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Supplementary Paper

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Review and Re-Appraisal of the Role and Functions
of the Economic and Social Council: Statement by the
Permanent Representative of Canada and Chairman of the
Canadian Delegation to the 38th Session of ECOSOC,
Ambassador Paul Tremblay, March 23, 1965.

After six years absence it requires a certain temerity to return to the ECOSOC stage to comment on the Council's role and functions. Canada has been out of the mainstream of the Council's developments during a period in which the whole structure of United Nations efforts directed towards economic and social development have changed beyond recall.

The review and reappraisal of the role and functions of ECOSOC now before us is one of the most important and most difficult items on our agenda this year. We have no grand plan, nor even specific proposals to offer at this stage. Indeed I think it would be ill-judged to do so because this is a subject which, more than most, will benefit by a preliminary and frank exchange of views. Any action which may flow from our debates here must emerge as the consensus of all the representatives around this table acting in the interests of the entire organization. No such consensus will emerge if we do not first probe each other's thinking and exchange suggestions offered with no commitment beyond the belief that they might possibly point the way to constructive revision and change. It is in this sense of thinking out loud that I make the following tentative comments. They represent the accumulated impressions of a country which has followed the Council's work with intense interest since the United Nations began but which, for the past six years, has witnessed its operations from the sidelines.

Every organization, every human enterprise, must stop periodically to take stock of the work it has done and the work it was set up to do. Otherwise it runs the risk of becoming stagnant or, even worse, superfluous to the society in which it exists. The immediate need to review and reappraise the work of the Council has arisen not only because of the passage of time. To a certain extent it is an inevitable result of our collective decision to establish as an organ of the General Assembly the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. This is perhaps the most important decision the United Nations has taken in the economic field in recent years. In our view, UNCTAD's establishment will have an effect on ECOSOC which will be profound and should be beneficial. If we do not revise ECOSOC's role and methods in the light of UNCTAD's establishment, we shall be shortsighted indeed.