

UNITED NATIONS MANAGEMENT  
& DECISION-MAKING PROJECT  
UNA-USA

# THE ROLE OF THE UNITED NATIONS IN THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL FIELDS

by Maurice Bertrand



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## UNITED NATIONS MANAGEMENT AND DECISION-MAKING PROJECT

### Project Description

The U.N. Management and Decision-Making Project, a two-year research program of the United Nations Association of the USA (UNA-USA), is dedicated to strengthening the effectiveness of the United Nations and its immediate affiliated organs by offering constructive criticism regarding the management, governance, and role of the world organization. Financed by a grant from the Ford Foundation, the project reflects an effort to identify ways of making the United Nations work better in an era of increasing interdependence and of growing demands on the world body.

The project consists of two parts. Its centerpiece is a high-level, 23-member international panel that unites individuals with senior political experience and those with outstanding managerial skills. This panel will publish a final report in the summer of 1987 that sets out a rationale, priorities, and feasible agenda for the United Nations for the remainder of the century and proposes the type of changes in structure, procedures, and management that are necessary to carry out such an agenda. A preliminary report entitled U.N. Leadership: The Roles of the Secretary-General and the Member-states was released in early December 1986.

Second, in addition to the meetings and reports of the Panel the project staff will produce several research papers over the course of 1986 and 1987. These papers will provide a background for the deliberations of the Panel and will serve as a source of information and analysis for the wider policy-making public in the United States and other countries. As with all of the staff papers that will appear over the next several months, this study reflects the view of its author. It was reviewed by the panelists before publication, but does not necessarily represent the views of the Panel as a whole or the position of any individual member.

## INTRODUCTION

The United Nations is facing a paradoxical situation. On the one hand, everyone acknowledges that we are living in an ever-more interdependent world--and that we need a suitable political framework to manage this interdependence. On the other hand, because the only universal political organization we have is unable to deal usefully with the world's main economic and social problems, a sense of failure prevails. This paradox is not easy to explain, and, indeed, a number of different and often partial explanations are proposed. In the main, however, such explanations focus on the U.N. itself, emphasizing either its internal deficiencies ~ the "lack of political will" of governments and the so-called "crisis of multilateralism," without trying to establish a relation between the present conception and structure of the world organization and the unwillingness of many member states to use it.

In these analyses, no distinction is made between the political role of the U.N. in the field of peace and collective security and its economic and social functions. Economic and social activities are often treated as secondary or subordinate to political activities, as if a renewal of prestige and influence of the U.N. in the field of politics were the preliminary condition for the development or success of its economic functions.

A deeper analysis of the question shows that the problems facing the U.N. in the economic and social sectors have their own importance and that a better understanding of the role the world organization

should play in these sectors--and of the structure it should have to fulfill that role--is badly needed. Indeed, because improvement of the U.N.'s efficiency in the economic and social fields is a more likely prospect than improvement in the field of peace and security, it is the only practical way to create a better climate for international and peaceful cooperation.

Such a conclusion is inescapable when one has studied the nature of the present-day phenomenon of "interdependence" and the defects of our institutional response to it.

A clear indication of the shape of the structural reforms necessary for improving the U.N.'s efficiency in the economic and social fields flows from this study.



## PART I

### INTERDEPENDENCE AND THE INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSE

#### The Network of International Organizations

The institutional answer to the problem of interdependence between nations has been, since the first acknowledgement of the phenomenon toward the middle of the 19th century, the establishment of international organizations. Since then these institutions have grown enormously in variety, size, and number. Between 1900 and 1987 the number of intergovernmental organizations increased from 12 to approximately 340--a figure that includes 30 world, 50 intercontinental, and 260 regional organizations. In this network should be counted some 4,500 nongovernmental organizations that deal with everything from labor relations to environment, from human rights to disarmament. Every year the number of intergovernmental organizations increases by a figure close to 10, the number of NGOs by a figure close to 200, and all these organizations are growing in size.<sup>1</sup>

This quantitative development could justify optimism about solving the problems of an interdependent world, since increasing institutionalization should multiply the opportunities for the peaceful conduct of relations among nations. Yet, international organizations are often criticized for their inability to solve the most important global problems.

For this reason, the problems of interdependence deserve a more precise analysis. In such fields as transportation, communications, meteorology, technical problems, facilitation of trade relations between nations, health, and a few other sectors, where a relatively large consensus has been easy to establish, the evolution of inter-governmental organizations has proceeded with ease. In fields where economic and political cooperation are required, however, the process has been far less simple and natural. Here, there has been a combination of two different approaches to the development of international organizations. In one approach, ideology and theory have a very important role; in the other, international organizations are looked upon as a means of increasing the influence of the major powers. It has been the first of these approaches--an ideology of peace--that has led to the various attempts to establish a global political organization. The process, at this level, has been one of trial and error. The first attempt was the creation of an International Court of Justice by the Peace Conferences of the Hague at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, the second attempt was the League of Nations in 1919, and the third was the United Nations (and its system of specialized agencies) in 1945.

The development of economic cooperation at the regional and intercontinental levels has also been fostered by theory and intensive reflection. The idea that peace would result from the institutionalization of economic cooperation has played an important role in the development of a number of international organizations. The theory of "functionalism",<sup>2</sup> inspired the creation of the system of specialized agencies at the world level. At the European level, the

establishment of the EEC has also been the result of reflection on the failure of the League of Nations and on the irrelevance of the U.N. when it comes to solving the problems of the Western European countries.

But the institutionalization of economic cooperation has also been viewed as a means of organizing the zones of influence of major countries, whether it be to maintain the political, cultural, and often military links between the former colonies and their mother country (British Commonwealth, etc.) or between a major power and developing countries in a geographic area (OAS, etc.); or to develop the solidarity of nations that are already members of political or military alliances (OCDE, CMIA) or have political and cultural affinities (Arab League, OAU, etc.). The result of this trend is "a complicated network of independent and uncoordinated organizations, each having its own characteristics and roles and lacking a common approach to world problems. Indeed, governments are using this network of international organizations as much as possible to advance their own best interests with respect to military security, political influence, political propaganda, legitimation of their regimes and power, and such economic needs as security of supply, facilitation of exports, facilities of credit, and development assistance.

The importance given to such organizations varies according to its capacity to render the services expected of it and the type of international problem to be solved. For example, the critical nature of the debt problem of developing countries has enhanced the role of the IMF; the Chernobyl accident has drawn attention to the role the IAEA can play in such matters; and so on. Yet none of these

organizations--with the exception of the European Community, which has its own dynamism and makes progress toward more intensive cooperation and even some degree of supranationality--is limiting the independence or sovereignty of any state. Multilateral diplomacy is inspired by the same philosophy of national interest as is bilateral diplomacy.

In the economic and social sectors, the U.N. is far from being a center of, or even an important partner in, the network of international organizations. The IMF is taking care of the money, credit, and national economic policies of a number of countries; the World Bank and its affiliates are addressing the financing of development; the OECD, EEC, CMEA,<sup>3</sup> etc. are dealing with economic cooperation at the intercontinental and regional levels; and the specialized agencies of the U.N. system are addressing sectoral problems (industrial transport, agriculture, health, etc.)

The U.N. is fulfilling a unique role in the social sector as a result of its humanitarian activities, particularly those relating to refugees and human rights, but in the economic field its role is limited to some specific functions: superficial discussions of the world economy, ideological debates on North-South relations, collection and distribution of world statistics, some research in such fields as population and environment, the channeling of a very small proportion of official development assistance, certain specific negotiations (through UNCTAD) on various commodities, and discussions and negotiations on the Law of the Sea, transnational corporations, and the role of women in development. In some of these fields results have been obtained that have rendered important services to the

international community, but these fall far short of expectations about the role the U.N. might play in economic matters. One reason why the U.N. fails to exercise any intellectual or managerial leadership at all--even on the agencies of its own system--is that the member governments themselves are generally uninterested in the U.N.'s activities, as indicated by the low-level representatives they send to the various intergovernmental economic bodies. This is important to bear in mind when considering the ability of an uncoordinated network of international organizations to deal with the new and important problems that now confront it.

The Consequences of a Greater Acknowledgement of Economic Interdependence

What has yet to be faced squarely--and the crisis of the U.N. is only one symptom of this--is that the rate of growth of economic interdependence in the world is such that the problems arising from it cannot be solved by existing institutions. In other words, the entire network of international organizations, including the U.N., is now confronted with problems it is not equipped to solve. This fact is on its way to being acknowledged.

Since the first oil crisis it has become commonplace to talk of interdependence, without fully analyzing its characteristics and consequences. It is apparent, however, that we are witnessing a phenomenon that is important, massive, and multifaceted, and one whose rate of growth is accelerating. The oil crisis, the Third World's debt, international migrations, nuclear accidents, the spread of

international terrorism, drugs, exchange rate variations, and transnational corporations' strategies have demonstrated, and continue to demonstrate, that countries are no longer protected on their borders.

An historical analysis would show that the type of interdependence that has been developing since 1972<sup>4</sup> is different from the interdependence of the past. For a long time interdependence was limited to external trade. In the 19th century, as trade developed even further, it became necessary to regulate the means of transport and communications, and the advantages of cooperation in the field of health and science were discovered. In a parallel development, increased cooperation among the allies in two successive world wars--The Lend Lease Act and the Marshall Plan are the most significant examples--gave rise to a new type of interdependence and cooperation in important geographical areas. The world has now entered a third phase, in which interdependence is characterized by the existence of a world market, of a transnational production and distribution system through the network of transnational corporations, of a unique ecological zone, and of world problems that can only be solved if addressed globally.

A. Growing acknowledgement of the fact that the world's main problems are not correctly solved

It is being acknowledged more and more that the type of problems that beset today's world requires a global response and that existing multilateral and bilateral institutions are insufficient to meet them. Concepts and principles concerning individual problems are

rapidly evolving, but no serious attempt has yet been made to approach them comprehensively despite their obvious interrelationship. Also lagging behind are efforts to improve the institutional setting within which to address the most urgent of these problems:

1. The need for a common management of the world economy. In the last decade the uncontrolled growth of the debt of developing countries and sudden and erratic movements in the price of oil and other commodities and in exchange rates have appeared to threaten the stability of the world economy--indeed, the economy of every country. It is now being acknowledged that independent decisions taken by major economic powers on the level of interest rates, on the type of assistance given to their agricultural or industrial development and on their budgetary policies could seriously endanger the global equilibrium necessary for maintaining growth and preventing recession and unemployment.

There are, of course, various perceptions and various types of reactions to the discovery of the importance of these new constraints: they sometimes give rise to nationalistic reactions, including a tendency toward increased protectionism or even xenophobia, as in the case of the increasing South-North migrations. At the same time, the necessity of applying common solutions to world problems is not yet obvious to public opinion in such a way as to become a part of the program of political parties.

Nevertheless, progress is being made in this direction: governments are increasingly making known that they cannot solve such problems as unemployment, inflation, or the slowing down of the

national growth rate without taking into account the situation of the world economy, and this is progressively being integrated in the explanations of national problems.

2. The set of problems arising from what is referred to as the North-South relationship--the relationship between the rich countries of the world, which have entered the postindustrial age, and poor countries, whose people live in agro-pastoral conditions. Both North and South are at risk from the uncontrolled development of population in a number of developing countries in combination with the decline of population in the developed world. Both are also at risk from growing urbanization in middle-income as well as in poor countries, increasing the danger of famine, dire poverty, permanent unemployment, and disease in the South. And the development of irrational and uncontrollable political reactions among the Third World's new proletariat has serious economic consequences for the North (for example, in security of commodity supplies) and leads to a political destabilization at the world level, notably through an increase in migration.

3. The set of problems linked to ecology, environment, global commons, etc.; the increasing capacity for destruction of chemical and nuclear industries; the increased risks of pollution; and the necessity of developing rational and coordinated policies for the exploitation of our "global commons" in space, oceans, etc.).

4. Cultural, ideological and political problems, including those affecting security and peace, that must begin to be addressed in common fashion if all the other problems are to be solved.



## B. The Principles Are Changing

The principles on which the nations of the world base their external policies have changed and are continuing to change, owing to three important developments:

1. The acknowledgement that there is no way to establish independent national strategies in the economic and social fields without taking into consideration the strategies, methods, and principles accepted by the other nations.<sup>5</sup>

2. The adoption of a principle of reciprocal support, according to which the good fortune of one country can no longer be built on the misfortune of others, and economic solidarity sometimes brings with it greater advantages than does competition. The United States' prosperity is indispensable to the prosperity of Europe and Japan, and the reverse is true as well. No major creditor-country, major bank, or large corporation can accept the bankruptcy of a major debtor.

3. Governments are often ready to invest more time and effort to establish and encourage respect for common rules--for arms control, or for the equilibrium of external trade--than to maintain their own systems for ensuring the country's security or prosperity.<sup>6</sup>

To say that the search for an institutional response to the reality of interdependence is lagging behind does not mean that the process has not already begun and given some results. These new perceptions have created the need for reliable political institutions at the global level--among them international treaties that include precise systems of inspection for arms control or medium-term commitments to implement economic policies. An attempt to obtain

collective decisions that would have greater credibility than the resolutions of the U.N. General Assembly or the Security Council is seen in the decisions of the Western summits.

M. R. G. Darman, Deputy Secretary of the U.S. Treasury, in an interview with The New York Times in March 1986, likewise noted that interdependence creates the need for a solid world political framework that does not exist at present, saying "that it is absolutely essential to deal with the relations between what will be the monetary system, whatever its form, and the political system, the wider system in which the monetary system must work." This new type of relation is just in the process of being established, but outside the United Nations. Particularly since ~970, there have been regular summits between the two superpowers to discuss arms control, and between the major Western powers--United States, Europe, and Japan--to address the harmonization of their monetary and economic strategies. The experimental involvement of some representatives of developing countries in the Western summits at Cancun in 1981<sup>7</sup> indicated the direction these consultations could take in the future.

The trend in these new political institutions seems to be toward the highest level of representation and the limiting of their membership to the most important countries--which means the exclusion of small countries and, in general (Cancun excepted), the Third World.

This rapid review shows that there is a need for:

- a comprehensive, institutional answer to world problems in view of the fact that the present system, particularly the present network of international organizations--established on an ad hoc basis and uncoordinated--is obviously unable to provide a global response

- and a central institution able to provide, particularly in the economic field, intellectual and practical coordination.

The experience gained from the process of trial and error in establishing two successive global organizations and from a study of the role actually played by the U.N. teaches that a new modern global organization:

- should not receive, as its main mission, the unrealistic mandate to "solve" all international problems or to "maintain" peace now--and everywhere in the world

- but should be charged with trying to develop a better world consensus on economic and social questions, which is indispensable to the development of a better consensus in the political field.

Such an organization should, consequently, be equipped to:

- identify common problems in these fields
- facilitate discussions and negotiations on matters relating to them
- propose joint activities of member states in all fields where some consensus exists.

## PART II

THE PRESENT U.N. CAPACITY IN THE ECONOMIC AND  
SOCIAL FIELDSAcknowledgement of the Necessity of Reform

Everyone acknowledges that the present capacity of the U.N. to fulfill the functions indicated above--identification, search for common approach, establishment of joint actions--is very limited. Nonetheless, there is a variety of diagnoses to explain this weakness. One of the most popular blames "bad management," holding the Secretariat responsible for U.N. ineffectiveness in many fields," particularly when it comes to identifying world problems.

It seems fashionable to be severely critical of the performance, methods of work, level of qualifications, structure, and composition of the Secretariat. The Group of 18's report<sup>8</sup> has insisted on these aspects and has explained that "the quality of work performed needs to be improved upon. The qualifications of staff, in particular in the higher categories, are inadequate and the working methods are not efficient. Today's structure is too complex, fragmented and top heavy. The secretariat is divided into too many departments, offices and divisions." There is obviously some truth in this description. It is obvious that these deficiencies, particularly the insufficient level of competence--for too great a proportion of the professionals, including the high-level-post incumbents--is detrimental to efficiency.

It would be unfair, however, to state that the U.N. Secretariat has no capacity for identifying world problems on which some action is possible. In some sectors, this capacity exists, and it has sometimes been efficient. This has been the case, for example, in the population field, where improvement in collection of data, analysis of trends, studies showing the relationship between population and economic and social problems, and facilitation of exchange of views and experience have certainly contributed to a better acknowledgement of the various problems at stake, the definition of common approaches to solutions, and the adoption of effective population policies in a number of countries.<sup>9</sup> In the environment field, achievements of the same kind could be cited.

But it is correct to state, unfortunately, that this has not been the case in many other sectors. For example, the description of the problems facing developing countries in practically all sectors--science and technology, public administration, natural resources, human settlements, etc.--has not led to an identification of the manner in which the international community could help in solving them. In some cases, such as transnational corporations and commodities, the manner in which the problems have been identified has not obtained a general consensus. In other cases, such as drugs and disaster relief, the U.N. Secretariat has not been able, with the very small resources at its disposal, to cope with the magnitude of the problem.

It has also been noted that the traditional reports and studies prepared by the U.N. Secretariat on the world economy and on the world social situation are indeed not really directed at identifying issues

the world organization could tackle and to which it could make a contribution to a better common understanding. These studies are in general more descriptive than analytical.<sup>10</sup>

It is also true that sectorialization, which leads to a relatively equal distribution of the U.N.'s manpower among a number of sectors, including those in which there is no great chance of having any effectiveness, does not attribute enough importance to interdisciplinary and comprehensive research. This situation is aggravated by the fact that it has not yet been possible, in carrying out this very difficult research,<sup>11</sup> to associate with any outside research center in the world. Finally, it can be said that international civil servants are not encouraged to develop new, original, or bold ideas, and that, consequently, they practice a self-censorship in the drafting of their reports.

But the reasons for this situation are not to be found in the Secretariat itself. Rather, it should be acknowledged that member states have never clearly requested the Secretariat to prepare carefully this type of identification of world problems, have not devoted the necessary resources to it, and have not established a structure for this purpose. On some occasions the Secretary-General has been encouraged to go in this direction. He has, several times, been invited to propose "priorities." The preparation of the Medium-Term Plan, and particularly of its Introduction, should have initiated this kind of research. But when these requests have failed to receive any satisfactory response, they have not been followed by new suggestions to encourage the Secretary-General to take the necessary measures to render these tasks possible.

Delegations have not really examined the consequences of their requests. They have not questioned either the exaggerated sectorialization of the U.N. proper or the decentralization of the U.N. system. They have not enforced a personnel policy that would have increased the capacity of the Secretariat. They have not changed the mandates concerning the world economic and social surveys, have not decided to develop an interdisciplinary work force, have not decided to facilitate the contribution of outside research centers, and have not considered whether improvements in the structure of the Secretariat might not be rendered easier to obtain through a serious reform of the structure of the intergovernmental machinery.

All these questions are now in the minds of an increasing number of people. In particular, the idea that the necessary changes in the structure of the Secretariat are subordinate to a profound reform of the intergovernmental machinery has begun to make some progress. The Group of 18's report--which reflects the views of a majority of delegations on this point--has clearly stated that "the expansion of the agenda has led to a parallel growth in the intergovernmental machinery, which has in some cases resulted in duplication of agendas and work, particularly in the economic and social fields. The efficiency of the organization has suffered through this process, and there is a need for a structural reform of the intergovernmental machinery . . . . [T]here is also an urgent need for improved coordination of activities undertaken both within the United Nations itself and throughout the United Nations System. The structure of the present system makes coordination of activities a difficult undertaking . . . . "

These strong statements have not led the Group to propose profound changes in the present intergovernmental structure. It is obvious--both in the recommendations made and the type of study recommended on this subject--that the majority of the members of the Group had in mind that some "corrections" to the existing structure would be enough to solve the major problems in this regard.

At least the road is open to a serious consideration of the problem. And, indeed, a thorough study of the present situation will show that it is impossible, without a complete reshuffling, to correct existing deficiencies. A review of these deficiencies helps to understand why.

#### The Level of Representation of Member States

The first feature that strikes any outside observer is the low level of representation of member states in these sectors. In the Security Council and elsewhere in the political sector, member states are represented by ambassadors (and efforts are made to supply the ministerial-level representatives for some meetings), but in the economic and social bodies the majority of diplomats representing their countries have lower (and sometimes far lower) grades. Indeed, discussions of economic problems in the Second Committee of the General Assembly, in the Economic and Social Council, or in the Trade and Development Board are held by secretaries or counsellors; and these diplomats have no direct links, in general, with the ministries of finance or economy that are not directly concerned by the resolutions taken in these bodies.



The dichotomy that exists between world financial institutions--the IMF and the World Bank--and the U.N. on economic matters is obviously detrimental to the U.N. In the financial institutions the representatives of the ministries of finance and economy make decisions that have consequences for their economic and monetary policies; in the U.N. diplomats discuss general questions and approve resolutions that have no practical consequences (with some exceptions, as indicated, in such fields as population and environment). The only economic Intergovernmental body in the U.N. in which ministers themselves are their countries' representatives is the World Food Council; for one week a year, ministers of agriculture of 30 countries have the opportunity to discuss problems of some interest for their own policies. One may wonder why what is possible for ministries of agriculture is not possible for other ministries. This question has to be borne in mind when one looks at the structure of the U.N. intergovernmental machinery.<sup>12</sup>

#### Structure of the U.N. Intergovernmental Machinery

The chart in Annex I shows that the machinery for general discussion, studies, and negotiations in the economic and social sectors is not only very complicated but split among three different and never convergent branches that often deal with the same sectors, make the same types of studies, and have no common credible center for synthesis and reflection. A comparison of the agendas of ECOSOC, the Second Committee of the General Assembly, and the Trade and Development Board shows that very often the same topics are addressed

without any real difference of approach, and that the general debates in the three branches are repetitive and not directed at identifying common approaches.<sup>13</sup>

Moreover, the distribution of tasks among expert groups and intergovernmental bodies and the determination of the number of members of each of them do not obey precise principles. This structure has been built over time; the reasons for decisions on the composition and mandates of various bodies have often been forgotten, and no review has succeeded to reorganize it on a rational basis. The historical trend to increase the number of members of all of these committees has, in general, been counterproductive, rendering the organization of the work more difficult, lengthening the debates, and leading to a very low level of representation.

#### Decentralization of the U.N. System

The type of deficiencies noted in the Secretariat of the U.N. proper exist throughout the U.N. system. At this level sectorialization reaches its apex; there is no aspect of human activity that is left outside the scope of the programs of the U.N. agencies. This universality should, in theory, facilitate the identification of the questions on which useful action is possible and allow the international community to concentrate its efforts on them. This is, unfortunately, not the case.

It is, of course, possible to cite some sectors in which proper identification has been made and useful action undertaken. While the contributions of each agency in the sectors in which it is specialized

are difficult to evaluate precisely and are uneven, in a number of cases, such as education, health, labor relations, agriculture, and industry, they are not negligible. These partial achievements aside, the problems faced are the same as in the U.N. proper: Not only does an exaggerated sectorialization result in a failure to concentrate enough manpower resources and efforts on problems that may be capable of solution, but there is no system for facilitating global and comprehensive analysis and exchanges of views. The decentralization of the system', which renders it unable to define any integrated or comprehensive approach to the problems of development, is aggravated by the split between the Bretton Woods institutions--IMF, World Bank, and GATT--which are not universal (due mainly to the absence of the USSR) and have a system of weighted voting and the other agencies that use the system of "one country, one vote." The separation that exists in all countries between the Ministries of Economy and Finance and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs leads to a total absence of coordination and to contradictory policies between the Bretton Woods institutions and the rest of the U.N. system.

In this regard, the only instrument that ought to have ensured coordination, i.e., the Administrative Committee of Coordination (ACC), is neither equipped nor employed for this purpose. Despite a number of reforms and recommendations, the ACC and its system of subcommittees remains a total failure.

It is true that the ACC has not been created for intellectual coordination. The word "administrative" indicates its original purpose, and the agenda of its three short annual meetings does not deal with conceptual or programming matters .

All attempts to render ACC able to play a useful role in programmatic coordination have failed: creation of the Coordinating Committee on Social Questions (CCSQ) and the institution of "joint planning" in resolution 32/197; Regulation 3.7 of the U.N. Regulations and Rules on the Introduction to the Medium-Term Plan of the U.N., specifying that this introduction should "highlight" in a coordinated manner the policy orientations of the United Nations system; and attempts to use the Administrative Committee of Coordination-Committee on Program and Coordination meetings for discussions of major problems common to all agencies of the system. This last failure is not surprising, since the intergovernmental coordination is as weak as the intersecretariat one. And indeed, the coordination organized by the Charter (Article 58) was not intended to be very strong; and when the necessity of stronger coordination has been acknowledged, all the attempts to improve it have failed.<sup>14</sup>

#### Establishment of Joint Actions of Member States

Historically, the U.N. has succeeded in establishing two categories of joint actions of member states:

- humanitarian activities, particularly those on behalf of refugees
- some programs of multilateral technical assistance.

The assistance to refugees has been entrusted to organizations created for this purpose: High Commissioner for Refugees and the U.N. Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA--for Palestinian refugees). This humanitarian role is relatively well defined and well suited to the

capacity of an international organization--which is often more politically sensitive and has greater independence and authority than a bilateral institution.

Unfortunately, this remark cannot be extended to the realm of technical-assistance activities. The multilateral aid that is delivered by the U.N. and the U.N. system has not found its specific focus; it has no characteristics to distinguish it from the bilateral technical-assistance activities. It is not inspired by a common approach to development problems and is not specific to any particular sector. Despite the relatively low level of resources it accounts for (6.5 percent of the total Official Development Assistance), technical assistance is fragmented among a variety of organizations--not only the four main programs affiliated with the U.N. (UNDP, UNICEF, WEP, UNFPA) and all the specialized agencies but a number of independent bodies (including the 13 attached to UNDP, for example, the U.N. Volunteers Program and the U.N. Sudano Sahelian Office). This structural complexity and dispersion are increased by the methods used--thousands of small projects and the system of "remote control advice" of the headquarters units. This type of joint action of member states cannot be cited as one of the successes of the United Nations.<sup>15</sup>

In fact, some "joint actions" are included in every program of the U.N. and its agencies. The collection and distribution of world statistics is one example. There are some "intergovernmental programs," such as the "World Weather Watch" in meteorology, "Man and Biosphere" in UNESCO, and numerous research programs, that can be considered the "joint actions" of member states and are carried out on

a more modest level than humanitarian or technical-assistance activities. Nonetheless, the identification of the types of activities in which member states could develop really important and efficient "joint ventures" is not systematically organized.

## PART III

A VISION FOR CHANGEThe Types of Changes Needed

It is clear from the preceding developments that profound changes are necessary if the U.N. is to become an organization able to respond to the needs of the modern world. These cannot be limited to the type of measures recommended in the past by various expert groups involving some changes in the structure of the Secretariat or the reduction of the number of meetings or the removal of some overlaps.

The changes that are needed should allow for the establishment of:

- an intellectual leadership for facilitating identification of issues
- an efficient intergovernmental machinery to search for common approaches and to establish and manage the joint activities of member states.

These functions cannot be fulfilled in the present setting. A profound reform of the secretariats--which are in charge of intellectual leadership--cannot be conceived in isolation, that is, without a parallel reform of the intergovernmental U.N. machinery, and the role of the U.N. proper cannot be conceived in isolation from its system of specialized agencies, the restructuring of which has become imperative.

The changes that such a profound reform entails will, of course, not be obtained overnight. The understanding of the necessity of a reform, the definition of a common political approach to the various problems linked to the process of reform, and acceptance of the general scheme for such reform will be slow and gradual, and the resistance of the existing structures against the forces pushing for change will be enormous.

We are now at the very beginning of such a process. What is needed is some vision of the changes that must be undertaken and a well-defined strategy for change. This means:

- first, setting out a general idea of the new type of world organization that is becoming necessary;
- second, identifying the main obstacles and defining a step-by-step approach to overcoming them.

#### A Transposition to the World Level of the Model of the European Community

A reflection on the type of world organization that would be able to ensure adequate intergovernmental cooperation and identification of pertinent issues leads to a consideration of the existing models of international organizations. Among the existing ones, it might be interesting to draw some lessons from, for example, the Law of the Sea treaty, which created a new distribution of power among its main organs. But the institution of the European Community merits



particular attention because it has succeeded in solving--at the regional level--problems that are comparable in many respects to the ones that are to be solved at the world level today.

Despite the media's constant criticism that the building of Europe is progressing at a slow pace, the institutions created by the Rome Treaty have an impressive record of achievement: Common, reasonable objectives have been defined; the number of countries cooperating in this endeavor has risen from 6 to 12; the process of cooperation and integration has regularly developed, and so too the intellectual leadership of the Commission and the process of quasi-permanent negotiation that takes place in the Council of Ministers; a number of joint ventures have been organized (from the European Center for Nuclear Research (CERN) to Airbus and Arianespace); and above all, so well-established is the habit of working together at solving common problems and reducing differences of view in a political situation that the idea of an armed conflict between the member countries is rendered scarcely imaginable.

Despite obvious differences between the political and the economic and social situations in Europe preceding the signing of the Treaty of Rome in 1957 and the world situation at the end of the 1980s, important similarities exist. This include: an obvious growing interdependence; the need for an enlarged market; a need for a better and more precise identification of common problems; a new awareness of common interests; an effort to overcome the problems that had led to wars in the past; a desire to institutionalize friendly relations, etc.

Consequently, some inspiration for the vision of a new possible world organization could be drawn from various elements of the institution of the European Community. The lessons the Community teaches concern: the definition of common objectives, the search for a common approach at the intergovernmental level, the intellectual leadership and the identification of issues, the launching of joint ventures.

### Definition of Common Objectives

One of the main difficulties the U.N. is facing is that its objectives in the economic and social fields have not yet been formulated in a realistic and practical manner. Improving this formulation is an intrinsic part of a reform. because it is only when these objectives are clear and agreed upon that the Organization can find the necessary dynamism to foster some progress. The differences in the methods of formulating objectives in the U.N. and in the European Community can be measured by considering Articles 2 and 3 of the Treaty of Rome.

Article 2 of this treaty states that the Community has the mission of establishing a common market, of progressively harmonizing economic policies of member states, and of promoting a harmonious development of national economic activities throughout the Community.

Article 3 lists 11 sub-objectives, among which are:

- the elimination of custom duties and of quantitative restrictions on the import or export of goods

- the establishment of common customs tariffs and of a common commercial policy toward third countries
- the abolition of obstacles to freedom of movement for persons
- the adoption of a common policy in the sphere of agriculture
- the adoption of a common policy in the sphere of transport
- the application of procedures by which the economic policies of member states can be coordinated and disequilibria in their balances of payments remedied
- the creation of a European Social Fund, a European investment bank, etc.

It is obviously because the main goal--the common market--is difficult to reach (30 years have passed since the process got under way, and 1993 is now the target date) that the Commission has been imaginative in making proposals and that the Council has been permanently engaged in a long process of negotiation; but this built-in process of reaching an agreed target is itself fostering progress.

It is obviously very difficult to imagine that a world organization could adopt a comparable system of objectives. First, despite the progress made in acknowledging economic and social interdependence and the new policy principles recently adopted by the major countries (as described above), there is no consensus comparable to the one that existed among the nations party to the Treaty of Rome. The notion of a "common market"--considered as a reasonable "step" in the direction of the establishment of a political community in a non-distant future--was the result of a long process in the evolution of ideas about the "construction of Europe." Then came the

considerable effort of Jean Monnet and his movement "for the United States of Europe" to prepare and educate public opinion as well as members of the political establishment, overcoming a very strong opposition to the establishment of such a Treaty and the type of definition of objectives included in it.

At the world level, the political situation, the ideological differences, the economic and Social disparities, and the recent failure of global negotiations between North and South do not permit the easy definition of a "step" of this type in the direction of a better world community.

The "taboo" on touching the Charter, which spread the idea that reform of the U.N. was impossible, has also contributed to obscuring the matter.

Indeed, the difficulty of defining common objectives for all member states at the world level has been a fundamental one ever since the drafting of the Charter, and the numerous methods used to try to overcome it have not yet given satisfactory results.

In general, objectives have been formulated in such general terms that there is room for different interpretations. The wording of the Charter in the economic and social area is the best example in this regard,<sup>16</sup> and the majority of resolutions establishing principles use the same type of formulation, too often adding to it a touch of unreality and utopian hope.<sup>17</sup>

The uneasiness created by this verbosity has led to various attempts at more precise formulations--as, for example, the indication in the International Development Strategies of desirable rates of growth for closing the gap between developed and developing

countries--but this has remained wishful thinking. Other attempts at the sectoral level, such as health for all in the year 2000, the world population plan, other "world plans of action" in the fields of water, industry, science and technology, etc., even when accompanied by "strategies" for reaching these goals, have not yet been much more effective. Not only has sectorialization of objectives at the world level failed to give tangible results, but it fails to give rise to any global, common, reasonable, practical, and time-limited objectives in the whole economic and social field. On the contrary, by emphasizing the essential importance of one sector, some of these plans tend to offer "miraculous" solutions to the problem of development, but they never reach the threshold of credibility.

The establishment of medium-term plans in the U.N. and some specialized agencies has been another attempt to define objectives more clearly. But this considerable and thorough endeavor has not permitted either a definition of "priorities" or even the establishment at the program level of "time limited objectives." The main reason for this failure quickly presents itself: the lack of a general intellectual framework showing how it could be possible to find a reasonable basis of agreement on the general trend to be followed, i.e., on the main general target toward which the U.N. and the U.N. system should move. This lack of common approach has fostered ideological debates. There was a certain logic to the belief that a common philosophy on economic and social problems was the preliminary condition to establishing a common plan of action, and it is not surprising that member states use the U.N. as a forum of propaganda for their preferred philosophical approach to this problem.

The discussions about defining a new international economic order represented the main effort in this direction. Research leading to better ways to implement human rights is another one. But at this ideological level, the three main economic and social schools of thought--the liberal, the socialist, and the non-aligned one--have not yet found some common ground.

Reaching some common approach to the type of world society acceptable to all nations and peoples is a distant but desirable ideal, and finding some "steep" to take in this direction may indeed been considered as the very basic mission of the U.N. The fact that all previous efforts have failed does not mean that this very difficult task should not be pursued--the more so when existing trends in the world allow some hope that a serious effort in this direction could give better results than in the past.

It has already been explained above that the growing acknowledgement of interdependence has led to the adoption of new principles aimed mainly at the harmonization of economic policies. This new approach offers some possibility of formulating objectives in a more practical manner and even of reformulating some of those that have not been considered acceptable in the past, mainly for ideological reasons. The new idea of the desirability of some system of stabilization of exchange rates and the search for a solution of the developing countries' debt offer new opportunities for discussing seriously the relationship of these questions to the question of stabilization of the prices of commodities--the more so when developed countries have begun to experience the drawbacks of the variations in the price of some of them.

What has not been possible to negotiate effectively (despite, for example, the adoption of the Common Fund or of the Law of the Sea convention) in a climate of exaggerated ideological confrontation should become easier to define as a part of a general trend toward practical harmonization of national economic policies.

This practical approach can be extended to the methods of delivering multilateral development aid. It is increasingly acknowledged that the use of experts is becoming obsolete and that the conception of this aid has to be reconsidered. The time has come to rethink "technical cooperation" (which still conveys a flavor of colonialism) and to replace it with some social system at the world level that focuses more than at present on the least-developed parts of the world and is more oriented toward education and training.

The progress towards democracy that has recently been made in Latin America and some other parts of the world should also facilitate a better understanding between the North and the South. Changes occurring in the USSR could work in the same direction.

All these changes are offering new opportunities. Obviously, it remains impossible to define a "step" that will be as clear and simple as the "common market" of the Rome Treaty. The time is not ripe for adoption at the world level of a "comprehensive plan of action" that all member states could approve. Nevertheless, it is not irrelevant to take inspiration from the EEC system of objectives, which:

- make no reference to idealistic or utopian considerations, stating ambitions that seem possible to reach
- deal with economic matters

- and combine substantive targets (establishment of a common market, free circulation of people) with institutional means for helping to reach them (common agricultural and transport policy, social fund, investment bank).

For defining useful and credible objectives at the world level, these three features should be kept in mind. In the economic field what is today really important for governments and peoples of all countries is to facilitate the establishment of the conditions of economic prosperity and to avoid the risks of unemployment, inflation, recession, and the social and political difficulties attached to these economic diseases. A better understanding of the conditions of economic cooperation through a better harmonization of national economic policies is obviously indispensable in this regard, and this is exactly the domain in which a universal organization can be effective.

Within this general framework, more precise objectives could be defined in General Assembly resolutions or in the Medium-Term Plan of the U.N. and its Introduction (which, according to the Regulations, should "highlight in a coordinated manner the policy orientations of the United Nations System," as noted earlier).

To develop in the U.N. a better definition of objectives in the economic and social areas and deal with problems of finance and development in relation to the political and sociological environment does not mean that the U.N. should take on the functions of any of the agencies of its system--IMF, World Bank, FAO, or UNIDO, and the like. This means that the role of the U.N. in identifying issues and coordinating the policies applied by all these agencies should be



better fulfilled. It also means that the definition of program orientations should be precise enough to render coherent all the activities of these agencies.

Finally, it can be said that the credibility of the world organization depends on the nature of the objectives it will define:

First, it is a problem of formulation and style--abandoning unrealistic and excessively ambitious wording in plans and resolutions, adopting a practical and relatively modest approach, identifying the domains in which it seems reasonable to expect some progress, and defining in these domains the possible next "steps."

Second, it should be realized that the attainment of substantive objectives is linked to the progress made on the institutional front. The possibility of organizing the framework of the world organization, requiring meetings of high-level representatives of the West, the East, and the South, to discuss questions of common interest, is a difficult and serious undertaking; and when achieved, it represents by itself an important progress because it changes the nature of relations among nations. Consequently, the process of institutional reform at the world level--as at the European level--should become an integral part of the objectives of the Organization itself.

As in the case of the EEC, a list of possible U.N. objectives should represent a strategy for change and combine substantive targets, such as control of fluctuations of exchange rates and commodity prices, the conditions facilitating the stability needed for the economic development of all countries, and the establishment of a global watch of international migrations, with institutional targets such as the progressive development of high-level global consultations

on identified issues and the transformation of the U.N. system (including the Bretton Woods institutions) into a more coherent institution. Defining such objectives would be a difficult departure from traditional habits, but it is the condition of any further progress.

#### The Search for a Common Approach at the Intergovernmental Level

The main institutional difference between the European Community and the U.N. system is that the European Community has a "center" of decisions and negotiations in which member states are represented at a credible level of responsibility~

Establishing a "center" in the U.N. system--i.e., a compact intergovernmental body comparable to the European Community Council of Ministers--requires either a profound restructuring of the existing intergovernmental machinery or the creation of something new.

Restructuring and revitalization have been very popular in the U.N. in the past decade. A restructuring operation in 1975-77, which led to General Assembly Resolution 32/197, attempted to revitalize the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly in economic and social matters. A number of decisions have been taken to obtain a better distribution of work between EeSaC and the General Assembly by organizing special sessions of ECaSaC. But none of these decisions has been implemented.

In the years that followed, "revitalization of EeSaC" has become a regular agenda item of ECaSaC itself. This has allowed delegations to propose a number of excellent ideas, some of which have even been

partially implemented, notably by developing the biennialization of some items of the agenda. But nothing has really been improved by these minor changes.

In 1986 the Group of 1~ report again addressed this problem and in its first chapter made eight recommendations. The most notable of these bore on the reinforcement of the Committee on Conferences, the reduction of the number of meetings, the rationalization of the agenda of the General Assembly, the reduction of the number of resolutions, and the launching of a thorough study of the intergovernmental machinery dealing with economic and social questions (recommendation #8). The length of this last recommendation and the precise definition of the objectives of this study, which the General Assembly in resolution 41/213 entrusted to the Economic and Social Council itself, shows that the Group has acknowledged the seriousness of the situation in this regard.

It remains to be seen whether this new undertaking will be more successful than the previous ones. If the "careful and in-depth study" recommended by the Group of 18 is made with enough precision and in a spirit of constructive criticism, it will certainly bring to light the following: overlaps between the mandates and the agendas of a number of committees, the absence of any results obtained by some other bodies, the uselessness of many reports requested from the Secretariat, the absence of a calendar of operations facilitating the examination of the relevant parts of the Medium-Term Plan by the competent organs, the overlap of the two decision-making processes for defining the program (the approval of the Medium-Term Plan, on the one hand, and the vote of resolutions, on the other hand) the repetition

of the same resolutions year after year, the absence of a logical distribution of work among intergovernmental committees and expert groups, and the absence of a rationale for determining the membership of the various committees.

It will mainly show that there is no well-thought-out distribution of work among ECOSOC, the General Assembly (Second and Third Committees), and UNCTAD or coordination of their activities--and, indeed, that there is often full duplication or triplication of their general debates. It will also show that there is no link between the activities of the Regional Economic Commissions and the various central organs and no center able to utilize the work prepared by the whole machinery, where member states could really take decisions or start negotiations.

Such a study could lead to recommendations for a streamlining of the existing machinery (for example, by doing away with the least-useful committees, such as the Committee on Natural Resources and the meeting of experts on the U.N. program of Public Administration); getting rid of the overlaps between the agendas of the various committees dealing with science and technology and with technical and economic cooperation between developing countries; or revising the type of general reports sent to ECOSOC (for example, the World Economic Survey), UNCTAD (for example, the Trade and Development Report), and the documentation prepared for the Committee on the International Development Strategy, even beginning to move toward a better distribution of work among UNCTAD, ECOSOC, and the General Assembly.

But very few such recommendations seem to have a chance of being formulated, much less enacted. The experience of the past demonstrates that it is nearly impossible to do away with an existing body. The experiment just made by the Group of 18 concerning the intergovernmental machinery dealing with program and budget matters has shown the size of the obstacles to reshuffling. Despite the fact that the logical approach to the problem of programming and budgeting was a merger between the existing subsidiary body dealing with financial and budgetary matters (the Advisory Committee on administrative and budgetary questions) and the existing body dealing with programmatic aspects of the budget (Committee for Program and Coordination), it is impossible to envisage agreement to such a plan. The resistance of delegations to any modification of the existing committees is even greater than the resistance in the Secretariat to any change in its practice or methods of work.

Consequently, there is no great hope of finding a solution to the existing deficiencies of the intergovernmental machinery by means of any proposal to delete, merge, or reshuffle, particularly because the main problem is the overlap of the activities of the three main bodies--the General Assembly, ECDSOC and UNCTAD.

Indeed, the only solution to the problem is a paradoxical one: It is to create something new, i.e., the "center" that does not exist at present (i.e. ·· a Council and Commission inspired by the model of the European Community). Objections to this approach--that it would complicate instead of simplify the existing system--are not valid.

There is an obvious need for a center able to fulfill the functions of synthesis, identification, and distribution of work to other bodies. The defining of better answers to the problems of interdependence must become a collective global undertaking, more satisfactory than the present system, which is only partially achieved through the various meetings of the major Western powers (for example on stabilization of exchange rates or on the debt problem) and fails to include the socialist world, the smaller developed Western countries, and the whole developing world. Such an organ would permit, through various organized channels of representation, all interested member states to participate in the identification, discussion, and definition of solutions to problems concerning the whole international community.

The identification by the Commission in a practical and precise manner of such world problems and of the ways in which it would seem possible to make a reasonable step in the direction of their progressive solution would orient the work of the Council. Such steps might include the harmonization of national policies on population, on rules concerning international migrations, on support given to some agricultural products; trade, budgetary, monetary, industrial, environmental and social policies; the possibility of developing joint ventures in science and technology or health, *etc.* The Council would have a central role (and far more real authority than the General Assembly or the general conferences of the specialized agencies) for defining the pace at which progress is possible.

- To be useful, such a center should meet at the highest level--at the ministerial level as often as possible, and regularly at the ambassadorial one. This means that the countries that send representatives to such a body to deal with economic and social matters should appoint ambassadors who have direct access to the economic ministries.

- The membership of this body should be limited to a small number of participants. Here, again, the example of the European Community--its Council of Ministers--should be considered. but the transposition at the world level is not possible without devising a system of representation of small and medium-size countries. The type of representation adopted for such a Council could result from the following principles:

- The major countries should have one seat and be represented by their own ministers

- The smaller ones should find a way to be represented collectively, through a system of representation preferably on a regional basis.

Criteria for the definition of "major countries" and "smaller" ones should be adopted--this might be. for the major ones, a GNP greater than 2.5 percent of the World Product and for countries not meeting this criteria, a population of more than 100 million.<sup>15</sup> Once such a center was established, it would begin to give directives to the other bodies and would be in a position over a period of time to obtain a useful reshuffling of the existing machinery.

Another way of establishing such a center could be--if the "taboo" on touching the present Charter could be shaken--to return to the initial Charter as adopted in 1945: i.e., to do away with the amendments to article 61 that entered into force on August 31, 1965, and September 24, 1973--the first one enlarging the membership of the ECOSOC from 18 to 27, the second enlarging it to 54. This unfortunate enlargement is one of the main reasons why ECOSOC has been deprived of any prestige, credibility, and decision-making power. The return to the initial membership of 18, if combined with a resolution organizing a system of regional representation (as explained above), could be an elegant way to create the type of "Council" we have just described.

#### Identification of Issues and Intellectual Leadership

The illusion that it is possible at the world level to rely upon an individual to exercise intellectual leadership is still quite prevalent. The naive dream of a great leader able to develop a "vision" of the future of the world and to translate it into the definition of "priorities" that all member states would adopt still plays a role in the conception of possible reforms of the Organization. Such a hope obviously inspired the creation in 1977 of the post of Director General of Development charged with coordinating the activities of the whole system in the economic and social sectors.

But experience has shown that neither the Secretary-General nor the Director General is in a position to exercise any leadership in this field, not only because the Charter and the resolutions fail to



give to them the necessary powers, but also because it is just impossible for an individual to fulfill such a function without the full cooperation of all the executive heads of the various agencies of the U.N. system and a system for facilitating the cooperation of member states in this endeavor.

To cope with the complexity of the various problems, only a collective leadership can be envisaged. In this regard, the experience of the Commission of the European Community has shown that it was possible to give such a mandate to a group of competent people. The EEC Commission, composed of distinguished persons chosen by governments on the basis of their competence, was given strong guarantees of independence in carrying out its functions in the interest of the organization. It has the responsibility for seeking out the community view, studying compromise solutions, making recommendations, and executing the budget. But the adaptation of such a formula at the world level would present serious difficulties.

First, it would be difficult at this level to develop a "community view." It would be more reasonable to speak of an endeavor to identify problems, analyze their many aspects and differing interpretations, and, through discussion and negotiation among member states, try to develop the possibility for convergence and common ground. Second, the creation of such a Commission would imply structural changes in the present U.N. system. As we have seen above, the existing decentralization was deliberately engineered in 1945 and seems to be in contradiction with the very idea of a Commission.

The structure of the agencies--each with its own executive

board, general conference, and budget adopted by their intergovernmental organs without any supervision of the U.N. General Assembly--guarantees their complete independence. The Directors General of these agencies are accountable only to their executive boards and they are, within the framework of the constitution of their organization, in charge of one sector. Consequently, they attribute more importance to the sector for which they are responsible than to the connection between this sector and other sectors. Finally, they are so busy with the problems proper to their agencies that they cannot find time for participating in a Commission dealing with more general questions.

For these reasons, all attempts made--in the present setting--to establish an intellectual basis for cooperation have failed. This failure means that, if things remain as they are, the U.N. system will not be able to face the two main categories of world problems, i.e., the problems of development of the Third World and the problems of economic and social interdependence, both of which require an integrated approach. But the knowledge and the capacity to deal with the global issues existing in the main economic and social sectors--money. education. industry, trade, agriculture, etc.--are now addressed in these sectoral agencies, in their secretariats and by their executive heads. Because it is impossible to organize a common international leadership and a Commission without using these agencies, the problem of establishing an intellectual leadership--a capacity for identifying the main issues and of making proposals to

the Council--is inevitably linked to the problem of a profound reform of the U.N. system. For such a reform to allow the constitution of a Commission, the main changes should be:

A. Budgetary reform

The Commission and the Council should be in a position to have an overview of the budget of the agencies. Article 17, paragraph 3 of the Charter, which states that "The General Assembly should examine the administrative budget of the specialized agencies with a view to making recommendations to the agencies concerned," should be applied, and a resolution should extend these powers to the Commission and to the Council. The constitution of the agencies should be modified in order to transfer budgetary powers to these central organs and the existing agreements between the U.N. and the agencies modified accordingly.

A consolidated summary of the budget of these agencies should be established by the Commission and submitted for the approval of the Council before being elaborated in detail by the executive boards of the agencies. This proposal is the only way to counteract the drawbacks of the decentralization of the U.N. system. No doubt it will be resisted, but it is the only measure that could in the future help to solve the insoluble problem of "coordination."

B. The mandate given to the Commission should give to this new body important powers

1. Within the U.N. budget the Commission should have its own budget and a central secretariat.<sup>19</sup> All the economic and social departments of the U.N. should be at the service of the Commission. They should be reinforced and reorganized and their interdisciplinary capacity developed. Particular consideration should be given to the possibility of developing a centralized economic and social information system and of putting the most modern electronic equipment at the disposal of the Commission to supply it with all the data it would need.

2. The Commission should be given the mandate of identifying the global issues on which the various intergovernmental bodies of the U.N.--mainly the General Assembly, the Council, and the central development board (mentioned in "Development of Joint Activities" below)--should consult.

This type of work should be conceived inside the framework of the reformulated global economic and social objectives of the U.N., as suggested in ("Definition of Common Objectives" above). The Commission would be in charge of proposing to the Council the type of incremental steps that its members believed would be acceptable to the Council and lead to a better harmonization of national economic and social policies. The Commission would, of course, draw upon the work done by the secretariats of the U.N. and the agencies and by all intergovernmental and expert bodies.

3. The Commission should also receive the mandate of preparing the consolidated U.N. system budget mentioned above and giving advice to the member states on the use of all extrabudgetary funds.

4. The Commission should define the types of studies it will need to fulfill its mandate and recommend the necessary changes in the structure of the services, the type of cooperation requested from the agencies, and the possibilities of utilizing outside research centers when necessary.<sup>20</sup>

C. The membership of the Commission should be as compact as possible

If, as seems logical, the Commission would be composed of the heads of the main agencies and either the Secretary-General of the U.N. or his representative (such as the Director General), this would entail very important changes in the present mode of designating these executive heads (and the Director General) and defining their responsibilities, i.e., their statute.

Transforming the heads of the main agencies and the Director General into "Commissioners" would mean upgrading their present statute. Instead of being responsible for their sector alone, their main duty would now be to cooperate with the other members in identifying global issues. This entails several important modifications of the present situation.

1. The Commissioners would be nominated by the "Council," where negotiations on geographical distribution and on the choice of competent personalities would take place, and they would be confirmed by the General Assembly.

2. Each Commissioner would be in charge of one of the main agencies but would be assisted in day-to-day operations by one or two deputies. (To allow them the time necessary for participating in the sessions of the Commission, the agenda and the dates of these sessions would have to be defined by them upon the request of the Council.)

3. If the Commission were composed, as it seems logical, of the heads of the main agencies, it would include the executive heads of GATT, IBRD, IMF, IAEA, 110, FAD, WHO, UNESCO, UNIDO. UNCTAD, despite the fact that its budget is included in the budget of the U.N., could be added. The U.N. should be represented by the Director General, who normally should be the Chairman of the Commission. Minor technical agencies dealing with telecommunications, post, transport, and meteorology could be represented collectively by one Commissioner, and the same type of representation is envisaged for all technical cooperation programs (UNDP, UNICEF, WFP, UNFPA).

Such a composition would consequently lead to the appointment of 13 Commissioners. This would leave room for appointing 3 to 5 additional members, who could be elected as Commissioners without direct responsibilities in a secretariat of one agency. These members could thus give all their time to the functioning of the Commission and assist its president in the preparation of its work. Their presence would create an element of flexibility in the new institution and facilitate further reorganization of the U.N. system. This would also help to get a satisfactory geographical distribution among the Commissioners.

Development of Joint Activities

Development of joint activities of member states could be more systematically organized and should be used as a method for developing "friendly relations among nations," which is one of the major objectives of the Charter.

Careful studies would obviously show that it is possible to find domains in which governments would cooperate. In fields like health, space, science and technology, and industry, important "joint ventures" could help to create the climate of confidence that is badly needed. Here again the European Community has shown the way by developing within the Community system (Common Agricultural Policy, European Development Fund) and outside it (the European Center for Nuclear Research (CERN), Arianespace, Airbus Industry, Espirit, Eureka) joint ventures for all the members of the Community or only for a few of them--and even at times in association with non-member states.

To reach such an objective in the U.N., the development of such mechanisms could be one of the specific tasks given to the Commission, as discussed above, or it could be entrusted to a "subcommission" specializing in the search for and launching of such ventures.

For the already existing joint activities in the field of technical assistance, a reorganization seems indispensable. It is obviously very difficult to undertake such a thing because of strong vested interests in the present fragmentation of existing structures. A first step might be the establishment of a single executive board ("central development board") for all the existing programs affiliated with the U.N. This

step has already been envisaged several times: Already recommended in resolution 32/197, it has again been recommended as a directive for study recommended in the Group of 18 report on the intergovernmental machinery. In any event, a complete revision of the objectives, structures, and methods of the multilateral aid distributed by the U.N. system is absolutely indispensable.



## PART IV

A STRATEGY FOR CHANGE

The "vision for change" necessary to facilitate a common definition of a new and more efficient world organization developed in the previous chapter could not be adopted overnight, of course. Time is needed to determine whether it corresponds to the political conceptions of peoples and governments, and time is needed to begin to implement it.

The process to be followed for reaching the necessary changes cannot be forecast precisely because political and economic events can influence it in many ways. It is possible that at some moment in the near future the emergence of new world problems and the aggravation of some existing ones will demonstrate that it is not possible to hesitate any longer. The time will be ripe for profound reform and for consultations at the highest level on this question.

It is also possible that the pressure of the constraints described above will increase progressively; in this case, the process of change could also be progressive. In any event, the inclusion in a plan of reform of the definition of a strategy for change, including a step-by-step approach (as in the example of the European Community), is indispensable for conferring on it an important degree of credibility.

Such a strategy might contain the following elements:

A. A clear conception of the new type of world organization that is needed

This means a definition of the types of reasonable objectives that could be assigned to it and the type of institutional framework able to help reach these objectives. Part III of this paper has provided suggestions in this regard. These proposals are summarized in Annex II.

.

B. A precise identification of the obstacles to change

Such obstacles are enormous. First, there is no real hope that the U.N. will have the capacity to reform itself.<sup>21</sup> All the constraints that have hampered any serious change are still there: the structural decentralization of the U.N. system, which forbids any interagency coordination, particularly between the Bretton Woods institutions and the rest of the system; the resistance of the Secretariat to any innovation; the specialization of the Secretary General in political matters, which prevents him from giving sufficient attention to managerial and economic problems; the pressure of the bureaucracies of the ministries of foreign affairs of all countries, which require the recruitment of their nationals in high-level posts regardless of the individual's qualifications; and the reluctance of delegations to consider any prospect of change.

But the main obstacle still remains the lack of importance attributed to the world organization by governments and public opinion. Despite existing frustrations, despite acknowledgement of

increasing interdependence, the view of the majority of governments is that the main problems can still be solved through channels other than the United Nations. Despite the general feeling that something should be done to improve the Organization's efficiency, the intellectual confusion about the type of useful role an improved world organization could play has not yet dissipated.

c. A step-by-step approach to the process of change

To overcome such obstacles, a step-by-step approach to institutional change should accompany the refinement of the vision for the future. Such steps should meet several requirements. They should:

- be meaningful enough to indicate that the process of change has effectively begun

- be taken in the directions that offer the least resistance

- attract the interest of some member states because they offer new possibilities for solving some of their problems

- create opportunity for further changes

It should be added that the experience of the process of change in international organization in general, and the U.N. in particular, shows that it is always easier to create new organs or institutions than it is to reshuffle the existing ones.

If one bears in mind these criteria, it seems possible to list some of the steps that could be taken separately to help build the new world organization whose economic and social sectors are in Part III of this paper.

1. The first step would be to make better use of the existing tools, particularly the Introduction to the Medium-Term Plan of the U.N. If a reasonable approach to the objectives of the U.N. and of the U.N. system for the period of the next plan were to be defined in this Introduction, as suggested in Part III, "Definition of Common Objectives," it would offer to member states their first opportunity to think seriously about reform.

2. Regarding institutional change, the creation of a "Council" of the type defined in Part III, "Search for a Common Approach at the Intergovernmental Level," seems easier to consider than the creation of the Commission. It would imply long and difficult negotiations of the problem of representation of small and medium-sized countries, but it would focus the discussion on the main questions of interest to all countries, i.e., the relationship between the type of issues that all countries agree to discuss seriously in the U.N. and the type of institutions in which such debates can take place.

3. As far as the Commission is concerned, it would probably be easier to begin by creating a small body of 3 to 5 Commissioners composed of independent, competent personalities (to include the Director General, elevated to the rank of Chairman of the Commission). This embryo of the larger Commission, which could later include the heads of the main agencies, could represent a useful first step in the right direction and permit the development of an experimental phase. In a more general way it can be assumed that the creation of institutions "on an experimental basis" could facilitate the process of change in the U.N.

4. The consideration of a progressive budgetary reform by applying firmly Article 17, paragraph 3 of the Charter to all the agencies of the U.N. system, excluding the Bretton Woods institutions, could also be a useful step for facilitating an overall view by member states of the activities of the U.N. system.

5. Finally, a systematic research of all opportunities for increasing the working relationship between the U.N. and the Bretton Woods institutions (for example, the establishment of common studies on the world economy and cooperation in the study of various concrete issues, such as the debt problem, commodities, the situation in Africa, etc.) could be undertaken to begin filling the gap between these two categories of world organizations.

Many other steps could be imagined. But if a process of change in the U.N. has any chance to develop in the years to come, it will be the result of a combination of efforts: overcoming the existing and continuing crisis, patient development of a new conceptual approach, mainly in the economic and social sectors; and discussions on the possibility of some institutional changes.



### NOTES

1. Harold K. Jacobson, Networks of Interdependence: International Organizations and the Global Political System (Alfred A. Knopf, New York). Also Yearbook of International Organizations, prepared by the Union of International Associations (Robert Fenaux, Secretary-General and Anthony Judge, Assistant Secretary-General).

2. The article by David Mitrany. "A Working Peace System" (The Royal Institute of International Affairs. Oxford University Press, London, June 1943) is the most widely known text on "functionalism." Among those connected with this school of thought are its precursors, such as Leonard Woolf, Norman Angel, Robert Cecil, G.D. H. Cole, and some contemporaries, such as Ernst Haas (Beyond the Nation State [Stanford University Press. 1964]), A.J.R. Groom, Joseph Nye, Patrick Sewell, and Paul Taylor.

The author of this paper shares the idea underlying functionalism, inasmuch as he believes that the development of economic, technical, and cultural relations is the best way to build peace in the long run. Conversely, he does not share the much narrower theory of "sectoral" functions, which advocates collaboration between specialists in each sector and which, when applied to development, is at variance with the integrated and interdisciplinary nature of the problems in this domain.

3. OECD: Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development;" established September 30, 1961, Paris. Successor of OEEC: Organization for European Economic Cooperation set up April 1948 (24 member states--developed countries)

EEC: European Economic Community, established January 1, 1958, Brussels (12 member countries--Western Europe)

CMEA: Council for Mutual Economic Assistance, Established January 1949, (10 member states--socialist countries).

4. The date of the first oil crisis.

5. One of the most recent examples of this phenomenon is the decision taken by the French government in 1984 to give up the "Keynesian" policy orientations adopted in 1982, and to come back to an economic policy in conformity with policies followed by the major Western countries.

On the other hand, the forces at work are such that in some fields governments are losing control and even abdicating from this control voluntarily--as in the deregulation of financial markets.

6. This is only a trend--but it is developing rapidly. What is at stake in the negotiations on arms control between the U.S. and the USSR is the whole concept of the national defense policy of each party. Success or failure of such negotiations has a tremendous impact on these national policies. The same can be said about discussions between the U.S. and Japan or Europe about the level of interest rates, budgetary policies, or agricultural policies.

7. The Caneun (Mexico) summit involved 14 developing countries and 8 industrialized states.

8. Report of the Group of High-Level Intergovernmental Experts to Review the Efficiency of the Administrative and Financial Functioning of the United Nations (General Assembly Official Records, 41st Session, supplement 849 [A/41/49], August 1986).

9. See Rafael Salas, Reflections on Population (Pergamon Press, New York, 1985).

10. See Joint Inspection Unit report on "Reporting to the Economic and Social Council" (A/39/281/E/1984/I) of May 31, 1984. Remarks made here on these reports on the world situation do not mean that they are useless or bad; together with the Bank and the Fund reports and some other world surveys, they present interesting information. But they are not read by the delegations to the Economic and Social Council, to whom they are directed. The question is: What types of studies would better facilitate the identification of issues to be discussed usefully by member states?

11. The word "research" in this context does not have the same meaning as in a purely academic environment. Rather, it means policy planning and analysis, identification of issues, etc. It has to be recognized that the processes of multilateral diplomacy are so complex that it is hard to do useful "research" on the subject from the outside. Making a proper use of outside experts would be a complex undertaking, because it requires a close association with the evolution of thinking inside the Organization. But such an association with various centers in the world is not impossible and would create a better understanding of the issues at stake inside and outside the U.N.

12. These remarks on the level of representation do not mean that things would improve automatically if ministers were sent as representatives. The level of representation is indeed conditioned by three factors:

- The importance that member states attach to a question put on the agenda
- the quality of preparation of the discussions on this item
- the level of expectation that discussions in the intergovernmental body concerned will have an influence on a possible solution. This last factor is obviously linked to the composition of the intergovernmental body and to the economic and political importance of the states (or group of states) that are partners in these discussions. A compact body is always more prestigious than a large one.

13. Joint Inspection Unit Report, REP/84/7, entitled "Reporting to the Economic and Social Council" (U.N. document A/39/281, E/1984/81 of May 31, 1984).

14. Report of the JIU, "Some Reflections on Reform of the United Nations" (A/40/988, December 6, 1985, paragraphs 25-32).



15. A/40/988, paragraphs 17-19 and 89-104.

16. The economic and social objectives of the Charter, as stated in the Foreword and in Article I:

Foreword: to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom

...to employ international machinery for the promotion of the economic and social advancement of all peoples,

Article I Paragraph 3: To achieve international cooperation in solving international problems of an economic, social, cultural or humanitarian character ....

17. Among the best examples of unrealistic formulation is the following quotation from paragraph 12 of the latest International Development Strategy, which recommends that governments of member states "end without delay colonialism, imperialism, neocolonialism, interference in internal affairs, apartheid, racial discrimination, hegemony, expansionism and all forms of foreign aggression and occupation, which constitute major obstacles to the economic emancipation and development of the development countries." Other examples can be found in paragraphs 44 to 54 of A/40/988.

18. These criteria are given as examples. The figure for population could also be a percentage: 100 million is approximately 2 percent of the world population. For more details and the list of countries that meet the criteria indicated, see A/40/88, paragraphs 181 to 185 and footnote 63.

19. The merging of the Office of the Director-General (DIEC) and of the Department of International Economic and Social Affairs (OIESA) could be a first step in the right direction. Even if at present the head of OIESA is under the authority of the Director General, a more interdisciplinary and stronger integrated secretariat appears to be desirable for allowing the Director General to fulfill the functions--as envisaged here--of Chairman of the Commission.

20. The changes entailed by the creation of a Commission are no doubt far-reaching. Any proposal in this direction will consequently provoke serious opposition in many quarters.

The decentralization of the U.N. system, and in particular the complete separation of the Bretton Woods institutions from the U.N., was voluntarily organized in 1945. The situation of the world in 1987 is completely different and today this institutional decentralization is not only obsolete but also harmful.

For all countries, the foreign policy of the ministries of finance and economy have to be integrated with the foreign policies of the ministries of foreign affairs, and this necessary integration should be reflected at the world level.

But it is impossible now to build something entirely new without taking into account the existence of the "system" (even if, as Robert Jackson said some 20 years ago, it is indeed a "non system"). The agencies are a part of the international landscape, and they should be maintained; they are in many respects useful.

But a complete reshuffling of the system is now becoming indispensable: the necessity of coordination and even of integration of their programs is obvious, and experience has amply demonstrated that without a change in the institutional framework, no coordination is possible. The process of change in this matter is likely to take time. It is linked with the interdependence on the one hand (particularly for the relationship between the IMF and the rest of the system) and the role and methods of multilateral aid on the other hand (particularly for the relationship between programs and agencies dealing with some aspects of development aid).

On the present evolution of ideas and methods concerning development assistance, see R. H. Carey (OECD), "Official financing and growth oriented structural adjustment," paper prepared for the symposium on "growth oriented adjustment programs" (Washington, D.C., February 25-27, 1987). The following extract has particular relevance for the problems discussed in the present paper:

"Against this background, what we are witnessing is not just a rearrangement of the pattern of financial flows, but an important new phase in the forty-year record of development cooperation and official financing.

"What, fundamentally, is new?

"First, a diverse range of actors is being called upon to respond to a large number of specific country situations with a degree of rapidity, flexibility and coherence not previously a notable feature of development financing processes.

"Second, the nature of current development problems demands a programme approach to the delivery of development assistance and finance, rather than a policy approach. In more technical economic terms, there is a general equilibrium problem involving the use of all resources in the recipient economy, and development assistance and other financing agencies cannot divorce themselves from that overall context.

"Flexibility and programme approaches have by no means been absent from the development cooperation scene. Major changes in the allocation of aid, both geographically and sectorally, have taken place, while programme aid has a long history. It would nevertheless not be inaccurate to characterize the development assistance process, both bilateral and multilateral, as having evolved mainly along incremental and project lines. It is also fair to say that the concept of policy-based lending, in any broad, concerted form at least, has not been a part of the "culture" of development cooperation. Even on a discreet, partial equilibrium basis. On the whole, the development cooperation industry has been prepared to leave it to the IMF to take the general equilibrium approach, focused on key macroeconomic prices and other variables, having itself neither the orientation nor the competence to handle this difficult task."

21. This remark does not mean that efforts that are made inside the U.N. are useless. On the contrary, as we have seen in author's "Planning, Programming, Budgeting and Evaluation in the U.N.," (UNA-USA, March 1987), some progress is possible from inside. Although, it falls short of obtaining decisive reforms. it facilitates the progress of ideas about change. Any effort to restructure the Secretariat and the intergovernmental machinery, or to modify the conception of the U.N. Medium-Term Plan and of its Introduction, will also contribute to the evolution of ideas on the type of United Nations that the world needs. But it is not from inside that a decisive impulse for reform will come.



## ANNEX II

Summary of Recommendations Made in Part III

A. In order to face the consequences of a rapidly growing economic interdependence among nations, there is a need for a global organization able to: identify the world problems on which the international community can cooperate and contribute to a solution; facilitate studies, discussions, and negotiations to this end; and, whenever possible, establish and develop joint actions of member states on matters on which some consensus exists.

B. The U.N.--at present the only universal political organization--is unable to fulfill this task. A profound reform of its economic and social sectors has become indispensable. It should aim at the definition of practical common objectives at the world level and at facilitating the establishment of an intellectual leadership, a center for discussion and negotiation on world problems, and a system of developing "joint ventures." In this regard, a transposition to the world level of the model offered by the European Community could provide some inspiration for the new type of world organization.

C. A more realistic formulation of the U.N.'s general objectives in the economic and social fields should be undertaken as an intrinsic part of the whole reform. Some inspiration could be taken at the world level from the system of objectives adopted on a regional basis by the European Economic Community, i.e., those that define reasonable "steps" to a better management of the economic and social interdependence.

D. The center for discussions and negotiations among member states should be obtained not through an impossible reshuffling of the present intergovernmental machinery but by creating a council of ministers in which the "major" countries are directly represented and the "smaller" ones collectively represented through regional groupings. (Another solution would be to return to the initial Charter with an Economic and Social Council of 18 members.)

E. The intellectual leadership should be a collective one. It could be obtained through the establishment of a "Commission" {of the type of the Commission of the European Community}, i.e., a compact body composed of independent, competent personalities, the majority of whom would be the executive heads of the main agencies of the system (including the Director General, representing the Secretary-General). Such a creation would imply a budgetary reform of the U.N. system, the granting to the Commission of important powers, a definition of the statute of the Commission, which would entail a complete change in the methods of the designation of the heads of the main agencies and a

reform of the structure of the U.N. Secretariat, which for the economic and social sectors would become the Secretariat of the Commission.

F. Mechanisms should be developed through the Commission, or by the creation of a "sub-commission," for launching "joint ventures" of member states. The existing system of multilateral aid should be reorganized, a first step being the creation of a single executive board ("a central development board") for all the programs affiliated with the U.N.





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