

CANADIAN DELEGATION TO THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY
(FIFTEENTH SESSION)

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United Nations Programme of Technical Assistance:
Arrangements to facilitate prompt supply of technical
assistance personnel

Statement by Mr. W. B. Nesbitt, Chairman of the Delegation
in the Second Committee, December 9, 1960

Mr. Chairman:

It gives me great satisfaction to introduce resolution A/C.2/L.532 to this Committee, since although it may be less far-reaching in its implications than some of the other resolutions which the Committee has dealt with at this session, my Delegation believes that, if adopted, it would significantly stimulate the future growth and development of the United Nations programmes of technical assistance.

The various technical assistance programmes which have developed within the United Nations framework have become important factors in the economic development of less-developed countries. As distinguished Delegates know, over the years several thousand experts have served in a great variety of fields of activity in most of the member countries of the United Nations and its related agencies. The demand for the services of highly-qualified personnel has been growing steadily and there is every reason to believe that it will continue to grow. It is for this reason that we believe that governments of countries which are able to supply such people should be encouraged to consider ways and means of making their recruitment easier and quicker, and in this way to prepare themselves to respond to the demand as it develops.

Many of the countries represented here have supplied experts for United Nations assignments in other countries and most have made use of the services of such experts. All are undoubtedly well aware of the difficulties that are encountered in finding suitable people for such assignments. The demand for special skills is growing in developed and less-developed countries alike, and even when people with the qualifications needed for a specific job are found it is not always easy to obtain their release from their

CANADIAN CONTRIBUTION TO THE UNITED NATIONS
ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR LATIN AMERICA

STANDARD FORM NO. 64
1950

Trade Office
250 Third Avenue
New York 10010

Mr. Secretary
United Nations Secretariat
Economic Commission for Latin America
Río de Janeiro, Brazil

Dear Sir:

Mr. Chairman,
I give my great appreciation to the Commission for the work it has done in the field of economic development of Latin America. It is a pleasure to see that the Commission has been able to bring about a better understanding of the economic situation of the countries of the region and to help them to develop their resources more effectively. The Commission's work has been most valuable and its reports have been most helpful. I am sure that the Commission will continue to make a valuable contribution to the economic development of Latin America in the future.

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regular employment or to induce them to interrupt what are usually successful and attractive careers to go to other countries and unfamiliar environments for relatively short periods of time.

The standards set by the United Nations and its related agencies for the people they recruit are high, and rightly so, since no country which requests a technical assistance expert is prepared to accept less than the best available talent. Similarly, no supplying country which takes its responsibilities in this field seriously will offer the services of people who have not the highest personal and professional qualifications that can be found.

But it is precisely these highly-qualified people who are in the most demand in their own countries, and who are therefore the most difficult to detach for United Nations service. It is clear, therefore, that special steps need to be taken to facilitate recruitment, and to attract qualified people in increasing numbers to the field of technical co-operation.

It is this that resolution L.532 seeks to encourage. As distinguished delegates will have noted, the resolution confines itself to practical and concrete recommendations.

Before going on to analyze some of these specific recommendations, I should perhaps mention two aspects of United Nations technical co-operation which are not dealt with in the resolution, because we and our distinguished co-sponsors have not thought them relevant to its purposes.

We are well aware, Mr. Chairman, that the resolution does not touch upon the criticisms which some countries have made from time to time about the less than complete advantage which United Nations agencies have taken of their resources of available expert personnel. Members of the Committee will recall that the distinguished representative of New Zealand, one of our co-sponsors, referred in his statement last week to the fact that the opportunities for recruitment in his country had not yet been exploited to the full, and expressed the hope that all those countries capable of providing people with the necessary qualifications would be given the opportunity to do so.

My Delegation shares this hope, but in preparing this draft resolution we and our co-sponsors, including the distinguished delegation of New

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Zealand, confined ourselves to suggestions to governments about what they might consider doing to overcome some of the internal problems which tend to impede smooth and rapid recruiting. The resolution does not address itself to the authorities administering United Nations programmes on their role in the development and refinement of programmes capable of meeting changing and expanding demands.

Furthermore, the resolution does not deal with the extent of the financial resources provided for United Nations programmes of technical assistance, nor with their expansion. We have already dealt with a number of resolutions at this Session bearing on those aspects of the matter, and we do not consider it relevant to the aims of resolution L.532 to introduce them again. The resolution is intended to contribute to the overcoming of recruitment difficulties which would continue to exist regardless of the size of the United Nations programmes for which recruitment was taking place unless appropriate measures were taken to resolve them.

The resolution's objectives are severely practical and are deliberately limited since we believe that the setting and attainment of limited objectives are in this case likely to produce more satisfactory tangible consequences than would a more elaborate set of broader proposals.

I turn now, Mr. Chairman, to the specific terms of the resolution. The first two preambular paragraphs refer to the recruiting situation as it now exists and as it is expected to develop not only in relation to United Nations technical assistance programmes generally, but also in relation to the needs of the Trust Territories and of the newly independent states.

The report of the Committee on Programme Appraisals of ECOSOC (Document E/3347/Rev. 1, para. 372), and the Secretary-General's report on opportunities for International Co-operation on behalf of Trust Territories and Newly-Independent States (Document A/4585, para. 26), summarize the points which I have made in my general comments.

Preambular paragraph 3 cites the value of promptness in ~~recruiting~~ and paragraph 4 the possibility of action by governments to place themselves in a better position to meet the growing demand for experts.

Operative paragraph 1 urges member governments to support and assist the efforts now being made by the United Nations and its related agencies to recruit experts.

Faint, illegible text covering the page, possibly bleed-through from the reverse side. The text is mirrored and difficult to decipher.

The next three operative paragraphs, numbers 2 to 4, contain the recommendations for additional measures on the part of governments about which I have spoken. I should like to comment on the measures singled out for attention in further detail.

Operative paragraph 2 places emphasis on promptness of response by member countries when they are approached by a United Nations agency for expert personnel as a consequence of a request made by another member country. I think it will be generally agreed that lengthy delays in recruitment can have seriously detrimental effects on the development of any technical assistance programme. There are many situations, indeed, where a rapid response is vital--in cases of natural disaster, for example, such as we have seen recently at Agadir or in Chile, or in other situations, which many member governments will have experienced where no general emergency exists but where the need for expert assistance for a specific task becomes urgent. In such cases, when the requesting government signifies that particular urgency attaches to its request, every effort should be made to overcome the all too prevalent obstacles to rapid recruitment.

Operative paragraphs 3 and 4 recommend for the consideration of the governments concerned certain devices which could, in our view, contribute to this end. The first of these is the establishment in national capitals of rosters of qualified personnel available for assignment by the United Nations and its related agencies to advisory or operational posts, especially when requesting governments find themselves in the position of requiring experts quickly.

(This proposal was referred to by the Prime Minister of Canada, the Right Honourable John G. Diefenbaker, in his address to the General Assembly on September 26. At that time, speaking of the needs which have arisen in distress and disaster areas in different parts of the world, Mr. Diefenbaker said, and I quote: "National action of a standby nature is obviously desirable...We suggest that experts, in an 'experts bank', if you will, might be recruited for medicine, public health, sanitation, public welfare, distribution of supplies, communications, transportation.. To set up an 'experts bank' would make for administrative stability instead of having to rely on a crash recruiting campaign for

this purpose after the need arises."

In Canada, Mr. Chairman, our attention was focussed on this aspect of the matter as a result of our participation directly and through United Nations agencies and such other international bodies as the International Red Cross and Red Crescent in the relief operations made necessary by the earthquakes in Morocco and Chile. We do not consider however, that the usefulness of the roster idea is confined to disaster situations. Provided, as the resolution states, that within their own constitutional structures, member governments find it desirable and feasible to do so, we believe that the maintenance of rosters could contribute substantially to shorten the recruiting process of qualified experts for a wide variety of assignments.

We do not suggest, of course, that this pattern is necessarily one which all governments would be able, or would wish to follow. Modifications would in any case be necessary in the various countries to suit local circumstances. We ourselves intend in Canada, Mr. Chairman, to establish such a roster of experts drawn from fields in which we believe our experience might be useful. Persons entered on this roster will be ready to accept at short notice United Nations assignments in countries which request them. I am happy to say that we have already taken the preliminary steps toward developing this arrangement on a workable basis. I should perhaps emphasize at this point, in case any delegation has doubts on that score, that none of the suggestions we are advancing contemplate for a moment any departure from the well-established and fundamentally important principle that the requesting government must have the right to specify the qualifications, personal, professional or national of the experts which it will receive.

I would not wish to create the impression that we consider this the only type of measure which could be taken by governments seeking to facilitate rapid recruitment, either for immediate requirements or for requirements which may not be unusually urgent. The use of National Technical Assistance Committees, which are referred to in operative paragraph 3, may be the most useful means to this end in some countries.

As members of this Committee know, National Committees, composed of representatives of governments, universities, trade union, industrial and professional bodies, have proved notably successful in a number of countries whose constitutional and administrative structure lends itself to this approach. The wide range of contacts and facilities which these Committees have built up have been extremely valuable in locating and recruiting high quality personnel for technical assistance assignments. Other effective means may also be evolved and we hope that as the pressures on available resources increase measures appropriate in different countries will be devised.

I come now to operative paragraph 4 which deals with possible means of encouraging personnel to accept technical assistance assignments. The report of the ECOSOC Committee on Programme Appraisals draws attention to the importance of bringing the value of service with international organizations to the attention of those governmental and other bodies from which potential technical assistance personnel are mainly drawn. It is regrettably true that even now the extent of the requirements of less-developed countries is not always widely known or appreciated. Similarly, the value to the expert himself of service in new surroundings is not always grasped. The fresh challenges and unfamiliar problems which confront him, and above all the working out of their solutions in co-operation with his colleagues in the country where he serves may often be of the greatest value to him and his own country when he returns home.

We feel, Mr. Chairman, that in the interest of the future success of the United Nations technical assistance programmes it would be desirable that governments bring the value of service under those programmes to the attention of those who might undertake such service. I emphasize, however, that this suggestion is subject to an important qualification which is embodied in the first line of operative paragraph 4 in the phrase, "subject to their own requirements". This has been inserted in order to protect the interests of those developing countries--of which there are a considerable number--who have supplied experts for United Nations assignments and will undoubtedly do so more and more in the

As members of the Board, I have a duty to report to you on the progress of the work of the Board during the year 1961. The Board has been very busy in the past year, and I am pleased to report that we have made significant progress in many areas. We have completed the review of the curriculum, and we have begun the process of developing new courses. We have also been successful in securing additional funds for the school, and we have been able to improve the physical plant of the school. I am confident that these efforts will result in a better educational program for our students in the future.

future. These countries themselves, of course, have very great need for experts and although their spirit of co-operation and their sense of shared responsibility for economic development everywhere in the world impels them to make some experts available to other countries in need of them, they cannot, of course, spare experts in great numbers. Nobody, I think, would deny that they are fully justified in ensuring that their own requirements should be safeguarded.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, I come to the measures, which might be described as "career protection" advanced in the second half of operative paragraph 4. It has been our experience in Canada, and we believe the experience in many other countries, that one of the most important single obstacles to rapid recruiting is the uncertainty about their own future that potential candidates for technical assistance assignments may feel if they interrupt their careers for a limited period of time to serve elsewhere in the world. We think this is a thoroughly understandable concern, Mr. Chairman, and I may say that the Government of Canada, and, I believe, other governments, are now engaged in developing just such career protection procedures as the resolution suggests. We believe that such measures will have a salutary effect on recruiting and that general adoption of measures designed to this end would be a useful contribution to the success of the United Nations technical assistance programmes.

We believe that adoption of resolution L.532 as a whole would have a similar salutary effect, Mr. Chairman, and it is our hope that it will receive widespread endorsement in this Committee.

Thank you Mr. Chairman.

These days, it is not unusual to find a person who is not only a member of a church, but also a member of a political party. This is a sign of a new era in our country, where the church and the state are no longer separate. The church is now a part of the government, and the government is now a part of the church. This is a great step forward for our country, and it is a sign of a new era in our history. We are proud to be a part of this new era, and we are confident that it will bring us a bright future. We are proud to be a part of this new era, and we are confident that it will bring us a bright future. We are proud to be a part of this new era, and we are confident that it will bring us a bright future.