



## *Centre for Economic and Social Information*

CESI Features ESA/22  
7 December 1970

### UNITED NATIONS INTERNATIONAL VOLUNTEER CORPS BEGIN JANUARY 1971; WILL WORK FOR ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL PROGRESS IN DEVELOPING NATIONS

#### General Assembly Schedules Project to Commence with Second Development Decade

The General Assembly of the United Nations today decided to establish an international corps of volunteers, who will work with the world's developing nations in efforts to achieve economic and social advancement. The volunteer programme will commence on 1 January 1971 — the same date on which the recently-proclaimed United Nations Second Development Decade will begin.

To be designated collectively and individually as United Nations Volunteers, the corps will be sent to various developing countries, but only at the explicit request and approval of the recipient Governments.

The volunteers will be recruited from the ranks of university and institutes of technology graduates, and highly qualified artisans. They will be selected from among independent individual applicants, as well as from candidates proposed by Governments and non-governmental organizations. In the developing countries, they will assist, either individually or as members of a team of United Nations volunteers, international and national experts carrying out national development projects assisted by the United Nations system.

The General Assembly resolution setting up the international volunteer corps was passed by a vote of 91 in favour, none against, and 12 abstentions.

#### Co-ordinator for Volunteers to be Named

The Secretary-General, U Thant, is requested to designate the Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Paul G. Hoffman, as the Administrator of the United Nations Volunteers. In consultation with the UNDP Administrator, the Secretary-General is also to appoint a co-ordinator to promote and co-ordinate the recruitment, selection, training and administrative management of the activities of the Volunteers.

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The General Assembly invites Governments of States Members of the United Nations and members of the specialized agencies, international non-governmental organizations and individuals to contribute to a special voluntary fund to support the volunteers.

In the resolution, the General Assembly expressed its conviction that "the active participation of the younger generation in all aspects of social and economic life constitutes an important factor in ensuring the increased effectiveness of the collective efforts necessary for a better society" and that "voluntary service in development assistance activities is a rewarding form of such participation and one which can make a substantial contribution to their success by the provision of an additional source of trained manpower".

The resolution states that the voluntary service should be well planned and directed, and should utilize volunteers recruited from as wide a geographical basis as possible, including from the developing countries. Also, the volunteers must have the technical and personal qualifications required for the development of recipient countries, including the transfer of skills.

In December 1968, the General Assembly, in resolution 2460 (XXIII) requested the Economic and Social Council to study the feasibility of creating an international corps of volunteers for development and to report to the Assembly appropriate conclusions and recommendations deriving from the study.

After considering the question at its forty-seventh session in the summer of 1969, the Council, in its resolution 1444 (XLVII) invited the Secretary-General, in co-operation with the Administrator of the UNDP, and in consultation with other organizations of the United Nations system, particularly concerned with volunteers, to study the constitutional, administrative and various financial arrangements necessary for the creation of an international corps of volunteers.

#### Secretary-General's Report on Volunteers

The report of the Secretary-General (document E/4790) was submitted through the tenth session of the Governing Council of the UNDP to the Economic and Social Council at its forty-ninth session.

The General Assembly adopted today's resolution creating United Nations Volunteers, after considering the Secretary-General's report, and the comments passed on the report by the Economic and Social Council.

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In preparing the report, the Secretary-General gauged the interest of developing countries in the idea of international volunteers by sending questionnaires to Resident Representatives of the UNDP, and asking that they consult officials of the countries in which they were accredited, along with field representatives of United Nations agencies. The key question, the report states, was whether these countries would be interested in requesting such volunteers.

Among the responses, 80 per cent indicated interest in having United Nations volunteers work in projects assisted by the United Nations Family. Some 68 per cent of the responses expressed interest in having volunteers work in programmes other than those aided by the United Nations system.

#### Who's a 'Volunteer'?

The Volunteers, the Secretary-General indicates, would be selected from persons whose "aspirations for a better world include wanting to work for it".

A Volunteer is also described as "a person who gives his services without regard to financial benefit and with the purpose of contributing to the development" of the country in which he would work.

The Secretary-General observes that the estimated local costs of supporting a volunteer could range from \$1,500 to \$3,000 a year, and a possible basic estimate of \$200 a month might be considered for an initial reference, with the terms and conditions of service to be uniform within the country of service.

Setting forth basic goals of the proposal, the Secretary-General notes that legislators and administrators have been increasingly concerned with widening the supply source of personnel for development work. In addition, he adds that the Economic and Social Council has been giving attention to the role of youth in national development.

#### Objectives of the Programme

With these and other factors in view, he has outlined the basic objectives of the United Nations Volunteers as:

- To give youth a constructive opportunity to use their talent and skills in the implementation of national development plans and in carrying out programmes of international co-operation;
- To provide development projects with a new manpower source that could help train local personnel, help fill the gap of middle-range personnel in order to extend the ranges of experts' work, and help "reduce the professional isolation which often characterizes the situation in a developing country", as well as provide potential recruits for future technical co-operation programmes;

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- To improve international understanding through an exchange of young people, thus helping to build an "international network of professionals with intercultural experience";
- To increase public sympathy throughout the world for development work, which could help stimulate increased aid by donor countries and also create a broader public participation in development by youth of the developing countries.

#### Other Bodies Using Volunteers

As early as 1948, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) convened a conference of organizers of international voluntary work camps which resulted in the establishment of a non-governmental permanent body, known as the Co-ordinating Committee for International Voluntary Service.

According to an earlier Secretariat study\*, issued in May last year, this body has a membership of 136 member and affiliated organizations in over 50 countries in every region of the world which sent a total of 2,400 volunteers to developing countries in 1968 alone. Its effort has increasingly been associated with the activities of the UNDP over the years.

Another body which is active in this field is the International Secretariat for Volunteer Service, an intergovernmental organization based in Geneva with a membership of 52 Governments.

According to other statistical data, 350 to 400 volunteers, mostly young people in their twenties, have been assigned to field projects of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) during the five-year period which ended in December 1968.

#### Background of United Nations Interest

The concern of the Economic and Social Council with the question of volunteers began in August 1961 when, in resolution 849 (XXXII), it recognized that volunteer technical personnel, provided in response to requests from Governments and agencies, could play "an important role" in the economic and social development of developing countries. That year, the Council authorized the Secretary-General, and invited the specialized agencies, to make use of voluntary personnel, and established six principles to govern their use.

In his traditional key-note policy statement every year to the summer session of the Council, the Secretary-General, in 1965, expressed hope that "some day it will be commonplace for the average young man or young woman to spend a year or two of his life as a volunteer in the cause of development".

\* Document E/4663, issued on 16 May 1969.  
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