

Reporting to the Economic and Social Council

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CONTENTS

	<u>Paragraphs</u>	<u>Pages</u>
PURPOSE OF THE REPORT	1 - 7	1
CHAPTER I. CONTRIBUTION TO THE DEFINITION OF POLICIES		
Documentation for the general debate	8 - 12	3
The World Economic Survey	13	6
The CDP report	14	7
Analytical parts and descriptive parts	15 - 21	7
Role of CDP and outside expertise	22 - 25	10
Recommendations	26	12
CHAPTER II. THE FUNCTION OF CO-ORDINATING SYSTEM-WIDE PLANS AND PROGRAMMES		
The ACC reports	27 - 31	13
The cross-sectoral analyses	32 - 33	15
The "COPAs"	34 - 35	16
The CPC report	36 - 37	17
The ACC-CPC meetings	38 - 39	18
Co-ordination of analyses and co-ordination of programmes	40 - 44	19
The need for outside expertise	45 - 47	20
Recommendations	48	22
CHAPTER III. THE FUNCTION OF PLANNING AND PROGRAMMING IN THE UNITED NATIONS		
The fundamental and difficult problem	49 - 50	22
The example of CNR	51 - 54	23
The difficulties of 19 major programmes	55 - 58	25
Improvement of the programming instruments	59 - 60	26
Recommendations	61	27
CONCLUSION	62 - 68	29

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1. For about 10 years now, the "crisis" in the United Nations in the economic and social fields has become increasingly accepted as a normal situation. Whereas in 1974 the Organization appeared to be the natural place for negotiations on the most important world problems - food, energy, development conditions in general, in 1984 it continues to be a forum for discussions but it can hardly be said to be a negotiating forum. The deadlock in the "global negotiations" and the divergent positions on the role of the various organs of the United Nations, whether it be the General Assembly, UNCTAD or the Economic and Social Council, have created an extremely difficult political situation and everyone is wondering what means could be used to bring about a change in this situation.

2. In this context, the "crisis" peculiar to the Economic and Social Council, which emerged as a premonitory sign well before the general crisis in the Organization, is the most visible and the most closely studied phenomenon. Practically without interruption for 20 years or so, ^{1/} proposals have been made with a view to the reappraisal of the role and functions of the Council and some have been retained in important resolutions (the most recent of which are General Assembly resolution 32/197 and Council resolution 1982/50). Just last year, the President of the Council took stock of the question of revitalization in a statement which contained a list of the very numerous suggestions for possible reforms (cf. annex to the report of the Council to the General Assembly).

The technical difficulties and the political difficulties are embroiled within the current crisis in the Organization and in the crisis peculiar to the Council.

3. The hypothesis underlying these suggestions is that there are a number of technical problems whose solution is possible despite the difficult political context within which they exist. In other words, the deadlocks and political difficulties would not in themselves appear to account either for the "crisis" in the Council or even the crisis in the United Nations. This is undoubtedly a hypothesis but it does seem to be shared by a large number of delegations belonging to all geographical groups.

4. In any event, there would appear to be no doubt that the political difficulties and the technical difficulties have a cumulative effect. Misunderstandings and frustrations develop both within the Secretariat and among delegations. Interpretations of the political situation lead staff members in many cases to apply a form of self-censorship which is not favourable to the dissemination of information, the development of initiative or the formulation of constructive

^{1/} A report of the Secretary-General of 18 November 1965 (A/3109) already bore the title "Review and reappraisal of the role and functions of the Economic and Social Council".

proposals. For their part, the members of delegations are too often confronted with documentation which is unsatisfactory, too voluminous, distributed late and lacking in what they need. This prompts them to request further reports within too short a time, while at the same time calling for a reduction in documentation.

The Council is in danger of being suffocated, instead of informed, by 4,000 pages. A revolution in technical conception is necessary.

5. The reports distributed to the Economic and Social Council provide a specific illustration of these difficulties and these contradictions. Not only has the volume of documentation - despite the repeated requests for a reduction - not decreased since for the two 1983 sessions it amounted to 4,000 pages in the case of pre-session reports submitted to the Council, ^{2/} but its presentation has not improved despite the resolutions and instructions calling for conciseness in the presentation and preparation of summaries. The documentation is always distributed so late that many reports cannot be taken into account during the debate. And above all, a more thorough examination of the content of the documents shows that the conception of many of them should be completely renewed so that it can be genuinely adapted to the needs of the Council. In these circumstances, a veritable revolution in the technical conception of this documentation would appear to be essential if the Council is to avoid being suffocated by it instead of being informed.

The problem of the relations between the Secretariat and the intergovernmental organs is considered in connection with the performance by the Council of three essential functions

6. What this report intends to examine are the conditions and possibilities for such a change. In fact, through the example of the Council, what is involved is the whole problem of relations between the Secretariat and the intergovernmental organs: if it proved possible to reduce to some extent the misunderstandings, frustrations and organizational difficulties which prevent their co-operation from achieving full effectiveness, substantial progress would have been made towards an improvement of the situation.

7. This is what this report will endeavour to achieve by examining a few documents which have been selected for their significance and their importance with respect to three of the essential functions performed by the Organization, functions to which the Council makes a particularly important contribution:

(a) The function of defining policies: synthesis, integration of all economic and social data at the world level, and guidance in the choice of objectives and methods by Governments and organizations in the United Nations system (general debate at the beginning of the second annual session, in 1983, item 3 of the agenda for the second session);

^{2/} In 1983: 108 reports comprising 3,951 pages of English text, including 44 reports, 1,615 pages, for the first session and 64 reports, 2,336 pages, for the second. The sessional documents - draft resolutions, "journals", press communiqués, summary records, official statements distributed and various information documents - amount for their part to some 2,500 pages.

(b) The function of co-ordinating plans and programmes at the United Nations-system level, from the standpoint both of programme content and of mechanisms and procedures (items 4, 7, 18, 19 and 21 for the second session: "revitalization", regional co-operation, operational activities, co-ordination at the system level, cross-sectoral reviews); 3/

(c) The function of planning and programming for the United Nations concerning the economic, social and human rights programmes of the Organization itself, which seems to consist mainly of supervision of the activities of the Council's subsidiary bodies (in 1983, items 6-14 for the first session and items 6-16 for the second).

CHAPTER I

CONTRIBUTION TO THE DEFINITION OF POLICIES

8. A study of the documentation provided to the Council for the general debate at its second session clearly shows how the nature of the reports is unsuited to the needs of the exercise. A general debate is undoubtedly a sort of ritual governed by well-established traditions: two opening statements (on agenda item 1) by the President of the Council and the Secretary-General of the United Nations, and a succession of general statements spreading over 15 or so plenary meetings, 4/ without any possibility of dialogue between the participants and without a conclusion, since no resolution or general declaration is adopted (the only documents surviving after this exchange of views are, apart from the summary records, the summary contained in the second chapter of the Council's report to the General Assembly and the introduction to this report in which what should be noted from the debate is indicated by the President of the Council in a personal capacity).

9. Undoubtedly too, the "general debates" held in 1983 at the sixth United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, in the Economic and Social Council and in the

Despite the constraints on any general debate and, in particular, on that held in 1983, ...

3/ These three fundamental functions originate from the basic texts (in particular, Articles 60 and 62-66 of the Charter, General Assembly resolution 32/197, Council resolution 1982/50, etc.) and from the practice of the Council itself which, by determining its agenda each year, has defined the content to be given to these functions and, being unable to deal with everything, has accorded priority to certain subjects at the expense of others.

4/ In 1983 there were 83 statements, including 42 by States members of the Council, 11 by observer States, 2 by representatives of regional intergovernmental organizations (European Economic Community and Council for Mutual Economic Assistance), 19 by executive heads of specialized agencies, directors of major programmes or departments of the United Nations, including the executive secretaries of the regional economic commissions, 7 by NGO representatives, 1 by a secretary of a specialized institution, and 1 by the rapporteur of the Committee for Development Planning (CDP).

Second Committee of the General Assembly may appear somewhat repetitive, and the debate in the Council has the additional disadvantage of coming between the two others. The suggestion that the general debate should be abolished has even been referred to by the President in the list in which he indicated possible revitalization measures. The content of a debate of this kind is subject to constraints which were not avoided by the 1983 debate: repetitive themes (severe consequences of the world crisis for all countries and, in particular, the developing countries, regret concerning the poor results achieved by the sixth UNCTAD, etc.), descriptive recapitulations of the economic and social situation in general, statements devoted solely to the description of activities by departments or NGOs having only remote connections with the important problems, etc.

10. Despite these difficulties, however, a debate of this type not only enables the views of participants to be made better known and indicates points of convergence and divergence, but above all it identifies the questions which are regarded as fundamental by the majority or even all of the participants. In this connection, the 1983 debate highlighted, inter alia:

... important
problems have been
highlighted,

The policies, and in particular monetary policies, which should be followed by Governments and the international community as a whole in order to help them overcome the crisis through efforts to combat inflation and lower interest rates, to ensure a certain stabilization of exchange rates, to reduce unemployment and to solve the problems created by the indebtedness of the developing countries;

The various opinions expressed on the policy pursued by the international Monetary Fund (IMF) and the possibilities of studying and implementing a reform of the international monetary system;

The agriculture and food situation, and the problems of food and food security strategies;

The illustration, through specific and precise examples, of the problems existing in certain countries and regions, particularly in Africa.

and the function
thus performed of
contributing to
the search for
solutions is
fundamental.

11. To the extent that a general debate of this kind can promote, albeit modestly, understanding of such important problems and the convergence of views of Member States on possible solutions, it clearly corresponds to one of the essential functions entrusted by the Charter to the Economic and Social Council. In these circumstances, it is also clear that the documentation provided to the Council on these problems may have a decisive impact on the effectiveness of the debate: in this respect the documentation which is currently distributed is certainly capable of improvement.

12. At the formal level, the documentation distributed under agenda item 3 - 4 reports, 5 summaries of reports and 12 other documents, amounting to 265 pages of English text - is much too voluminous; 5/ it is distributed too late since, according to the information provided to us by the secretariat, three of the summaries of the reports of regional economic commissions were not distributed until after the debate (on 26 and 28 July), and the other reports were made available on dates between 12 June (World Economic Survey) and 27 June (CDP report), in other words between three weeks and three days before the opening of the session. Such a schedule precludes any consideration by the competent authorities in the capitals and, in the case of most documents, does not even allow them to be read by delegates before the opening of the session. Moreover, this documentation is somewhat diverse (the relationship to item 3 of the reports on the role of the public sector or on the new international human order is not obvious at first sight). It comprises summaries of only some of the reports. 6/ Basically, it is purely informative since, with the single exception of the CDP report, no document presents conclusions or recommendations. But it is not only the formal presentation which would have to be changed in order to give delegates the information they really need. It is the very conception of the reports which must be reconsidered, as is clearly shown by an examination of two of the most important among them.

The documentation provided is too voluminous, too late, somewhat diverse, partly summarized, too purely informative, without recommendations except in one case.

5/ The list of documents is as follows: World Economic Survey (114 p.); the report of the Committee for Development Planning (30 p.); the summaries of the reports of the regional economic commissions: ECE (11 p.), ECA (6 p.), ECWA (6 p.), ESCAP (21 p.), ECLA (14 p.); a report by the Secretary-General on the role of the public sector in the promotion of development (54 p.); a report by the Secretary-General on the new international human order (9 p.); documents comprising extracts of reports, communications from member States and NGOs, draft resolutions (81 p. in all). The reports of four regional economic commissions - ESCAP (161 p.), ECA (127 p.), ECWA (43 p.) and ECE (110 p.) (441 p. in all) - were also made available to delegations.

6/ The reports of the regional economic commissions are summarized in 6-21 pages; the CDP report presents its main conclusions and recommendations in 5 pages. All the other reports, and in particular the World Economic Survey, have no summary.

The World Economic Survey devotes 85 per cent of its total volume to descriptions of situations. Its analytical parts are too brief and difficult to identify.

13. The World Economic Survey, 7/ which is published every year in accordance with Council resolution 118 (II), appeared in 1983 in the form of a 134-page document comprising 31 statistical tables of one or two pages each, without any graph and without any summary. This document, which is of vital importance because of its subject matter, is the product of a very old tradition and its over-all conception has not changed greatly since the outset, only the number of pages having been reduced. It is an essentially descriptive document. Of its three chapters (I. General description of the world economy in 1982, 34 pages; II. International trade and finance, 45 pages; III. Growth of the world economy, 59 pages), the bulk (83 per cent) of the survey is devoted to a description of developments in the world economy during the past year. 8/ Only 17 per cent of the report is devoted to analytical observations concerning short-term prospects or analyses of problems regarded as important or the lessons to be learned from the events considered. The observations are not indicated by any distinctive sign to the reader, who is obliged to turn to the end of chapter I for the authors' opinion concerning the requirements for sustained recovery, 9/ or to read on from the third page of chapter II in order to discover their critical eight-page analysis of the type of protectionism which is developing or of the shortcomings in the international monetary system.

7/ Throughout the rest of the report, this document will be referred to by its initials: WES.

8/ That is to say, 114 pages covering general observations (37 p.) the developing countries (35 p.), the developed market-economy countries (26 p.), and the planned-economy countries (16 p.). This typological division into three categories of countries is supplemented, in the case of the developing countries, by a distinction between energy-importing developing countries and energy-exporting developing countries.

9/ Thirteen pages indicating the need for reviving investment in the developing countries and in the planned-economy countries, sustaining recovery in the developed market-economy countries, lessening international financial strains, an improved trading environment, co-ordinated macro-economic policies, enhanced international liquidity, and increased ODA.

14. The report of the Committee for Development Planning, on the other hand, is a brief (some 20 pages), consolidated document preceded by a five-page summary containing recommendations. The text of the report itself also comprises a rapid survey (6 p.) of the economic and social situation in 1982 and then studies the inadequacies of international economic co-operation, outlining:

What the authors of the report call "the shortage of financial resources"; in this part they criticize the conception underlying IMF's policy of imposing "harsh adjustment" on the developing countries, a policy which it presents as "a form of necessary adaptation to new conditions in the world economy, laying the basis for future growth". The CDP favours "an anticyclical role for the Fund and a further increase in its resources" (para. 63);

Measures (possible and desirable) in favour of the least developed and other low-income developing countries;

The (necessary) improvement of creditor and debtor information; in this part a debtors' club or institute is recommended with the object of sharing market experience (para. 85);

"The need for order in world trade";

"Review and reform of the international system for co-operation in trade, money and finance"; in this part the Committee proposes "that an ad hoc group should be established under the auspices of the United Nations, composed of high-level experts from its concerned agencies and bodies, particularly IMF, the World Bank, UNCTAD and GATT, as well as independent personalities with extensive experience of the issues involved";

Lastly, the relationship between "co-operation, disarmament and development".

The report concludes with observations on "development strategies for greater autonomy" for the developing countries (cost of dependence, options for control and leverage, South-South co-operation).

15. As we have already stated, the Council has adopted no resolution concerning the recommendations in the CDP report, or in fact on the analytical parts of the WES. Decision 1983/177 merely takes note of these documents and of the summaries of the reports of the regional economic commissions. In these circumstances the question arises to what extent the type of documentation we have just described is responsible for the fact that the Council has been unable, in accordance with what it itself decided in its resolution 1982/50, to "formulate appropriate conclusions and recommendations" as part of its general discussion.

The CDP report, on the other hand, is brief, is summarized and contains precise recommendations on important points ...

... but the Council has not taken a decision on its recommendations. The question arises as to what proportion should be reserved for the descriptive parts and for the

analytical parts
accompanied by
recommendations

This question may be subdivided as follows:

What proportion should be reserved in the reports for the purely descriptive parts?

What importance should be given to the analytical parts and the conclusions and recommendations, and what form should they take?

In the preparation of documentation, how should one distribute the respective roles of the United Nations Secretariat and of the groups of independent experts specializing in economic questions, such as the members of CDP?

16. Before replying to these three questions, we consider it necessary to recall that the studies submitted to the Council for its general debate form just one part of the very numerous studies on world economic problems which are prepared every year by the United Nations, by organizations in the United Nations system or by other international organizations. Particular mention may be made of:

(a) United Nations system:

Many other
international
organizations
prepare documents
of the same type
as the WES
describing the
world situation.

UNCTAD's "Trade and Development Report" (published September-October every year, 138 p. in 1983);

IMF's "World Economic Outlook" (every May, 242 p. in 1983);

The World Bank's "World Development Report" (every July, 213 p. in 1983);

ILO's "World Labour Report" (first report published in February 1984);

Report of GATT (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade) "International Trade 1982/83" (September 1983).

(b) Outside the system:

OECD's "Economic Outlook" (every December, 181 p. in 1983);

Report of the Bank for International Settlements (every June, 188 p. in 1983).

17. All these reports contain important descriptions of the world economic situation during the past year which clearly duplicate the descriptive parts of the WES. UNCTAD's annual report, for example, always contains a first descriptive chapter on this situation which uses the same typology for the classification of countries and provides more or less the same type of information and numerical tables relating to the same data as the WES. It also regularly comprises a chapter which is very comparable to chapter III of the WES

on developments in international trade. IMF's "World Economic Outlook" also devotes its first chapter to the same subject and its later chapters contain further details on the same categories of countries. The World Bank's "World Development Report" for 1983, too, devotes its first chapter to a description of the recession in the world economy during the period 1980-1982. Mutatis mutandis, similar descriptions are found in the other documents cited.

18. However, these documents differ in their analytical parts; the nature of the analyses and the place accorded to them vary considerably. We have already referred to the brevity of the analytical sections of the WES and the subjects it deals with. UNCTAD, on the other hand, has chosen every year to deal with different subjects in special chapters of its report: in 1982, "Structural change in the world economy"; in 1983, "Economic co-operation among developing countries". The World Bank, too, chooses a new subject every year. In 1983, it offers in its part II an analysis of the role of management in development. Part II of the OECD report traditionally gives detailed treatment to developments in each of its member countries. The ILO report deals mainly with the specific problems within its competence (in 1984, three chapters on the world employment situation, one chapter on migration, income and wages, social security in the industrial countries, etc.). Each of the reports therefore seeks in specific sections an originality corresponding to the mission of the organization concerned.

19. It would appear to be all the more important to inform the Council of the conclusions that may emerge from these analyses since, on a number of essential problems, the positions of these reports are sometimes contradictory. In order to enable the Council truly to fulfil its mission, the divergences in analyses by international organizations should not just be mentioned, but should be clearly described and explained, since they frequently relate to the substance of the problems confronting the international community. If one takes IMF's monetary and policy problems as a whole, it is true to say that the documentation submitted to the Council (CDP reports, WES, statements by the Director of IMF, etc.) has not concealed the existence of these divergences. On the other hand, it is not certain that sufficient explanations have been given by those holding different positions concerning a possible reform of the international monetary system or of the policy currently followed by IMF to enable the members of the Council genuinely to increase their understanding of these problems as a whole. In the aforementioned major reports of the various organizations, there are sections which might usefully have supplemented the Council's documentation on these subjects: for example, chapter III (paras. 171-202) of UNCTAD's "Trade and Development Report", the paragraphs relating to conditionality and the Fund's relations with commercial banks in IMF's "World Economic Outlook" (pp. 24-26), or the observations made in ILO's "World Labour Report" concerning the need to protect social programmes when creditor countries and IMF

They nevertheless differ in their analytical parts;

it would seem important that these parts should be brought to the attention of the Council, especially because they explicitly indicate divergences on fundamental problems.

negotiate debt-rescheduling agreements with debtor countries (paras. 28 and 29).

The descriptive sections should be shortened, if not deleted altogether; in particular, the descriptive parts of the WES should be replaced by a dossier comprising graphs and maps.

20. The foregoing remarks endeavour to demonstrate not that the documentation provided to the Council should be increased, but on the contrary that its volume should be reduced and its conception modified. Generally speaking, we consider it essential to shorten drastically (if not delete altogether) the purely descriptive sections because they provide information which is in most cases already available and known through press analyses or specialized publications, because the various reports duplicate one another - in some cases two or three times, and above all because in the final analysis the information provided is not what the members of the Council really need in order to be able to perform their task. It would appear absolutely essential to consider replacing the descriptive parts of the WES by brief summaries referring to existing reports or by information sheets showing graphs or maps outlining the development of the world situation in a much more succinct fashion than at present. The whole document should be must shorter, since the interested reader can always consult the documents referred to.

The analytical parts might, on the other hand, be expanded, use references and highlight the list of recommendations.

21. The analytical parts, on the other hand, might be slightly more voluminous, but they should provide a different presentation from the actual analyses, references to other existing documents and recommendations. The analyses should also be as complete as possible and clearly present the arguments for and against the questions identified by the Council as important; for example, on the reform of the monetary system, the policy of IMF, the problems posed by food strategies, efforts to combat protectionism, South-South co-operation, etc. There again, it is not necessary to write at length in order to be precise, since the problems discussed are already fairly well known and the use of references to existing documents would enable delegations to find all the information they need. As to the recommendations, they should be clearly enunciated and distinctly separated from the text of the analyses, instead of being hidden away within the text of the reports. It would even be useful to number them in order to give the Council a clear idea of the points on which it should attempt to take a position.

The respective roles of the Secretariat and CDP should be reconsidered so that the Council can implement its own resolutions.

22. In order to enable the Council to have at its disposal documentation of this type, it is nevertheless necessary to reconsider the respective roles of the Secretariat and the groups of independent experts which enjoy greater freedom in expressing their opinions. More precisely, it would seem that the role of the Committee for Development Planning should be considerably strengthened. The Council itself, in its resolution 1982/50 and in particular paragraph 1 (a) and (d) thereof, decided to organize its work "in such a manner as to enable it to focus its attention on a limited number of carefully selected major policy issues, to be studied in depth with a view to elaborating concrete action-oriented recommendations", and "as part of its annual general

discussion ... (to) formulate appropriate conclusions and recommendations ... addressed to the General Assembly, States Members of the United Nations ... and bodies of the United Nations system concerned". To this end, therefore, the Council needs clear, independently-expressed proposals in order to be able to take them as a basis for its own deliberations. As is shown by a comparison of the contents of the CDP report and the WES, a group of independent experts with the status and level of those making up CDP has greater freedom than the Secretariat to make recommendations. Speaking in a personal capacity and on their own responsibility, they are not obliged at all costs to seek the neutrality which the fact of belonging to the Organization tends to impose.

23. In these circumstances, the Council might consider entrusting precise tasks to CDP and, above all, according it the means necessary for the performance of these tasks. The general mandate of CDP, as defined by resolutions 1035 (XXXVII) of 15 August 1964 and 1625 (LI) of 30 July 1971, is sufficiently large, although situated within the context of planning and economic objectives, to enable the Council to make better use of this committee of experts and its sub-committees as a workshop for the preparation of its work on the study of major economic and social programmes. Machinery should be developed in order to establish at regular intervals the list of problems on which clear and complete dossiers containing recommendations would be submitted to the Council. CDP itself might, for example, be requested to suggest the choice of these problems and the Council might possibly consider entrusting to its own officers the final formulation of this list and of the procedures for preparing dossiers, specifying the respective missions entrusted to the Secretariat and CDP.

24. But in order to enable the Council to use CDP's report or reports and to give CDP the means of preparing them, the following action should be taken:

The sessions of CDP should be so arranged as to enable it to meet demands of the type envisaged in this report. This may mean either that the spring session would be considerably lengthened or that two sessions would be scheduled, including one in the autumn, possibly supplemented by the session of the Committee's working groups;

The last session should be completed not later than 15 March, so as to permit the publication of the report or reports by 30 April at the latest, thus giving Member States two months in which to study them;

At least some of the tasks entrusted to CDP should be clearly spelt out at least two years in advance so as to give it time seriously to consider the questions raised;

The Council might consider entrusting more precise tasks to CDP and according it the means necessary for the performance of these tasks.

Lastly, budgetary credits, drawn from the credits for consultants currently made available to the Secretariat, should be provided so as to enable the Committee to remunerate the work or studies entrusted either to persons or to research institutes within or outside the United Nations system appearing on a list prepared by the Committee.

25. If the documentation for the general debate was presented in the form which we have just advocated, the Council could possibly discuss the form to be given to this debate. The question-and-answer experiment organized with the executive secretaries of the regional economic commissions in 1983 might give an idea of the path to be followed. Centring on the recommendations submitted by CDP, the debate might, at least partially, comprise questions put to competent personalities in the area in question, directors or secretary-generals of organizations in the system, or senior independent experts. A debate of this type might, moreover, be concluded either with a resolution or with a special report of the Council to the General Assembly.

26. To sum up, it would appear that the following recommendations are called for as a result of the examination of the reports submitted to the Council to assist it in its general debate:

The Council might also consider a different form for its general debate and for the outcome of this debate.

RECOMMENDATIONS on

The list and content of dossiers;

the presentation of documentation and recommendations;

the form of the general debate;

the role and conditions of operation of CDP.

Recommendation No. 1: Machinery of the type suggested in paragraph 23 might be developed in order to establish sufficiently in advance the list and content of dossiers that might be prepared for the Council on specific issues.

Recommendation No. 2: The Council might once again issue an urgent reminder concerning the conditions of presentation of documentation: maximum length, existence of summaries. It might also state that all reports should end with clear recommendations, presented separately, in the form of a numbered list, and that to the fullest extent possible graphs and maps should replace numerical tables.

Recommendation No. 3: The form to be taken by the general debate and the formulation of its conclusions should be reconsidered, and the officers of the Council should be invited to make proposals on this question and on the list of persons whom it would consider inviting to speak or to reply to questions.

Recommendation No. 4: The role and conditions of operation of CDP (number, dates and duration of sessions, definition of its tasks, use of consultants) might be revised in accordance with the procedures suggested in paragraph 24 above.

CHAPTER II

THE FUNCTION OF CO-ORDINATING SYSTEM-WIDE PLANS AND PROGRAMMES

27. There is an obvious relationship between the identification and study of major world programmes in the economic and social fields and the co-ordination of the United Nations system. If complementarity of programmes is to be ensured, duplication avoided and the over-all system made more effective, it must be ascertained that the analyses which guide action are complementary, set the same objectives and do not conflict with each other. In other words, intellectual co-ordination governs the co-ordination of activities and the co-ordination of procedures and methods. But the number, frequency and binding character of the resolutions on co-ordination ^{10/} demonstrate fairly clearly that none of these objectives has been attained. In fact, the function of co-ordinating plans and programmes at the level of the United Nations system is encountering difficulties that are very comparable to those which we have just described in connection with the first function.

28. Since it is impossible to examine everything, we have limited our investigation to two agenda items and a few important documents. ^{11/} But this examination is sufficient to show that most of the documents are not designed in such a way as to enable the Council to attain the objectives to which we have just referred. It would therefore seem necessary not only very seriously to call in question the conception of these reports and the methods adopted in preparing them, but also to check whether the procedures for their review by the inter-agency and intergovernmental machinery should not be thoroughly recast.

The function of co-ordination is encountering the same type of difficulties.

^{10/} In particular, apart from Articles 58, 63 (2) and 64 of the Charter, Council resolutions 1622 (LI), para. 5, of 30 July 1971 and 1768 (LIV), paras. 9 (b) and (d) and 10, of 18 May 1973, General Assembly resolution 3202 (S-VI), sect. IX, para. 3, of 1 May 1974, Assembly resolution 32/197, part II relating to the Economic and Social Council, para. 5 (b), (c) and (d), part III, paras. 16 and 17, part IV, paras. 37, 38 and 43-45, part VII, paras. 54 and 55, part VIII, paras. 60 and 61, Assembly resolution 34/214, paras. 1-3, of 19 December 1979, and Council resolution 1982/50, paras. (f) and (g).

^{11/} The items concerned by the performance of this function were, in 1983, items 7, 8, 19 and 21 for the second session: regional co-operation, operational activities for development, international co-operation and co-ordination, review of major issues in the medium-term plans of the organizations in the system. In this report we have not dealt with the first two items, and in the case of items 19 and 21, for which the documentation provided comprised seven reports (147 p.) and three reports (66 p.) respectively, we have given thorough consideration only to the reports of ACC and CPC, and the cross-organizational programme analyses (COPAs).

The examination of a few documents, in particular the ACC reports, suffices to show that they are not designed to enable the Council to supervise the co-ordination of activities, analyses or procedures.

29. A striking feature of the ACC reports on the questions of international co-operation and co-ordination, for example, is that they do not provide the essential information needed by the Council. ACC sends the Council several types of reports: reports, now biennial, on United Nations-system expenditures in relation to programmes; ^{12/} less regularly, reports on specific programmes (in 1983, for example, a report on the strengthening of co-ordination of information systems); and lastly, "annual overview reports" (that for 1983 related to the period 1982-1983).

30. The structure of the reports on "expenditures of the United Nations system in relation to programmes" has undergone little change in many years. These documents contain numerical tables on the expenditures of all the organizations in the system by source of funds and by sector. They reflect changes in these figures from biennium to biennium. This purely statistical information is indispensable; one can only regret that it does not include the financial organizations in the United Nations system. The reports on specific issues, such as that provided in 1983 relating to "strengthening of the co-ordination of information systems in the United Nations system" (E/1983/48, 28 April 1983), have the merit of providing details on questions asked by the Council. ^{13/}

The "annual overview reports" are descriptive catalogues intended to convince Member States that co-ordination is functioning properly.

31. The "annual overview reports", which could be the most important documents, are in fact merely descriptive catalogues, as it were, of ACC activities during the preceding annual period. For example, the 1983 report (E/1983/39, 16 March 1983) explains that the Secretary-General of the United Nations and all the members of ACC have convergent goals relating both to the need to achieve "coherence and complementarity of action" among organizations and to the characteristics of the current world crisis. It also states that the Task Force on Long-Term Development Objectives noted the continued slow-down in growth during 1982 and concluded that "the first half of the Third United Nations Development Decade would be a period of stagnation rather than development". On the management of programme activities, the document provides the list of

^{12/} These reports became biennial following decision 1980/103 of 6 February 1980; consequently no such report was supplied in 1983. We would mentioned them, however, and refer to the most recent of these reports (E/1982/87, 28 June 1982), at the time of writing the present report.

^{13/} The latter report followed a first report submitted in 1982 (E/1982/85) in response to resolution 1981/63, in which the Council requested ACC to review its decision to terminate the functions of the Inter-Organization Board. The Council merely took a note of that report, whose essential purpose is to present the work programme laid down for the Advisory Committee for the Co-ordination of Information Systems (ACCIS).

inter-organizational reviews in preparation, states that prior consultations on work plans and programmes have been undertaken as systematically as possible, regrets that an overview of the objectives and plans of the organizations in the system requested by the Council in decision 1981/181 has not been completed, and outlines the conferences in preparation. On operational issues, the document contains a text on "challenges and constraints" relating to those activities, explains that it is too early for a judgement on the role of the "resident co-ordinators" as requested by General Assembly resolution 37/226, and concludes by quoting the report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization, recalling that a sense of optimism can be retained on the "potentially better means to solve many of the major problems facing humanity". It is thus simply an information document, essentially intended to convince Member States that everything is fine in the area of co-ordination.

32. In addition to the purely descriptive reports which we have just summarized, there are various sorts of reports dealing with co-ordination at the sectoral level. In addition to a document on mineral resources which will be analysed in the following chapter, the Council received in 1983 two reports of this type under agenda item 21: document E/1983/99 of 17 June 1983 on food and agriculture, and document E/1983/101 of 15 June 1983 on population issues. These two reports are essentially descriptive. Thus the report on population, after stating that it will deal only with the activities of the organizations most directly concerned with the problem so as to make the report "as concise and action-oriented as possible", simply describes population trends and policies since 1974 in the first part, and then in the second gives a succession of summaries of population programmes contained in the 1984-1989 medium-term plans for the United Nations, the Population Fund, UNCTAD, the regional economic commissions, WHO, the World Bank, ILO, UNESCO and FAO. It does not culminate in any conclusion or recommendation and, in these circumstances, it is difficult to see how it can claim to be "action-oriented". 14/

33. The report on food and agriculture is in the same mould but longer (40 pages as opposed to 23 for the above-mentioned report). It also contains descriptions of the medium-term plans or programmes of the principal organizations active in the area concerned: FAO, WFP, World Food Council, World Bank, IFAD, UNDP, UNEP, UNESCO, UNU, etc. One difference in presentation vis-à-vis the previous document is that its descriptions, instead of being given at one

The cross-organizational analyses provided in 1983 on population issues and food and agriculture problems still contain no conclusions or recommendations.

14/ This document begins somewhat curiously with a framed eight-line "summary" on page 1; this text simply recapitulates paragraph 1 of the report itself and is in any case not a summary.

fell swoop, are broken down according to a plan which distinguishes between agricultural production (five sections), food security (three sections), and trade in food and agricultural products (two sections). But the fact that these descriptions are broken down into ten sections instead of being given globally one after the other changes nothing in the nature of the exercise. It is true that the report ends with a few "concluding observations", but they essentially constitute a reminder of the seriousness of the food situation, the inadequacy of external assistance to the developing countries, the importance that must be attached to "world food security", and the lack of progress in intergovernmental negotiations on trade and price stabilization problems. In other words, the conclusion in no way relates to the procedures for co-ordination between the organizations in the system or to possible methods of improving such co-ordination.

34. Thus in both cases, these "cross-organizational analyses" of the medium-term plans of the organizations in the system, instituted by resolution 1982/50, paragraph 1 (f), are in their present format practically unusable by the Council. As is well known, in this area of cross-organizational analyses, another type of study, the "cross-organizational programme analyses" - more widely known by their English acronym "COPAs" - are of longer standing and reflect greater experience because they were instituted in August 1977 by Council resolution 2098 (LXIII) and by the decisions of the joint ACC/CPC meeting in 1978: it was specified that the "COPAs" should provide "an analysis of the actual state of co-ordination, rather than a mere description of activities", should be "analytical in nature" and should contain "recommendations for action". To this end, they should have four main sections, the first dealing with the pattern of mandates, the second with activities corresponding to the pattern of mandates, the third with the current status of co-ordination, and the fourth presenting conclusions arising from the analysis. 15/

On this type of study, as on the "COPAs", despite a few interesting analyses, a "dialogue of the deaf" seems to have arisen.

35. Generally speaking, although the "COPAs" have tried to follow these instructions, have presented interesting analyses of what the system is accomplishing in the fields studied and have led to a few recommendations, they have unfortunately resulted only in a sort of dialogue of the deaf between ACC and CPC. CPC has constantly been repeating 16/ since 1978 that these documents had "conceptual and methodological weaknesses", that the greatest efforts must be made "to achieve effective co-ordination", that

15/ The list of COPAs compiled since 1978 is provided in document ACC/1983/PG/11 of 23 September 1983; they have dealt with economic co-operation among developing countries, information systems, science and technology, energy, rural development, youth, public administration and marine affairs.

16/ Above-mentioned document ACC/1983/PG/11: see in particular the column entitled "Comments and recommendations of CPC" in its table 1.

"progress in co-ordination and harmonization was extremely limited", that reports "did not provide the in-depth analysis CPC had expected", that "programmes should be critically analysed in relation to mandates", and that "an attempt should be made to identify gaps, duplication and the effectiveness or otherwise of co-ordination arrangements". There is therefore no doubt that considerable efforts remain to be made in order to make these documents more effective.

36. As the foregoing quotations have shown, CPC, the auxiliary of the Council and the General Assembly specializing in co-ordination has for several years taken care to develop the mechanisms of the planning cycle and of co-ordination of the United Nations system. Its annual report is the only document that gives the Council and the Assembly conclusions which are at the same time critical and constructive in these areas. The 1983 report, for example, 17/ comprised the review of a "COPA" (on marine affairs), two evaluations (technical co-operation activities of UNIDO in the field of manufactures, Department of Public Information), some ACC reports (analysed in paragraphs 30 and 31 above), a few chapters of the programme budget, questions concerning the reformulation of the 1984-1989 medium-term plan, and three important methodological problems: drafting of the rules governing planning, the programme aspects of the budget, monitoring of implementation and methods of evaluation, strengthening the capacity of the United Nations evaluation units and systems, and procedures for the provision of statements of programme implications to the General Assembly. The systematic plan followed in the report on each of these points comprises an introduction outlining the problem, a brief recapitulation of the gist of the discussion, and conclusions and recommendations which are generally worded very precisely. 18/

CPC's annual report is the only document which submits to the Council conclusions which are at the same time critical and constructive.

17/ A/38/38 (Part I), 14 June 1983. In this report we shall not refer to Part II of this report, which was not issued until 26 September 1983 (second part of CPC's twenty-third session, 29 August-12 September 1983) because of the delay in the production of the programme budget and could not therefore be submitted to the Council in 1983.

18/ For example, concerning the review of the rules governing planning, the Committee itself, for some 10 articles, spelt out the corrections and amendments that it wanted made to the text proposed by the Secretary-General. This type of presentation of recommendations greatly facilitates the work of the Council and the General Assembly. The recommendations in the CPC report were approved by the Council in resolution 1983/49 and by the General Assembly in resolution 38/227.

But in co-ordination matters CPC is in the same situation as the Council; the reports supplied to it do not meet its needs. Consequently, the importance attached by CPC to recommendations repeating earlier requests and giving methodological instructions is growing at the expense of substantive recommendations.

The joint ACC-CPC meetings suffer from exactly the same difficulties.

37. In co-ordination matters, however, CPC finds itself in the same situation as the Council or the General Assembly: it is simply the first to receive the same ACC reports or "COPAs", and it has more time to consider them in detail and make recommendations on them. But as we have seen in paragraph 35, the conclusions and recommendations which this type of report enables it to make are mainly repetitions of earlier requests concerning the very nature of the analyses or new methodological instructions. This type of recommendation is even tending to replace substantive conclusions. On the one hand, in planning, programming and evaluation, methodological progress has been and continues to be possible, thanks to the progressive and continuous improvement of instruments such as the medium-term plan, the programme budget, programme performance reports and evaluation reports; on the other hand, in the area of co-ordination, the available instruments (such as the ordinary planning procedures) are not subject to direct control by the intergovernmental bodies or, when they are subject to such control (e.g. the "COPAs"), it has proved difficult to improve them.

38. These difficulties are confirmed by the malaise and concern which have long been felt about the ineffectiveness - not to say pointlessness - of the joint ACC-CPC meetings. The report (E/1983/98) of the Chairmen of CPC and ACC on the joint meeting of the two committees demonstrates this. The joint meeting of 4 and 5 July 1983 devoted part of its agenda to discussing precisely the problem of improving the effectiveness of those meetings. The discussion resulted in an agreement on the need for "a time lapse of at least six months between the selection of a topic and the meeting itself, in order to allow for the preparation of proper documentation and the identification of the crucial issues for debate," and for "a systematic follow-up at a subsequent meeting to ensure that the results of the deliberations were translated into action".

39. But apart from these procedural problems which were the subject of numerous suggestions, the discussion also showed that, in the opinion of many delegations, it was the very objectives of those meetings that should be better defined. It was emphasized, for example, that "the purpose of those meetings was not to review the activities of the various United Nations organizations individually, but to examine their work in the context of the work of the United Nations system as a whole". Reference was also made to "the fact that the topics chosen were too broad" and it was suggested that "the topics for consideration at the joint meetings should be the same as those considered earlier in the year by CPC". In our opinion, these observations confirm that the substantive problems confronting the joint ACC-CPC meetings are exactly the same as those confronting CPC, the Council and the General Assembly in the area of co-ordination. The following paragraphs attempt to summarize the substance of these problems.

40. The efforts which have been made for many years, in particular through the establishment of the Consultative Committee on Substantive Questions (CCSQ), the attempt at harmonization of presentation of programme budgets and medium-term plans, efforts to achieve "joint planning", the establishment of the Office for Programme Planning and Co-ordination and of the Task Force on Long-Term Development Objectives, the institution of the "COPAs", the extension of CPC sessions, etc., have undoubtedly enabled some, at least formal, progress to be made towards the improved co-ordination of the programmes and activities of the United Nations system. However, they have also given a more precise idea of the extent of the efforts that still need to be made. These efforts will have to be substantial, in the area of both the co-ordination of analyses, and the co-ordination of programmes and activities.

41. As we stated in chapter I, it is quite clear that very serious divergences in analysis exist between the various organizations in the United Nations system. It could hardly be maintained today that UNCTAD and IMF, for example, have the same conception of conditions of development, or that despite their convergence at the Alma Ata Conference on Primary Health Care WHO and UNICEF now share the same approach to health methods in the developing countries, or that FAO's approaches to food security are fully shared by the World Food Council.

42. Many more examples could be cited, but it is clear that despite the resolutions showing the international community's general acceptance of the idea that development is a problem which requires multi-disciplinary and integrated responses ("integrated approach to development", "integrated rural development", etc.), the various organizations in the United Nations system are a long way from having a common philosophy, vision or approach vis-à-vis the problems to be solved. On the question of the financing of operational activities, there has been no real dialogue between donor and beneficiary countries on the nature of the problems to which most attention should be paid, since financing decisions are taken separately for each of the operational funds (UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, etc.). It is not even certain that within the same organization there is agreement between headquarters and field personnel or between the various departments dealing with different but related problems.

43. There is nothing abnormal about such a situation since the system was designed on a "functionalist" basis. But the objective of co-ordination is precisely to offset the disadvantages of this division of labour between sectors and between specialists in various disciplines by trying to reduce the divergences, promote better mutual understanding and define an approach which is as common as possible. For example, it would appear important to ensure that there is

The efforts made to achieve better co-ordination have mainly given a more precise idea of the extent of what remains to be done.

Very serious divergences in analysis ...

... and serious difficulties are impeding the definition of a common approach.

The division of the various organizations into sectors undoubtedly accounts for this situation.

indeed consistency between the policies advocated for industrial development and agricultural development, or between policies relating to the development of science and technology and employment policies. 19/

Member States would like to be able to ensure that the co-ordination of programmes and activities averts duplication, lacunae and the waste of resources.

44. Leadership and control - by the intergovernmental organs and in particular the Council - of the co-ordination of analyses is a prerequisite for the co-ordination of programmes and activities. On this second point, the concern of Member States relates to the possible existence in the design and execution of programmes and projects, of duplication, contradictions, lacunae or simply inadequate co-ordination in space and time, leading to waste of effort and money. As we have seen, neither the ACC reports nor the "COPAs" enabled this type of control to be exercised. However, the problem of the co-ordination of programmes and activities is too serious for it to be considered acceptable much longer that the intergovernmental organs responsible for such co-ordination should continue, despite their repeated requests, to be deprived of the type of information they need.

In order to obtain the necessary information, ...

45. The answer to these problems does not lie in the regular repetition of the same requests. In fact, the real reason for all the difficulties encountered is that it is not possible to ask the secretariats of the United Nations and the other organizations in the system to practise self-criticism. The efforts that have been requested of them for many years to ensure better co-ordination have been considerable. The secretariats have responded to these requests in particular through the work of the CCSQ, efforts to establish long-term objectives, and exchanges of views on the formulation of plans and on the harmonization of budgetary formats. They consider that they have thus achieved not insignificant results and it is only normal that they should communicate that impression to the intergovernmental organs. For their part, these organs wish to obtain critical views that would enable them to make recommendations with a view to improving a situation that continues to be far from satisfactory. In this connection, there is no doubt that the studies produced by the Office for Programme Planning and Co-ordination (PPCO) since its establishment have constituted very remarkable efforts. This encouragement of self-criticism within the Secretariat has unfortunately encountered, and continues to encounter, extremely strong resistance. If such an undertaking is to succeed, it should be invigorated both by a genuine will to improve methods in all units within the various secretariats and by recourse to independent expertise from outside these secretariats.

... recourse to outside expertise is the only solution.

19/ This type of control is precisely that provided for in Article 62, paragraph 1, of the Charter.

46. As in the preceding chapter, therefore, we would once again recommend recourse to the independence and critical and constructive spirit of experts recruited externally by the intergovernmental organs themselves. In the present instance, CPC as the specialized body responsible for co-ordination should be called upon to organize, on the proposal of its officers:

The list of subjects adopted, which might comprise all the "COPAs" (for which a provisional list and schedule have already been compiled), the other cross-sectoral analyses (if, however, the principle of such analyses is adopted), the study of various types of divergence observed between the analyses of the various agencies, and lastly the over-all review of the progress made by ACC in joint planning, or more generally on all the activities covered by its annual over-all report;

The choice of experts: compilation of lists as in the case of CDP examined above, criteria to be observed, methods of choice of persons in accordance with the subjects adopted;

The schedule of studies to be covered by external examinations, including their dates of publication, calculated sufficiently far in advance for them to be submitted for consideration by the specialized bodies of CPC, the Council and possibly, as appropriate, the joint ACC-CPC meetings;

The methods of co-operation between the outside experts and the Secretariat, in particular with PPCO;

Statement or reminder of the standard models of desired studies: list of analytical parts, methods of presentation of recommendations;

The respective responsibilities - with regard to the formulation of the decisions proposed to the Council - of the specialized subsidiary bodies and CPC.

47. For such a system to be possible, the following action should be taken:

Consideration should be given to the possibility of giving CPC the necessary means to perform this supplementary function, and in particular providing it with a permanent secretariat comparable with that available to ACABQ. In this case, the secretary might be chosen from among the staff of the Office for Programme Planning and Co-ordination;

As we have already stated in the preceding chapter concerning the financing of the consultants needed for CDP, credits should - through transfer of part of the credits for consultants assigned to the Secretariat - be made available to the officers of CPC to remunerate this outside expertise.

In order to organize this, it is necessary to draw up a list of subjects adopted, provide for transfers of credits and compile a list of approved experts.

In addition, CPC should be able to study the detailed conditions in which such a system would be established and to receive the means necessary for this purpose.

RECOMMENDATIONS

48. To sum up, the examination of the types of reports currently provided to the Council concerning the co-ordination of the activities of the United Nations system prompts us to recommend:

Recommendation No. 5: The use by the intergovernmental bodies, through CPC, of expertise from outside the secretariat to examine the problems of co-ordination of analyses, and co-ordination of the programmes and activities of the organizations in the United Nations system in the conditions specified in paragraph 46 above.

Recommendation No. 6: Giving CPC the means necessary for this task, as indicated in paragraph 47.

CHAPTER III

THE FUNCTION OF PLANNING AND PROGRAMMING IN THE UNITED NATIONS

The function of planning and programming is encountering comparable difficulties.

49. The performance of the function of planning and programming for the United Nations, in other words, the function of governing body for the work programme of the United Nations in the economic, social and human rights fields, which the Council has defined for itself on various occasions, 20/ is encountering the same types of difficulties as those which we have just described in connection with the two other functions. The documentation provided, both to the Council and to the subsidiary bodies, suffers from shortcomings comparable with those noted in the aforesaid cases. This function, in fact, occupies most of the substantive items of the agenda for the annual session. 21/

20/ Resolution 1156 (XLI) of 5 August 1966, resolution 1623 (LI) of 30 July 1971, and resolution 1982/50, para. 1 (e), in particular.

21/ In 1983, the items concerned were items 6-14 at the first session, and items 6 and 8-16 at the second, i.e. 50 per cent of the total number of agenda items. The questions dealt with concerned the following major programmes within the medium-term plan: human rights (major programme 6), drug control (7), refugees (8), energy (11), environment (12), food and agriculture (13), human settlements (14), industrial development (15), natural resources (17), cartography (part of 17), science and technology (20), social development and women (21), statistics (22), transnational corporations (23), i.e. 14 out of the 19 major economic and social programmes within the medium-term plan. The major programmes in the areas of trade and development (16) and public administration (19) had been considered in 1982. The major programmes for disaster relief (5) and development issues and policies (10) are never covered by a special agenda item for the purposes of programme consideration, although some of their products (e.g. the World Economic Survey in the case of major programme 10) are regularly studied by the Council. The same is true of the major transport programme (24), no doubt because of its decentralization (managed by the regional economic commissions).

50. The problem thus posed is fundamental because of the central role of the United Nations both within the United Nations system as a whole and in the analysis of economic and social problems at the world level. It is, on the other hand, particularly difficult to grasp, not only because of the defective operation of the machinery and the inadequate and excessively formal character of the use of the planning cycle instruments, but also because of the complexity and variety of the Organization's programmes, the diversity of their objectives, and the distribution of the programming function among very many different levels of intergovernmental organs or experts. The examination of the operation of the machinery must therefore be supplemented by analysis of the objectives proposed by planning and co-ordination, and of the institutional organization of these functions.

The problem posed is fundamental but difficult.

51. The example of the mineral resources programme, within the major programme on natural resources, illustrates particularly well the deficiencies in the functioning of the machinery and the inadequate nature of the documentation available. The Committee on Natural Resources (CNR), which is the intergovernmental body for this sector, 22/ received information in 1983 on only a few of the products of the regular programme of the Department of Technical Co-operation for Development, a programme which does not exceed \$500,000, and no data at all on the whole of the United Nations regular programme (\$15 million in 1982-1983, including the activities of the regional economic commissions and UNCTAD), on operational activities (\$69.5 million) or on the activities of the agencies in the system, which, if the World Bank is included, approach a total of \$1 billion. 23/

The example of CNR shows:

The inadequacy of information;

22/ CNR was established by Council resolution 1535 (LXIX) of 27 July 1970. Its terms of reference include "assistance to the Council in providing guidance in the programming and implementation of activities in the United Nations system for the development of natural resources, particularly with regard to the development of water, energy and mineral resources," ... "the examination of reports concerning operational activities," ... "appropriate attention to the problems of research promotion," ... and "assistance to the Council and the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination in maintaining the necessary liaison between the activities in the field of natural resources of the regional economic commissions, the specialized agencies, the International Atomic Energy Agency and other bodies doing relevant work, with a view to ensuring the utmost efficiency and co-operation".

23/ Cf. document E/C.7/1983/12 of 28 April 1983, "Activities of the United Nations system in mineral resources in 1982-1983". Aggregate total: \$922.5 million, of which \$84.7 million for the United Nations, \$3.3 million for UNESCO, \$3.5 million for IAEA, \$2 million for WHO and \$828.2 million for the World Bank.

The impossibility of making proper use of the planning instruments;

and the impossibility of putting the evaluation and co-ordination reports to good use.

52. CNR was unable to make proper use of the planning cycle instruments in order to assist the Council in providing guidance in programming, as stipulated in its terms of reference. The proposals for the relevant parts of the 1984-1989 medium-term plan were submitted to it too late and in only one language and did not enable it to express its opinion. 24/ It has never had an opportunity to consider the draft chapters of the programme budgets concerning natural resources, although it meets in the odd years when CPC, the Council and the General Assembly consider these documents. Neither has it received the relevant parts of the reports on biennial programme performance of the United Nations, although the dates of issue of the two most recent documents of this type would have enabled it to consider 1978-1979 programme performance at its seventh session and 1980-1981 programme performance at its eighth session. 25/

53. Lastly, CNR has been unable to make as much use as it would have wished of the evaluation and co-ordination reports which have been provided to it, namely the evaluation report dated 1 March 1982 (E/AC.51/1982/5) and the inter-organizational report supplementing the former report (E/C.7/1983/12). The evaluation report, which covered a representative sample of activities of several organizations in the United Nations system in the area of mineral resources, concluded with fairly precise recommendations concerning delays in the execution of operational projects, the identification of the end-users of various outputs, and certain deficiencies in both the planning and the co-ordination of various United Nations services. The inter-organizational report, on the other hand, was purely descriptive. The quality and clarity of the evaluation report were acknowledged and appreciated, but

24/ Cf. in particular, Committee decision 7/1, 156th meeting, 27 May 1981, and paragraphs 139-149 of the report of CNR on its seventh session (E/1981/50, E/C.7/125).

25/ Documents A/C.5/35/1 of 19 March 1980 and A/37/154 of 26 May 1982. CNR could thus have noted the percentages of programme performance and the explanations given for the non-performance of certain programme elements, and noted for example, that in 1980-1981, although in the case of the DTCD natural resources programme 25 programme elements out of 32 had been executed as planned, on the other hand only 23 out of 36 had been executed in the case of ESCAP, 10 out of 21 in the case of ECLA, 8 out of 16 in the case of ECWA, and 16 out of 51 in the case of ECA. When the programme performance rates fall to less than 50 per cent (and even below one third in one case), it would seem only normal that the intergovernmental body responsible for supervising the over-all programme performance of the United Nations in this field should be informed and be given appropriate explanations.

no conclusion emerged from it: the two intergovernmental committees competent to consider it, namely CPC and CNR, seem to have passed on to each other responsibility for substantive decisions. CNR's consideration of the co-ordination report, on the other hand, prompted it to emphasize that one of its "principal responsibilities ... is to provide the Council with guidance in the programming and implementation of ... programmes", to state that it "was again unable to discharge this responsibility on the basis of the report submitted ... at its eighth session", and to request the Secretary-General to submit further reports on that question (cf. Council resolution 1983/59).

54. Given the fact that CNR has historically proved itself to be an effective body, ^{26/} it is abnormal that it should be reduced, at its eighth session in 1983, not only to proposing the above-mentioned resolution 1983/59 on the co-ordination of programmes, but also to noting (decision 8/1 of 17 June 1983) "the unanimous view of its members on the need to increase its efficiency" and deciding "to consider, at its ninth session, ways and means by which it could better discharge its responsibilities". However, the fact of being unable to receive sufficient information or the existing planning and programming documents recurs in the case of very many other subsidiary bodies of the Council.

55. An examination of the 19 major economic, social and humanitarian programmes of the United Nations within the 1984-1989 medium-term plan shows that five subsidiary bodies have been unable to consider the chapters that concern them and that several others have expressed regret at the delays in submission which prevented them from making recommendations. The relevant parts of the programme budgets were, for their part, submitted to only a few of the subsidiary bodies (this process was, moreover, disrupted in the case of the 1984-1985 programme budget by the delay in its submission which led to Council resolution 1983/51). The regional economic commissions and their subsidiary bodies have a system of regular examination of work programmes, but this does not seem to be the case with the majority of the central subsidiary bodies.

56. In addition, it has been confirmed to us by the responsible units within the secretariat that there is, for the moment, no established procedure for submitting the relevant parts of the "programme performance reports" to the subsidiary bodies. Similarly, the reports on the technical

CNR has been obliged to observe that it does not have the means to discharge its responsibilities.

The examination of the 19 major United Nations programmes shows the serious difficulties in using the medium-term plan, ...

... the other programming instruments, ...

^{26/} CNR in particular played a pioneering role in the co-ordination of water programmes (1975 Water Conference and Mar del Plata Plan of Action), highlighted the importance of energy problems, paved the way for the 1981 Conference on New and Renewable Sources of Energy in Nairobi, and launched the United Nations Revolving Fund for Natural Resources Exploration.

co-operation activities undertaken in many sectors are not submitted for consideration by these bodies (cf. Council resolution 1983/50, which requests that the work programmes and plans of the organizations of the United Nations system should identify clearly activities in technical co-operation carried out by those organizations and that information on activities in technical co-operation should be submitted periodically to Member States).

... and the
evaluation reports.

57. The in-depth evaluation reports, despite the efforts made by the Evaluation Unit of PPCO and the relevant recommendations contained in some of the reports, have not yet enabled "the Secretariat and Member States to engage in systematic reflections, with a view to increasing the effectiveness of the main programmes of the Organization by altering their content and, if necessary, reviewing their objectives", as provided for in the regulations governing the planning cycle adopted by the General Assembly in resolution 37/234. Internal evaluation within all United Nations units has, for its part, not yet yielded any result. Lastly, the decision-making machinery concerning the recommendations of the evaluation reports has not been sufficiently defined and the respective responsibilities of the various competent intergovernmental bodies have not been specified.

No systematic use
of the programming
instruments, ...

58. In short, the over-all picture is one of the partial use of a few of the programming tools by a few of the subsidiary bodies. At present, there is no systematic procedure enabling all the substantive bodies to receive in good time, in accordance with a coherent sequence, the whole series of relevant documents in order to enable them to discharge their responsibilities for the formulation and over-all review of programmes, as provided for in their mandates and as requested by the General Assembly in resolutions 31/93, 32/206, 34/224 and 37/234.

... which it should
be possible to
improve.

59. Furthermore, the programming instruments themselves remain to be improved. Many reports by the Joint Inspection Unit have repeatedly recalled the need to improve the conception of the medium-term plan (A/36/171, A/37/460, A/38/160), to set up a secretariat unit in order to bring about an improvement in the preparation of programme evaluation reports, to improve evaluation methods (A/36/181 and A/36/182), and to formulate and implement the rules and regulations governing the planning cycle. It is common knowledge that much remains to be done in this field and, here again, particularly in the area of evaluation, recourse to outside expertise would appear essential in order to strengthen and supplement the capacity of the Secretariat, and to improve the conception of objectives, programmes and activities. In the area of evaluation, this external expertise should be made available to CPC in the same conditions as those advocated in respect of co-ordination in the preceding chapter (recommendation No. 5 and para. 46). Parallel with this, the supplementary strengthening of the evaluation capacity of the Office for Programme Planning and Co-ordination would be extremely useful.

60. But if these various measures are to yield results, it is still essential that all the programming instruments be used systematically, as indeed they should be used. In this connection, it would appear particularly important that the lessons learned from the evaluation exercises should be applied to the conception of new programmes, and that the intergovernmental committees should ensure that they receive the explanations and analyses provided for in the rules and regulations governing the planning cycle. 27/ If on the other hand the programming instruments continued not to be used, their preparation by the Secretariat would constitute a pointless exercise and there would be no chance of their being improved.

61. The measures that might be taken to ensure that this is done in the future are set out in the following recommendations:

Recommendation No. 7: A special part of all reports of the subsidiary bodies of the Economic and Social Council should be devoted, at least every two years, to an examination of the content of all United Nations programmes in the sector concerning them and, on a regular basis, to an examination of the programmes of all the organizations in the United Nations system in the same sector. In accordance with the biennia, this part should be devoted to examination of the draft medium-term plan (or any amendments thereto), examination of the draft programme budgets, and examination of the programme performance reports, studies on operational activities, evaluation reports, and cross-organizational programme analyses.

Recommendation No. 8: All documents prepared for the planning, programming and evaluation cycle should be distributed to the subsidiary bodies as soon as they become available.

Recommendation No. 9: A very precise calendar should be drawn up so as to enable these documents to be produced and considered in good time. 28/

RECOMMENDATIONS

A special part of the reports to be devoted to examination of the programme;

distribution of documents;

calendar;

27/ See, in this connection, in particular rule 103.6 as defined in paragraph 158 of the report of CPC on its twenty-third session.

28/ Apparently, despite the studies already conducted on this subject, in particular the "Draft calendar for the preparation of the proposed medium-term plan 1984-1989" (A/C.5/35/4, 11 March 1980), these various calendar constraints have not so far been overcome.

improvement of
instruments, and
implementation of
rules and
regulations;

Recommendation No. 10: Every possible measure should be taken to facilitate the continuous improvement of the various planning, programming and evaluation instruments. In particular, the rules and regulations approved by the General Assembly should be issued in a format comparable to that of the Staff Rules or the Financial Regulations and given wide distribution. The attention of the subsidiary bodies should be drawn to the importance of certain of their provisions, in particular, for example, rule 103.6 concerning the types of analysis which should explain the choice of programme and subprogramme objectives within the medium-term plan.

recourse to outside
expertise;

Recommendation No. 11: Recourse to outside expertise to promote the improvement of programming tools and in particular the in-depth evaluation reports should be organized in accordance with the procedures defined in recommendation No. 5 and paragraph 46 of the report concerning co-ordination studies.

formulation of
recommendations;

Recommendation No. 12: Special instructions should be drawn up on the way in which recommendations in reports should be formulated and highlighted, in particular the evaluation reports and the cross-organizational programme analyses.

decision-making.

Recommendation No. 13: Procedures should be defined concerning decision-making on recommendations; the rules to be followed might be modelled on the provisions recommended by the General Assembly in resolution 38/229 of 20 December 1983 concerning decisions to be taken on the recommendations of the reports of the Joint Inspection Unit. 29/

29/ This resolution invited United Nations organs to adopt "formulations along the following lines:

- (a) Approves recommendations ..., and ...;
- (b) Approves recommendations ..., and ... in the light of the comments thereon by the Secretary-General (and/or ACC; and/or the debate in the Committee);
- (c) Reserves its position on recommendations ..., and in the light of the debate in the Committee;
- (d) Does not approve recommendations ..., and ...".

CONCLUSION

62. The recommendations made at the end of the three preceding chapters are based on the assumption that it is possible, by improving the conditions of dialogue between the Secretariat and the intergovernmental organs - in other words by acquiring the means of revising the type and style of the reports and documents submitted, to increase the effectiveness of the United Nations and the system as a whole in the economic and social fields. The issue thus formulated must be clearly defined in order to dispel any possible misunderstanding. The idea is not to transform the United Nations into a negotiating forum where all the divergences separating the industrial countries from the developing countries would easily be resolved, or to define priorities so forcefully that it would be possible to reduce the number of programmes in order to concentrate resources on a few major activities yielding significant results. Because of the constraints on the economic and social activities of the United Nations, it is possible to achieve only more modest results. But these results could be of some importance for the United Nations and, through it, the international community, and the nature of the issue must therefore be defined precisely.

63. Everyone is aware of the existing constraints, namely:

The differences in approach between Member States on the very nature of the role of the United Nations;

The existence of a limited global financial package, both for the regular programme and for operational activities, a package which has no chance of growing considerably or rapidly, at least in the current political circumstances;

The obligation to deal with all existing problems, in all fields and in all sectors, because of the convergent pressure of the most diverse interests of all delegations, which leads to a parcelling-out, not to say fragmentation, of available resources between a very large number of small programmes and small projects endowed with extremely limited means; 30/

The fact that, in these circumstances, the foreseeable types of activities are limited in most cases to the production of a few studies, reports and publications, the holding of a few seminars, the

Increasing the effectiveness of the United Nations and the system, ...

... because of well-known constraints, ...

30/ For the United Nations, in particular, cf. paragraph 47 and annex to the report of the Joint Inspection Unit (A/37/460) on the elaboration of regulations for the planning cycle, indicating the average number of Professional staff assigned to each subprogramme.

sending of a few experts within the context of projects, technical consultancy, research or training which only very rarely reach the pre-investment stage, and the production of documents on request in support of a few negotiating activities relating to particular points;

The obligation to relate these few limited activities to ambitious objectives such as: reducing the divergences between industrial and developing countries on most economic or social programmes, assisting the developing countries in solving their sectoral or global problems, initiating large-scale co-ordination programmes at the regional or world level; hence the visible existence of a huge discrepancy between declared ambitions and everyday activities, and the impression of unreality and of verbalism which results therefrom.

... can be situated only within the strengthening of its intellectual authority.

64. In these circumstances, an improvement of the Organization's effectiveness in the economic and social fields can be found only in the strengthening of its intellectual authority. To that end, it would appear sufficient for the activities of each programme, which are currently dispersed among too many routine outputs of often limited value, to be concentrated, for example:

In the case of over-all analytical programmes, on a few in-depth analyses of acknowledged quality, enabling possible spheres of negotiation to be more closely identified;

In the case of sectoral programmes, on a few interesting and widely-sold publications, or on a few efficient information and reference systems;

In the case of operational programmes, on training activities which genuinely transfer useful know-how and technology to the developing countries.

65. If this is to be achieved, the dialogue between the Secretariat and Member States must enable collective analysis to develop and then lead to the definition of accessible and precise objectives and to more appropriate "production methods". This report has endeavoured to show that, for this to happen, the following action should be taken:

An improvement in the dialogue between the Secretariat and Member States makes it essential to have recourse to outside expertise, ...

In the field of studies on the international economy, in the light of the increasing banality of descriptions and analyses, the descriptive parts should be very considerably curtailed and the critical parts relating to types of solutions should be strengthened;

In the field of co-ordination of the United Nations system, in place of catalogues and reports juxtaposing summaries of existing programmes, critical and constructive studies should be undertaken,

accompanied by clear recommendations and relating to differences of analysis between the various organizations and to efforts to identify duplication, lacunae and inadequacies in co-ordination;

In the field of planning and programming United Nations activities, the existing programming instruments should be used and an effort made to improve them.

66. In the three cases, the United Nations Secretariat alone or the secretariats of the specialized agencies cannot be asked to prepare reports or instruments of this kind. An outside contribution is essential in order to ensure that the efforts made so far in the areas of planning, evaluation and co-ordination go beyond the formal stage which they have now reached and become truly effective. Recourse to outside expertise by the Council and the General Assembly, with the assistance of subsidiary bodies such as CDP and CPC, must therefore be organized and financed by transferring part of the credits for consultants currently assigned to the Secretariat.

67. Of course, the purpose of such recourse to outside expertise must not be to deprive the Secretariat of a share of its responsibilities. Recourse to outside expertise should, on the contrary, assist the Secretariat in constantly improving its effectiveness, breathing new life into its dialogue with Member States and devising a new style in many fields. This collaboration between the Secretariat and outside experts chosen by the intergovernmental organs is not altogether new; the establishment by the General Assembly of ad hoc expert committees, the use of outside rapporteurs by the Commission on Human Rights and the reports of the Joint Inspection Unit represent examples of precedents in this area. But the more systematic use of this method which is recommended in this report for economic research, co-ordination, evaluation and programming requires more thorough institutional analysis. Its articulation with the Secretariat units dealing with these problems, namely, in the case of economic research, the Office for Development Research and Policy Analysis (Department of International Economic and Social Affairs) and UNCTAD's Money, Finance and Development Division, and in the case of co-ordination, programming and evaluation, the Office for Programme Planning and Co-ordination, should be subjected to particularly close scrutiny.

68. For this reason, the implementation of this solution will require more thorough research. If the Council were to approve such action in principle this year, additional studies by the Secretariat and the Joint Inspection Unit and their consideration either by a working group of the Council or by CPC would make it possible to define the relevant procedures (of which a few have merely been outlined and suggested in this report).

... which might be adopted in principle; ...

... its implementation will require more thorough research.

Note: The recommendations of this report appear at the end of each of the three chapters:

Recommendations Nos. 1-4	in paragraph 26;
Recommendations Nos. 5 and 6	in paragraph 48;
Recommendations Nos. 7-13	in paragraph 60.