

AD HOC COMMITTEE ON PROPOSED
ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR THE MIDDLE EAST

STATEMENT BY DR. EL TANAMLY, REPRESENTATIVE OF THE
ARAB LEAGUE AT THE MEETING OF 12 MAY 1948

THE LEAGUE OF ARAB STATES AND THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF THE MIDDLE EAST

The League of Arab States, founded on 22 March 1945, is an inter-governmental organization. It is the only regional organization in the Middle East. It is composed of the independent Arab States, i.e., Syria, Lebanon, Transjordan, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Yemen and Egypt. All these States, with the exception of Transjordan, are Members of the United Nations. The Pact of the League further provides that any independent Arab State may become a member of the League.

I. THE COMMITTEES

Article 2 of the Pact defines the aims of the League of Arab States. The Article is worded as follows:

"The purpose of the League is to draw closer the relations between member States and co-ordinate their political activities with the aim of realizing a close collaboration between them, to safeguard their independence and sovereignty, and to consider in a general way the affairs and interests of the Arab countries.

It also has among its purposes a close co-operation of the member States, with due regard to the structure of each of these States and the conditions prevailing therein, in the following matters:

- (a) Economic and financial matters, including trade, Customs, currency, agriculture and industry.
- (b) Communications, including railways, roads, aviation, navigation, and posts and telegraphs.
- (c) Cultural matters.
- (d) Matters connected with nationality, passports, visas, execution of judgments and extradition.
- (e) Social welfare matters.
- (f) Health matters.

/Article 4 of the Pact

Article 4 of the Pact states that a special committee shall be formed for each of the categories of questions enumerated in Article 2. These committees shall be responsible for establishing the basis and the extent of co-operation between the member States.

There are now in existence, besides the Political Committee, a Committee for Economic and Fiscal Matters, a Cultural Committee, a Committee on Communications, a Legislative Committee, a Health Committee and a Committee on Matters connected with Nationality, Passports, Visas, Execution of Judgments and Extradition. The formation of a special committee for Social Welfare Matters is imminent.

A. The Economic and Fiscal Committee

In 1945 this Committee drew up a Report which amounts to genuine "economic planning" for the member States of the League. This Report contains practical recommendations on the following two questions:

(a) Agriculture

The section devoted to agriculture makes recommendations on the following subjects:

1. Exchange of information

- (1) Collection of information on the present state of agriculture in the Arab countries;
- (2) Standardization of statistical methods. Organization of exchanges of statistics between the Arab countries;
- (3) Exchange of information on agriculture between the Arab countries and other States;
- (4) Organization of conferences of experts.

2. Research

- (1) Development of scientific research in each member State;
- (2) Co-operation between the various member States in order to obtain the best results from such research;
- (3) Publication of such research.

3. Education

- (1) Dissemination of modern agricultural methods;
- (2) Establishment of intermediate schools for the training of technicians able to set an example to the peasants;
- (3) Development of agricultural teaching in rural schools, and the establishment of technical schools;
- (4) Raising of the standard of living of the peasant, from the economic, cultural and social point of view;
- (5) Increase of peasant incomes.

/4. Co-operation

4. Co-operation

- (1) Propagation of co-operative principles;
- (2) Establishment of agricultural co-operative societies;
- (3) Establishment of an Arab Co-operative Union.

5. Legislation

- (1) Collection of information on agricultural legislation in the Arab States. Establishment of a basis for reform in these States;
- (2) Collection of information on the present landholding and agricultural systems, especially as regards relations between landlords and farmers. The establishment of a system capable of inducing greater production and a better standard of living, for the cultivators;
- (3) Organization and supervision of exports of agricultural produce;
- (4) Recording of fluctuations in international prices with a view to organizing production so as to avoid agricultural products being sold at a loss;
- (5) Organization of agricultural credit;
- (6) Report of the system of taxes and dues.

6. General

- (1) Acquainting the public with agricultural problems;
- (2) Increasing the budgets of departments and groups dealing with agriculture;
- (3) Training teams of technicians able to prepare and carry out reforms in the various Arab States.

.. Trade and Industry

The Sub-Committee on Commercial and Industrial Matters, adopted recommendations on the following points:

- (1) Exports of surplus local products to the member States of the League. Collaboration in obtaining supplies of raw materials;
- (2) Development of transport facilities;
- (3) Exchange of information and statistics. Standardization of statistical methods. Reporting of statistics to the Secretariat of the League;
- (4) Exchange of trade representative
- (5) Establishment of regional exhibitions of industry and agriculture. Collective participation in international exhibitions;
- (6) Development of the tourist trade;
- (7) Co-ordination of the Customs policies of the member States;
- (8) Co-ordination of Customs regulations and relaxation of formalities;
- (9) Exchange of practical and scientific missions;

- (10) Formation of regional, industrial, commercial and financial undertakings, with the joint participation of member States and private enterprise;
- (11) Establishment of regional Chambers of Commerce and Industry;
- (12) Development of scientific and technical research and exchange of results of such research;
- (13) Development of education;
- (14) Co-ordination of legislation concerning trade or industry. Standardization of weights and measures;
- (15) Plan for fixing rates of exchange. Study of the possibility of introducing a single monetary system for member States.

C. Committee on Transport and Communications

During 1946 the Committee on Transport and Communications prepared the following drafts:

(a) Aviation

- (1) Draft Convention between member States. This draft mentions the establishment of an Arab Aviation Council;
- (2) Formation of a large Arab company for civil aviation. Member States and private individuals will join in forming this company.

(b) Posts

- (1) Establishment of an Arab Postal Union.
- (2) Application of local tariffs to letters and postcards addressed to member States.

(c) Telephones and Telegraphs

Scheme for an Arab Telephone and Telegraph Communications Union.

This scheme deals principally with the following questions:

- (1) Establishment of an Arab Union;
- (2) Fifty per cent reduction for press telegrams;
- (3) Twenty per cent reduction in present telegraph rates.

(d) Railways, Roads and Shipping

- (1) Standardization of railway gauges;
- (2) Nationalization of the railways;
- (3) Plan for the construction of certain railways deemed to be necessary for facilitating transport between the Arab countries;
- (4) Plan for the construction of certain roads;
- (5) Formation of a large shipping company. Governments and private individuals will join together to form this company.

D. The Legislative Committee

The Legislative Committee has already done useful work. The former Chairman of this Committee is the author of a new Egyptian Civil Code.

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He is also the originator of similar codes for Iraq and Syria.

In commercial matters the Committee has prepared a large part of a unified Trade Code for States-Members. The Committee has taken advantage of the great amount of legislation already enacted in Lebanon.

In the field of supplementary commercial law the Committee has drawn up a draft model law on copyright. The Committee is at present putting the finishing touches to other standardized drafts for patents, industrial designs on models and trademarks.

The standardization of juridical institutions will clearly trade and help to consolidate the economic unity of the Arab countries. Legal institutions are the framework within which economic activity develops.

E. The Other Committees

To attempt to survey the whole of the activities of all the Committees of the League of Arab States would be a tedious business. It may, however, be useful to mention the work done by the Cultural Committee in standardizing educational programmes in member States.

The drafts already prepared on passports, visas, the execution of judgments and extradition, are facts to be kept in mind by all those interested in trade between countries of the Middle East.

II. THE SECRETARIAT

The Secretariat of the League is divided into departments corresponding to the Committees mentioned above.

The Economic and Fiscal Affairs Department constitutes an economic research and information centre. It is not concerned only with data regarding member States of the League and their economic development; it also follows with great interest economic phenomena on a regional and world-wide scale.

The activities of the Department may be summarized under the following heads:

- (1) Collection and co-ordination of statistics published by the various Arab States;
- (2) Publication of a statistical bulletin in Arabic;
- (3) Establishment of an information centre for traders and commercial groups in the various Arab states. The centre serves as a link between such individuals and groups and the appropriate governmental authorities;
- (4) The Department follows and records the activities of the United Nations in the economic and social field. It collects information on international conventions of an economic character;
- (5) On a regional level the Department is taking part in the organization of the Cairo Agricultural and Industrial Exhibition;

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(6) The Department is at present studying the currency question in the member States of the Arab League.

III. THE LEAGUE AND THE UNITED NATIONS

This summary demonstrates similarity of the purposes and methods of the League of Arab States and the United Nations.

The Pact of the League is at several points similar to the United Nations Charter and the resemblance becomes complete when one examines the purposes of the two organizations. Comparison of Articles 2 and 5 of the League Pact and Article 1 of the United Nations Charter affords sufficient proof of this. (See Pact of the League of Arab States in "Documents of the United Nations Conference on International Organisation" vol. XII).

The fact has, moreover, been recognized by the authors of the two conventions. Article 52, paragraph 1, of the United Nations Charter states that

"Nothing in the present Charter precludes the existence of regional agreements or agencies for dealing with such matters relating to the maintenance of international peace and security as are appropriate for regional action, provided that such arrangements or agencies and their activities are consistent with the Purposes and Principles of the United Nations."

The third paragraph of Article 3 of the Pact of the League of Arab States, defining the competence of the Council of the League states that it "shall also have the function of determining the means whereby the League will collaborate with the international organizations which may be created in the future to guarantee peace and security and organize economic and social relations."

Although Article 52 of the United Nations Charter, unlike Article 3 of the League Pact, makes no mention of economic and social matters, there can be no doubt that the latter are included in the conditions of stability and well-being necessary for peaceful and friendly relations among nations (United Nations Charter, Article 55). There can therefore be no doubt that the need for close co-operation between the United Nations and the League of Arab States in the economic and social field is emphasized by the actual Charters of the two organizations.

The articles mentioned have not remained a dead letter. Co-operation between the two organizations has already produced results.

In September 1947 I was invited by UNESCO to take part in the work of the Committee of Experts for the preparation of an International Copyright Convention. Although the invitation was a personal one, it showed the desire of the specialized agencies of the United Nations to co-operate with experts from the League of Arab States. It was this desire to collaborate and

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co-operate in the intellectual field that enabled the Conference of Experts to issue unanimous recommendations.

In February 1948 the League was invited to participate in the work of the FAO Regional Conference. I had the honour of representing the League at the Conference and I was able once again to appreciate the value of co-operation between the League and the United Nations.

The United Nations has not overlooked the activity of the Arab League in widely differing fields. Thus, in the report of the Transport and Communications Commission one reads that in the field of transport and communications in the Middle East "the only multilateral arrangement consists of the Transport and Communications Commission of the Arab League" (document E/CN.2/34).

It may also be noted that the brilliant reports submitted to the Ad Hoc Committee by the Secretariat have faithfully reflected the work accomplished by the Arab League.

The Report on the Activities of the Interim Commission of WHO, issued in November 1946, shows how the Arab League is co-operating with WHO through the Arab Bureau in Alexandria (document E/593).

The ILO regional meeting at Istanbul in November 1947 called attention to the importance attached by the ILO to close co-operation between itself and any Economic Commission for the Middle East. It also stressed the importance of collaboration with the League of Arab States. (See ILO official Bulletin Vol. XXX. No. 4, page 215).

IV. THE LEAGUE AND THE PROPOSAL TO ESTABLISH AN ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR THE MIDDLE EAST

In its Resolution of 31 October 1947, inviting the Economic and Social Council to study the factors bearing upon the establishment of an Economic Commission for the Middle East, the General Assembly stated "that such measures would be facilitated by close co-operation with the United Nations and its subsidiary organs as well as with regional organizations in the Middle East such as the Arab League."

The Economic and Social Council made a similar reference in its resolution of 8 March 1948 to the value of co-operation with the Arab League.

The Ad Hoc Committee in its resolution of 15 April 1948 invited the Arab League to send a representative to take part, without vote, in its work.

Convinced of the value of international co-operation in the economic field the Arab League was glad to give prompt acceptance to this invitation.

The League of Arab States, as the only organization working in the economic field for the prosperity of the Middle East, is following with great interest the work of the Ad Hoc Committee. However, conscious of the special
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circumstances of the Middle East, the Arab League feels bound to draw the Ad Hoc Committee's attention to the necessity of taking these special circumstances into consideration; it is common knowledge that foreign political influences have been among the reasons for the economically backward state of some countries in the Middle East. It is also common knowledge that the Middle East has been the scene of political rivalry between the Great Powers and that their rivalry has not been such as to encourage economic development and stability in this part of the world. The Arab League therefore believes that every possibility of foreign influence in the affairs of the Middle East should be removed.

The League of Arab States with its heavy responsibility towards the peoples of the seven States of the region considers that its participation in any organization created for the Middle East is the logical counterpart of its obligations and its work.

The Arab League is convinced that co-operation and goodwill are the best guarantees for the peace and prosperity of all.
