

The usual difference of opinion was manifest among the delegations as to the relative competence of the Assembly and the Council to deal with minorities questions. The delegations of Greece, Poland, Roumania, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia declared that, under the Minorities Treaties, the right to judge as to whether the treaties were improperly applied was within the competence of the Council alone.

Several speakers reaffirmed the principle on which agreement was unanimous in 1930, that the solution of the minorities problem was to be found in constant co-operation and mutual confidence between the majority and the minority in each country. While minorities had rights, they also had duties toward their respective States.

In the opinion of the Polish delegation, the League's task in regard to the protection of minorities could never give complete satisfaction to the moral conscience of the world until two conditions had been fulfilled, namely, that the claims of minorities should never be inspired by reasons unconnected with their object, and that all minorities should be protected. Further, the opinion was expressed that the Sixth Committee could, with advantage, give its opinion in the case of minorities not protected by special treaties.

The German delegation laid great stress on the need for establishing a procedure which would, in practice, more effectively ensure the protection of minorities, and suggested the creation of a body consisting of persons independent of the States which have signed undertakings in regard to minorities to advise the Minorities Committees or the Council when desired. The opinion of delegations in regard to this policy was divided.

Emphasis was laid by several delegations on the great importance of publicity in the protection of minorities. In the German delegation's opinion, the number of decisions of Committees rendered public has constituted only a very small fraction of the total of decisions taken and these related almost exclusively to questions of slight importance or to matters in which the opinion formulated was favourable to the Government concerned. It was pointed out by the Yugoslav delegation that the Governments concerned were sometimes obliged to refuse publication because the petitions in question contained, in their opinion, elements of propaganda.

Observations were also made to the effect that the provision in the Madrid resolution relating to the constitution of Minorities Committees of five members should be interpreted in as broad a sense as possible, and that—as is also contemplated in the Madrid resolution—the Committees should hold meetings between Council sessions more often than has hitherto been the case.

Finally, certain delegations emphasized the importance of Minorities Committees making use of any information they considered appropriate, and of bearing in mind that it was in their power to hear petitioners and to consult experts.

The Norwegian delegation proposed that it would be desirable for the Minorities Section of the Secretariat to collect the fullest possible documentary material and information, so as to avoid any needless delay in the examination of questions by the Committees and to lessen the burden laid on the Governments concerned by repeated requests for further information. This proposal was supported by several other delegations during the discussion.

Mandates

The Sixth Committee observed that, thanks to the efforts of the mandatory Powers and the able and impartial co-operation of the Permanent Mandates Commission, the mandate system has continued to produce excellent results. This is strikingly illustrated by the case of the Kingdom of Iraq, to which it has been possible to grant complete independence and admission to the League, the final stage in the system provided by Article 22 of the Covenant.