

Inter-Governmental Maritime Consultative Organization

The Inter-governmental Maritime Consultative Organization (IMCO), which was designed to promote co-operation among governments in international shipping problems, has not yet come into being because the Convention establishing it has not been ratified by the required number of countries.

Canada ratified the Convention on October 30, 1948 — the first country to do so. Since then Australia, Burma, France, Greece, Ireland, Israel, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and the United States have deposited instruments of ratification.

There have been no meetings, since the first one in 1948, of the Preparatory Committee which was set up as an interim body pending the establishment of IMCO.

International Refugee Organization

The International Refugee Organization (IRO) has now ceased operations after giving assistance to more than 1,600,000 persons. In addition to noting the activities of the Organization during the last year of its existence, this article will summarize briefly the history of this important Specialized Agency of the United Nations.

Soon after the war, in February 1946, the General Assembly of the United Nations agreed unanimously that the problem of refugees and displaced persons deserved immediate attention. Next the Economic and Social Council examined the problem, and finally on December 15, 1946 the Constitution of the IRO was adopted by the General Assembly by a vote of 30 to 5, with 18 abstentions. The Preparatory Commission for the International Refugee Organization (PCIRO) was set up to bring IRO into being.

The first session of PCIRO which opened on February 11, 1947 was attended by representatives of Canada, the Dominican Republic, France, Guatemala, the Netherlands, Norway, the United Kingdom and the United States. The Organization began operations on July 1, 1947 at a time when thirteen governments had signed the constitution of IRO, but only six had ratified. This was an expression of faith in international good will on the part of the governments represented at the first PCIRO meeting, and an indication by those governments of the urgency and importance which they attached to refugee problems.

Fifteen ratified signatures and a firm subscription of 75 per cent of the operational budget of the IRO were required to bring its constitution into force, and these requirements were fulfilled in August 1948. The following month fifteen governments were represented at the first meeting of the IRO general council. Eventually sixteen members of the United Nations and two non-members¹ comprised the membership of IRO.

¹Members of IRO listed according to the order in which they signed the Constitution: United States, Canada, Guatemala, France, Dominican Republic, Netherlands, Norway, United Kingdom, New Zealand, China, Belgium, Iceland, Australia, Venezuela, Luxembourg, Denmark, Italy, Switzerland. Eight other governments signed but did not ratify the Constitution.