

MEETING ON SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND DEVELOPMENT
IN LATIN AMERICA

(Mexico City, 2-7 December 1974)

Information Note

ECLA has convened a Meeting on Science, Technology and Development in Latin America, to be held in Mexico City from 2 to 7 December 1974.

General background

The United Nations has shown increasing concern over the scientific and technological backwardness of the lower-income countries, which partly explains the limited capacity of the developing countries for economic expansion. At the United Nations Conference on the Application of Science and Technology for the Benefit of the Less Developed Areas (Geneva, 1963), an Advisory Committee 1/ was set up and requested to examine the causes and repercussions of this scientific and technological lag in order to devise ways of overcoming it. In resolution 1155 (XLI), the United Nations Economic and Social Council welcomed the proposal of the Advisory Committee to establish a World Plan of Action designed to provide a general framework for the joint efforts of developing and developed countries to create institutions and machinery for the promotion of scientific and technological progress. On the basis of the World Plan of Action 2/ adopted by the Advisory Committee in February 1971, regional plans were prepared in line with the general objectives of the International Development Strategy.3/ The

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

2/ World Plan of Action for the Application of Science and Technology to Development, United Nations, New York, 1971.

3/ See United Nations, Action Programme of the General Assembly for the Second United Nations Development Decade, New York, 1970, and Science and Technology for Development, New York, 1971.

Latin American group of the Advisory Committee formulated a Regional Plan of Action ^{4/} which was discussed at the fifteenth session of ECLA (Quito, Ecuador, March-April, 1973).

Regional background

In addition to the views expressed and the mandates formulated within the United Nations, ECLA has taken into account the concern of Latin American governments over the distortions which technical progress - indiscriminate in some cases and insufficient in others - has created in the region, especially among the countries that depend excessively on the external supply of technology. The secretariat has devoted particular attention to the Declaration of the Presidents of America (Punta del Este, April 1967), which stated that "science and technology offer infinite possibilities for providing the people with the well-being that they seek", and accordingly called for the co-operation of the inter-american system to promote scientific and technological progress. The background to this Declaration can be found in the proceedings of the Conference on the Application of Science and Technology to the Development of Latin America (CASTALA) sponsored by UNESCO in Chile (1965). The Conference of Ministers of Education and Officials Responsible for the Promotion of Science and Technology for the Development of Latin America and the Caribbean (MINESIA), held in Venezuela in 1971, and the resolutions adopted by the Specialized Conference on the Application of Science and Technology to Latin American Development (CACTAL) (Brasilia, May 1972), sponsored by the Organization of American States (OAS), should also be borne in mind.

In the light of these considerations and of ECLA's work in the identification of the socio-economic problems of Latin America and the provision of direct assistance to the countries, the member Governments requested the secretariat, at the Commission's fourteenth session (Lima, 1971, resolution 308 (XIV)), to begin to implement the

^{4/} See ACAST, Regional Plan of Action for the Application of Science and Technology to Development in Latin America, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico, 1973, with an introduction by the Executive Secretary of ECLA.

resolutions of the United Nations General Assembly and the World Plan of Action by promoting the dissemination of technological innovations relevant to Latin American development.

At its fifteenth session (Quito, Ecuador, March-April 1973), the Commission gave a more explicit mandate in respect of technology and Latin American development when it adopted resolution 322 (XV). Paragraphs 2, 3 and 4 of this resolution make express reference to the meeting now being convened in Mexico at the kind invitation of the Mexican Government:

"The Commission:

"2. Requests the ECLA secretariat to convene a meeting of representatives of Governments, to be held immediately before the fourth meeting of the Standing Conference of Directors of National Councils for Science Policy and Research of UNESCO's Latin American Member States, to initiate the analysis of the Regional Plan of Action for the Application of Science and Technology to Development and to examine the manner of implementation of the Regional Plan and the possibility of co-ordinating the Plan with other regional programmes being carried out by other international organizations and with the programmes and policies of the region;

"3. Accepts the Mexican Government's invitation to hold the above-mentioned meeting in Mexico City, with the Mexican National Council for Science and Technology acting as the host institution;

"4. Requests the participating countries, taking into account the progress of similar initiatives in the region, to express their views at that meeting concerning the advisability of establishing a committee or some other intergovernmental machinery in ECLA to analyse the application of science and technology to the development of Latin America".

Provisional programme

In order to orient the work of the Meeting, the debates will follow the provisional programme which is being sent to Governments with the present note and the general invitation. The main lines of the programme or agenda are self-explanatory. The opening meeting

/will be

will be held - as will all the working meetings - in one of the conference rooms of the Mexican Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the Tlatelolco Building and will be attended by His Excellency Mr. Luis Echeverría Alvarez, President of the Republic.

Participants

Since this is a meeting of an intergovernmental nature, the secretariat of the Commission has stressed how desirable it would be for all the delegations taking part to be made up of high-level technical and political experts, headed if possible by a Minister of State and including officials responsible both for questions of science and technology and for economic development policy in their respective countries.

In accordance with the decisions taken by the Commission, the Mexico Meeting will be open to all the member states of ECLA, including the two Associate Members. According to the Commission's rules of procedure, other member States of the United Nations which are not members of the Commission and international non-governmental organizations recognized by the United Nations Economic and Social Council may send observers.

Observers from the various international organizations of the United Nations system and other international organizations may also attend the Meeting as provided in the rules.

Documentation

Since the documents prepared by the secretariat for the Mexico Meeting are summarized in the provisional programme, no comment on them is necessary here.

It is hoped that the delegations of member Governments will submit papers on the situation of science and technology in their respective countries and that the representatives of regional and international agencies will do likewise in their own domain. In view of the limited nature of the secretariat's translation and reproduction services, distribution of these documents during the meeting would be greatly facilitated if delegations could supply an adequate number of copies for this purpose, if possible in both Spanish and English (not less than 150 Spanish and 50 English copies).

/It would

It would also be most desirable if heads of delegations could take sufficient copies of their general statements to Mexico. Copies could then be circulated to the Press through normal channels. Owing to its limited resources, the secretariat regrets that it is not able to provide this service itself.

