordination and co-operation among the various branches of the United Nations and their activities at country level was always of great importance. The problem is thus as old as the United Nations itself and has been dealt with from time to time by its various organs, like the General Assembly, ECOSOC, ACABQ, etc. Many measures were recommended and adopted, with varying degrees of success. In the early stages, when the number of United Nations bodies operating in various countries was limited, co-ordination did not present a very serious problem. But, with the present growth of activities in the field of technical assistance and the increased participation of the United Nations family in pre-investment and development programmes, the problem has become very complex. The creation of special branches of the United Nations (economic commissions, UNDP, UNIDO, UNCTAD, etc.) has added to the magnitude and complexity of the problem.
2. Considering that the problem has been examined and solutions proposed by numerous expert bodies, the inspectors approached it with some diffidence. They felt, however, in the light of the experience they gathered during their visit to some African countries that, in spite of the laudable efforts already made, there was need for a greater degree of co-ordination and co-operation than exists at present among the various branches of the United Nations and their activities at country level.
3. Such co-ordination and co-operation, besides leading to greater operational efficiency, is also likely to result in the more rational and economic use of the United Nations financial resources. Considering that, in spite of the great strides made by the United Nations in recent years, the quantum of multilateral United Nations aid is still very small compared to bilateral assistance - one estimate puts it at no more than 15 per cent of the total assistance - the rational and economic use of limited United Nations funds assumes special importance. Furthermore, this quantum of United Nations aid is financed and executed from a variety of sources as indicated below:

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- (a) Technical assistance programme financed by the regular United Nations budget;
- (b) Technical assistance and Special Fund component of UNDP executed by the United Nations and its specialized agencies;
- (c) The regular programme of the various United Nations specialized agencies;
- (d) Programmes financed by trust funds operated by the United Nations and the specialized agencies;
- (e) Programmes financed by UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, etc.

Such increased presence of the United Nations family in each country might easily result in the duplication of administrative machinery and costs and in co-ordination being made more difficult.

4. The functions of the representatives of the various United Nations organs stationed in each country fall under the following broad heads:

- (a) expert advice and assistance to local governments;
- (b) assessing local conditions and needs and keeping Headquarters informed;
- (c) administrative work.

5. The first function, viz. giving expert advice and assistance to local governments, is an important one. The type of expert advice which local governments require is however becoming so specialized and sophisticated that, generally, high-level specialists may have to be sent for special assignments on an ad hoc basis. The permanent local representative will therefore be an "expert" at a somewhat lower level, an "all rounder" in his general field. This would apply to the second function, namely, assessing local conditions and keeping Headquarters informed.

6. There may be some exceptions to this general rule. For example, in some "least developed" countries the local "expert" representative of a United Nations specialized agency may actually be utilized for everyday administrative work also. The WHO country representatives work in, and function more or less as a part of, the local Ministry of Health.

7. It is true that it is sometimes difficult to draw a line between the administrative and technical functions of country representatives of United Nations bodies. They sometimes overlap. By and large, however, a considerable proportion of the work of local representatives of United Nations specialized agencies and

bodies is administrative. Whenever there is any serious technical problem, a top expert is sent on an ad hoc basis.

8. This view of the inspectors is reinforced by their personal experience in the countries they visited. In the case of UNESCO representation in countries, it is often true that their officers are accredited to, and have direct dealings with, the Foreign Affairs Ministries (which are not technical Ministries) instead of the Ministry of Education, Culture, etc.

9. It seems obvious that the administrative functions of the country representatives of various United Nations bodies should be co-ordinated and unified as much as possible as this is bound to lead to greater efficiency, not to mention economy. This has been recognized in the past and various principles have been enunciated by the ACC and other bodies under which the UNDP Resident Representatives were to play a co-ordinating role especially in regard to "house-keeping" services and administrative matters. The inspectors found, in the three or four countries they visited, that these principles and directives have not gone far enough and have not been fully implemented. For example, almost all the representatives of specialized agencies had their own separate premises. They had separate administrative services, separate reference libraries, telephone systems, transport, watchmen, cleaners, etc.

10. The inspectors were told by the representative of a specialized agency in Lusaka that the premises given to him by UNDP were not adequate as he needed more room to receive experts; the inspectors thought that the existing premises were sufficient and that attempts of each agency to function separately should be discouraged. The inspectors also found instances when even junior representatives were unnecessarily touchy and sensitive about their status.

11. The inspectors also gathered the impression that some agency representatives thought that the Resident Representative represented only the UNDP and that it was only in regard to security, diplomatic immunities, etc., that he had any authority to act on behalf of the whole family.

12. The problem of co-operation and co-ordination can be examined under two separate heads:

- (a) Administration;
- (b) Policy and operations.

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13. On the first there can be no objection on grounds of principle. Everyone is in theory agreed that "house-keeping" operations should be co-ordinated and unified. As stated earlier, numerous directives in this regard have been issued by the ACC, ECOSOC and other bodies.

The inspectors were told by some specialized agencies that in this respect there had been considerable improvement in recent years. They found that, in fact, a large number of administrative services were already being performed by the UNDP Resident Representatives on behalf of specialized agencies. The inspectors feel that, in view of this, there should be scope for some reduction in the administrative staff of representatives of specialized agencies.

There is, of course, room for even greater improvement in the sphere of co-ordination of administrative services. Firstly, every endeavour should be made to house all members of the United Nations family in a single building. This requires the co-operation of Governments as well as United Nations specialized agencies. The matter has engaged the attention of ECOSOC and United Nations Headquarters for some time, but very little headway has been made. The inspectors propose to examine this matter further in order to ascertain the difficulties in implementing the recommendations, and how they can be overcome. Secondly, all the administrative and financial work for the entire United Nations family (in addition to common "house-keeping" services), should be undertaken centrally - this, for the time being, could be the UNDP Resident Representative's office. It might involve the adoption of unified administrative and financial rules, or the adaptation of existing rules. If this suggestion is carefully thought out and adopted, there are bound to be considerable savings as duplication of effort will be avoided. Side by side, there will be the psychological advantage of the various units of the United Nations thinking themselves as members of one family engaged in a joint effort. The inspectors feel bound to express the view that they found competition among United Nations bodies more prevalent than co-operation and co-ordination. They gathered that this view was shared by many government representatives in the countries they visited.

14. The second aspect of the problem, namely, co-ordination in respect of policy, is more delicate and complex. The non-administrative functions of United Nations country representatives, as stated earlier relate to:

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(a) tendering of expert advice to governments, especially in the matter of initiation of development and other "projects" (however financed), including help and assistance in the preparation of over-all development plans; and

(b) briefing of Headquarters on the factual situation in each country, and suggesting areas of assistance by Headquarters.

15. Approved projects have their own Project Manager and other experts assigned ad hoc to each project. The functions of the agency country representatives in regard to the projects are therefore in the main administrative and can be easily performed by a single representative on behalf of all the United Nations bodies.

16. The tendering of expert advice to governments is by far the most important function. This might be subdivided under the following heads:

- (1) over-all development planning;
- (2) individual problems; and
- (3) the selection and preparation of project requests.

The first of these, namely, advice and assistance on over-all development plans, can be given only jointly on behalf of the entire United Nations family. The over-all advice must obviously be tendered to the Government by one representative in consultation with, and on behalf of, the entire United Nations family. Competing or contradictory advice to the same government on behalf of different United Nations bodies will be of no assistance to governments. The inspectors came across a case when two members of the United Nations family gave mutually contradictory advice to a government about a particular project.

17. On the other hand, each United Nations body can advise governments concerned of actions in its own sphere of competence and leave it to the governments to co-ordinate them with an integrated national plan, with due regard to the priorities as determined by governments. In fact many reports of United Nations co-ordinating committees and bodies mean precisely this when they say that co-ordination should be the prime responsibility of governments rather than the United Nations, especially as bilateral offers of aid have also to be taken into account. We have heard it argued, by one specialized agency, that it is a good thing for different United Nations bodies to compete among themselves for niches in the national development plans for their own favourite projects; and governments would in fact benefit from such competition in making their own final plans and allotting their final priorities.

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18. The inspectors concede that there is something to be said for this point of view. But they were impressed by the large body of practical objections voiced in the countries they visited. They were told that each United Nations body was "pressurizing" its opposite technical Ministry, which in turn, was pressurizing the Planning and Development Ministries. This caused difficulties and embarrassment to the Planning Ministries. There is a strong feeling that Governments should draw up independently an over-all development plan for the country and see where United Nations aid and assistance will fit in and can be utilized. Whereas, what in fact happens in some cases is that the plans have to be made to fit the separate offers from different United Nations sources. This is not very satisfactory, because, after all, the quantum of total United Nations aid to a country is a very small part (about 15 per cent) of the total external aid; and even a much smaller part of the total investment (from all sources) in development.

19. Moreover, the United Nations regional economic commissions have an important role to play in advising countries on development programmes. The present separate projection of each United Nations body into each country does not take into account this role of the economic commission. Many specialized agencies have begun to realize this and are taking steps to work in co-ordination with the commissions and make use of the general expertise available to the commissions. The FAO, for example, has gone so far as to propose that the Executive Secretary of most of the regional commissions should also function as its regional representative. The ILO as well as the UNESCO have of late felt the need of bringing the ECA more in the picture in the field of their activities.

20. The idea of each United Nations specialized agency or body playing its lone "expert" hand in each country, and leaving it to the national government to sort out the priorities and do the co-ordination work is, therefore somewhat receding. Some Governments, which have a sophisticated administrative system, may be able to do all the work of co-ordination. Others would like that the United Nations should project a single total image (in the field of technical assistance) and not several competing (and sometimes contradictory) images. Without exception all Ministers and policy-making officials whom the inspectors talked to in Africa said in clear terms that they would like to deal with one single United Nations representative to discuss and finalize the whole range of United Nations

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aid to the country. As, however, it cannot be asserted that this view prevails in all quarters, the inspectors propose to make further inquiries on the matter.

21. The inspectors also came across other instances of lack of co-ordination which caused embarrassment to the local government. Very often representatives of different branches of the United Nations family approach the government at different times for the same information. For example, in Lusaka an ECA expert was unable to obtain from the Government the information he was seeking because the UNIDO representative had recently collected the same information. Obviously the information collected by UNIDO did not reach ECA or the office of the local UNDP Resident Representative. It would appear that, so far, the United Nations specialized agencies and the ECA have failed to establish adequate contact and liaison.

22. The existing position being thus unsatisfactory, the inspectors gave much thought to the idea of having a single unified representative of the United Nations family in each country. They were aware of an earlier opinion of the Advisory Committee of Administrative and Budgetary Questions that the Resident Representative could not be expected to serve several masters. It seems, however, that the problem will sooner or later have to be faced and solved by the United Nations. With the UNDP having conceived of targets for successive "Development decades", it appears inevitable that the United Nations family must make an integrated approach to the problem of economic and social development in each country. The existing laissez-faire practice of each expert United Nations body sponsoring its own projects without reference to over-all targets, and leaving it entirely to the Governments to sort out the priorities, must, in time, yield to a system under which the United Nations will portray a complete and integrated image of the needs of each country or area in the field of economic and social development.

23. The inspectors have had informal discussion with heads of specialized agencies on this particular subject. Most admitted the necessity of achieving better co-ordination and co-operation at the country level. Some conceded that the problem could be solved by having a single United Nations representative in each country in over-all charge of United Nations technical aid, with the representatives of the specialized agencies acting as his technical advisers

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(as in the case at present with a number of FAO country representatives acting as technical advisers to the UNDP Resident Representative). They thought, however, that consultation arrangements with the various agencies with regard to the selection of the single over-all representative should be better than those which now exist for the selection of Resident Representatives.

24. One specialized agency was opposed to this idea, as it considered its field to be too specialized and technical to be subordinated to any over-all co-ordinating control by a non-technical single United Nations representative. It was emphasized by another specialized agency that care should be taken to ensure that the direct line of communication between the Agency Representative and the technical Ministry concerned is preserved, in spite of any over-all co-ordinating control by a single representative. The need for preserving the constitutional position and independence of each agency (and its legislative bodies) in each country was also emphasized.

25. The inspectors consider that the idea of having a single unified representative requires further study and investigation in order to obtain a more general spectrum of views, and to see how the practical objections can be met. They propose to pursue this study as one of their priority tasks in 1969.

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(c) The report on the contribution of non-governmental organizations to the UNESCO programme could be examined in the Administrative Commission (paragraph 169).

Recommendation 20: Further consideration might be given to the idea that the General Conference should review in depth only two of its four main subjects each biennium (paragraph 172).

(f) Finally, the Programme Commission, sitting again in plenary, would approve the Sub-Commissions' reports and examine the long-term programme (covering the four years following the next biennium) on the basis of document C/4 - the Director-General's estimate of future prospects (paragraph 148);

(g) Once the Programme Commission's discussion of long-term plans would have come to an end, the results could be embodied in a draft resolution which would also include ideas expressed by heads of delegations in their statements on general policy as singled out by the Director-General in his summation at the close of the meetings devoted to the general policy statements (paragraphs 53 and 151);

(h) When the report of the Programme Commission comes up before the plenary Conference, it should be submitted for adoption sub-chapter by sub-chapter and delegates should be invited to comment on individual points as they see fit (paragraph 142);

(i) The existing time-limits for the submission of amendments and draft resolutions could be maintained on a trial basis (paragraphs 152-154);

(j) The Secretariat should have in readiness competent officials trained to service effectively also the subsidiary organs of the General Conference (paragraphs 155-157);

(k) The evaluation of the Programme Commission's activities should be made, not by the Commission itself during the Conference session, but by the Executive Board at its session the following spring (paragraphs 158-160).

Recommendation 19: (a) The leaflet or circular letter of practical advice relating to the Conference session should include a recommendation that delegations should endeavour to make available an expert on budgetary and administrative matters to serve on the Administrative Commission or second a member of their permanent mission for that purpose (paragraphs 161-168);

(b) The Administrative Commission could drop from its agenda those items the nature of which does not call for a detailed discussion and could be reported on by the Executive Board; the recommendations prompted by the Board's reports could then be examined by the plenary Conference (paragraph 168 (2));

(d) Thought might be given to an arrangement for all those making statements on general policy to do so from their seats (paragraph 112);

(e) At the close of the statements on general policy, the Director-General would sum up the deliberations (paragraphs 121-124);

(f) The practice of summing up the results of the so-called "general debate" in a resolution should be discontinued (paragraphs 125-126).

Recommendation 17: A major contribution to shortening the sessions would be given by the authorities of the Conference and the senior officials of UNESCO if they would consider adapting their speeches to the standards suggested in paragraph 121 of the report (paragraphs 119-121).

Recommendation 18: (a) The Programme Commission should continue to share out a part of its work among its four Sub-Commissions according to the main sectors of UNESCO's activities (paragraph 135);

(b) The practice of limiting the statements made by delegates in the Programme Commission and sub-Commissions to 5 to 10 minutes each should be maintained and strongly recommended by the Chairmen. The rule would also be mentioned in the circular letter or leaflet suggested in recommendation 5 (paragraph 136);

(c) During the debate representatives of the Secretariat should speak, if possible, only when delegates ask for an explanation (paragraphs 137-139). When introducing the various chapters of the programme, their interventions should take no more than 5 minutes (paragraph 139);

(d) The Programme Commission should first deal, in plenary meetings, with past and current activities, in the light of the Director-General's reports and Executive Board document C/9, containing an evaluation of those activities. The reports could then be approved in a brief resolution (paragraphs 145-151);

(e) Then the draft programme and budget should be discussed section by section in the Sub-Commissions on the basis of documents C/5 and C/6, which contain the comments and recommendations of the Executive Board, each section being adopted singly (paragraph 147);

Recommendation 14: (a) Every organ should open its meetings not later than 10 minutes after the announced time. Existing rules should be enforced to attain this objective. The Secretariat should take particular care to advise the first speakers on the eve in order to ensure their timely presence (paragraphs 103-106);

(b) Thought should be given to the possibility of amending rule 69 to allow meetings to start deliberations as soon as a quorum of one-third of the members is present (paragraph 106);

(c) These rules should be mentioned in the circular letter or leaflet suggested in recommendation 5.

Recommendation 15: (a) The inaugural meeting should take place in the morning of the first day of the week (paragraph 28);

(b) The only speaker at the inaugural meeting should be the outgoing President. As soon as the new President is elected, and after his words of thanks, the Conference would begin its work (paragraphs 116-121);

(c) At the closing meeting, once the representatives of Member States will have completed their statements, only the President of the Conference should speak.

Recommendation 16: (a) The general policy debate should be re-named "statements on general policy" (paragraphs 122-123);

(b) The Executive Board should continue to suggest six to eight topics for such statements. These topics would be listed in the circular letter or leaflet suggested in recommendation 5 (paragraphs 107-110);

(c) At the suggestion of the Executive Board, a decision could be taken to the effect that delegates' statements should not exceed 15 minutes, the expiry of the time-limit being brought to their attention by a signal. This recommendation would be reproduced in the circular letter or leaflet, together with a note on the number of pages which such a 15 minute statement would represent (paragraphs 111-115);

Recommendation 11: (a) The basic documents should be issued in a series labelled "Official Documents", and be uniform in binding and presentation (paragraphs 66 and 88-89);

(b) This series of basic documents should be numbered in a logical sequence consistent with the chronological order of their consideration by the General Conference (paragraphs 66 and 90).

Recommendation 12: (a) As a general rule, the reports of commissions, sub-commissions and working groups should be more succinct (paragraphs 91-94);

(b) Successive versions of reports of commissions, sub-commissions and working groups should be limited to the essential minimum (paragraphs 92-93);

(c) Texts of previous resolutions, statements, etc., should not be reproduced verbatim, but merely referred to (paragraph 94);

(d) Amendments, draft resolutions, budget estimates should be circulated on separate sheets and should not be reproduced in the preliminary but only in the definitive version of the reports that are for submission to the plenary General Conference (paragraph 94).

Recommendation 13: (a) As a general rule, the reproduction in provisional form of post-session documents that are to be issued later in printed form should be avoided (paragraphs 95-97);

(b) Document C/Resolutions (Provisional) could be abolished altogether. For that purpose, rule 63 of the rules of procedure of the General Conference would have to be amended to provide that adopted resolutions will be brought to the attention of Member States as soon as the approved C/5 document can be circulated and not later than two months after the closing of the session (paragraph 97).

(b) The topics suggested by the Executive Board for the general policy debate could also be kept in mind when drafting this document (paragraph 71);

(c) Whenever possible, gross estimates of the cost of programmes should be indicated (paragraph 72);

(d) C/4 should be issued at least two months before the opening of the General Conference.

Recommendation 8: (a) Were document C/6, containing the Executive Board's recommendations on document C/5, to consist of a more substantial statement of views on the draft programme and budget, the General Conference would have the most authoritative basis on which to examine the Director-General's proposals (paragraphs 74-77);

(b) These views of the Executive Board, and especially those suggesting changes in C/5, could be summarized in a few short draft resolutions (paragraph 78).

Recommendation 9: Document C/8, containing amendments to the draft programme and budget should continue to be in the form of an index. Draft amendments and resolutions should be circulated separately (paragraphs 79-81).

Recommendation 10: (a) Thought might be given to introducing changes in document C/9, containing the comments of the Executive Board on the reports of the Director-General, so that it take the form of an evaluation of the Organization's past and current activities (paragraphs 82-87),

(b) Such evaluation would cover the three years preceding that of the General Conference as reported and evaluated by the Director-General (paragraphs 85-86);

(c) Those projects which can be dropped and those which have lived up to expectations could then be clearly identified (paragraph 87).

general policy would be included in each sub-chapter embodying some of the ideas from the draft resolutions whose elimination is recommended in paragraph (d) (paragraphs 50-55);

(f) Efforts should be made to reduce the length of draft resolutions by cutting the preambular paragraphs to a minimum and by avoiding the repeated detailed references to earlier decisions in such paragraphs (paragraph 52);

(g) The work plans should take the form of concise explanations of the activities proposed, the details of their execution being given in very summary form. Whatever technical details are considered necessary should be available in the form of individual background papers for restricted circulation and later added to the approved document C/5; this would enable the Executive Board to examine and follow through the execution of the programme (paragraphs 56-59);

Recommendation 4: Document C/1 might include, in addition to the agenda, the recommendations on the distribution of items among the various Conference organs (paragraphs 60-62).

Recommendation 5: Document C/2 might be replaced or accompanied by a circular letter from the Secretariat featuring practical advice to delegations; the advice given would be repeated in the first issue of the Conference journal. An alternative might be to circulate an attractively printed leaflet in a practical form (paragraphs 62-65).

Recommendation 6: The introductions to the annual reports of the Director-General should continue to consist of an evaluation, in synthetic form, by the Director-General of the past and current activities of the Organization (paragraphs 66-68).

Recommendation 7: (a) Document C/4 on evaluation should take the form of an analysis of future prospects by the Director-General as a guide to the discussion of the future programme, with particular reference to the four years succeeding the biennium which follows the General Conference session (paragraphs 69-73);

ANNEX

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1: (a) When preparing the programme for the General Conference session, the aim should be to limit its duration to not more than four weeks (paragraphs 19-30);

(b) Saturday mornings should be treated as normal working time. Saturday afternoons should be kept free of activities unless it is necessary to convene small bodies from time to time to deal with urgent matters or in order to complete the closing meeting of the Conference (paragraphs 21 and 27);

(c) Public holidays should be treated as normal working days (paragraph 27).

Recommendation 2: As a general rule, the recurrent documents circulated to Member States for the General Conference session should be reduced in number and length (paragraphs 34-97).

Recommendation 3: Drastic changes and careful centralized editing are needed in the make-up of document C/5, containing the draft programme and budget (paragraphs 37-59):

(a) The over-all length of document C/5 should not exceed 500 standard pages (paragraphs 38-40);

(b) The Director-General's introduction should not exceed 40 standard pages (paragraphs 41-42);

(c) The introduction to each sector should not exceed 3 printed pages and should not reiterate ideas already expressed in the Director-General's introduction (paragraphs 43-48);

(d) The draft resolution addressed to Member States and the suggestions for action by Member States and National Commissions could be eliminated altogether (paragraph 49);

(e) All the draft resolutions and authorizations to the Director-General should be removed from part II. Instead, a single draft resolution on