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THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL AND SUBSIDIARY BODIES

The Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and its subsidiary bodies are the principal groups through which the United Nations endeavours to promote higher standards of living and conditions of economic and social progress. The Council is composed of 18 members elected by the General Assembly who serve for staggered terms of three years, a third of the seats on the Council being filled by elections each year [see Appendix II]. Canada was one of the first members of the Council and served on it from 1946 to 1948, from 1950 to 1952 and from 1956 to 1958.

The Economic and Social Council reports annually on its work to the General Assembly. Reporting to the Economic and Social Council are seven Functional Commissions and one Sub-Commission (Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities). These Commissions are responsible for work programmes in specific fields and include the Population Commission, the Commission on the Status of Women, the Commission on Narcotic Drugs, the Commission on International Commodity Trade, the Statistical Commission, the Social Commission and the Human Rights Commission.

As well as initiating programmes, the Council co-ordinates the economic and social and relief programmes carried out by the subsidiary bodies of the United Nations and by related agencies. The Technical Assistance Committee (TAC), a standing Committee of the Council, has general responsibility in the field of technical assistance. The United Nations Special Fund, which provides assistance for relatively large projects beyond the scope of United Nations programmes of technical co-operation (EPTA and the regular programmes) also reports to the ECOSOC. In addition, four Regional Economic Commissions, for Europe, Asia and the Far East, Latin America and Africa, provide forums for exchange of information and co-operative endeavours in matters of regional concern. ECOSOC receives yearly reports from the Functional Commissions, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). [The Functional Commissions are discussed later on in this chapter, UNICEF in Chapter VI, UNRWA in Chapter IV and the UNHCR in Chapter VIII.]