

SECOND SESSION OF THE PREPARATORY COMMITTEE OF THE  
UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON TRADE AND EMPLOYMENT

Chairman's Committee

(Heads of Delegations)

Summary Record of the Fifteenth Meeting held on  
Thursday, 7th August 1947, at  
4:30 p.m.

Chairman: M. M. Suetens (Belgium)

1. President's Report on Visit to New York.

M. SUTENS expressed his pleasure on returning to Geneva after his visit of ten days to New York to attend the meeting of the Economic and Social Council. He said that the Preparatory Committee's Report had been presented to the Council on 28 July and in speaking of the Report he had stressed the preparatory character of the work of this Second Session in Geneva and the efforts that were made by the Committee to prepare a Draft Charter which took account of the different economic and political structures of all Members of the United Nations. Regarding the time and place of the proposed International Conference on Trade and Employment he had stressed the fact that the original plan had called for a World Conference at the end of 1946. There had therefore already been a year's delay and in view of the great importance of the Charter and the urgency of bringing it into operation as early as possible, any further delay should be avoided. He had said that the Preparatory Committee recognised the need for governments to have ample time to study the Draft Charter, but as they had had an opportunity to send observers to all the meetings of the

Preparatory Committee and had been furnished with copies of documents, the three months that remained between the completion of the Charter in August and the convening of the Conference in November should be sufficient. The Council had then examined the Preparatory Committee's Report. The agenda had been accepted. Two Members of the Council urged a postponement of the World Conference. USSR and Byelo-russia abstained from participation in the discussion. The proposed date was accepted and the Council was unanimous on the choice of Havana as the venue.

M. Suetens then referred to the invitations to be sent to non-members of the United Nations and to their voting rights. First, a proposal had been made that territories which were not fully self-governing should be treated separately from the sovereign states which were non-members, but this had been defeated. The list of countries to which invitations should be sent, proposed by the Preparatory Committee, had been approved but two additions had been made to the list, namely Pakistan and Indonesia. On the question of the right to vote, M. Suetens had been asked for his views and he had stated that whilst the Preparatory Committee had not discussed this question it was his personal view that the non-members invited to the Conference should be given full voting rights because of their commercial importance and because if they were wanted as Members of the Organization, their views should be taken into account and nothing should be done to provoke their hostility. Mr. Holmes of the UK Delegation, who had accompanied him, had strongly supported this view and the cable message received from the Preparatory Committee had been read to the Council. However, there had been two currents of opinion opposed to the voting rights; in the first place, the question of principle had been

raised and it had been argued that to grant the vote to non-members would set a dangerous precedent for other inter-governmental organizations and conferences. M. Suetens read extracts from the speeches made at the Council meeting by the Members representing Canada, Norway and the United States, strongly opposing the proposal that non-members should be allowed to vote; in the second place, said M. Suetens, the right to vote had been opposed because it was thought inadvisable to extend it to countries which did not enjoy full sovereignty and which did not figure in the list presented by the Preparatory Committee.

M. Suetens was congratulated by various Delegations on his return to Geneva and on the success which had attended his efforts on behalf of the Preparatory Committee at the meeting of the Economic and Social Council.

Mr. A. B. SPEEKENBRINK (Netherlands) said that the Council must have been under some misapprehension when it decided that an invitation should be issued to the Indonesian Republic; the territory called the Indonesian Republic was only one of the territories making up the United States of Indonesia which was to be formed; and the treatment of various territories, having the status of the Indonesian Republic, as separate states, would undermine the structure of the proposed organization. Moreover, it should be understood that the Delegation of the Netherlands to the Preparatory Committee represented the Kingdom of the Netherlands and that that included all overseas territories as well as the metropolitan territory.

Mr. J.R.C. HELMORE (United Kingdom) thought that the Council's action somewhat belied their professed interest in the

work of the Preparatory Committee in that it ignored the Committee's message on the subject of voting rights. He now wondered whether something could be done to obtain a reversal or modification of the Council's decision, since it was possible that the refusal of voting rights might cause some non-members of the United Nations to refuse the invitation. The United Kingdom, for example, would regard it as a serious matter if Eire did not attend the Conference, and no doubt European countries would be equally disturbed if Switzerland did not attend. He suggested that possibly the question could be re-opened by the Governments represented on the Preparatory Committee; the Governments that had opposed the voting rights might be persuaded to change their attitude, or, alternatively a middle course might be found which would be acceptable to all. The Governments represented at the Havana Conference would be undertaking far-reaching obligations, and, therefore, the questions which arise for decision could perhaps be divided into two categories and non-members of the United Nations might be allowed to vote when questions affecting their obligations as potential Members of the International Trade Organization came up for discussion but not on other matters. Mr. Helmore said that his Government might be willing to take the initiative in seeking some such compromise solution, but he would like to know that the Delegations of one or two other important countries which had opposed voting rights would be prepared to support his plan. Finally, Mr. Helmore said that he would want the whole question of voting rights treated in this manner and would not want different treatment for the "customs territories" which were to be invited to the Conference.

Mr. L.D. WILGRESS (Canada) said that he had received no reports from his Government on the questions discussed at the meeting of the Council, nor had he been given instructions. It was, however, clear from the extracts from the reports read by the Chairman that the Canadian representative at the Economic and Social Council had opposed the granting of voting rights. He had always understood that it was the view of the Canadian Government that the Trade Conference should be on the broadest possible basis, but possibly they had strong views on the question of setting a precedent for future conferences. Mr. Wilgress expressed his personal view that non-Members of the United Nations should have full voting rights on questions affecting the obligations of Members of the new Organization; on these questions they should be allowed to have a voice in the decisions, but on questions of procedure the voting might be restricted to Members of the United Nations. Mr. Wilgress said that if such a compromise proposal were put forward he could ask his Government if they would be prepared to support it.

Mr. ERIK COLBAN (Norway) said he was in the same position as Mr. Wilgress, and he agreed with what he had said.

M. BARADUC (France) agreed with Mr. Wilgress and Mr. Colban; he was prepared to support Mr. Helmore's proposal, and would be pleased to submit it to his Government for the matter to be raised again in the Economic and Social Council or in the General Assembly.

Mr. C. WILCOX (United States) joined the other Delegates in supporting Mr. Helmore's proposal.

Dr. WUNSZ KING (China) said that in the absence of instructions from his Government he could not differ from

the attitude adopted by the Chinese representative at the meeting of the Council, but he would gladly forward Mr. Helmore's proposal for the consideration of his Government.

Mr. A. de V.F. BRAGA (Brazil) said his Government was not a Member of the Council, but in the absence of instructions he agreed that the voting rights should not be restricted. He offered to put Mr. Helmore's proposal to his Government.

M. ANGEL FAIVOVICH (Chile) supported the views of other Members of the Preparatory Committee on the question of voting. He suggested that Members of the Preparatory Committee should obtain the views of their Governments and then the Committee could decide what to do. He would welcome further clarification of the proposal of the United Kingdom delegate.

Mr. HELMORE (United Kingdom) said that he had not formulated his proposal in precise terms, but the sense of his plan was to secure an amendment of the Council's decision so as to allow non-Members of the United Nations to vote on questions affecting the rights and obligations of Members of the proposed Organization. He said that he did not think the Preparatory Committee itself could take any action; the Council would submit its Annual Report to the Assembly and the question of voting rights could then be re-opened; meanwhile, no doubt, the invitations to the Conference would be issued in accordance with the Council's decision, but the non-Members could perhaps be informed that the voting question might be re-opened and rejections of the invitation might thus be avoided.

Mr. COLBAN (Norway) suggested that the Summary Record of this discussion should be made available as soon as possible, and Mr. Braga (Brazil) proposed that the record of the discussion in the Economic and Social Council should also be circulated.

Mr. BARADUC (France) asked the Executive Secretary whether he thought the Council could reverse its decision before the end of its present meeting, and Mr. Wyndham-White (Executive Secretary) stated in reply that it would be difficult for the Council to reverse a decision which had been the subject of a formal vote following full discussion.

The CHAIRMAN reinforced the opinion of the Executive Secretary. He also felt that the Preparatory Committee itself should take no further action on this question. He suggested that the General Assembly might, however, modify the Council's decision; the Assembly would meet on 15th September and the Governments represented on the Preparatory Committee - particularly the United Kingdom Government - might take action with a view to reaching a compromise; and meanwhile, the non-Members might be informed that the question is likely to be re-opened.

Mr. HELMORE (United Kingdom) suggested that other Delegates assist in securing the desired compromise by making appropriate recommendations to their Governments and should let the United Kingdom Delegation know what action their Governments decided to take.

It was unanimously agreed to proceed in accordance with the suggestion of the United Kingdom delegate.

2. Requests to send Observers to final meetings of the Second Session.

Mr. WYNDHAM-WHITE (Executive Secretary) reported that he had received two requests from non-Members of the United Nations,

who would be receiving invitations to the Havana Conference, for permission to send Observers to attend the final stages of the Preparatory Committee's discussions on the Charter; he said that to admit such Observers would require an amendment of the rules of procedure, but before proposing such an amendment he would like to have the decision of the Preparatory Committee on whether such Observers should be admitted.

Dr. Z. AUGENTHALER (Czechoslovakia) and Mr. COLBAN (Norway) expressed the view that it was unnecessary at this late stage that such Observers should be admitted to the remaining meetings of the Preparatory Committee; they said that the Governments concerned were receiving the documents and could send Observers to the public meetings.

In reply to a question the Executive Secretary stated that the requests to which he referred had been received from the Governments of Italy and Hungary.

M. FAIVOVICH (Chile) suggested that Governments invited to the Havana Conference should be permitted to send Observers to the remaining meetings in Geneva, and the Chairman agreed with this view.

After further discussion it was proposed by Mr. Helmore, supported by Mr. Baraduc that the discussion be adjourned.

The meeting rose at 7.30 p.m.