

P.2

INFORMATION SERVICE
European Office of the United Nations
Geneva

Press Release No. ECE/GEN/493
21 April 1960

(For use of information media only: not an official record)

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE
Fifteenth session

ECE CONTINUES ITS CONSIDERATION OF THE WORK OF THE COMMISSION AS A WHOLE

The discussion of Item 3 of the Agenda continued this afternoon. Several speakers addressed the Commission. It will be recalled that Mr. Nicolai FIRYUGIN submitted this morning a report supplementing the Soviet delegation's memorandum. He expressed his firm conviction that instead of a world divided into two separate blocs conditions could be created to facilitate a profitable exchange of goods and mutual services between all countries; while the differences in the development of labour must be taken into account international trade must be expanded without discrimination. That aim could be realized by laying down general principles for international trade on the basis of regional agreements for the different continents. In the light of those aims and desirous of developing large-scale economic co-operation between countries with different economic and social systems the Soviet Union was ready to take part in establishing principles for study by the new economic organization the creation of which was at present being negotiated by the peoples of western Europe with the United States and Canada.

Mr. Josip DJERDJA urged the need for intensifying and expanding international and particularly intra-European economic relations so that the harm done by the divided economy of Europe could be cured. In his opinion, that meant that the essential aim of ECE was to study the significant economic and political trends in Europe and to prepare the ground for progressive solutions which would lead to better European collaboration and to a strengthening of the economic links with the other parts of the world. With that end in view he would like to see a series of high level periodic meetings organized from the sixteenth session of ECE onwards; they would be concerned with the most important economic problems in Europe, particularly questions of payments and financing. It would be desirable for a group of experts to consider the measures to be taken and the proposals to be made to improve bilateral and multilateral exchanges between countries with different economic systems. He would also be happy to see a decision taken to strengthen the work of the Commission with a view to closer co-operation between the European countries and the under-developed countries. Assistance given to the latter would help to consolidate world economy and peace. ECE should try to find solutions to assist the under-developed countries, particularly in Europe.

Mr. Gheorghe RADULESCO (Romania) said that it was a propitious time to intensify international collaboration in view of the relaxation of tension in the international situation. ECE should therefore increase its efforts to organize intergovernmental co-operation in Europe. The Soviet memorandum contained all the elements for a practical step forward in regional economic collaboration. The proposals in it, moreover, were in line with the resolutions adopted by the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly. The money spent on armaments could be used to improve living conditions and for economic development. The gap between the industrialized countries and the under-developed countries was deepening steadily, but the money spent on armaments could bridge that gap by helping those countries to become industrialized. ECE might engage in studies on certain particular points, such as the development of the chemicals industry, a problem of great significance at the present time. A study of the improvements achieved in the various regions had been submitted to the Committee on Electric Power; the other committees might follow suit, each in its own province.

Mr. Jano BACZONI (Hungary) stressed the importance of the proposals submitted by the Soviet Union. The economic development of the Eastern European countries was continuing and Hungarian trade with the West had increased; it amounted to 22 per cent more than in the previous year. The development of international trade was unstable and the hundred billions devoted to armaments were unproductive; they might usefully be diverted to economic and social development. The organization of two closed regional economic groups in Western Europe was unfortunate. Confronted with that, ECE should become more active by creating better and more far-reaching European co-operation and should pay special attention to ways and means of eradicating the obstacles to East-West trade. Meetings between the most competent leading economists should be promoted and organized, as the Executive Secretary and the Soviet Union in its memorandum had proposed. Studies should be made of the factors creating obstacles to European trade, especially with regard to agricultural products and foodstuffs. There should be greater concentration of scientific, technical and economic efforts with a view to better economic development. Large-scale European industrial installations should be developed, especially with regard to oil pipelines, natural gas and high voltage power lines. To promote scientific and technical contacts was also an aspect of the Commission's work to which increasing attention should be paid.

Mr. Nicolai G. SYSOEV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) drew attention to the objective work carried out by the Committee as a whole, especially with regard to the improvement of trade and contacts in the technical and scientific field, in housing, in iron and steel and in the unification of navigation and transport, but many new problems were arising which called for the establishment of new bodies. It would be advisable for ECE to set up a permanent body for petroleum, another for the chemicals industry, and a third, as Poland advocated, dealing with river economy. A group responsible for exchanges of information might also be set up, to be especially responsible for arranging and co-ordinating study tours and seminars on the most modern technical and scientific achievements for collecting all the information likely to promote trade.

The CHAIRMAN said that as there were no more speakers on the list today, item 3 of the agenda remained open.

The Commission then went on to item 4 (Work of the committees and other subsidiary bodies).

Consideration of the work of the Conference of European Statisticians

Mr. F. FAIJFV (Chairman of the Conference) began by submitting a short report on its work during the year. He said that the Conference could play an important part in helping the Commission in its work of developing European economic co-operation, by expanding and improving the available statistical data on a basis of international comparability. He stressed in particular the Conference's work in the sphere of comparisons between the two main systems of national accounting used in Europe. The fact that the countries of East and West Europe used different systems of national accounting constituted one of the most arduous problems with which the experts were confronted in the European economy and the development of statistics. It was therefore an especially important task for the Conference, since it was the only all-European statistical organization. As the subject was particularly difficult it must be tackled with patience and understanding and the necessary time allowed to find a solution.

Many representatives stressed the importance of the work done by the Conference, with special reference to the progress made in elaborating methods of comparability.

The meeting rose after the Chairman had announced that the discussion of item 3 would be resumed tomorrow and would be followed by the discussion of item 4.

The next meeting will be held on Friday, 22 April at 10.30 a.m.