

NOTE ON THE PROGRAM OF UNITAR

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1. Having read the "Note by the Executive Director of UNITAR on the restructuring of the institute" and having tried to comprehend both the situation of UNITAR at present and the intentions as put forward in that Note for the coming three years, 1987/1989, I permit myself to put forward some observations. However, I would like to preface these observations by a note of general agreement with the goals as stated and the proposals put forward to implement those goals. More particularly, I understand that the financial situation will not permit any unnecessary expense, and see that as entirely compatible with what I understand to be the general orientation of the Note by the Executive Director: the rapid execution of a number of smaller projects, both in training and research, as opposed to large scale undertakings, possibly of long duration, in both fields.

2. A very rough sketch of UNITAR would remind us that the institution has three basic concerns, economic and social development, peace and security and the United Nations, and then two types of activities: training and research. This gives us six combinations to explore, and I shall have some reflections on all of them. However, the Executive Director has appointed me as Special Advisor on peace and security issues which will, consequently, be the focus of the present note. Basic to the success or failure of UNITAR would be the extent to which these six combinations are well coordinated, with one part feeding into the other. It is easily seen how this can be done for training and research: the outcome of the research is put into the training process; the training process is combined with brainstorming sessions and dia-

logues among very diverse participants inspiring and informing the research activities. It is also easily seen how the concern for economic and social development on the one hand and peace and security on the other are compatible with the basic concern for the United Nations institutionally and operationally: these are the two basic concerns of the United Nations, enshrined in the Charter, and the United Nations is at any time since its start forty years ago producing material, in words and in actions, relevant to the two issues.

3. More complex, however, is the relationship between economic and social development on the one hand and peace and security on the other. I think this has to do with two important considerations. First, whereas the United Nations has developed considerable flexibility and ability in discussing economic and social development, meaning by this that the language of discourse is broad, flexible and permits articulation of very different points of view the same cannot be said to be the case for peace and security. Hence, a basic concern of UNITAR might be to explore and broaden the language of discourse, from the present political concerns of the security council, the concerns with peacekeeping operations, arms race and its possible consequences and disarmament--all of them very important--into some new areas. Examples of such areas would be: military doctrine attempted at the end of the UN report on the consequences of a nuclear war. (Comprehensive study of nuclear weapons, New York, 1981, A/35/392) but much more work could be done. Then, the future oriented task of visioning a world where war has

been abolished (like slavery was once abolished and colonialism is almost abolished--in all three cases meaning "abolition as an institution"). Then, more focus on how wars originate and terminate, and how conflicts are resolved.

4. After the important work done by the United Nations, Study on the relationship between disarmament and development (New York, 1981, A/36/356) there has not been much further exploration of the linkage between economic and social development and peace and security issues. One reason for this would be that we come very close to controversial matters, both with regard to theories of how conflicts arise and what would be the consequences of reducing, even dismantling, the machineries for war. One of the last acts by one of the great pioneers among the statesmen of the world in the field of peace and security, the late Mr. Olof Palme, was to chair a commission meeting of the Independent Commission on Disarmament and Security issues in New Delhi 17-19 January 1986 where it is stated:

The existence of extreme poverty and inequities is a major source of conflict, both internal and external, in the developing world. Common security would be served by external powers refraining from exploiting or fueling the disruptive potential of deprivation and disparity, as well as by positive measures in disarmament and development to assist the developing countries in overcoming these problems.

Statements such as these are filled with implications, and they could be explored.

5. In short, a major task of UNITAR~~it~~ would seem to me - would not in the first run be to assume that one could do training and research in a systematic manner in all these difficult and controversial fields, but at least to contribute settings where a wide-ranging discussion of such issues would be not only possible but desirable in the way I have witnessed myself as a consultant to nine UN organizations in the field of economic and social development. Below some indications will be given as to what kinds of settings might be considered.

6. In the field of training there are three possibilities I think could profitably be explored, all of them completely in line with the Note by the Executive Director: a series of luncheon seminars, a summer school, and the use of UNITAR as a clearing house between the UN and academia, meaning universities, research institutes outside the universities, etc.

7. The UNITAR building seems excellently suited for simple luncheons for a group of not more than twenty-five participants, on a brown bag basis with coffee, tea and soft drinks available, an introduction by a well-chosen speaker and a discussion altogether lasting a little more than one hour. More specifically, one might consider the possibility of having four series of such luncheons, one devoted to topics of economic and social development, one to topics of peace and security, and one to institutional and operational aspects of the United Nations--and then

a fourth series devoted to special issues, as they arise. The four series could be organized the first, second, third and fourth weeks of the month, respectively, when the United Nations is in session, meaning something like seven or eight meetings for each group. One might also consider the possibility that a person, or at least the mission or the unit in the UN through which s/he belongs would sign up for a series with a certain commitment to finding a substitute in case participation by that particular person is impossible. Very precise timing is essential for the success as people have a right to know exactly with which time interval at luncheon hour they can calculate. From the UNITAR point of view this would mean the organization of one such seminar per week which should be manageable.

8. A UNITAR Summer School would aim considerably higher: to give officers from the UN and the Missions of Member States a chance to achieve a deeper understanding of economic and social development, peace and security issues and the United Nations, drawing upon the vast experience these officers would have accumulated during their day-to-day confrontations with the three fields of training and research. The place should be away from any major city to permit complete dedication, but close to a good college or university library, possibly making use of dormitory facilities vacated by the students during summer months at some major university not too far from New York (at the same time the travel distance to New York and-or Washington should not be insurmountable, but for weekends rather than evenings). The duration of the summer school

should be a minimum of four weeks, possibly six. If four weeks one format might be similar to the luncheon seminars in the preceding point: one week to economic and social development, one week to peace and security issues, one week to the United Nations institutionally and operationally, and one week to special issues. Other formats could also be considered such as parallel summer schools, or sessions within one summer school, devoted to only one of these areas. The training should be very intense, combining lectures with discussions (for instance before lunch, in two two hour sessions interrupted by a coffee break), with seminars preferably introduced by the participants themselves, and evening events. The participants would have to write a paper on a topic of their own choice but acceptable to the staff of the summer school, preferably the same topic as the one chosen for their seminar presentation. They would be given a certificate of attendance on the basis of having followed and participated in the lectures and seminars, and prepared an acceptable paper. To permit sufficient time for study and writing and recreation activities the lunch break might last until five p.m. The best month would probably be the month of July, the UN no longer being in session, the month of August generally being conceived of as vacation month for the whole family by most people. The number of participants could be in the same range as for the luncheon seminars, twenty to twenty-five. Ideally the summer school should be financed by the participants (meaning the organizations that send them) and the host institution, and be conducted at the levels so high that participation both as participant and as a resource person is con-

sidered an honor. The goal would be to make participation in the UNITAR Summer School something that would count towards promotion.

9. UNITAR has already considerable experience in creating contacts between the UN world and the academic world. On the one hand members of Missions and UN staffs want to participate in training opportunities offered by universities, both for their own career and interests and for the interests of the organizations of which they are members; they want to learn of the research, very often of high relevance to the United Nations going on in the universities. And the universities, on the other hand, are interested in the experience of UN and Missions staffs both as students and resource persons, and in access to UN research material and results. The basis for symbiosis is and has always been excellent, and the question is whether UNITAR could function more as a clearing house in this connection. More particularly, many officers of the UN and the Missions want to broaden their horizons by following courses at universities in the New York and Geneva (and others) areas; UNITAR might be in a position to offer advice. As a clearing house will have to be at least a two way street this also means making UNITAR services more available to academic institutions wanting more access to the United Nations. All parties will gain from this type of cooperation, and no part of the UN should be in a better position to serve as a clearing house as UNITAR.

10. Where the research function of UNITAR is concerned it might perhaps first be pointed out what UNITAR should not do. Explorations in depth, whether philosophically-conceptually or substantively theoretically, should not be encouraged. Usually this is much better done by universities or, possibly, by other parts of the United Nations system better funded for such purposes. Nor should projects of very long duration be encouraged: they tend to be not only long lasting but also interminable, the persons doing this research become dependent on the funding agency for support, and however important such studies might be to promote general knowledge the conditions under which the project is started and ultimately terminated are likely to be so different that the relevance no longer is as clear as it might have been in the minds of those who started the project.

The conclusion would be that UNITAR should focus on projects of short duration, even with a rule that the maximum of three months should pass from the project is started till it is concluded. Moreover, the reports should be of modest length, for instance maximum length thirty pages, including data and references. Very important is quick publication, for instance a maximum of one month from the report is ready till it is out, a modest publication form (photocopied, in one or more UNITAR series with a uniform cover with a "window") being a minor price to pay for rapid circulation (which does not preclude more advanced forms of publication after the working papers have been circulated). To what extent these working

papers are available free of charge and/or for sale through UN circulation points is an open question; one solution does not preclude the other.

11. There are several ways in which research activity can be linked to training activity. Thus, the lecturers well-chosen for the luncheon seminar presentations and the summer school presentations will be asked to prepare manuscripts which may then be collected and issued as training manuals, reference books, etc. But out of these sessions, particularly the discussions, themes of research may also emerge, to be picked up by Junior Professional Officers (JPO) who, advised by more experienced staff, will prepare the short research monographs. The basic key is never to lose an opportunity to have a discussion in the form of a brainstorming, have good rapporteurs sit in on the discussion but not for the purpose of making a report (that would generally be premature), but for the purpose of using major points that emerge as a basis for research.

12. Particularly important in this connection would be special, invited UNITAR lectures--even in the form of a series of Distinguished UNITAR Lectures; lecturers coming from the UN, being politicians from member states, or businessmen, academic people, NGO officers, etc.; for instance once a month when the UN is in session. Discussion after such lectures might be particularly rewarding provided there is a genuine search for depth and perspective, and that "politeness" is not the only rule governing the

debate. For this reason I would tend to see these lectures more in a research than in a training context, particularly if the lecturers are encouraged to break new ground.

13. There are two types of research that should be given low priority: research on the past ("the history of negotiations in the field X, Y---") because so much of this research has already been done, and state of the art research on present research, again because so much of it has been done. In no way denigrating the significance of a focus both on the past and the present, may be the United Nations today would be better served by a focus on the future, injecting a futuristic dimension in the research (and by implication also the training) activities. The general frame, "The United Nations in the year 2000" is excellent. But one might also expand the time horizon to year 2025, 2050 in order to encourage bolder visions; after all, the year 2000 will only be thirteen years away when the new UNITAR program gets started. On the other hand, the world in general and the United Nations in particular has undergone considerable transformations in the last forty years since the Second World War, so the shorter time-span is certainly also warranted. In the field of peace and security issues this is particularly important. Extrapolation from past tendencies tend to lead to apocalyptic visions, of arms races only terminated by wars, of endless disarmament negotiations also only terminated by wars--the wars being devastating. Visions for the future--tempered by the experiences of the past and the constraints of the present--might be

much more liberating not only for ~~thought~~, but also for action.

14. Given the limited resources of UNITAR one might continue the present policy of moderate honoraria both for training and for research. But the major expenses are likely to be for travel and per diem, for which reasons a resource person (training or research) should generally be found in the area from Boston to Washington, which in no way means a limitation to US citizens. One function of the UNITAR clearing house would also be to increase the awareness of when, where and how resource persons from other countries could be available during visits to that area, many of them being very interested in opportunities of the kind discussed. Given these possibilities for cutting down expenses one might perhaps consider *improving* the honoraria, including the speed with which the honoraria are made available after the work has been completed.

15. UNITAR would need a very small review board for publications, drawn from people with UN, possibly also with UNITAR experience, residing sufficiently close to UNITAR to be available on call. Under no circumstance should UNITAR permit badly executed, sloppy and inexact, or uninteresting material to be published under its name.

16. UNITAR should not be afraid of making propaganda for its sessions, recruiting not only resource persons but also participants. Detailed personnel knowledge accumulated by UNITAR during the years

would be invaluable in this regard, knowing which networks to tap, who might have a multiplier effect with some new ideas, who are good at dialogue not only at lecturing, and so on. All of this should be done with a view to promoting the basic concerns of the United Nations, development and peace, in a constructive manner, not being afraid of pointing out mistakes of the past and difficulties in the present, even when they are "controversial."

|7. Seen this way the six combinations alluded to above should be relatively well integrated. As research not only on economic and social development, and on peace and security, but on institutional and operational aspects of the United Nations develops further, and becomes both imaginative and realistic, time might come to revive such ideas from the UNITAR past as a council of "wise persons" (provided a much better term is found!), who could then discuss such ideas further, perhaps with an eye to implementation. After all, to UNITAR training and research are not goals in and by themselves, but for the purpose of promoting the ideas of the United Nations in general, and economic and social development and peace and security in particular.

|8. In conclusion, the ideas put forward in this note are, of course, at present at a very general level. After a period of discussion concerning the validity and limitations of the principles indicated, a period of concretization will follow, for UNITAR in New York and possibly also for UNITAR in Geneva.