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ADMINISTRATIVE COMMITTEE ON CO-ORDINATION  
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DEVELOPMENT DECADE  
New York, 3-5 February 1971

ARRANGEMENTS FOR APPRAISAL OF PROGRESS IN IMPLEMENTING  
THE INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY FOR THE SECOND  
UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT DECADE

Background paper by the United Nations Secretariat\*

INTRODUCTION

The adoption by the General Assembly of an International Development Strategy for the Second United Nations Development Decade is a landmark both for the organizations of the United Nations system and for world development. By setting forth a comprehensive and integrated programme of national and international action to achieve a series of interrelated economic and social objectives, the Assembly has launched a new phase of international co-operation. The action programme of the Assembly attests to the fact that the world community has come a long way from 1961 when a relatively modest beginning was made in development policy formulation at the international level through the proclamation of the 1960s as the First United Nations Development Decade.

One of the important features of the programme for the Second Development Decade is the recognition that the delineation of the International Development Strategy for the 1970s must not be a once-for-all act. As an integral part of the Strategy, the General Assembly has called for appropriate arrangements "to keep under systematic scrutiny the progress towards achieving the goals and objectives of the Decade - to identify shortfalls in their achievement and the factors which account for them and to recommend positive measures, including new goals and policies as needed."<sup>1/</sup> The purpose of such arrangements is to make the Second Development Decade a continuing and dynamic exercise. Through an analysis of actual developments set against the framework of the Strategy, appraisals carried out periodically will help to draw attention to achievements and also to deficiencies in results and thus point the way to modifications that may be required in

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\* Prepared by the Centre for Development Planning, Projections and Policies of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs.

national and international policies and, if the circumstances so dictate, in the goals and objectives of the Decade.

The possibility of introducing additions to and changes in basic goals and objectives during the course of the Decade is of special significance. Certain problems - unemployment, for example - already loom large; and if it were to appear that their gravity was increasing, the world community would need to be confronted with the urgency of revising priorities, setting new goals and finding adequate means for attaining them. This element therefore gives a particularly important dimension to the Strategy.

The ultimate responsibility for the appraisals involving the whole world community will naturally rest upon the General Assembly. It is in this forum that global developments will, from time to time, be scrutinized and assessed and made the basis of a continuing forward-looking programme of action. The task of undertaking such an examination of prospects, through retrospective analysis, will not be confined to the General Assembly. It will be the essential purpose of all reviews and appraisals. Therefore, in carrying out its own appraisal work, each of the organizations of the United Nations system will constantly need to follow a policy-oriented approach, designed to assist its governing body in making recommendations in its particular area of competence. It is vital that the efforts of each organization be developed in such a manner as to fit properly within a concerted programme of the United Nations system as a whole, which in its approach and content must, by its comprehensiveness, boldness and imagination, reflect the historical significance and the importance of the Strategy.

The continuing appraisal of progress in implementing the International Development Strategy will be a major challenge for the United Nations system. It is of course too early to be able to indicate all the details of how best this task can be carried out. A great deal of thought and imagination will be required to work out the necessary procedures to ensure that this new endeavour delivers the results expected from it.

This paper is designed to serve as a background to the discussion to be undertaken by the ACC Sub-Committee on the United Nations Development Decade at its meetings on 3-5 February 1971. It is of a preliminary nature, and is intended solely to clarify some of the issues. Definitive proposals, such as those called for by General Assembly resolution 2641 (XXV), will have to be put forward only after ascertaining the views of Governments and other interested parties.

## I. DISTINCTIVE ROLES OF DIFFERENT APPRAISALS

As indicated in the text adopted by the General Assembly, appraisals of progress in implementing the Strategy will be carried out at the national, regional, functional (sectoral) and global levels. Of course, many national and international organizations are already engaged in one way or another in reviewing and appraising aspects of economic and social progress of developing countries. It is indeed awareness of this fact that led the General Assembly to emphasize the need for "streamlining the existing machinery" and to caution against "unnecessary duplication or proliferation of review activities".<sup>1/</sup> The experience already gained should undoubtedly prove very helpful. What is crucial now is the development of an imaginative and concerted effort by all concerned, based on the focal theme provided by the International Development Strategy for the Second Development Decade. The effort should fully reflect the decisive significance of the task set by the General Assembly.

While the Assembly did not spell out the distinctive roles envisaged for appraisals at different levels, the discussions that led up to the final text did suggest that the specific part to be played by each of these appraisals was generally well understood and is therefore to be taken as implicit in the text. However, as the absence of an explicit description in the text might give rise to some confusion, it would be helpful to look briefly at the respective roles of various appraisals.

### A. National appraisals

At the national level, just as it will be the responsibility of each developing country, bearing in mind the indicative perspective of the Strategy, to formulate its own precise goals and objectives and its own set of domestic policy measures within the framework of its own development plan,<sup>2/</sup> each such country "will, where appropriate, establish evaluation machinery or strengthen the existing one and, whenever necessary, seek international assistance for this purpose".<sup>3/</sup> Systematic reporting and supervision of progress are necessary components of national plan implementation. This is a task which developing countries have to undertake on a continuing basis for their own benefit. However,

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<sup>2/</sup> Ibid., paragraphs (13) and (78).

<sup>3/</sup> Ibid., paragraph (80).

the information emerging from national appraisals will also be of help to the international community in arriving at suitable policy recommendations as part of the ongoing exercise relating to the Decade. National appraisals are, by definition, expected to contain an analysis in depth of the performance of the country concerned. By way of contrast, it may be noted that the appraisals by the international community at regional, functional and global levels will not be designed to pronounce judgements on the performance of individual countries; rather, their role will be to assist in a broader way in improving national and international policies for the economic and social progress of developing countries.

#### B. Regional appraisals

The distinctive feature of regional appraisals - for which "regional economic commissions and the United Nations Economic and Social Office in Beirut, in co-operation with regional development banks and subregional groupings, and with the assistance of other organizations of the United Nations system, will assume the main responsibility"<sup>4/</sup> - will be to highlight the links among neighbouring countries and, given the frequent similarity of their problems, to find solutions for them in a mutually-supporting manner. It will not be merely in trade promotion among neighbouring countries that regional appraisals will be of distinct value. In the context of the Second Development Decade, these appraisals will seek close co-operation among the countries concerned in a wide range of matters with a view to facilitating the expansion and diversification of their economies, especially through a greater division of labour among them and an enlargement of the market for their products. Moreover, drawing upon the similarity of the problems encountered by them, these appraisals will help countries to gain from the experience of one another. They will aim at bringing about a more intimate dialogue and regular consultation among members of regional (or sub-regional) groupings, thereby contributing to sound policy-formulation in the developing countries concerned.

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<sup>4/</sup> Ibid., paragraph (81).

### C. Functional appraisals

The functional appraisals - envisaged as a continuing activity of "the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization and the specialized agencies of the United Nations... in their respective sectors according to the procedures already established and to be adapted as necessary"<sup>5/</sup> - will be designed to provide the world community with a systematic analysis of major developments in principal economic and social sectors on a cross-country basis. It will be very useful for the international community to assess from time to time the state of progress in the world in eradicating specific diseases, or in eliminating illiteracy, or in spreading new agricultural practices, or in widening the industrial base, or in dismantling barriers to international trade. Such in-depth assessments will aim at bringing to the fore the specific difficulties encountered in a particular area of activity and the combination of policies required to bring about the necessary improvements. It would be particularly useful if in the case of major sectors - employment, education, health, nutrition, etc. - two comprehensive appraisals could be planned for the 1970s, one as soon as possible and the other later in the Decade.

### D. Over-all appraisals

The over-all appraisals - to be "made by the General Assembly, through the Economic and Social Council, on the basis of above-mentioned reviews and of comments and recommendations, within the framework of a specific mandate, by the Committee for Development Planning"<sup>6/</sup> - will provide the highest policy-making organs of the United Nations with a global view and assessment of the progress towards fulfilling the tasks relating to the Second Development Decade. These appraisals will examine the efforts of both developing and developed countries in implementing the International Development Strategy. The global assessments will identify the persisting obstacles to the economic and social progress of developing countries, suggest remedial action and re-examine goals and objectives of the Decade in the light of changing circumstances. In other words, the over-all

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<sup>5/</sup> Ibid., paragraph (82).

<sup>6/</sup> Ibid., paragraph (83).

appraisals will be both diagnostic and prescriptive in character; their distinctive role will be to provide a compact analysis, designed to assist the principal intergovernmental organs of the United Nations to arrive at appropriate policy decisions. The "documentation and reports"<sup>6/</sup> requested by the General Assembly from the Secretary-General will take these considerations fully into account.

## II. RELATIONSHIPS AMONG DIFFERENT APPRAISALS

The brief account contained in the preceding section has sought to emphasize that the system of appraisals called for by the General Assembly does not entail any unnecessary overlap or duplication. The fact that the national, regional, functional and over-all appraisals will all have distinctive roles to play does not, however, imply that these appraisals should be considered in isolation from one another. That is far from the intention of the General Assembly.

It is clear that the appraisals will be closely linked by a common purpose, namely the economic and social progress of developing countries within the indicative perspective established by the General Assembly for the Second Development Decade. For the sake of both efficiency and expediency, the appraisals at different levels will need to draw on one another. The basic information for international appraisals - regional, functional and global - will necessarily come from national sources. Within the group of international appraisals, naturally full use will need to be made of the work carried out in various international bodies and organizations. It is logical to expect that the over-all appraisals will be aided by the work on other appraisals; and as part of a continuing exercise, the other appraisals will benefit, in a subsequent round of work, from the conclusions emerging from an over-all assessment. The cardinal purpose of all international appraisals will be to assist in a better formulation and implementation of policies at the national level by both developing and developed countries.

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It would certainly be a great advantage if the timing of different appraisals could be so arranged as to maximize the benefits they could draw from one another. For example, the time-table of the two comprehensive functional appraisals for the 1970s mentioned in the last sentence of sub-section I.C need not coincide with that for the over-all appraisals; in fact, it would be particularly useful if they appeared in the years when the over-all appraisals were not required so as to leave an ample margin of time for the detailed analysis contained in them to be fully made use of in the global assessments. Where such an alternating sequence cannot be arranged, a special effort will have to be made to channel the information emanating from the relevant analyses for use in connexion with the over-all appraisal.

### III. TIMING OF APPRAISALS

The over-all appraisals of progress "will be made biennially, the second biennial appraisal being in the nature of a mid-term review"<sup>6/</sup> of a "comprehensive" type which might lead to specification of more ambitious goals and objectives for the second half of the Decade than those set out in the present text of the Strategy.<sup>7/</sup> Since the Second United Nations Development Decade as proclaimed by the General Assembly began on 1 January 1971, it is understood that the first biennial over-all appraisal will be conducted in 1973. The General Assembly, in its capacity as the highest organ of the United Nations, will undertake this first appraisal at its twenty-eighth session in September-December 1973. Before that, the subject will be examined by the Economic and Social Council at its fifty-fifth session in July 1973. Whether any special intergovernmental group will be entrusted with the task of carrying out the detailed work relating to the over-all appraisals can only be a matter of conjecture at present. However, as both the Assembly and the Council have to deal with a large number of subjects at each of their sessions, the possibility of such a group being convened for an intensive session around May 1973 cannot be ruled out. The advisory body of experts known as the Committee for Development Planning will, in accordance with

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<sup>7/</sup> Ibid., paragraph (13).

the request of the General Assembly, therefore have to submit its views and recommendations by March 1973. The first biennial report requested from the Secretary-General to assist in the task of the over-all appraisals will thus have to be issued in January 1973. Following this chain of reasoning, it may be assumed that more or less the same pattern will have to be followed in connexion with the subsequent biennial appraisals during the Decade - that is, in 1975, 1977 and 1979.

The General Assembly has not suggested any fixed time-table for other appraisals. At the national level, however, it is desirable that an evaluation of progress should be carried out annually, especially since national appraisals are bound to remain intimately linked with annual plans - the operational components of four- or five-year development plans - and the annual budgets of Governments. This is one area where the United Nations system can render a particularly valuable service, first in bringing home the importance of this task to Governments which do not at present undertake it and secondly through appropriate assistance in carrying out the task. The desirable frequency of the regional and the functional appraisals will naturally be determined by the existing legislative decisions or those to be taken by the appropriate governing bodies in the light of the respective roles envisaged for these appraisals by the General Assembly. It is to be hoped, however, that the considerations concerning the links between the appraisals, touched upon in the preceding section, will find a reflection in such decisions.

#### IV. INFORMATION REQUIREMENTS

All appraisals of progress will require a regular flow of information of a wide-ranging nature. Although the core of the information required will be common to all appraisals, there will inevitably be differences among appraisals at different levels with regard to the degree of detail. It will be up to the organizations concerned to give precise shape and content to the information requirements relating to the appraisal work in their area of activity.

In this connexion, however, it should be borne in mind that progress will need to be appraised against the frame of reference of the International Development Strategy. Through this Strategy the world community has established

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a series of interrelated goals and objectives as well as a wide-ranging set of national and international policy measures for achieving them; and it is in relation to the various elements of the Strategy that the world community will want to probe into the unfolding trends and events. The work on appraisals will therefore require the compilation and analysis of information on all relevant variables mentioned in the Strategy.

A closely related point should also be stressed. The Strategy has not enunciated targets for individual developing countries, but rather for developing countries as a group. As already noted, the responsibility for formulating national targets rests with the developing countries themselves, each taking into account its own special circumstances. Thus, the variables mentioned in the Strategy will need to be examined in the light of national development plans covering the relevant time segments of the Decade as well as of the trends prevailing in the second half of the 1960s. The latter information will be necessary not merely in the cases where national plans are lacking - in order to provide some idea of possibilities in the light of past performance --but for all developing countries in order to judge the realism of national goals and objectives.

The information on relevant variables will need to be assembled and sifted in such a way as to bring out both the performance of the country concerned in terms of the results achieved and the effort made towards the attainment of the designated goals. Appraisal of both effort and performance is desirable in order to make full allowance not only for the time lag that may occur between the former and the latter but also for the wide differences that exist in respect of the endowment and economic status of developing countries.

The question of the information required for the over-all appraisals was examined by a Working Group of the Committee for Development Planning in August 1970 with the assistance of bodies and organizations of the United Nations system as well as a number of other intergovernmental organizations. Drawing upon the draft of the International Development Strategy as it stood at that time, the Working Group prepared a list of indicators it considered particularly

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relevant for the over-all appraisals.<sup>8/</sup> The suggestions of the Working Group will be discussed by the Committee for Development Planning as a whole at its seventh session in March-April 1971, and the views of the Committee on the subject will be submitted to the Economic and Social Council at its fifty-first session in July 1971. Members of the ACC Sub-Committee on the United Nations Development Decade may find the list prepared by the Working Group a useful basis for discussion.

For the developing countries, the Working Group has suggested the following quantitative and qualitative indicators relating to performance (results) and effort (policies):

Results of the development process

- (a) Indicators of output, based on the system of national accounts wherever feasible, supplemented by other indicators of production of main sectors of the economy (including infrastructure) and of principal goods;
- (b) Employment;
- (c) Levels of living (consumption of basic goods, education, health, housing etc.);
- (d) Investment and saving;
- (e) Foreign trade and balance of payments (including the relative extent of external indebtedness).

Policy measures

- (a) Measures for increasing agricultural production and improving distribution of income in the rural sector (including measures relating to land reform, rural credit, organization of agricultural markets etc.);

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<sup>8/</sup> See "Framework for appraising progress during the Second United Nations Development Decade", report of a Working Group of the Committee for Development Planning (E/AC.54/L.37).

- (b) Measures for accelerating industrialization;
- (c) Measures for expansion of employment and better distribution of income;
- (d) Measures relating to educational expansion and improvement (including literacy campaigns and inculcation of vocational skills);
- (e) Measures for mobilizing domestic financial resources;
- (f) Measures for export-promotion, import-substitution and external-debt management;
- (g) Measures for expanding and strengthening sub-regional and regional economic co-operation. (This is particularly important for small countries);
- (h) Measures for promoting scientific and technological progress;
- (i) Measures for internal economic stability;
- (j) Measures for improving administrative efficiency (including that relating to planning and plan implementation);
- (k) Other measures for institutional and structural reform;
- (l) Measures for improving health, housing, social welfare etc.

The corresponding indicators of the contribution by developed countries have been listed by the Working Group as follows:

#### Results

- (a) Official financial flows to developing countries (gross and net volume, components by type, terms and other conditions);
- (b) Private financial flows to developing countries (gross and net volume, terms, etc.);
- (c) Trade flows with developing countries (including structural breakdown);
- (d) Research and development expenditure for the benefit of developing countries;
- (e) Technical assistance.

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Policy measures

- (a) International commodity agreements;
- (b) Reductions in tariffs and non-tariff barriers;
- (c) Measures for industrial co-operation;
- (d) Measures for promoting scientific research and technologies suitable for developing countries;
- (e) Measures for expanding educational and health facilities in developing countries.

V. CO-OPERATION AMONG ORGANIZATIONS

The close co-operation maintained by organizations of the United Nations system during the preparatory work for the Second Development Decade was an important contributory factor to the success of intergovernmental deliberations which led to the unanimous adoption of the text of the International Development Strategy by the General Assembly at its special commemorative meeting on 24 October 1970. In turn, the text of the Strategy provides a unique framework for co-ordinating the relevant ongoing work of the organizations. It goes without saying that the concerted efforts of the organizations will be crucial for the success of the Decade.

For the evaluation of economic and social progress, fortunately a substantial pool of expertise already exists in the United Nations system. Over the past quarter of a century, a large body of technical literature, of both analytical and factual character, has been built up by international organizations. The critical need now is to give a new thrust to the work on the basis of the framework of the International Development Strategy.

It is important that steps should be taken to enlarge the information required for monitoring progress. Although a considerable improvement has taken place by virtue of the sustained efforts made in the post-war years, much work still remains to be done in refining and standardizing statistical concepts and in gathering economic and social data.<sup>8/</sup> It is to be hoped that this work will be given full attention as an integral part of the implementation of the International Development Strategy.

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The basic information will necessarily come from national sources, and the United Nations system should continue to make systematic efforts to improve its quantity and quality. Appropriate technical assistance for statistical improvement should be enlarged. Technical assistance experts in other fields - development planning, agriculture, industry, employment etc. - should also exert their weight in pushing for improvement in the flow of information. The multinational planning advisory teams of the United Nations too should prove helpful in this respect.

However, the drive to enlarge the flow of information should not be allowed to lead to the multiplication of questionnaires to Governments on the subject of the Development Decade. If questionnaires on the same subject, even though stressing somewhat different aspects, are sent to Governments by several organizations, the outcome may not be fruitful. Should the United Nations find it necessary to employ a questionnaire, by adapting its long-standing annual inquiry to this purpose, it would gladly make available to the interested organizations the replies from Governments. If other organizations already obtain regular information from Governments on the basis of existing arrangements, they too should take steps to circulate the replies.

The United Nations is eager to make use of the network of the Resident Representatives of the United Nations Development Programme in connexion with the work on appraisals of progress. The Resident Representatives can be a valuable additional source of information at the country level, at least in those areas of concern that are not the subject of regular data reporting.

In order to avoid unnecessary overlap or duplication it would be very helpful if the results of work relating to appraisals, especially data compilations, were to be circulated among the organizations concerned so that they might be drawn upon by the interested parties in connexion with their own tasks. Even if the information were not yet considered ripe for publication, or even if it were not to be published at all, its availability to the interested parties in the United Nations system could be very helpful. For example, although the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development does not publish its "country reports", it makes them available to the United Nations and other concerned organizations. And while these reports cannot be quoted or cited, they considerably ease the tasks in hand by shedding valuable light on various problems and issues. It would be very useful if similar arrangements could be made in other relevant areas.

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The regular appraisal of progress as part of the International Development Strategy for the 1970s will be a major innovation in the endeavours of the world community to accelerate the economic and social progress of developing countries and to bring about an integrated world economy. The outcome of the endeavours will inevitably depend upon how earnestly the work is carried out and how seriously its results are considered by Governments, which ultimately have the responsibility to take policy decisions.

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