

UNESCO - SINGAPORE *

Singapore is withdrawing from UNESCO not because of the criticisms of UNESCO made by the US and the UK. Singapore believes that UNESCO has a useful role to play in many countries. Singapore's decision is for the following reasons.

2 Singapore has been inactive in UNESCO for many years. As a small country, Singapore must set priorities and practise economy in its international activities to ensure that its efforts and resources are best used to serve the interests of the nation. In recent years, Singapore has become a victim of an unfair system of assessment for contributions to the UN Regular Budget. Singapore's assessed contribution to UNESCO, a UN Specialised Agency, is based on its rate of assessed contribution to the UN Regular Budget.

3 The UN scale of assessment is calculated on the basis of the average national income of a member state over a ten-year base period. Countries with per capita incomes below US\$2,100 are given relief in their assessed contributions. The burden of relief is absorbed by all countries with per capita incomes above US\$2,100 in accordance with their assessable national income. In the last few years, the US contribution has remained fixed at 25 percent of the total UN Budget. The rates of contribution of the socialist bloc have been stagnant or declining, and the contributions of most Western countries have also remained stagnant. However, Singapore and a few other developing countries have had their assessed contributions increased.

4 The methodology used to determine the UN scale of assessment is extremely unfair and does not truly reflect the country's real capacity to pay. The use of national statistics at market prices to assess member states' real capacity to pay is a major defect. It does not provide a uniform measure to compare the economic performance of both market and centrally-planned economies. There is no mechanism to correct for distortion to statistics provided by the statistical bureaux of socialist economies caused by inflation and exchange rate fluctuations.

5 The irony is that the socialist bloc economies which have boasted of high economic growth in recent years are having their rate of assessment reduced in the next UN Budget Triennium (1986-88). It appears that when the economies of the socialist bloc countries grow, their scale of assessment falls.

* (This is the text of remarks made by the spokesman of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Singapore, provided to the news by the Singapore High Commissioner, Canberra).

6 Singapore, as a small country with no natural resources, is vulnerable to the vagaries of the international economic environment. Its economy has not achieved the ability to generate self-sustaining growth found in the industrialised countries. Singapore's assessed contribution to the UN Regular Budget increased by 100 percent in the first decade of Singapore's membership to the UN. From 1976 to 1984, Singapore's contribution increased by more than 400 percent. Singapore's assessed contributions to UN specialised agencies, such as UNESCO, have also risen sharply along with this trend.

7 For the moment, there is little hope of a more equitable methodology emerging in the foreseeable future to determine members' real capacity to pay. Singapore, however, cannot let such a situation continue indefinitely. Under these circumstances, Singapore has decided to withdraw from UNESCO. If the trend continues, Singapore may have to consider the relevancy for a Third World country such as Singapore of some of the other international organisations as well.

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