

summarized by the Secretary. Several items referred to in these reports were relevant to the Committee's present agenda.

2.2 With reference to the recent regional conference on coca leaf problems and the relevant resolution of the Economic and Social Council,¹ the Committee noted with satisfaction that there is now general agreement on the harmfulness of coca leaf chewing and that the problems connected therewith are to be regarded as a concomitant of unfavourable socio-economic circumstances, with detrimental effects on the individual as well as the society. The general acceptance of this point of view should help in directing efforts towards the betterment of the underlying environmental conditions, wherever possible as part of the general social and economic development of the areas concerned, and towards the eventual solution of the coca leaf problem.

2.3 With reference to the economic significance of coca leaves arising out of a possible increase in the legal production of cocaine for medical purposes, the Committee wished to draw attention to the fact that the medical needs for cocaine have decreased considerably in the past few decades, as a consequence of the continuing development of synthetic local anaesthetics which can replace cocaine in the majority of its therapeutic indications. Therefore, further reduction in the legal manufacture of cocaine is likely and desirable, and this should diminish opportunity for diversion to illicit uses. The Committee was disturbed by the fact that in spite of this there is an upward trend in the abuse of cocaine, particularly in combination with other drugs.

2.4 The Committee was glad to note that the Commission on Narcotic Drugs and the Permanent Central Opium Board² were now placing increased emphasis on the sociological and economic aspects of drug abuse. It expressed the hope that the Commission's resolution³ requesting member states of the United Nations or of the specialized agencies to encourage research on these aspects of the problem would contribute to the elucidation of the epidemiology of drug abuse already called for both by the WHO Expert Committee on Addiction-Producing Drugs⁴ and by the WHO Study Group on the Treatment and Care of Drug Addicts.⁵

¹ United Nations, Economic and Social Council (1963) *Official Records : thirty-sixth session, 2 July - 2 August 1963. Supplement No. 1 : Resolutions*, Geneva, p. 21 (Document E/3816).

² United Nations, Permanent Central Opium Board (1963) *Report to the Economic and Social Council on the Work of the Board in 1963*, Geneva (Document E/OB/19).

³ United Nations Commission on Narcotic Drugs (1962) *Report of the Seventeenth Session, Resolution 2 (XVII)* (Document E/3648, p. 22).

⁴ *Wld Hlth Org. techn. Rep. Ser.*, 1960, 188, 11.

⁵ *Wld Hlth Org. techn. Rep. Ser.*, 1957, 131, 11.