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COMMITTEE FOR THE INTERNATIONAL  
CO-OPERATION YEAR

Facilitating communication

It has been suggested to the Committee for the International Co-operation Year that one of the useful tasks which could be encouraged during the International Co-operation Year would be the development of a kind of symbol, known technically as a glyph. A glyph is a symbol which has meaning that is separable and independent from the names given to the symbol in different languages. The development of glyphs is already widespread in the sciences and in mathematics. Examples in the field of mathematics are as follows: + - %. Road signs are also glyphs, as are the flags used by ships for communication.

With the great increase in international contact and the development of new forms of communication, especially through the use of communications satellites, it would be advantageous to have more symbols which are independent of language. The development of new glyphs and the standardization of glyphs already in use would reduce the difficulties involved in foreign travel and in international communication and facilitate international co-operation. For example, now that there is more international travel by car and travellers often rent cars locally, safety would be promoted if road signs in all countries used identical symbols.

The committee considers that this suggestion is in harmony with the aim of the International Co-operation Year. Since glyphs are independent of language or culture, the suggestion is also consistent with the criteria specified in the report of the Preparatory Committee.

The Committee could not itself suggest specific fields in which new glyphs might be developed or in which existing glyphs might be standardized. But, the Committee would like to call attention to the importance of glyphs as a means of communication and the advantages to be gained through their further elaboration. It would be for the specialized agencies, Member Governments and voluntary organizations, both international and national, to consider whether possibilities existed in their own fields of co-operation for expanding the use of these useful symbols.

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