NOTES AND NEWS

BRUSSELS COLLOQUIUM ON THE RECORDING OF CUSTOMARY LAW

The " Centre d'histoire et d'ethnologie juridiques " in the Institut de Sociologie Solvay, at the Free University of Brussels, has organised a very successful Colloquium on the recording of customary law, which took place at the Institute on the 16th and 17th May, 1960. The Colloquium consisted of a number of papers presented by different scholars on various past and present projects for the reduction of customary laws to writing. Thus reports were given on the medieval French and Belgian recording of customary laws in Europe, on the Punjab recording of customary law in British India during the nineteenth century, on the work of the American Restatements in codifying the common law in the United States, on Islamic law and the customary law of Indonesia, and on customary laws in various parts of contemporary Africa. Dr. J. Vanderlinden described what has been achieved by the Belgians to date in this field; while Dr. A. N. Allott for the British and ex-British territories, and M. J. Poirier for the French and ex-French territories, indicated what had already been done and what was planned for the future in the work of recording customary laws in Africa.

The subject chosen for the Colloquium has great practical importance at the present moment in Africa, where the questions of whether customary laws ought to be put into written form, and, if so, what is the best means for bringing such a recording about, are being currently debated. The general tendency is undoubtedly in favour of a systematic statement or restatement in written form of all the applicable laws, including customary law; in considering how to achieve this, the experiences of other countries at other moments in history are of the greatest assistance.

The " Centre d'histoire et d'ethnologie juridiques " intends to publish the proceedings of the Colloquium, including a report of the valuable and stimulating discussions which followed the papers presented.