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BEFORE THE XVth GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF
THE INTERNATIONAL SOCIAL SECURITY ASSOCIATION

I think it is not too much to say that the quest for security is one of the dominant features of contemporary society. In terms of internal policy, this need has led to the development of social security, which is considered, in a growing number of countries, as vital to any democratic organization of society. In terms of external relations, man's quest for a safer environment - pointing, here also, to the acceptance of a more human scale of values (and to the awareness of solidarity among men) has led the nations to embark on the long and arduous apprenticeship of international co-operation. Your organization, the "International Social Security Association", thus responds to two deeply-felt needs and constitutes one of the most appropriate symbols of today's world.

This is why I appreciate so much the privilege of being able to attend your XVth General Assembly, and why I am happy to add my own endorsement in passing on to you the best wishes of the EEC Commission and of its President, Professor Walter Hallstein, for the success of your Assembly. It is unthinkable that our Commission could remain indifferent to the efforts of the ISSA, since our own work is based on the very same conviction that ever closer co-operation in the widest range of fields between men and countries separated only by frontiers constitutes not only a factor making for peace but also a factor contributing to progress towards a society, and a world, in which man's dignity will be acknowledged as of paramount importance.

I hope it is not necessary to stress that the drive towards integration which the Six are now conducting will in no way lead them to shut themselves up behind new frontiers. It is true that their experience has mainly been obtained in a limited geographical area, but the establishment of a Community and the lessons learned in running it can only serve to stimulate, among its member nations, a sense of their responsibility in face of the great problems of their time, and a desire to contribute to solving them in the light, no longer solely of their own experience, but of that of other countries also. The Community's open-door policy is not only a notion, it is also a fact: witness the various association agreements concluded with European and African states and the agreements negotiated or under negotiation with other countries throughout the world.

This applies particularly to social security. It is obvious that in order to attain the objective set out in this sphere by the Treaty of Rome - the levelling up and progress of the various systems in force in the six countries - the Commission must work for very close co-operation between the member countries, and that it is mainly in this "limited" framework that problems must be examined and experiences compared. I say mainly, but not solely, and I am quite convinced that the development of this co-operation among the Six, so far from inducing the countries concerned to limit the field of their interest and their curiosity, is strengthening the propensity they already had for international co-operation, and is bringing home to them even more clearly the value of these wider confrontations for which your organization provides a forum. That is more, there are two reasons why these confrontations are bound, in my opinion, to be of very specific interest at the present time for the EEC countries.

The first reason is connected with the development of social security in our countries; in the last few years this seems to have moved into a new phase. Looking back, in rather general terms, it may be said that after the war social security underwent a period of reorganization or even of actual organization, with each country making certain choices as to the main lines of the systems to be

applied. It was, to a great extent, a period of innovation. Then came a period of what we might call "stratification", during which a series of minor improvements were added to the original systems, without, generally speaking, any genuine reforms or any new ventures. Some actual progress was, of course, achieved both in the progressive extension of social protection to new groups of the population, notably among persons self-employed, and in improving the range of benefits and the level of protection they guarantee. But what makes me believe that a new phase is now discernible is that in most of our countries an awareness seems to have grown up of the need to go beyond mere adjustments to the laws in force and to begin a thorough reappraisal of all aspects of a number of problems, particularly from the legal, financial, economic, sociological and scientific points of view. In short, social security policy is back on the committee-room table. Here are some of the more significant symptoms of the return of social security to the centre of interest:

- (a) In France: the completed reports on policy with regard to old age and to families, and other reports, now at the drafting stage, on sickness insurance expenditure and on the financial outlook for social security;
- (b) In Belgium: the report on social security arrangements for the self-employed;
- (c) In Luxembourg: the report on the structural reform of old-age pension insurance for self-employed and paid workers (this reform was voted by the Luxembourg Parliament early in the year);
- (d) In Italy: the report of the National Council for the Economy and Labour on the reform of social security, and the report on the reform and the harmonization of disablement, old-age and surviving-dependents insurance;
- (e) In Germany, work leading up to the recasting of the regulations on occupational diseases and industrial accidents;
- (f) In the Netherlands: the studies culminating in a scheme to introduce disablement insurance covering all prolonged disablement whether of occupational origin or not

And it is noteworthy that, in most cases, the studies carried out make reference as often as not to lessons learned in other countries, more especially but not exclusively within EEC. Not only, then, is the spirit of reform stronger, but it is also guided by a new approach. This is good reason for believing that the ground is particularly well prepared for international meetings such as the one opening today.

My second reason for believing that international meetings such as this are of particular value to EEC at the present time is connected with the very nature of the objective we are pursuing at Community level: namely the harmonization of the social security systems in force in the six countries. It is clear that in this harmonization work (and it is a long-term project) we are not trying to study the six separate systems of legislation as they now exist and to work out, so to speak, an average on which each of them should then be aligned. What we are really trying to do is to fix common objectives towards which our separate legal systems should develop, and in order to do this to seek out in unison solutions adapted to the future for each of the major social security problems. I hardly need to stress that in this search - which must be dynamic and not static - it is our duty to accord the fullest attention to experience acquired beyond our frontiers, and to turn to the fullest account the work which your organization has been carrying out for many years.

I shall spare you details of how we are actually setting about all this in the Community, but would like to quote one or two specific examples which will show how closely our problems resemble your own.

Two topics to be discussed by your General Assembly are of particular interest at the moment for the EEC countries. The first one is occupational diseases: on this point we felt that some degree of harmonization was needed at the earliest possible moment; in 1962 the Commission therefore addressed to the Governments of the Member States a recommendation concerning the adoption of a

European list of occupational diseases. This recommendation has already borne fruit in more than one country, but the aim is that it should serve as the basis for permanent co-operation arrangements, notably on the medical side. Obviously, your work in this field will be extremely valuable to us. I should also like to mention social security for the self-employed, a topic which raises the problem of the extension of protection to fresh population groups, and especially to the farming community. In its harmonization programme established after the European Social Security Conference of 1962, the Commission has proposed to the Governments of the six countries a joint approach in relation with the right of establishment granted to workers by the Treaty.

Nor can I ignore the work your organization has done, and is still doing, in other fields not mentioned in the agenda of the present Assembly, for example on the adaptation of benefits to economic trends and on the harmonization of disablement assessment criteria. As you know the Commission has studied your work closely, and thanks to your help, has been able to follow it up by entrusting specific tasks to small working parties.

We are mainly concerned with these topics in the context of the harmonization of social security arrangements in the EEC countries. But to complete the picture I should mention another aspect of our work - the co-ordination of national arrangements so as to ensure the fullest advantages of social security to migrant workers. This has been secured since 1958 mainly by Regulations Nos. 3 and 4, which affect about a million and a half persons in the six countries (workers and their families). A general revision of these

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regulations is now in hand; the aim is to improve benefits and simplify the rules.

I feel I must stress that, here again, we have tried not to shut ourselves up in an ivory tower. We have obtained technical assistance from the International Labour Office, whose experience has been, and still is, of untold value. I venture to hope, for my own part, that in this field our achievements may be of use to other countries tackling similar problems.

As I look forward to your discussions, I know already that by the time they are over I shall have learned much, though I greatly hope, too, that the gains will not be all on my side, and that the work and experience of EEC may, so to speak, serve to "reimburse" to the ISSA the debt we contract with it at each of its meetings.

It is in this spirit, Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen, that I bring you the EEC Commission's sincerest good wishes for the success of your Assembly.