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SOCIAL COUNCIL**



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ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON THE APPLICATION OF SCIENCE
AND TECHNOLOGY TO DEVELOPMENT (ACAST)
ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR LATIN AMERICA (CEPAL)

REPORT OF THE REGIONAL GROUP FOR LATIN AMERICA

(Mexico City, 1-2 June 1978)

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I. PREPARATIONS FOR THE UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY FOR DEVELOPMENT (UNCSTD)

Comments and Advice on Draft Regional Paper to be Submitted to the Regional Meeting

1. The Group heard an introductory statement by Mr. Victor Urquidí in which he recalled earlier work by the Group in close cooperation with the CEPAL Secretariat and welcomed this opportunity to consider CEPAL's contribution to preparations for UNCSTD, including the preliminary draft regional document to be presented to the forthcoming regional meeting. He also mentioned the current regional preparations, among them the subregional meetings in Guatemala, Kingston, Lima and Buenos Aires. He drew attention to the several CEPAL and other studies in the field of science and technology in the last few years. Mr. Urquidí stressed the full support of ACAST to the preparations for UNCSTD.

2. The CEPAL representatives introduced part I of document CEPAL/MEX/ACAST/RGLA/I/2, "Preliminary Suggestions for Preparing CEPAL's Regional Document for the UNCSTD", making special reference to the preliminary character of the document due to difficulties arising from the timing of the ongoing preparations for UNCSTD, including the schedule for submission of the national papers.

3. The participants made a number of general and specific comments and suggestions for the document, the most important being:

i) One of the main concerns of the document should be to illustrate the way in which science and technology should relate to the issues of development, with emphasis on the "extreme poverty of having" and the "extreme poverty of being" of the majority of the Latin American population;

ii) Stress should be put on the need to free scientific creativity from ideological repression;

iii) Although the document considers the main obstacles to scientific and technological development in Latin America, it does not sufficiently reflect the studies and practical experiences of the region in the last thirty years. It was felt that the present preliminary draft should be enriched by an analysis of the main Latin American experiences and realizations in science and technology, based on statistical data and other information available;

/iv) Due

iv) Due mention should be made of the importance of the social sciences for development;

v) The problem of the integration of science and technology into society should be contemplated, taking into account the historical factors that determined the present marginalization of science and technology from the social and cultural values of the region;

vi) The special characteristics and needs of the rural sector and the application of the suitable technology should be included;

vii) The improvement of education for science and technology should be emphasized;

viii) Attention should be given to the importance of basic research, the need for the countries to provide resources for it at an adequate level, the interlocking of basic and applied research, and the desirability for joint ventures in basic research among the countries of the region as a way to use efficiently scarce resources;

ix) Mention should be made that with regard to scientific and technological knowledge in many countries of the region. There is an insufficient and distorted demand and not only a problematique of supply;

x) The educational system should be given more attention in the document;

xi) The important role of the international organizations should be mentioned, and

xii) The document should reflect the agenda items of the conference and the selected subject areas should be used for illustrative purposes.

Contribution to a Preliminary Programme of Action

4. The CEPAL representatives introduced Part II of document CEPAL/MEX/ACAST/RGLA/I/2 containing inputs for a programme of action which have been distilled from the recommendations of various international fora.

/5. The participants

5. The participants of the meeting offered several comments and suggestions for the programme of action with a view to placing more emphasis on:

- i) The identification of the ends and not only of the means for development;
- ii) The specific problematiques of the Latin American region;
- iii) The application of science and technology to the development of the rural areas for the benefit of the less favoured strata of the population;
- iv) The importance of social science;
- v) The importance of integrating the knowledge of different sciences and technologies into a holistic understanding of development;
- vi) The role of the scientific community, and
- vii) The funding of research and development.

Involvement of Regional Non-governmental Organizations and the Scientific-technological Community

6. The representative of OST and UNCSTD introduced the subject describing the NGO's participation in the preparatory process for UNCSTD. In this context, the role of NGO's at the regional level was discussed and considered to be fundamental to the success of the Conference. The Chairman asked the Secretariat to prepare a list of Latin American NGO's so as to enable ACAST to get in contact with them. Emphasis was placed on the function of ACAST in securing the collaboration of scientists concerned with the problems of developing countries.

II. REGIONAL ASPECTS OF A HARMONIZED SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY POLICY FOR PROGRAMMES WITHIN THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM

7. Mr. Urquidi gave background information with regard to this subject pointing out that a new report is being prepared by an ACAST Working Group for consideration at the forthcoming ACAST session and, subsequently, by UNCSTD. Mr. Urquidi stressed that there was general consensus on the need for harmonization but not on the way to achieve it, and that the matter is unduly complex.

/8. The representative

8. The representative of OST and UNCSTD explained the ongoing restructuring of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs.

9. CEPAL's participation in the harmonization process will depend upon the outcome of UNCSTD recommendations and of the restructuring process. In any event, CEPAL participates regularly in the ACC Subcommittee on Science and Technology.

III. REGIONAL COMMISSION'S PROGRAMME OF WORK IN SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY FOR 1980 TO 1983

10. The representative of OST and UNCSTD introduced the OST programme of work in science and technology for 1980 to 1983, explaining in detail its four sub-programmes.

11. The representative of CEPAL presented the programme of work of the CEPAL Unit of Science and Technology for the next four years.

12. The participants of the meeting made the following comments:

i) The work programme was felt to be too industrially oriented and not to give sufficient consideration to the problematiques of social development especially with regard to rural areas, health and the needs of the less favoured strata in general.

ii) The shortcomings of interagency coordination were mentioned and it was recommended that UN activities in science and technology in the region be more closely coordinated with CEPAL.

iii) It was recommended that an interdisciplinary approach to the problem of the eradication of poverty be established starting with the topical preparatory seminars for UNCSTD.

iv) It was further suggested that CEPAL cooperate in the studies to be undertaken by OST on scientific and technological trends.

v) Finally a recommendation was made to strengthen the CEPAL Unit of Science and Technology especially with a view to the follow-up activities of UNCSTD.

/IV. PREPARATIONS

IV. PREPARATION FOR THE TWENTY-FOURTH SESSION OF ACAST

13. The representative of OST and UNCSTD explained the modifications of the provisional agenda for the twenty-fourth session of ACAST.

14. A recommendation was made that a member of the CEPAL Secretariat attend the twenty-fourth ACAST session and brief the members of ACAST on the results of the forthcoming Latin American Regional Conference.

V. ORGANIZATION OF THE SESSION

Opening and Duration of the Session

15. The Regional Group for Latin America of the Advisory Committee on the Application of Science and Technology for Development held its sixteenth session at the Mexico Office of the Economic Commission for Latin America (CEPAL) from 1 to 2 June, 1978. The Director of CEPAL's Mexico Office, Mr. Gert Rosenthal, opened the meeting and welcomed the participants.

Membership and Attendance

16. The following members of the Regional Group attended the session: Mr. Carlos Mallmann, Mr. Marcel Roche and Mr. Victor Urquidi. The Office for Science and Technology (OST) as well as the Secretariat of UNCSTD were represented by Mr. Vladimir Vasiliev. The Economic Commission for Latin America (CEPAL) was represented by Mr. Gert Rosenthal, Mr. Isaiás Flit, Mr. Aliber Guajardo Cantú and Mr. Niels Brandt. Further, the International Labour Organization (ILO), the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) and the United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA) were represented.

17. A complete list of participants is provided as Annex II.

/Election

Election of Officers

18. In the absence of the Chairman of the Latin American Group of ACAST, Mr. Carlos Chagas, Mr. Victor Urquidi acted as Chairman. CEPAL served as the Secretariat.

Adoption of the Agenda and Organization of Work

19. The Agenda as adopted is reproduced as Annex I. A list of documents before the Group at its sixteenth session is provided as Annex III.

Language

20. The Group expressed the opinion that the forthcoming sessions should be held in the Spanish as well as the English language.

Annex I

AGENDA

1. Election of Officers
2. Adoption of Agenda and Organization of Work
3. Preparations for UNCSTD
 - a) Comments and Advice on Draft Regional Paper to be Submitted to the Regular Regional Meetings
 - b) Contribution to Preliminary Programme of Action
 - c) Involvement of Regional Non-governmental Organizations and the Scientific-technological Community
4. Regional Aspects of a Harmonized Science and Technology Policy for Programmes within the United Nations System
5. Regional Commission's Programme of Work in Science and Technology for 1980 to 1983
6. Preparation for the Twenty-fourth Session of ACAST
7. Adoption of the Session's Report

Annex II

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Advisory Committee on the Application of Science and Technology to Development (ACAST)

Victor L. Urquidi, President, Colegio de México, Mexico
Marcel Roche, Researcher, IVIC, Venezuela
Carlos Mallmann, Executive President, Fundación Bariloche, Argentina

United Nations Office for Science and Technology (OST)

Vladimir N. Vasiliev, Deputy Director

International Labour Organization (ILO)

Roberto Tomasini, Expert, Employment Planning Programme

Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO)

Antonio Tapia, Chief, Joint Agricultural Section CEPAL/FAO

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

Gustavo Malek, Director, Regional Office for Science and Technology

World Health Organization (WHO)

Margaret Cammaert, Division of Health Services, PAHO/WHO

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

Patricio Silva, Regional Projects Division, RBLA

United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO)

Tulio de Andrea, Principal Advisor on Industrial Development

United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA)

Raúl Reyna, Programme Officer

Economic Commission for Latin America (CEPAL)

Gert Rosenthal, Director, Mexico Office
Isaías Flit, Science and Technology Coordinator
Aliber Guajardo Cantú, Regional Advisor
Niels Brandt, Expert in Science and Technology

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Annex III

LIST OF DOCUMENTS

1. Provisional Agenda (CEPAL/MEX/ACAST/RGLA/I/1)
2. Preliminary Suggestions for Preparing CEPAL's Regional Document for the United Nations Conference on Science and Technology for Development (CEPAL/MEX/ACAST/RGLA/I/2)
3. Proposed CEPAL Programme of Work in Science and Technology for 1980 to 1983 (CEPAL/MEX/ACAST/RGLA/I/ID.1)
4. Resolution Adopted by the Economic and Social Council (E/RES/1978/5)
5. Provisional Agenda for the Twenty-fourth Session of ACAST (E/C.8/57)
6. Resolutions Adopted by the Preparatory Committee at its Second Session
7. OST Programme of Work in Science and Technology for 1980 to 1983

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