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ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR LATIN AMERICA

CO-ORDINATED ACTION TO MEET THE CONTINUING WORLD FOOD CRISIS

(Secretariat Note on Item 8 of the Provisional Agenda)

The General Assembly in its resolution 45 (I) of 11 December 1946 drew the attention of Member States to the gravity of the world food situation and made certain recommendations to these Members regarding increased food production.

At the Second Session of the General Assembly one year later the Food and Agriculture Organization drew attention to the fact that the world still faced a severe food crisis. In a paper entitled "Measures to alleviate the World Shortage of Cereals and Other Foodstuffs" the Food and Agriculture Organization reviewed national and international action but noted that efforts up to that time had not been sufficient to overcome the food crisis. It noted too that there were dangers inherent in the longer-term outlook for food and agriculture which required immediate and positive action of both a national and an international character.

At the Sixth Session of the Economic and Social Council the Food and Agriculture Organization drew attention to the urgent need for co-operation between all United Nations agencies in a sustained campaign to increase food production. In one of the reports it presented to the Council the Food and Agriculture Organization made the following statement:

The world still faces a grave food crisis which is likely to continue in an acute form for at least two years. Stocks of most foods are at low levels, and with the present large unsatisfied demand, a generally excellent harvest in 1948 would do no more than ameliorate the situation. The prospects for such a harvest in 1948 are not encouraging. It would require excellent harvests in all the main producing areas in 1949 to bring the acute stage of the crisis to an end, and world-wide bounteous harvest in any one year are improbable.

Once the acute stage is past there are reasons to believe that for a number of years ahead the world may find itself in a sub-acute stage of food shortage. (Document E/613).

/In view

In view of the gravity of the Food and Agriculture Organization's warnings, the Economic and Social Council considered what action it could take in this connection.

As a consequence the Economic and Social Council in its resolution 103 (VI) (document E/733) emphasized that food today is one of the main bottlenecks impeding economic recovery from war destruction and hampering the economic development of under-developed countries. It believed that in order to overcome this bottleneck, action would also be required in the realm of industry, mining, transport, and finance. Further, the Economic and Social Council recommended that

"Member States give serious consideration to the Continuing World Food Shortage and take measures individually and in co-operation with the FAO, and where appropriate, other international agencies and organizations of which they are members, to contribute to the solution of this problem,"

and invited

"the specialized agencies concerned and the Regional Economic Commissions, in consultation with the FAO, to study suitable measures to bring about an increase in food-production by the elimination of supply shortages such as those of oil, coal, steel, electricity, chemicals, which directly or indirectly affect the production of fertilizers, agricultural machinery and the availability of transport."

The Food and Agriculture Organization which will participate in the work of the Commission and will have a representative present at the First Session in Santiago is preparing a paper for submission to the Economic Commission for Latin America on "Co-ordinated Action to Meet the Continuing World Food Crisis".
