

The research Training Programme on Regional Development illustrates another facet of the activities of the Commission for Social Development which, quite rightly, was warmly endorsed by the Council. As our statement before ECOSOC pointed out, the potential results of this programme will be of direct relevance to less developed and more developed countries alike. There has been serious criticism that, on the one hand, too much attention has been paid to programmes devoted to purely local development, while, on the other hand, concern has been voiced that planning at the national level is too far removed from the level at which implementation of these plans must occur. We hope, Madam Chairman, that by learning from the experience of others, and by training national personnel in the planning, administrative and evaluative techniques of regional development, a bridge may be found to link the national and the local. Canada will be happy, of course, to share her own experience in the area of agricultural rehabilitation and development, and we look forward to the first reports on this new United Nations programme so that we may benefit from the global experience.

The 1968 Conference of Ministers responsible for Social Welfare is important to social development in another way. It will focus attention on a particular theme, which in our opinion is a very practical one. The Conference will examine the role of social welfare programmes in national development for the purpose of identifying common elements in social welfare functions: formulating principles for social welfare programmes and related aspects of social development activities at the local level; promoting the training of manpower for social welfare; and recommending further action by the United Nations in this field.

We believe that a thorough examination of these subjects by social welfare Ministers and their senior advisers can lead to practical results in at least four ways. It will assist the Commission for Social Development in formulating more precise policies for consideration by ECOSOC; it will help the Commission and other organizations in evaluating the effectiveness of current multilateral programmes of technical assistance in this sector; it will provide valuable information to individual governments co-operating in bilateral programmes of technical aid; and finally, Madam Chairman, by coming together for the first time in an international conference devoted specifically to their concerns, Ministers and their advisers will have an opportunity to discuss, and we hope evaluate, their own particular programmes and problems in the light of others' experience.

If these objectives are to be realized, careful preparation will be required by all those who will be participating, particularly the social welfare ministries themselves. It is most important therefore that the Preparatory Committee pay particular attention to the need for the early distribution of its agenda and documentation so that ministries and other organizations and Agencies involved will have the maximum time for preparation. Given this serious consideration, we believe this Conference can be a significant and perhaps even an historic milestone in the evolution of the social welfare programme of the United Nations.