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held on

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at 8 p.m.

New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 54th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. PIRSON (Belgium)

Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative
and Budgetary Questions: Mr. MSELLE

CONTENTS

AGENDA ITEM 98: PROPOSED PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 1980-1981 (continued)

Alterations, improvement and major maintenance of premises, United Nations Office at Geneva (continued)

Section 28 B. Office of Financial Services

International Computing Centre - 1980 budget estimates and revised estimates under section 28 G (Electronic Data Processing and Information Systems - Division - International Computing Centre, Geneva (United Nations share))

Revised estimates under section 28 L (jointly-financed administrative activities);

Secretariat of the Consultative Committee on Administrative Questions (United Nations share)

Other matters

Report of the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination (continued)

AGENDA ITEM 101: JOINT INSPECTION UNIT: REPORTS OF THE JOINT INSPECTION UNIT (continued)

Medium-term planning in the United Nations (continued)

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The meeting was called to order at 8 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 98: PROPOSED PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 1980-1981 (continued)

Alterations, improvement and major maintenance of premises, United Nations Office at Geneva (continued) (A/C.5/34/23)

1. Mr. BUJ-FLORES (Mexico) said that there was a contradiction between the comments in paragraphs 11 and those in paragraph 8 of the Secretary-General's report. In paragraph 11 the Secretary-General stated that the Conseil d'Etat of the Canton of Geneva was prepared to discuss with the United Nations Office at Geneva the possible acquisition of the villa and plot of land constituting the property "Les Feuillantines"; paragraph 8 stated that the Director-General of the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) had recently expressed interest in buying or renting the property "Les Feuillantines". However, paragraph 8 went on to say that the Administration had informed WIPO that the matter of the utilization or disposal of the property was still under consideration but that no commitment could be made at that juncture. He asked whether there was any reason to think that the interest shown by WIPO in the possible purchase of the property "Les Feuillantines" was so absurd that the Secretary-General had deemed that the possibility should be ruled out.

2. Mr. BEGIN (Director, Budget Division), replying to the questions asked by the Algerian delegation at the preceding meeting, referred to the interpretation to be given to the words "to study further possibilities of the use of the villa 'Les Feuillantines'" and said that there should be no misunderstanding between the Tunisian delegation and the Secretariat about the fact that in his report the Secretary-General merely provided certain items of information that he considered useful for consideration of the question but that at the present stage, in view of General Assembly resolution 33/116 A, the sale of the villa was not contemplated.

3. The question had been raised whether the proposed arrangement involving the ceding to the City of Geneva of the strip of land concerned in order to eliminate the encroachment of the property "Le Bocage" on the public domain implied any renunciation by the United Nations of the privileges and immunities it enjoyed in Switzerland. He did not believe it was the Secretary-General's intention to agree to any such renunciation.

4. Concerning the much-discussed wall that would mark the new boundary of the property "Le Bocage", thus isolating the United Nations property from the public domain, what had happened was that, when the old building to the north of the property "Le Bocage", which had encroached upon the road, had been demolished in 1978, the wall that had separated the two properties had also been demolished, so that at present there was a wall around the entire precincts of the Palais des Nations except at that place, where for a few metres it had been considered sufficient to erect a simple fence. Thus once the strip of land had been ceded to the City of Geneva, there would be a perfect opportunity to build a wall to fill the gap where at present there was just a fence, which was inadequate from the security standpoint.

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(Mr. Begin)

5. The question asked by the representative of Mexico was more or less covered by his answer to the Tunisian delegation: in order to obtain information about the possible use of the villa "Les Feuillantines", the United Nations Office at Geneva had inquired about possible buyers. Certain agencies had shown an interest in buying or renting the villa, and the Secretary-General in his report had merely given an account of the situation for information purposes, without wishing to imply any intention of considering that possibility, since there again he had been guided by the relevant resolution of the General Assembly.

6. Mr. J. SCOTT (Office of Legal Affairs), referring to the concern expressed by the representative of Tunisia about the first sentence in paragraph 17 of the Secretary-General's report (A/C.5/34/23), admitted that the sentence had been badly drafted. Strictly speaking, it was incorrect to say that the privileges and immunities of the United Nations "could not be invoked" in that regard, in so far as section 2 of the 1946 Headquarters Agreement was still in force. However, that sentence should be interpreted to mean that in the existing circumstances it would not be appropriate to invoke the immunity from expropriation in question. When the two properties "Le Bocage" and "Le Chêne" had been exchanged between the United Nations and the City of Geneva in 1954, it had been mutually agreed that the municipal zoning rules and regulations would apply in that case. Consequently, to invoke that immunity clause now in a way which would constitute an obvious violation of the Swiss regulations in force would be an act of bad faith.

7. Mr. AYADHI (Tunisia) thanked the Secretariat for having responded to his delegation's concern, but said he had the feeling that his question had been incorrectly phrased and he would therefore like to put it more clearly. The question was the following: in the original evaluation of the land, account had been taken of the principle embodied in Geneva law that in such cases the acquisition price per square metre of the tract of land concerned could not exceed 50 per cent of the value per square metre of the property to which it belonged. Thus, section 2 of the Headquarters Agreement had indeed been disregarded and a Geneva law had indeed been applied to the United Nations. The argument that resulted from an arrangement concluded previously under which the United Nations had consented to submit to Geneva law could not hold water, unless the Secretariat had obtained the prior authorization of the General Assembly to agree to such a concession to the Geneva authorities. It was essential to straighten out that matter, which was very important because a precedent might be created for the Secretariat to renounce provisions deriving from Headquarters agreements without prior consultation of the General Assembly.

8. Mr. RUEDAS (Assistant Secretary-General for Financial Services), replying first to the representative of Mexico, who had asked whether the Secretary-General had considered the intention announced by WIPO to buy or rent the villa "Les Feuillantines" as "absurd", said he was dismayed that the Secretary-General's report (A/C.5/34/23) should have given such a mistaken impression. In fact, the Secretary-General had merely transmitted that information to the Fifth Committee as one piece of information among others. In any case, it was quite clear that the Secretary-General, having consulted all those concerned and studied all possible

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(Mr. Ruedas)

options, considered that the best solution was to continue to use the villa "Les Feuillantines" as a United Nations property, as indicated in paragraph 12 of the report. Furthermore, the Advisory Committee had also taken that view.

9. As to the legal situation, it must be noted that there had been no written agreement concluded on the ceding of a strip of land forming part of the property "Le Bocage", as a result of the contacts of the Secretariat with the Canton and City of Geneva, and thus it was not strictly accurate to speak of renouncing diplomatic privileges and immunities or of any departure from the Headquarters Agreement concluded with the Swiss authorities. It was merely a question of submitting to the Fifth Committee for its approval an agreement concluded in certain circumstances, which were described in document A/C.5/34/23, and it would therefore be incorrect to say that the Committee was faced with a fait accompli. In his report the Secretary-General merely described a situation that in his view justified an agreement acceptable to the two parties concerned. As was clearly stated in paragraph 19 of the report, it was understood that the final agreement must be approved by the General Assembly.

10. Mr. BUJ-FLORES (Mexico) said that while he had no wish to argue with the representatives of the Secretariat, paragraph 11 of document A/C.5/34/23 clearly stated that not only had the Secretary-General not decided to keep the property "Les Feuillantines", but he had contacted the Cantonal authorities in Geneva to consider the possibility of selling the villa. It was also clearly stated in paragraph 8 that WIPO had expressed interest in the villa. The information given in the report was therefore contradictory, as it was also indicated that the Secretary-General had no intention of disposing of the property. He was quite willing to accept the explanations which Mr. Ruedas had just given, but it must be admitted that the report was ambiguous and badly drafted. His delegation suggested that the Committee should adopt the recommendation of the Advisory Committee and take note of the report of the Secretary-General (A/C.5/34/23).

11. Mr. AYADHI (Tunisia) said that he fully supported the proposal of the representative of Mexico to take note of the Secretary-General's report (A/C.5/34/23) without further comment, on the understanding that the Committee would keep in mind the relevant provisions of General Assembly resolution 33/116 A, requesting the Secretary-General to study further possibilities of the use of the villa "Les Feuillantines".

12. From the point of view of the legal discussion, which was the main issue as far as the United Nations was concerned, Mr. Ruedas had been correct in saying that the problem was not so much the projected property transfer being considered by the Committee, as the agreement apparently concluded in 1954 for the exchange between the United Nations and the City of Geneva of the properties "Le Bocage" and "Le Chêne". The best thing would be for that contract to be submitted to the Office of Legal Affairs for advice, and for the findings to be reported to the Fifth Committee by the end of the present session, as it did indeed appear that the instrument of transfer, dated 8 December 1954, contained a clause under which the United Nations was bound to respect "legal restrictions to ownership as to building

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(Mr. Ayadhi, Tunisia)

line plans and other similar restrictions" under Geneva law. What was involved, therefore, was indeed a departure from the Headquarters Agreement, since the United Nations agreed, in the present instance, to be bound by a law enacted by the Geneva authorities subsequent to the Headquarters Agreement. The Secretariat must therefore elucidate the circumstances surrounding the contract and show, in particular, whether or not it had been concluded with the prior authorization of the General Assembly.

13. The CHAIRMAN suggested that the representative of Tunisia should undertake consultations with the Office of Legal Affairs and that, in the meantime, the Committee should adopt the suggestion of the representative of Mexico, and endorse the oral recommendations made at the previous meeting by the Chairman of the Advisory Committee.

14. Mr. AYADHI (Tunisia) said that he was willing to support that proposal, on the understanding that the interpretation of the relevant part of resolution 33/116 A, reproduced in paragraph 3 of the Secretary-General's report, precluded the possibility of a sale. The misunderstanding which had arisen on that point concerned the correct interpretation of a resolution already adopted by the General Assembly.

15. The CHAIRMAN said that according to the interpretation of the Tunisian delegation, one resolution in question precluded any possibility of the Secretary-General selling the villa "Les Feuillantines". Clearly, the Secretary-General had interpreted the resolution differently, as he had entered into discussions on the subject with the Swiss authorities, as indicated in paragraph 16 of document A/C.5/34/23. However, the representative of Tunisia apparently wished the Fifth Committee to accept and approve his own interpretation.

16. Mr. AYADHI (Tunisia) said that reference to the previous year's discussions on the question showed that his interpretation was in fact correct. At the previous session, the Committee had indeed had before it a request to dispose of the villa "Les Feuillantines", and the fact that the Committee had asked the Secretary-General to explore other solutions proved that it had had no intention of selling. The issue was also one of logic and sensible management. It was well known that there was an acute shortage of land in Geneva; obviously, an organization as active and flourishing as the United Nations was bound to need more land as its activities developed. Selling a property adjacent to the United Nations Office at Geneva would therefore disregard the Organization's future needs. It would also be most unwise to sell a plot of 7,000 square metres close to the Office, and then be obliged in a few years time to purchase a plot the same size a dozen miles away.

17. Mr. SORDO (Uruguay) said that it was natural for a city or a canton to expect land owners to respect the municipal regulations in force. His delegation therefore found nothing wrong with the statement in paragraph 16 of the Secretary-General's report (A/C.5/34/23) that the City of Geneva had invoked the law on roads of 28 April 1967 in connexion with United Nations property. Any State

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(Mr. Sordo, Uruguay)

had an inalienable right to declare that land situated beyond the boundaries of a private property was part of the public domain. Thus, in the present circumstances, there was no question in the case under consideration of invoking the privileges and immunities deriving from the Headquarters Agreement; the tract of land in question, as the Secretary-General's report clearly showed, had in fact never belonged to the United Nations, and the Swiss law of 28 April 1967 was therefore fully applicable. Moreover, the Secretary-General's proposal for settling the issue seemed to provide a permanent solution, at least from the financial point of view.

18. Mr. STEVENS (Sierra Leone) said that his delegation interpreted the relevant provisions of General Assembly resolution 33/116 A, mentioned in paragraph 3 of document A/C.5/34/23, as meaning that the Secretary-General should study various possibilities for utilizing the villa "Les Feuillantines", and then present to the Fifth Committee the measures he considered appropriate. In the view of his delegation, the three recommendations contained in paragraph 12 of the Secretary-General's report were in conformity with the General Assembly's request and were eminently reasonable.

19. The CHAIRMAN said that in his opinion, the possibility of a sale at some future date was not precluded by resolution 33/116 A.

20. Mr. AYADHI (Tunisia) said that there was probably agreement among all the members of the Committee that there was no question of selling, and that the Secretary-General should be trusted to make the best use of the villa. He therefore proposed that the Fifth Committee should state that it had noted the Secretary-General's report and the recommendations of ACABQ and was adopting them but that, with regard to part A of the report, it was leaving the Secretary-General to make the most appropriate use of the villa "Les Feuillantines", without selling it.

21. Mr. PAPENDORP (United States of America) said that he did not agree with the interpretation of resolution 33/116 A given by the representative of Tunisia, although it had some merit. However, his Government would like the status quo to be terminated as soon as possible.

22. The CHAIRMAN noted that the Committee had before it a proposal by the representative of Mexico to accept the recommendations of ACABQ, and an amendment to that proposal submitted by the representative of Tunisia. He suggested that the Committee should approve the recommendations of ACABQ, leaving the Secretary-General to make the most appropriate use of the villa "Les Feuillantines", without selling it.

23. It was so decided.

Chapter 28 B. Office of Financial Services (A/C.5/34/L.17)

24. Mr. PAPENDORP (United States of America), introducing draft decision A/C.5/34/L.17, said that the text contained proposals which had already been

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(Mr. Papendorp, United States)

approved by the Fifth Committee and the General Assembly. However, the subject dealt with in the draft decision - the improvement of financial management - was important enough for the General Assembly to take a new decision on the question. The draft decision covered three points connected with recommendations made the preceding year by the Board of Auditors; namely, the strengthening of the Controller's role, the establishment of a systems group, and the production of the financial manual. Since the General Assembly had already voted appropriations for those activities, the draft decision would have no financial implications.

25. Mr. KHAMIS (Algeria) said that his delegation would be happy to support the draft decision, but it was his understanding that at the previous session the General Assembly had already asked the Secretary-General to implement the recommendations of the Board of Auditors. The text of the United States draft decision, however, gave the impression that it was the first time the General Assembly was taking up the question of strengthening the Controller's role. It might be useful to recall the decision taken at the previous session.

26. Mr. PAPENDORP (United States of America) said that the General Assembly had indeed taken a decision on the question at the previous session, in resolution 33/10, but that unfortunately its recommendations had not so far been implemented.

27. Mr. AYADHI (Tunisia) said that his delegation appreciated the efforts made by the United States delegation to strengthen the Controller's role, but it felt that the draft decision should perhaps be completely revised.

28. Mr. PAPENDORP (United States of America) proposed that the words "of paragraphs 4 and 5 of resolution 33/10 and" should be added after the words "Request the Secretary-General to give priority to the implementation".

29. The CHAIRMAN said that, if he heard no objection, he would take it that the Committee wished to adopt without a vote the draft decision submitted by the United States delegation, as revised by that delegation.

30. It was so decided.

International Computing Centre - 1980 budget estimates. Revised estimates under section 28 G (Electronic Data Processing and Information Systems Division - International Computing Centre, Geneva (United Nations share)) (A/34/7/Add.7; A/C.5/34/19)

31. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) said that the Advisory Committee recommended approval of the 1980 budget estimates for the International Computing Centre. Such a decision would not call for any revision of the estimates in the proposed programme budget for 1980-1981.

32. The CHAIRMAN suggested that the Committee should recommend approval by the General Assembly of the 1980 budget estimates for the International Computing

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(The Chairman)

Centre and should note that no supplementary appropriation was being requested in the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1980-1981.

33. It was so decided.

Revised estimates under section 28 L.3. Jointly financed administrative activities: secretariat of the Consultative Committee on Administrative Questions (United Nations share) (A/34/7/Add.4; A/C.5/34/16)

34. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) said that the Advisory Committee recommended that the amount of \$297,900 already included in the proposed programme budget for 1980-1981 should be maintained by the Fifth Committee. On the other hand, the Advisory Committee found insufficient justification for the addition of a new P-3 post to the secretariat of CCAQ.

35. The CHAIRMAN suggested that the Fifth Committee should approve the recommendation made by the Advisory Committee in paragraph 3 of its report.

36. It was so decided.

Other matters

37. Mr. BEGIN (Director, Budget Division) said that he wished to reply to questions raised by various delegations at previous meetings. The representative of Algeria had asked how many reimbursements the Secretariat had made to the representatives on the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination. In 1978, there had been seven reimbursements for the first session and five for the second. In 1979, there had been six reimbursements for the first session and six for the second.

38. When section 32 was being considered, the representative of Rwanda had asked how many consulting engineers would be required for the Office at Geneva. He pointed out that the consulting engineers were not employed full-time, but were consulted as the need arose. The number therefore varied each year and was generally between 6 and 15.

39. When the UNIDO budget was being considered in first reading, the representative of the Philippines, referring to technical assistance activities, had asked whether consultants were paid from the appropriations indicated in paragraph 24.11 of the proposed programme budget. It should be made clear that those appropriations were used only to finance permanent staff, which consisted of the following: six regional advisers for regional advisory services and six interregional advisers for short-term advisory services. The appropriations were also used to cover the travel costs of such staff for consultations with Governments.

40. When section 11 was being considered, the representative of Italy had asked for further information regarding the expert group mentioned in paragraph 11.18. That group would be meeting in Bangkok in 1981 and the appropriation requested was

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(Mr. Begin)

intended to cover the maintenance and travel costs of the participants, who would be coming from 15 countries.

40a. When document A/C.5/34/22 was being considered, the representative of Algeria had asked why the appropriations for two annual regional seminars on action against racism and racial discrimination had not been included in the original budget estimates. When preparing the proposed programme budget, the Secretariat had been aware that those two seminars were to be held, but had not known where. It was, moreover, expected that the Economic and Social Council at its first regular session in 1979, would take a decision on the programme of activities for the second part of the Decade for Action to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination. At that session, the Economic and Social Council had recommended, in resolution 1979/3, that the General Assembly should adopt a five-year programme of activities. During the current session of the General Assembly, the Third Committee had approved that programme of activities with some amendments (A/C.3/34/L.10). The financial implications of that decision for 1980-1981 had subsequently been submitted to the Fifth Committee in document A/C.5/34/22.

41. Mr. KHAMIS (Algeria) said that, in section 23 C of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1980-1981 (Human rights activities), he expected output for subprogramme 4, Implementation of the Decade for Action to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination, would be the organization in 1980 and 1981 each of one regional seminar on action against racism and racial discrimination. The funds needed for those two seminars should therefore have been included in the budget estimates, particularly since the Secretariat had told the Third Committee the previous year that two regional seminars would be organized each year in that field and that appropriations would therefore be required. It had been necessary, however, to wait until the Third Committee had adopted a draft resolution on the subject before the financial implications could be considered by the Fifth Committee. Such a procedure did not at all reflect the spirit that should guide the deliberations of the General Assembly, and the Secretariat should estimate the funds required for those of its activities which were already programmed without awaiting a new decision from the Committees in that regard.

Report of the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination (continued) (A/34/38)

AGENDA ITEM 101: JOINT INSPECTION UNIT: REPORTS OF THE JOINT INSPECTION UNIT
(continued)

Medium-term planning in the United Nations (continued) (A/34/84 and Add.1)

42. Mr. PICO de COAÑA (Spain) recalled that, since the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination had become in 1976 the main subsidiary body of the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly for planning, programming and co-ordination, the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly had taken various decisions designed to enhance the effectiveness of its planning activities so that the medium-term plan would better correspond to the political strategies and priorities adopted by those two organs. In resolution 33/118 the General Assembly had approved the recommendations of CPC on further harmonization of programming in the United Nations system, including the request to the

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(Mr. Pico de Coaña, Spain)

Administrative Committee on Co-ordination to submit detailed proposals for securing an overview of the objectives and plans of the organizations of the system.

43. It was apparent from that far-reaching mandate laid down by the legislative bodies that the main short-comings of the medium-term plan were that it was too broad, that the apportionment of tasks among the various bodies was not clear and that very often there was a lack of well-defined and concrete objectives which would make it possible to establish priorities. When a programme was well conceived and balanced, the plan did not permit the evaluation or verification of its results. As was stressed in paragraph 6 of the report of the Joint Inspection Unit in document A/34/84, to give a programme a certain degree of credibility, it was necessary to define the objectives which could be achieved. The other criticisms made of the medium-term plan were that it lacked a general system of evaluation, that most of the programmes were not carried out within the planned time periods and especially that the plan did not sufficiently identify the activities which were obsolete, ineffective or of marginal usefulness.

44. His delegation felt that the application of the same criteria by the Secretariat, the Joint Inspection Unit and CPC constituted significant progress, since that had clarified the respective roles of the Secretary-General and the General Assembly in the preparation of the plan and to make the medium-term plan a suitable basis for the proper execution of the programme budget in accordance with the financial recommendations of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions.

45. His delegation felt that it was wise to make a distinction between programmable activities and non-programmable activities, whose number should be reduced as much as possible since the planning rules did not apply to them. In that regard, the programme managers should accept outside control, even if that went beyond the range of their normal activities. His delegation recognized that certain political activities, such as peace-keeping and disarmament, were not programmable, but there were other activities which could be and, in fact, were programmed. Of course, account should be taken of that in the medium-term plan in order to define objectives and strategies.

46. With regard to programmable activities, the distinction between continuing and time-limited activities was of great importance. It was good that the Secretary-General shared the opinion of the Joint Inspection Unit in that regard. CPC, which had approved that distinction in its recommendations, should strive to further define that idea which could result in financial savings.

47. As it had done the previous year for the programme of public administration and finance, the Joint Inspection Unit in its report provided concrete examples of the activities to be carried out within time limits. The idea of a time limit was important in order to prevent the same subprogrammes and programmes for continuing indefinitely.

48. His delegation was not opposed to scheduling the plan to cover a period of six years provided that the programmes continued to faithfully reflect the mandates of the legislative bodies. If the present structure was kept, the various new subprogrammes should be defined by giving them precise and clear objectives.

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(Mr. Pico de Coaña, Spain)

49. It was necessary to implement General Assembly resolutions 3534 (XXX) and 31/93. In that regard, the medium-term plan should clearly define the new activities, and the planning process should permit the identification of activities which had been completed, or which were obsolete or of marginal usefulness, and designate the resources which were thus freed so that the competent bodies could take the necessary steps.

50. His delegation recognized the importance of adopting a calendar of activities and it would carefully study the recommended priorities. He agreed with those who felt that there was no real relationship between the percentage of growth and the priorities which should be defined more precisely than they had been to date. That question should be studied further in order to establish the criteria for defining and implementing the concept of priority. As the Joint Inspection Unit pointed out in paragraph 98 of its report, the level of the relative importance of a programme was very frequently determined more by human factors than by considerations of general effectiveness.

51. Lastly, co-operation in the practical and theoretical spheres should be established between the Joint Inspection Unit, ACC, CPC and the Secretariat through the assistance of the ACABQ in order to bridge the gap between the general and ambitious objectives set out in the resolutions and the varied outputs deriving from the day-to-day activities of the Secretariat.

52. His delegation reserved the right to take the floor on that issue again.

53. Mr. TOMMO MONTE (United Republic of Cameroon) recalled that in 1978 his delegation had welcomed the initiative of CPC to undertake an in-depth study of the planning process of the Organization since it had felt that that provided the opportunity to correct the short-comings which were generally found in the form and substance of the medium-term plan. He expressed satisfaction, therefore, that that study, as the reports of CPC and the Joint Inspection Unit indicated had been complete and in depth.

54. Since planning within the United Nations was undertaken within a political framework based on the sovereignty of States, it should take account of the concept of autonomous development, which most countries were committed to. Nevertheless, in view of the growing interdependence of nations, such planning should also be based on the idea of co-operation and complementary relations between countries and peoples. Therefore, as the Joint Inspection Unit pointed out in paragraph 56 of its report, planning should aim at defining the type of contribution that the Organization could make in order to help Member States to attain the objectives for which they were responsible.

55. His delegation felt that the medium-term plan should provide the rational framework for defining general policies, objectives, strategies and priorities. After its adoption, the medium-term plan constituted the main body of general policy directives of the United Nations. That, of course, implied a dynamic and forward-looking method of planning. In that regard, his delegation agreed with the

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(Mr. Tommo Monte, Cameroon)

conclusions of CPC with regard to the "deductive" nature of the plan which should faithfully translate the mandates established by the legislative bodies into directives and objectives.

56. Moreover, bearing in mind the need for balanced growth in different programmes and sectors, the medium-term plan should be comprehensive and not staggered, as CPC had stressed.

57. On the question of the planning period, CPC, the Joint Inspection Unit and the Secretary-General had recommended that the time horizon for the plan should be longer than four years. His delegation considered that too high a frequency permitted neither adequate preparation nor proper evaluation of the issues either by the Secretary-General or by intergovernmental organs. It therefore favoured lengthening the period of the planning cycle. On the question of whether the plan should roll or have a fixed horizon, his delegation considered that, in a climate characterized by change, no plan could ever be either completely fixed or completely free, at least in the short or medium term. In fact, the orientation of a plan was conditioned by the facts of history, and changing trends called for substantial mutations which, generally speaking, could only evolve over the long term.

58. His delegation had examined with interest annex I of the report of the Secretary-General which surveyed changes and continuity in three consecutive medium-term plans for six programmes and subprogrammes elaborated to date and concluded that no major change had taken place in the orientation of those activities during the three planning periods. It therefore agreed with the Secretary-General's conclusion, in paragraph 78 of his report, that one of the purposes of a medium-term plan was to ensure continuity in logic between programmes, subprogrammes and programme elements, so that when change was appropriate, there was a framework of consistency in which that could occur. The plan should however, be sufficiently flexible to be adaptable to changing situations and needs. In that connexion, his delegation supported the Secretary-General's proposal for a special mechanism which would make it possible to build into the plan the conclusions of international meetings which had not coincided with the planning cycle or to restructure the plan on the basis of such conclusions.

59. The plan must be a rational framework to ensure congruence between fluctuations and goals and must also be capable of responding to a wide variety of changes. In that connexion, it was not so much a question of giving the plan a "fixed" or "rolling" character as it was of establishing a balance between the two terms. The regular preparation of prospective studies on trends and orientations in the medium or long term established during the preparation of the plan, as well as prompt evaluation studies, would contribute to that end.

60. It was essential that the general programmatic framework of the plan should facilitate evaluation. The Joint Inspection Unit had recommended that the current structure of the programme should be modified so as to distinguish between those

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(Mr. Tommo Monte, Cameroon)

activities which were programmable and those which were not and so as to establish objectives for fixed horizons within the plan. In connexion with the first proposal, his delegation shared the views of the Secretary-General that the plan should continue to furnish outlines of all programmes in accordance with the instructions of the General Assembly. For those activities which at first sight did not seem to be programmable, efforts should be made to find a special planning formula which would emphasize the evaluation of objectives and the staggering of the stages of their execution over different planning periods.

61. In connexion with the definition of time-limited objectives, his delegation had noted with interest that the experimental survey done by the Secretary-General and the Joint Inspection Unit had shown that the sample used might not have been representative of the majority of programmes. It therefore supported the recommendation of CPC that the Secretary-General should be requested to submit a study on types of programmes which might help to clarify the question of the structure of programmes and of the various levels of detail of programme narratives required by the organs reviewing the plan, so that the General Assembly could consider the matter.

62. The introduction to the medium-term plan should indicate clearly that planning was a promotional technique. It should clearly state the problems which stemmed from the world situation, and stress the contribution which the United Nations, through the plan, could make to Member States and above all to developing countries, during the period under review, towards the achievement of vital objectives such as those of the new international economic order for the new development strategy. It should also indicate the most appropriate steps by which those objectives could be achieved, as well as the main priorities set in the mandates received from legislative organs. Finally, it should define the areas of joint planning so that judicious interagency co-ordination could be introduced by stages.

63. From that standpoint, co-ordination should be regarded as the harmonization of over-all views and methods rather than the synchronization of planning cycles throughout the system. It should be a tool to strengthen efficiency in the areas of joint planning. The participation of central intergovernmental organs and, even more, of decentralized organs, would imply either a long preparatory period or a broad deployment of resources. In the former case, which might lead to economies, there was the risk of unduly lengthening the preparatory period of the plan. The second solution had certain advantages but, on the other hand, it would entail a revision of the calendar and the number of meetings in order to obtain adequate participation in the process of preparation and evaluation of the plan and, furthermore, would require substantial resources, possibly at long intervals if the plan covered a period of more than the current four years. In any case, nothing could replace discussion and the taking of formal positions on a draft text. It was desirable that that consideration should be borne in mind in drawing up the time-table for the preparation of the plan.

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(Mr. Tommo Monte, Cameroon)

64. The budget should be formulated within the framework of the plan, as CPC had stressed in paragraph 71 (j) of its report. It would thus make for a better identification of results and would become a valuable instrument for evaluation.

65. The medium-term plan could become an effective tool for management, for co-ordination and, above all, for the promotion of development, not only because it was inspired by respect for the sovereign will of Member States, but also because of its orientation and objectives which responded to the aspirations of the international community and because its preparation involved the participation of central and decentralized organs, both sectoral and technical, and furthermore made it possible to identify strategies, priorities and over-all resources.

66. Mr. MAJOLI (Italy) welcomed the definite progress which had been made on the question of the medium-term plan: according to the documents before the Committee, the stage of theoretical speculation had been succeeded by that of organization. It was for that reason that he approved the recommendations of CPC in paragraphs 71 to 73 of its report (A/34/38, part I); according to the most important of those recommendations, the next medium-term plan would cover the period 1984-1989, thus supplanting the proposed plan for 1982-1985. The Secretariat would therefore have the necessary time to draw up the future planning document in the light of the recommendations of the Joint Inspection Unit and CPC, the comments made by the Secretary-General in document A/34/84/Add.1 and, in particular, the experience acquired in the meantime.

67. Planning was an essential function in the development of the modern world. In an age of computers and broad social issues, Member States must prepare long-term solutions and be ready for change. For the United Nations, the task was to establish priorities and systematize the work, to redeploy resources and, as Member States were constantly asking, to eliminate obsolete, ineffective or marginal activities. However, the plan must not be a strait-jacket but must remain as flexible as life itself, unpredictable and subject to the dynamics of development and the turbulence of international political life. Its chief aims were to structure activities, to eliminate duplication and to integrate the plans of the various United Nations bodies. In that context, his delegation approved the CPC recommendation that the planning cycle should be extended.

68. The main effort in the preparation of a medium-term plan should be directed not towards solving terminological problems but towards evaluating obsolete, ineffective or marginal activities and establishing a system for the rational distribution of the resources available to the Organization.

69. The members of CPC had been unable to choose between a fixed-horizon plan and a rolling plan. The answer might perhaps be found in a suggestion made in 1966 by the Committee of 14 which had thought at the time that the medium-term plan should cover three bienniums, in other words, that it should have a six-year cycle. The part covering the first biennium would be very detailed and the programme budget would automatically flow therefrom, as CPC recommended in paragraph 71 (j) of its report. The part dealing with the third biennium would be much more speculative

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(Mr. Majoli, Italy)

and would be the only part subject to possible revision. That procedure might combine the advantages of a fixed-horizon plan and those of a rolling plan.

70. In any case, the next medium-term plan must show the cost of the activities included in it since the consideration of those activities by Member States would thus be greatly facilitated. The plan should also be the product of a dialogue between the various parties concerned so that it would become a more effective instrument in the optimum use of the resources of the Organization.

71. Mr. MAL'KO (Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic) said that enough time had elapsed since the publication of the first medium-term plan for the results to be evaluated. Although there were positive elements in that attempt at planning, there were unfortunately a number of serious gaps which had become apparent at the thirty-third session of the General Assembly during the consideration of the medium-term plan for 1980-1983. On that occasion, delegations had made a number of serious observations on the basis and the preparation of the plan, but the plan had been published so late that two of the principal bodies concerned, the Economic and Social Council and CPC, had been unable to discharge their functions. The Fifth Committee's task had therefore been more complicated and his delegation considered that such weaknesses must be corrected first of all.

72. The present planning cycle and the volume of documentation supplied afforded additional possibilities for a detailed study of the medium-term plan but the period for the preparation of the plan must be made as long as possible and the plan itself must be presented in a more concise form. The planning cycle should also be reviewed; the six-year period proposed was quite acceptable. That change should not preclude reconciling the United Nations plan with the plans of other bodies in the United Nations system, not so much to synchronize the planning cycles but to promote co-ordination, in particular by endeavouring to eliminate duplication which would entail needless expenditure. The timely publication of a preliminary draft would enable the various bodies concerned to consult about matters of common interest.

73. As for the content, the plan should give information on the way in which activities were distributed among the various organizations of the United Nations system. All United Nations activities were programmable on the same basis and, after the necessary adjustments had been made, all programmes should be included in the plan, including those relating to the maintenance of international peace and security. The presentation of the plan should be such as to make the information more accessible.

74. In paragraph 9 of its report (A/34/84), the Joint Inspection Unit stated that in the Secretariat planning work was generally considered by those in charge of programmes as an exercise which was superimposed on their daily duties without making any real contribution to them. In paragraph 17 of its report (A/34/38, part I), CPC stated that planning should be viewed as an essential feature of the responsibilities of the programme managers and not as a burdensome addition to their work. It was to be hoped that the attitude of members of the Secretariat

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(Mr. Mal'ko, Ukrainian SSR)

would tend to change, since planning was an essential obligation of those responsible for programmes.

75. Evaluation was central to the programming and planning cycle; it was a continuing process which should proceed in step with the execution of the programmes themselves. The method used to date should be maintained; it combined internal evaluation with an external evaluation undertaken by the Joint Inspection Unit and intergovernmental bodies. Internal evaluation was a means of bringing order into activities and distributing resources rationally. At that level, planning was not a means of obtaining supplementary funds but a way of setting realistic targets in the light of budgetary constraints.

76. Since the plan was the basic tool for the preparation of the programme budget, it should be both precise and concise and should indicate the quantitative objectives being pursued and the time-limits set; it should describe the main features of the strategy to be applied and should report on the results achieved. It should also show the way in which the inputs of Member States were distributed and should take account of the views of the largest contributors. The latest medium-term plan contained no information on obsolete, ineffective or marginal activities and Member States had therefore been unable to speak on that matter if they had wished. The period for the preparation of the plan should be long enough to allow them to state their views and, generally speaking, to enable the work to be carried on in the most efficient way. The six-month period which had been suggested seemed to be adequate.

77. The introduction to the medium-term plan should define priorities for Secretariat activities and explain the criteria on which they were based. It should also contain information on the relevant decisions of deliberative organs, on the solutions proposed during the preparation of programmes, and on the activities to be discontinued. It should also indicate priorities for the whole United Nations system, so that duplication could be eliminated. If that were done, Member States would have a general idea of the remainder of the document and could concentrate on the essential task, which concerned their economic, social and political responsibility. The medium-term plan would thus have a political character and would improve relations between the Secretariat and Member States, and its introduction would become an essential element for study.

The meeting rose at 11.10 p.m.