

the merger of TAC and the Governing Council of the Special Fund into one Governing Council for a unified United Nations Development Programme. The Commission on International Commodity Trade recently died a graceful and essential death, its functions taken over by UNCTAD.

We have seen moreover the development of what has been called the United Nations "family of organizations" - the Specialized Agencies, which have in recent years been drawn increasingly closer to the work of the United Nations itself, to the point where we might change our terminology to speak in future of the United Nations common system of organizations.

CHANGING ROLE OF ECOSOC

All these developments - with their common theme of increasing specialization - have reflected the changing needs of a changing world. It would be surprising if these changes did not signal the need for comparable changes in the role of ECOSOC itself. It would also be surprising if the founders of the United Nations who endowed ECOSOC with its functions had been able to see in any detail the role the United Nations would be required to play in economic and social matters 20 years later. In that 20 years, we have seen the urgent need for an assault on economic and social development emerge as the priority claim on the attention of ECOSOC and all the bodies that come within its orbit. The recent debate on emerging trends in the economic and social fields has been supplanted by the more urgent need to act. This is not to say that debate has become unnecessary, but rather to suggest that it must always be regarded as a prelude to action, be that action national, regional or international. If effective action is to result, the debate which precedes it must necessarily be precise, informed and specialized - hence the establishment of specialized bodies.

As each specialized body has emerged, the Council has been able (or should have been able) to withdraw from what might be called the action debate in that particular field. The responsibilities for detailed action have been delegated to experts. This process has achieved a new level with UNCTAD; it would be absurd for 27 representatives to sit in these halls debating in all solemnity the trade requirements of the developing countries when a better-qualified and larger body had made these needs its special concern. It should be with something very like a sigh of gratitude that ECOSOC hands over its detailed responsibilities in this field. The picture in other areas is no different. This Council has neither the time nor the necessary expertise to wrestle with the detailed planning required to make social development or international acceptance of human rights a working reality.

LEGISLATIVE OBLIGATION

To say that the Council has no further detailed responsibilities in these spheres is not to say that it has no work to do. In fact, its role has become more complex and more difficult to discharge satisfactorily. In the first instance, it has a legislative obligation with respect to its Functional

Commissions and subsidiary committees; the resolutions of these bodies must be approved as decisions of the Council if they are to take effect on an international level. Speaking for my own delegation, we think this task should be discharged with considerable restraint when it comes to revising the recommended texts, and with debate which avoids the temptation of merely recording once again national positions for the record.

Secondly, there will always be areas where action is required but which do not fall readily into the terms of reference of any of the specialized bodies. These areas will necessarily come under the direct jurisdiction of the Council, which will, by consequence, play the action role. Here, too, one would hope for a firm sense of perspective. There will be those topics that, essential in themselves, will not be of major importance when we draw up the balance-sheet of progress in the development process. Conversely, in other areas it may become clear that something more is needed than an annual and necessarily curtailed debate in the Council.

These responsibilities need not, and, indeed, should not, amount to the major work of ECOSOC. But when the urgent problems have been dealt with by the specialist subsidiaries, what remains to be done apart from the necessary job of electing the members of those subsidiaries, and ironing out conflicts in the annual pattern of conferences? To us it seems that the major and crucial role for ECOSOC will come in assessing and co-ordinating the efforts of the entire international community directed towards the process of development.

CO-ORDINATING FUNCTION

Development, both economic and social, requires expertise and sustained attention. By creating specialized subsidiaries, we have gone a long way towards meeting that need. In dealing with one problem, we have, however, created another - ensuring that the specialists work within some generally-approved overall pattern without conflict or friction. If we are to make any sense of the notion of a joint effort or a common system, there must be some one body which attempts to assess the process of development in all its aspects. The job must be done, but why ECOSOC? In part because the United Nations itself, as an agency, is engaged in so many action areas directed towards the ultimate goal of development that it needs at all times to keep an eye on the nature of the forest. It is not enough to work on the theory that if you have many strong trees the forest will take care of itself. The United Nations is an agency but *not* an agency like any other, and it is the Charter responsibility of this Council to advise the United Nations about what is going on in the economic and social fields.

None of this is new. Indeed, the most significant developments in the Council's work in the past two years have taken place precisely in the field of co-ordination - the insistence on priorities and planning in the work of the Functional Commissions, the attendance of Council officers at meetings of the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination, the continuing efforts to work out a coherent and

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