

his own departure and to report on further developments. This appointment was made despite criticism from the Soviet Union and when Mr. Hammarskjold returned to United Nations Headquarters, Mr. Sukari Tuomioja, the Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, remained in Vientiane to review the economic situation in the country and, in particular, the role of economic and technical assistance that might be given by the United Nations. He was also empowered to follow up the discussions initiated by the Secretary-General with the Laotian Government.

In his report of the situation, which was forwarded to the Secretary-General in mid-December, Mr. Tuomioja put forward a proposal for co-ordinated action by the United Nations and Specialized Agencies concerned to assist Laos in its economic and social development. He envisaged assistance in the development of basic sections of the economy such as natural resources, transport and communications. In addition, he suggested, attention should be given to the development of a suitable education system and to community development, with special regard to minority groups, and to improvement of health conditions and the public administration system. The report suggested that a series of short-term projects should also be undertaken and that Laotian requests for technical assistance should be favourably considered. The speeding-up of the implementation of the commitments of the Special Fund under the plan for the development of the Mekong River was specifically mentioned. Mr. Tuomioja recommended the appointment of a high-level United Nations official to co-ordinate the various development programmes.

As a result of Mr. Tuomioja's preliminary study, the Secretary-General requested the Commissioner for Technical Assistance, Mr. Roberto M. Heurtematte, to visit Laos to discuss with Laotian authorities various technical and organizational questions relating to the implementation of such a programme. It is expected that a decision on the recommendations will be taken after the various consultations have been completed.