

In conclusion, the Fifth Committee proposed to the Assembly the adoption of its report, which is contained in Document A. 70, 1936, V, and of the following resolution :—

“ The Assembly—

“ Having taken note of the Secretary-General's report on penal and penitentiary questions (Document A. 25, 1936, IV) :

“ Thanks the Governments for the reports that they have sent to the League this year (see Document A. 25, 1936, IV), and requests them to continue to inform the League annually of any reforms that have been effected in their penal and prison systems ;

“ Thanks the international technical organizations for their annual information on their work, and for their valuable co-operation in promoting the study of penal and penitentiary questions on international lines ;

“ Instructs the Secretary-General to have recourse to the good offices of the International Penal and Penitentiary Commission asking it to institute, if necessary with the assistance of the League Secretariat, an inquiry—

“ (a) Into the number of prisoners over eighteen years of age (separate figures being given for men and women) in the different countries at the nearest possible date to 31st December, 1936. By prisoners is meant persons deprived of their liberty (excluding those detained on account of mental or physical unfitness), whether—

“ (1) On remand, or awaiting trial ;

“ (2) Under judicial sentence ; or

“ (3) Detained and not included in the above categories.

Where possible the figures should show the numbers of prisoners of each of these three categories.

“ (b) Into the measures taken in different countries during recent years with the object of reducing the number of prisoners.”

INTERNATIONAL RELIEF UNION.

This body is constituted by an international Convention which came into force in 1932. There are now thirty contracting States, including New Zealand. Its object is to render first aid to populations which have suffered from some natural calamity (*e.g.*, flood or earthquake) of such gravity that it cannot be dealt with solely by the resources of the country afflicted. In such cases the Union affords the machinery and resources for co-ordinating whatever international assistance may be forthcoming. Every contracting State contributes to the formation of an initial fund at the rate of 700 Swiss francs (about £35) for each unit of its annual contribution to the League (in the case of New Zealand formerly 10 units, now reduced to 8). Some States are slightly in arrear with their contributions. The Union is also authorized to receive private and voluntary contributions. A General Council and an Executive Committee are the administrative organs.

The efforts of the Executive Committee of the Union during the past year were devoted to the improvement of its methods of co-ordination for the administration of relief and the encouragement of research and preventive methods, where possible, against disasters, and in endeavouring to secure the co-operation of certain private organizations working on similar lines. The placing on a sound basis of the Working Capital Fund, whose revenues should be in proportion to its normal expenses, and the constitution of a reserve of cash in hand sufficient to allow of the sending of relief to afflicted countries upon the first news of a disaster being received, are other matters constantly engaging the attention of the Union.

It may be of interest to record that when in June of last year India (a member of the Union) had one of its regions, Baluchistan, ravaged by an earthquake which claimed more than five thousand victims, and caused material damage estimated at £2,200,000, the Union promptly informed the contracting States of this calamity by telegram, and as a result was able to collect £2,522 from seven Governments, of which sum Italy and New Zealand each contributed £1,000. Although these gifts seem modest compared with the number of victims and the extent of the damage, they represent the first case of mutual assistance speedily rendered, in response to an appeal made by the International Relief Union, to contracting States for the relief of another State Member stricken by a natural disaster.

After a brief discussion of the subject the Fifth Committee proposed that the Assembly adopt the following resolution, which is contained in Report A. 71, 1936, XII :—

“ The Assembly—

“ Having taken note of the report on the activities of the Executive Committee of the International Relief Union from 1st January to 31st December, 1935 :

“ Expresses its gratification at the useful work done by that organization with a view to improving its means of action ;

“ Emphasizes the value of the agreements concluded or contemplated with private organizations as a method of increasing the efficacy of those means ;

“ Expresses the hope that the Executive Committee of the Union may, thanks to the authority that the Union has acquired, continue to exert its beneficent influence in the various fields of international relief work ;

“ And trusts that Governments will consider the possibility of intensifying the action of the International Relief Union by securing the appropriate co-operation.”