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Some reflections on the major decisions of the Plenipotentiary Conference, Geneva, 1959

Since the last Plenipotentiary Conference at Buenos Aires in 1952, the membership of the Union has increased from 89 Members and 2 Associate Members to 96 Members and 5 Associate Members. Eighty-eight Members and one Associate Member were represented at the Plenipotentiary Conference that opened in the *Bâtiment Electoral* in Geneva on 14 October, 1959. In addition, the United Nations, the Universal Postal Union, the International Civil Aviation Organization, the World Meteorological Organization and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization were represented.

As the Conference was held at the seat of the Union and without an inviting government, it was opened by the chairman of the Administrative Council for 1959 who, most fittingly, was Mr. LANGENBERGER of Switzerland, the country in which the Union has been established for 95 years and which for over 80 years

managed its Bureau. On behalf of the Federal Government and of the Government and City of Geneva, the leader of the Swiss Delegation extended a cordial welcome to Switzerland to all the delegations; he outlined the plans that had been made by the Swiss authorities for their entertainment and comfort during their sojourn in Geneva, and told them of the generous grant of free postal, telegraph and telephone facilities by the Swiss PTT. Since the Buenos Aires Conference, the Union had suffered a grievous loss by the premature death in June, 1958, of Dr. M. A. ANDRADA, chairman of the Conference, who was elected Secretary-General of the Union in 1953. As no successor to Dr. Andrada had been appointed, the Assistant Secretary-General Mr. G. C. GROSS, who had been Acting Secretary-General since Dr. Andrada's death, and had been responsible for making all the preparations for the Plenipotentiary and Radio con-

| <i>Committee</i> | <i>Subject</i> | <i>Chairman</i> | <i>Vice-Chairmen</i> |
|------------------|--|---|--|
| A | Steering Committee | Chairman of the Conference (Netherlands) | Brazil Japan |
| B | Credentials | Switzerland | Cuba PR of Poland |
| C | Finance Control (Joint Committee with the Finance Control Committee of the Radio Conference) | New Zealand | Ireland FPR of Yugoslavia |
| D | Organization of the Union | Italy | Union of South Africa, Bielorussian SSR. |
| E | Relations with the United Nations, including Technical Assistance | USA | Mexico Fed. of Malaya |
| F | Convention and General Regulations (excluding subjects dealt with by Committees D, E, G and H) | Argentina | PR of Roumania Ghana |
| G | Personnel | UK of Great Britain and Northern Ireland | Ceylon Rep. of Philippines |
| H | Finances of the Union | Spain | Austria United Arab Republic |
| I | Drafting | France | Venezuela Australia |

| <i>Sub-Committee</i> | <i>Subject</i> | <i>Chairman</i> |
|----------------------|--|---|
| D 1 | Structure and organization of the secretariats | Kuwait |
| D 2 | Secretary General and Deputy-Filling of vacancies, mandates, conditions of service | United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland |
| F 1 | Definitions (Annex 3 to Convention) | France |
| F 2 | General Regulations | Ghana |
| H 1 | Financial management and accounts, 1952-1958 | Colombia |
| H 2 | Consolidated budget | Canada |
| H 3 | Budget levels 1960-1965 | United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. |

ferences, also welcomed the delegations and outlined the tasks before the Conference. Dr. J. D. H. van der TOORN, formerly Director General of the Netherlands PTT and leader of the Delegation of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, was elected chairman by acclamation. Dr. L. O. de MIRANDA, vice-chairman of the Administrative Council for 1959 and Assistant Director General of Posts and Telecommunications of Brazil, and H. E. K. OKUMURA, Ambassador of Japan to Switzerland, were elected vice-chairmen.

Comparatively few proposals had been submitted to amend the text of the Buenos Aires Convention, but many of those that had been made raised questions of great importance concerning the future structure and organization of the Union. Perhaps the most important and far-reaching were those connected with the expansion of the technical assistance activities of the Union to give more help to new or developing countries in planning and developing their networks, and in training their staff. Proposals had also been made to increase the number of Members of the Administrative Council, to revise the conditions for Membership of the Union, to reorganize the structure of the secretariats into a pyramid under the overall control of the Secretary-General, to revise the constitution and functions of the International Frequency Registration Board (IFRB) and to reorganize the Union's financial structure. In addition, the Administrative Council had submitted proposals for the assimilation of the conditions of service, salaries, pensions and allowances of the staff to those of the United Nations Common System.

After the formal opening, the Plenary meeting set up the conference secretariat with Mr. Gross as Secretary of the Conference, and established nine committees to consider the proposals and to report to the Plenary. (*See on page 98e.*)

During the course of the Conference, certain of the committees set up sub-committees to deal with particular problems. (*See above.*)

It would be impossible, within the space of a short article, to refer to all the decisions of a conference lasting for 10 weeks and covering every Union activity ; what follows, therefore, only gives a broad outline of the more important decisions.

Administrative Council

In order to secure "the equitable representation of all parts of the world," and to take account of the increase in membership of the Union since the number was fixed at 18 at the Atlantic City Plenipotentiary Conference in 1947, the number of Members of the Council was increased to 25. Election was on a regional basis. An additional Region—Africa—was created with four seats, and the number of seats in each of the American, Western European, and Asian and Australasian Regions was increased from five to six. The following Members of the Union were elected to serve on the Council until the next Plenipotentiary Conference. (*See on page 100e.*)

The newly elected Council held its inaugural meeting on 16 December, and elected as chairman Mr. L. O. de MIRANDA (Brazil) and as vice-chairman Mr. V. ŠENK (Yugoslavia) to hold office until the annual session in 1961. In view of the large number of problems remitted to it by the Plenipotentiary Conference, the Council decided that its annual session in 1960 should be extended to five weeks.

International Frequency Registration Board (IFRB)

When the conference opened, the Radio Conference had been in session for two months and had already decided that further important tasks should be undertaken by the IFRB. The Conference then considered and revised the text of the Convention to provide for a Board of eleven suitably qualified persons to be elected by the Radio Conference from candidates

| <i>Region</i> | <i>Number of seats</i> | <i>Members elected (in order of the number of votes received)</i> |
|---------------------------------|------------------------|---|
| A The Americas | 6 | Brazil Mexico Argentina United States of America Canada Colombia |
| B Western Europe | 6 | France Italy Switzerland Fed. Republic of Germany United Kingdom Spain |
| C Eastern Europe and North Asia | 3 | Yugoslavia USSR Czechoslovakia |
| D Africa | 4 | United Arab Republic Morocco (Kingdom of) Ethiopia Tunisia |
| E Asia and Australasia | 6 | Japan India { Australia China Iran Philippines |

| <i>Region</i> | <i>Number of seats</i> | <i>Persons elected</i> |
|---------------------------------|------------------------|---|
| A The Americas | 3 | * Mr. J. H. GAYER, USA * Mr. F. DELLAMULA, Argentina * Mr. A. H. CATÁ, Cuba |
| B Western Europe | 2 | * Mr. J. A. GRACIE, United Kingdom * Mr. R. PETIT, France |
| C Eastern Europe and North Asia | 2 | Mr. M. FLISAK, Poland Mr. N. KRASNOSELSKI, USSR |
| D Africa | 1 | * Mr. N. H. ROBERTS, Union of South Africa |
| E Asia and Australasia | 3 | Mr. M. N. MIRZA, Pakistan Mr. S. I. HASE, Japan * Mr. T. K. WANG, China |

* Already a Member of the Board

sponsored by countries, Members of the Union, in such a way as to ensure equitable representation of the various parts of the world, to serve until the date determined by the following Ordinary Administrative Radio Conference for their successors to take up office. It also revised the conditions under which a serving member of the Board who dies, resigns or abandons his duties may be replaced. The existing provisions about the complete independence of Board members were retained. A curious omission from the Atlantic City and Buenos Aires Conventions was rectified by the inclusion of a provision that the Board is to be assisted by a specialized secretariat.

During the closing stages of the Conference there was considerable discussion about the size of the increase in the Board's secretariat necessary to enable it to carry out the additional tasks given to it by the Radio Conference. Eventually the Conference authorized a substantial increase in staff at a cost in 1960 of Sw. frs. 800 000, with consequential additional costs in the General Secretariat in 1960 of Sw. frs. 40 000, and instructed the Council, before drawing up the budget in its final form, to review in detail this estimated additional expenditure with a view to reducing costs to the lowest possible level.

The Radio Conference elected the following eleven persons to serve on the Board until the next radio conference. (*See on page 100e.*)

The Radio Conference decided that the persons elected should take up office as Members of the Board on 1 October, 1960.

Consultative Committees

The decision to integrate the former CCIT and CCIF to form the CCITT was confirmed, and no change was made in the constitution of the Consultative Committees. New provisions were inserted for the CCIs to pay due attention to the study of Questions and the formulation of Recommendations about the establishment, development and improvement of telecommunication in new or developing countries and, at the request of a country, to study and offer advice about its national telecommunication problems. The post of Vice-Director of the CCIR was abolished but special provision was made for the extension of the service of the present holder of this post until the close of the Xth Plenary Assembly in 1963.

Structure and organization of the Secretariats

Several proposals had been made for the reconstruction of the secretariats of the various permanent organs of the Union into a pyramidal structure under a Secretary-General. Considerable time was spent in discussing various alternative forms of organization and to assist it in considering this important subject, the Conference invited the Head of each of the permanent organs to give his personal views; for the most part they did not recommend any

change, although there was general agreement that there was scope for greater integration of administrative work and services, especially when the Union moved into its new building.

After a long and exhaustive debate, it was finally decided to retain the existing basic structure and organization, but to improve the machinery for co-ordination between the permanent organs at the working level, especially as regards technical assistance, external relations and public information. It was also decided, in preparation for the move to the new building, to call in outside experts in office management to look into the organization of the secretariats to see what improvements and rationalization, within the framework of the Convention, were desirable.

Under the Buenos Aires Convention, as under that of Atlantic City, the Secretary-General and two Assistant Secretaries-General are appointed by the Administrative Council to which the Secretary-General is responsible; all three posts are permanent. The Conference decided in a secret ballot that, in future, the Secretary-General shall be elected by the Plenipotentiary Conference, that there shall be one Deputy Secretary-General, also elected by the Plenipotentiary Conference, and that the officers so elected shall remain in office until the dates determined by the next Plenipotentiary Conference (with a minimum term of office of five years); holders of both posts shall be eligible for re-election. Furthermore, the Secretary-General will in future be responsible to the Plenipotentiary Conference and, between conferences, to the Administrative Council. If the post of Secretary-General falls vacant, the Deputy Secretary-General will discharge the duties ad interim; if it considers it desirable, the Council may fill ad interim the vacant post of Deputy Secretary-General. The Conference also decided to proceed with the election of the new Secretary-General and his Deputy to take office on 1 January, 1960, in accordance with the provisions of the new Convention.

Seven candidates were nominated for the post of Secretary-General and, after three secret ballots, Mr. G. C. GROSS, Assistant Secretary-General and, since the death of Dr. Andrada, Acting Secretary-General, was elected. There were two candidates for the new post of Deputy Secretary-General and Dr. M. B. SARWATE, alternate leader of the Delegation of India to the Conference and the representative of India on the Council, was elected on the first ballot. Mr. Gross took the oath and Dr. Sarwate made the declaration of allegiance to the Union before the whole Conference, and they received the hearty congratulations and good wishes of all the delegates.

The Council had recommended, following an interim adjustment in staff salaries in 1958, that Union staff conditions of service, salaries, pensions and allowances should be assimilated to those of the United Nations Common System in Geneva in accordance with Article VIII of the agreement with the United Nations in which the Union undertakes

to develop as far as practicable common personnel standards with the United Nations. The other Specialized Agencies in Geneva all apply the Common System. The Council had approved proposals for assimilation of salaries and allowances, a draft agreement for the Union to become affiliated to the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund, detailed proposals for the transfer of members of the three Union pension schemes, and proposals concerning the future pension arrangements for existing staff members where it proved impracticable for them to join the United Nations Fund. The Conference accepted the Council's proposals and decided that assimilation should take effect from 1 January, 1960. The salary of the Secretary-General was fixed at Sw. frs. 63 000 and those of the Deputy Secretary-General, Directors of the Consultative Committees and Members of the IFRB at Sw. frs. 59 000; Geneva Common System gradings, salary scales and allowances will apply without modification to all permanent and temporary officials in the D2-D1, Professional and General Service categories of staff. The Council will approve revised staff and pension regulations, and will review any case of hardship due to a reduction of take-home pay on assimilation.

The need to widen the geographical distribution of the staff was given special consideration; in June 1959 and excluding the Members of the IFRB, only 18 Members of the Union had nationals serving in the higher classes recruited internationally. With safeguards for the promotion prospects of existing staff (and, of course, those of staff recruited under the new arrangements), it was decided that all vacancies in the Professional categories and above should be advertised internationally and that, provided other qualifications were equal, preference would be given to candidates from regions not represented or insufficiently represented. General Service categories will continue to be recruited locally if possible, but technical posts in the three highest grades will be considered for international recruitment.

All these decisions will be costly and special provision was made in the budget for 1960 of Sw. frs. 500 000 for the cost of assimilation to the Common System.

Technical Assistance

Discussion of the future role of the Union and of its secretariats in giving more technical help to new or developing countries was most informative, valuable and stimulating, and ranged over every problem and every form of technical aid. Naturally, the contributions to the debate of the newer countries were of particular interest. It was accepted that telecommunications development should keep pace with, but not outstrip, the social and economic development of a country, and that there was a need for countries to review the degree of priority given by their Governments to telecommunications projects under the United Nations Expanded Programme of Technical Assistance (EPTA), the United

Nations Special Fund, and the various other schemes for giving technical and financial help to new or developing countries. But it was also accepted that the Union could do still more to help to solve the particular problems with which these countries were faced.

After long and careful consideration, it was decided to increase direct help by extending the duties of the Consultative Committees to include the study of Questions and the formulation of Recommendations about the establishment, development and improvement of the telecommunications of new or developing countries in the regional and international fields and, if requested, to study and offer advice to any country about its national telecommunication problems. This will ensure that the best and most up-to-date advice from the foremost telecommunication specialists in the world, and the combined experience of the most technically advanced countries, will be available to any country to assist it in solving its problems. The Consultative Committees will also consider the possibility of setting up groups to study problems of particular interest to new or developing countries, and to publish, in suitable form, Recommendations extracted from their documentation likely to be of interest to these countries. The activities of the PLAN Committee were extended to Latin America, and the CCIs will continue joint studies with a view to recommending suitable means, having regard to technical and economic considerations, for linking to the world telephone network regions not yet so linked.

It was also decided that the Union should continue to participate fully in the Expanded Programme (EPTA), but that the Council should revise the present procedures on lines indicated by the Conference; and that the Union should collaborate fully in furnishing assistance to governments in preparing telecommunication projects for submission to the United Nations Special Fund for Economic Development, in advising the Fund's Management about the technical aspects of projects, and in supervising the execution of telecommunication projects approved by the Fund. In addition the Secretary-General will collect and publish technical and administrative information of special use or interest to new or developing countries and will draw their attention to the possibilities of assistance from the various United Nations schemes; he will also ascertain whether any Members or Associate Members contemplate telecommunication projects for which outside capital would be desirable and, without committing the Union in financial operations or in expense chargeable to its budget, will ascertain from inter-governmental and private agencies whether they would be prepared to associate themselves with an international financing scheme. The Council will also take all possible steps, within the framework of the Convention, to continue active co-operation in the field of telecommunications with the Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East (ECAFE), and with the other regional economic Commissions.

It is clear from all these decisions that technical assistance will continue to form one of the most important activities of the Union and of its permanent organs. The Union is justly proud of its position as the pioneer international organization in the sphere of technical assistance through the work of its Consultative Committees. The readiness of the Conference to recognize the special needs of certain countries and to expand the duties of the Consultative Committees and of the Union's secretariats, has demonstrated that the Union still regards mutual assistance to be one of its most important activities.

Financial structure and budget levels

The principal problems before the Conference were to decide the future structure of the budget and the future budget levels.

Proposals had again been made for the adoption by the Union of a consolidated budget to conform with practice in the United Nations and the newer Specialized Agencies, and for the establishment of a Working Capital Fund to make the Union financially independent. The Conference decided to introduce a consolidated budget from 1 January, 1961. Under the consolidated budget, the costs of all conferences and meetings (including CCI Study-Group meetings) will be paid by all Members and Associate Members whether or not they have attended; the only exception will be for certain special conferences. With a consolidated budget, conference expenditure must be fixed in advance and the duration and number of conferences is determined by the financial limits set by the Plenipotentiary Conference. The proposal to set up a Working Capital Fund was withdrawn.

The Conference set budget ceilings for the annual expenses of the Council and of the secretariats for the next five years rising from Sw. frs. 11 000 000 in 1961 to Sw. frs. 12 200 000 in 1965 when the Centenary Plenipotentiary Conference is due to be held. If the 1965 Plenipotentiary Conference has to be postponed, the annual budgets for the years after 1965 may not exceed the sum specified for the previous year by more than 3% per annum. In very exceptional cases, the Council may use credits not exceeding by a maximum of 3% the yearly limits set for the annual budgets. A separate ceiling for expenditure on conferences was set at a maximum of Sw. frs. 13 189 000 for the five years 1961-1965; the Council was instructed to attempt to restrict such expenditure within the sums stipulated for each year, but may authorize expenditure in excess of the annual limits if this can be compensated either by credits accrued from a previous year or by credits foreseen in a future year. The sum authorized for 1965 will be reduced if the Plenipotentiary Conference or the Ordinary Administrative Radio Conference is not held in that year. An additional amount not exceeding Sw. frs. 750 000 for non-recurrent expenditure was authorized to cover the cost of the move to the new building.

The budget for 1960 was eventually fixed at Sw. frs. 9 000 000 after considerable discussion of the

heavy additional expenditure necessary to enable the IFRB to carry out the extra duties resulting mainly from the decisions of the Radio Conference. In view of the general concern at the steep rise in the budget, the Council was instructed to review in detail the various items with a view to reducing expenses to the lowest possible level before approving the ordinary budget. As the national budgets for most countries were closed, Members were asked to pay the balance of the contributions for 1960 (that is the additional sums required to implement the decisions of the Conference during 1960) at any time in 1960 after firm estimates have been fixed by the Council; interest will not be charged on these sums if they are paid before 1 January, 1961.

Members and Associate Members must notify the Secretary-General before 1 July, 1960, of the class they have chosen for contribution under the new Convention. In view of the future level of the budget, and following the precedent set at the Buenos Aires Conference, the chairman invited all delegations empowered to do so to state the class they intended to choose, subject, of course, to confirmation by their governments; he reminded Members contemplating a reduction that they should bear in mind that a heavy reduction in the total number of units available would involve a corresponding increase in the value of the unit, and so might defeat the object of the reduction. In response to this invitation a large number of delegations announced that they would maintain their existing classes of contribution, and some delegations said that they would recommend contributing in a higher class.

The new building

It was decided to rent, instead of to buy, the new building which is rapidly taking shape on the *Place des Nations*, but to include in the agreement an option to buy it at a later date. A resolution was adopted expressing the very warm thanks of the Conference to the Government of the Swiss Confederation and the State of Geneva for the generous terms offered to the Union; the Swiss Confederation has been the Host Government to the Union ever since it was set up in 1865 and has always treated the Union with the utmost generosity and benevolence. The resolution also included the thanks of the Conference to Australia and the Federal Republic of Germany for their generous offers respectively to furnish a room in the new building and to supply and install the complete telephone installation. The Secretary-General, after consultation with the Council, was authorized to accept other offers of gifts for equipping, furnishing or decorating the new building.

At a late stage in the Conference the Delegation of Mexico made a formal proposal, on behalf of the Mexican Government, that the seat of the Union should be moved to Mexico City, and made a generous offer of financial assistance if the proposal were accepted. While deeply appreciative of the generosity

of the offer and the interest in the welfare and comfort of the Union and of its secretariats shown by the Government of Mexico, the Conference felt that time did not permit full consideration of the proposal ; in addition, since the Conference had already extended beyond the date expected, several delegations who would have wished to consider the offer had already left Geneva. The Delegation of Mexico intimated that the offer by the Mexican Government would remain open if, at some future date, the Union decided to amend Article 3 of the Convention.

Outer space

In spite of being the oldest of the Specialized Agencies, the Union keeps abreast of all new developments and, in the conquest of outer space, telecommunication is destined to play a most important part ; without telecommunication the recent remarkable developments in the exploration of outer space would have been impossible. In view of the importance of the role that telecommunication and, in consequence the Union, is destined to take in this new sphere, the Conference instructed the Secretary General to inform the United Nations and the other international organizations concerned, of the decisions of the Radio Conference and of the technical studies being undertaken by the CCIR, and to keep them informed of developments so far as the Union is concerned.

Proposed re-draft of the Convention

The Delegation of Paraguay submitted a most interesting proposal containing a complete revision and rearrangement of the text of the Convention. Unfortunately time did not permit adequate consideration of the proposal owing to its complexity and late submission, but the Council was asked to study it and to submit recommendations to the next Pleni-potentiary Conference ; Members were also invited to study it in preparation for the next conference.

Conclusions

The Conference will be long remembered for the degree of agreement reached on the important prob-

lems, and for the ready spirit of compromise and co-operation shown by delegations when majority decisions were not entirely to their liking. The attendance was the largest in the 95 years of the Union's existence and provided many opportunities, apart from conference activities, for the exchange of information and ideas ; old friendships were renewed and many new friendships were made. A notable feature of the Conference was the prominent part played by the delegations of the newer countries ; their contributions to the debates often shed new light on old problems.

Our Swiss hosts, although not the Host Government to the Conference, were more than generous, and provided entertainment on a princely scale. The thanks of all delegations are due to the City and State of Geneva for making our stay in the beautiful City of Geneva so interesting and enjoyable ; to the Swiss Federal Council for the magnificent banquet at Zurich ; to the Canton and City of Zurich for the wonderful reception at the beautiful *Staathaus* ; and last, but not least, to the Swiss PTT for the superbly organized excursion to Zurich. This, which afforded a most welcome break in our labours, was deeply appreciated and will be long remembered for its lavish hospitality and for the opportunity it gave to see the beautiful city of Zurich and to visit places of interest in the surrounding country.

A tribute must be paid to Dr. van der Toorn for the patience, skill and wisdom with which he directed the business of the Conference, and to the chairmen of committees for the hard work involved in completing their agendas within the time limits laid down. The thanks of all delegations are also due to the Conference secretariat for their magnificent efforts and for their readiness to work long hours under arduous conditions to ensure the success of the Conference services.

The new Convention was signed on behalf of the Governments of 84 Members and one Associate Member. This clearly demonstrates the world-wide nature of our Union and the fact that, after 95 years of existence, it is full of life and vigour and ready to meet the joint challenge of a changing world and new technical developments.

E.M.P.