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FIFTH COMMITTEE
85th meeting
held on
Tuesday, 8 December 1979
at 11 a.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 85th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. PIRSON (Belgium)

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

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The meeting was called to order at 11.10 a.m.

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

Administrative and financial implications of the draft resolution submitted by the Second Committee in document A/C.2/34/L.106 and of the draft decision submitted by the Second Committee in document A/C.2/34/L.107 concerning agenda item 55 (continued) (A/C.5/34/86 and Corr.1)

1. Mr. HAIDAR (India), speaking on behalf of the members of the Group of 77, said that there seemed to be a misunderstanding with regard to draft resolution A/C.2/34/L.106 and draft decision A/C.2/34/L.107, which both concerned the United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries and had been submitted on the basis of informal consultations held on draft resolution A/34/L.17.
2. Paragraph 5 of draft resolution A/34/L.17 concerning assistance for travel and subsistence to enable delegations of the least developed countries to participate in the meetings of the Preparatory Committee for the Conference had not been immediately acceptable to all those participating in the consultations. As a result of a consensus reached during the informal negotiations, draft resolution A/34/L.17 had been submitted in the form of two separate texts, namely, draft resolution A/C.2/34/L.106, which had subsequently been adopted by consensus, and draft decision A/C.2/34/L.107, which had ultimately been put to the vote.
3. It had been quite clear to all concerned that the financial implications of draft resolution A/34/L.17, which were set forth in the statement submitted by the Secretary-General in document A/C.2/34/L.70, continued to apply to both draft resolution A/C.2/34/L.106 and draft decision A/C.2/34/L.107. A provision of \$216,000 had been made for travel and subsistence of representatives of 30 least developed countries (A/C.2/34/L.70, table 3), and that sum still applied to draft decision A/C.2/34/L.107. The Second Committee had adopted that draft decision in full knowledge of the relevant financial implications. It had become evident in the course of the informal negotiations that a number of delegations believed that the travel and subsistence costs in question should be met from extrabudgetary resources. However, the first meeting of the Preparatory Committee was scheduled to take place in February of the following year, and the Secretariat was unable to give any assurance that extrabudgetary resources could be raised in time. Accordingly, in draft decision A/C.2/34/L.107 the Group of 77 had tried to emphasize the search for extrabudgetary resources, while not excluding provision of budgetary resources. In other words, it was necessary to provide for an appropriation of \$216,000 under the regular budget, which would not be spent if the Secretary-General was able to find extrabudgetary resources.
4. The CHAIRMAN said it was regrettable that the Second Committee had submitted proposals that were not accompanied by statements of administrative and financial implications. A statement concerning the administrative and financial

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implications of draft resolution A/34/L.17 had been submitted to the Committee in document A/C.5/34/86. However, paragraph 5 had subsequently been deleted from the text of draft resolution A/34/L.17. A specific statement of administrative and financial implications had not been submitted with respect to draft decision A/C.2/34/L.107.

5. In his view, there seemed to have been agreement in the Second Committee that it would perhaps be necessary to provide budgetary resources to solve an urgent problem, but that those resources might be paid back at a later date with the aid of extrabudgetary resources obtained in the meantime.

6. Mr. SADDLER (United States of America) wondered whether it was possible for the Committee to take up consideration of a question again, once it had concluded consideration of that question.

7. The CHAIRMAN said that draft decision A/C.2/34/L.107 had not been submitted to the Committee previously, and the Committee was therefore opening a debate on a new question.

8. Mr. SADDLER (United States of America) said that, since the Committee was considering draft decision A/C.2/34/L.107, it needed to be informed, notwithstanding the statement made by the representative of India, whether that draft decision had financial implications, so that the normal course of action could be taken.

9. Mr. AYADHI (Tunisia) appealed to all delegations, especially the delegation of the United States, not to go into procedural questions, since the relevant financial implications had been the subject of an agreement in the Second Committee.

10. Mr. PALAMARCHUK (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that he had no knowledge of draft decision A/C.2/34/L.107. Since it seemed that that document had not been dealt with in accordance with the proper procedure, he wished to ask the Chairman for a clarification of the position.

11. Mr. KOUYATE (Guinea) expressed his dissatisfaction with the attitude displayed by certain delegations with regard to matters concerning the developing countries. The Committee must reach a decision on the basis of the statement in document A/C.5/34/86.

12. Mr. DOWSE (United Kingdom) said that he could see the same procedural difficulties as could the representative of the USSR. The Second Committee had adopted draft decision A/C.2/34/L.107 without any statement of financial implications; if the Fifth Committee was to decide that there were such implications, it would focus attention on whether the Second Committee had properly adopted the draft decision in the first place.

13. The CHAIRMAN suggested that the Committee should agree to place the item on the agenda of its following meeting. On that understanding, he requested the Secretariat to provide a statement of the administrative and financial implications of the draft decision contained in document A/C.2/34/L.107, which the Fifth Committee would then transmit to ACABQ for consideration.

14. Mr. RUEDAS (Assistant Secretary-General for Financial Services) said that the draft decision requested the Secretary-General to explore ways of providing resources to enable delegations from the least developed countries to take part in meetings of the Preparatory Committee for the Conference on the Least Developed Countries. Two meetings of the Preparatory Committee were scheduled for 1980: the amount needed to cover the travel expenses and subsistence payments for the delegations concerned in 1980 was estimated at \$144,000.

15. Clearly, the draft decision laid particular emphasis on the desirability of finding extrabudgetary resources but, given the short space before the first meeting of the Preparatory Committee, it would be extremely difficult to issue an appeal and obtain extrabudgetary funds in time. Accordingly, the Secretary-General recommended that the General Assembly should make an exception to the provisions of General Assembly resolution 1798 (XVII) and authorize him to enter into commitments not exceeding \$144,000, on the understanding that he would report at the thirty-fifth session, in the light of the results of his appeal, to what extent he had had to draw upon the regular budget.

16. Replying to a question from the representative of Guinea, he said that only \$144,000 was being requested, as opposed to the \$216,000 previously cited, because by the end of 1980 the Secretary-General should know whether the extrabudgetary resources available were sufficient to cover the requirements of delegations from the least developed countries. Consequently, the amount which the Fifth Committee was being asked to authorize covered only 1980.

17. The CHAIRMAN said that, if he heard no objection, he would take it that the Fifth Committee agreed to transmit the statement of financial implications just made by the Assistant Secretary-General to the Advisory Committee for consideration.

18. It was so decided.

Accommodation at the Vienna International Centre (A/34/7/Add.26; A/C.5/34/48, parts I and II)

19. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) said that the reports of the Secretary-General had been submitted too late for the Advisory Committee to be able to give them the detailed examination appropriate to requests of such magnitude. The Advisory Committee had therefore decided to postpone its consideration of the reports until the second year of the biennium; but in order to allow the Secretary-General enough resources to continue to operate the Centre in 1980, it recommended the provision of a lump sum of \$16,074,400, as explained in paragraph 8 of its report (A/34/7/Add.26). It further recommended that additional staff resources as might be required in 1980, whether under section 28.M, for the UNIDO information service, or for the new administrative office at Vienna, whose establishment the Advisory Committee endorsed, should be provided on a temporary assistance basis, as detailed in paragraphs 5 and 8 of its report.

20. Mr. AYADHI (Tunisia) said it appeared to his delegation that the various bilateral and multilateral agreements concerning the establishment of the Vienna International Centre had not been fully carried out. He asked for more complete information on the rules which would govern the operation of the Centre.

21. His delegation, too, deplored the late submission of the documents on the item. Nevertheless, it felt that some of the Advisory Committee's recommendations were designed simply to defer a decision until the thirty-fifth session. That was especially true of the recommendation to recruit staff only on a temporary basis. The staffing needs of the Centre were well known: his delegation would have wished the Advisory Committee to make definitive recommendations in that respect.

22. At the request of the Soviet representative, a vote was taken on the recommendations of the Advisory Committee contained in paragraphs 11 and 12 of its report (A/34/7/Add.26).

23. The recommendations of the Advisory Committee were adopted by 81 votes to 6, with 2 abstentions.

Administrative and financial implications of the draft resolution submitted by the Second Committee in document A/C.2/34/L.68 concerning agenda item 65 (A/C.2/34/L.82; A/C.5/34/77 and Add.1)

24. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) said that the Advisory Committee had been unable to subject the draft resolution to the detailed analysis it required. It would have wished to consider the matter in the context of the human settlements programmes of the regional economic commissions, but had been unable to take up that matter. In order to provide some staffing resources for the regional economic commissions, however, it recommended the provision to each commission of a lump sum of \$35,000, making a total of \$140,000 under section 19 for 1980 alone. The Advisory Committee would consider the establishment of the requested posts during the thirty-fifth session of the General Assembly.

25. The lump sum recommended would be for hiring staff on a temporary basis, as determined by each regional economic commission.

26. The Advisory Committee further recommended approval of an amount of \$36,000 under section 31 (Staff assessment), to be offset by an increase in the same amount under income section 1.

27. Mr. SADDLER (United States of America) expressed concern with regard to the irregular procedures and sequence of events that had led to the confusing situation currently before the Committee. As he understood it, the Commission on Human Settlements had approved the work programme of the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat), as was described in paragraph 1 of document A/C.2/34/L.82, but no statement of financial implications had been provided either at that time or when the work programme had subsequently been endorsed by the Economic and Social Council. A statement of financial

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(Mr. Saddler, United States)

implications had at length been submitted during the discussion of draft resolution A/C.2/34/L.68 in the Second Committee. Therefore, the Governments participating in the work of both the Commission and the Council had not realized that additional resources would be necessary. As a result the Fifth Committee was presented with a dilemma: it was being asked to endorse the request for additional resources without knowing whether or not those resources were necessary.

28. His delegation attached considerable importance to the work of the Centre but, if the Fifth Committee encouraged such haphazard procedures in future, it would no longer be able to control circumstances. Although the Advisory Committee had done what it could, it could not possibly judge the substance of the matter or determine precisely what the Commission on Human Settlements had intended when it had approved the work programme. He therefore appealed to members of the Fifth Committee to encourage the Secretary-General to take steps to prevent such haphazard procedures in future. In view of those considerations, his delegation could not support the financial implications contained in document A/C.2/34/L.82.

29. The CHAIRMAN reminded members that, at its 81st meeting, the Committee had already approved the draft resolution contained in document A/C.2/34/L.68 and it was thus familiar with the financial implications submitted by the Secretary-General.

30. Mr. PAL (India) said that, although he understood the logic on which the statement of the Chairman of the Advisory Committee was based, he did not agree with the Advisory Committee's recommendation. Had it decided to approve half of the additional resources requested by the Secretary-General (see A/C.5/34/77/Add.1), in other words, to allocate \$205,100 for the first year of the biennium, that would have been logical, but the amount of \$140,000 seemed arbitrary. The work programme had already been carefully scrutinized by the Commission on Human Settlements, the Economic and Social Council and the Second Committee. The Second Committee had considered that the human and financial resources requested were necessary for the work programme in question.

31. Therefore, he formally proposed that the Fifth Committee should approve one half of the amount requested by the Secretary-General, or \$205,100, on the understanding that the Advisory Committee needed more time to examine all the aspects of the work programme.

32. Mr. DOWSE (United Kingdom) said that his delegation was opposed to the proposal of the representative of India. In its opinion, the Advisory Committee had taken account of the fact that the work programme had previously been examined carefully. The main question was whether or not the existing resources of the regional commissions were adequate to that purpose or whether they needed to be strengthened. Clearly, the Advisory Committee needed time to study existing resources in that light. Therefore, in his delegation's opinion, an interim appropriation should be granted, and, accordingly, he supported the recommendation of the Advisory Committee.

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33. Mr. HAMZAH (Syrian Arab Republic) pointed out that all the alternatives before the Committee were difficult. As the Chairman has said, it would not be logical for the Committee to consider such an important matter hastily, especially since the Advisory Committee had been unable to give that matter the necessary attention. However, to postpone the consideration of financial implications, which normally would have been approved, was not an ideal solution either.

34. Mr. OKEYO (Kenya) observed that the Commission on Human Settlements and the Economic and Social Council had already approved the work programme, and it should therefore be undertaken during the current biennium. While he appreciated the position of the Advisory Committee, he did not understand how the resources it recommended could possibly be distributed among five regional commissions. He therefore supported the proposal of the representative of India, which would provide the best financial support both for the regional commissions and for the Centre.

35. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) explained that whenever the creation of new posts was proposed for a particular biennium, most of the expenses arose during the second year, primarily because of the time involved in recruiting staff to fill those posts. That fact had been the Advisory Committee's foremost consideration in deciding to recommend not \$205,100 but \$140,000.

36. Mr. PAL (India) asked the Secretariat whether it considered that all 12 posts would be needed for the implementation of the work programme in 1980. If so, he asked whether the Secretariat could finance those posts from the appropriation recommended by the Advisory Committee, or whether some of the regional commissions would be obliged to work without the staff in question.

37. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) pointed out that there were already many vacant posts in several of the regional commissions. Therefore, it might be difficult to recruit the necessary staff by 1 January 1980.

38. Mr. RUEDAS (Assistant Secretary-General for Financial Services) said that, obviously the appropriation recommended was not sufficient to meet all the costs involved in hiring 12 staff members for all of 1980, but it would make it possible to start recruitment. He pointed out that, not only the regional commissions, but also the Centre had many vacant posts. Accordingly, up to 12 staff members could be recruited in 1980 so that the implementation of the work programme could be begun. The resources appropriated would, of course, be distributed among all the regional commissions.

39. Mr. OKEYO (Kenya) asked whether the Secretariat could confirm that the appropriation recommended by the Advisory Committee would enable the regional commissions and the Centre to undertake the work programme in 1980, without detracting from their responsibilities in other spheres.

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40. Mr. BEGIN (Director, Budget Division), said that, if everything proceeded normally, the appropriation recommended by the Advisory Committee would cover the recruitment of the necessary staff and, if there were no problems of recruitment, the work programme could be implemented.

41. Mr. PAL (India) said that, in view of the assurances given by the Director of the Budget Division, he wished to withdraw his proposal.

42. The CHAIRMAN suggested that the Fifth Committee should inform the General Assembly that, should it adopt the draft resolution contained in document A/C.2/34/L.68, a supplementary appropriation of \$140,000 would be required under section 19 for 1980 only and that an additional requirement of \$36,000 would also arise under section 31 in respect of staff assessment, to be offset by an increase in the same amount under income section 1.

43. It was so decided.

44. Mr. PALAMARCHUK (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that, had the administrative and financial implications contained in document A/C.5/34/77/Add.1 and the recommendations of the Advisory Committee been put to a vote, his delegation would have voted against them.

45. Mr. SADDLER (United States of America) said that, in his delegation's opinion, it was illogical for the Fifth Committee to take a decision on the financial implications of the work programme, when it had not been ascertained whether the additional appropriations or the 12 new posts were necessary, except on the basis of political considerations. Therefore, had a vote been taken on the resources requested, his delegation would have voted against them.

46. Mrs. DORSET (Trinidad and Tobago) said that the problem mentioned in connexion with the recruitment of staff was a cause of concern for her delegation. The Fifth Committee should not simply approve the appropriation of resources but should also ensure that another committee would give careful consideration to the recruitment problem; otherwise its work would be meaningless.

Conditions of service and compensation for officials, other than Secretariat officials, serving the General Assembly (A/C.5/34/L.47)

47. Mr. KEMAL (Pakistan), introducing draft decision A/C.5/34/L.47 on conditions of service and compensation for officials, other than Secretariat officials, serving the General Assembly, said that the draft decision was based on General Assembly resolution 33/116 B. Paragraph 6 of section VIII of that resolution stated that the compensation of full-time members of the International Civil Service Commission and the Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions should continue to be reviewed every four years or when the consumer price index in the United States of America had risen by 10 per cent since the last review, whichever came first. By projecting the rise in the consumer-price index of 9.1 per cent for the period from January to October 1979, he had arrived at a figure for the whole of 1979 of 10.8 per cent, which was a conservative estimate. Therefore, the requirements of section VIII of resolution 33/116 B had been met.

(Mr. Kemal, Pakistan)

48. Accordingly, the draft decision submitted by his delegation proposed an increase in the annual compensation of the two full-time members of ICSC and the Chairman of the Advisory Committee of \$4,000, or 7 per cent, thus giving rise to financial implications amounting to \$12,000 for 1980. The increase had been limited to 7 per cent in order to set an example of austerity and because the United Nations staff did not receive full compensation for rises in the consumer price index.
49. In view of the fact that the proposal was in accordance with a previous decision of the General Assembly, he expressed the hope that it would be adopted by consensus.
50. Mr. HAMZAH (Syrian Arab Republic) said that his delegation fully supported draft decision A/C.5/34/L.47.
51. Mr. PALAMARCHUK (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that his delegation did not understand why the delegation of Pakistan had submitted the draft decision in document A/C.5/34/L.49 without first calling upon the Secretary-General to submit a proposal on the subject. Furthermore, because of the lack of data needed to confirm the necessity of taking such a decision, his delegation felt that the draft decision was unjustified and would have difficulty in supporting it.
52. Mr. WILLIAMS (Panama) recalled that his delegation had supported General Assembly resolution 33/116 B, section VIII, since it felt that the officials concerned, who served the General Assembly and the international community, should be protected from increases in the cost of living in order to allow them to discharge their duties properly. In keeping with that position, his delegation expressed the hope that the draft decision would be adopted by consensus.
53. Mr. VAN NOUHUYS (Netherlands) said that his delegation supported the draft decision. For the sake of clarity, however, he proposed that the words "Chairman of the" should be added before the words "Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions" in paragraph 1.
54. Mr. BRUCE (Canada) said that it was rather invidious to have to discuss the remuneration of people in their presence. His delegation would have to abstain in a vote on the draft decision because of the lack of time to study that document and the absence of sufficient information.
55. Mr. PALAMARCHUK (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) pointed out that the Committee must follow the rules of procedure of the General Assembly and ask the Secretary-General to present the financial implications of the draft decision.
56. Mr. STUART (United Kingdom) said that his delegation would be happy to support the draft decision, provided it was clear that the consumer price index in the United States had risen by 10 per cent in 1979. He requested the representative of the Secretary-General to confirm that figure.
57. Mr. RUEDAS (Assistant Secretary-General for Financial Services) said that the financial implications of the draft decision would amount to \$12,000 for the year 1980.

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(Mr. Ruedas)

58. With regard to the request made by the representative of the United Kingdom, he said that he could not confirm that the consumer price index had risen by 10 per cent, since the cost-of-living data for the month of November 1979 would not be available until the end of December. If the rise of 9.1 per cent for the period from January to October 1979 was projected to cover November and December, it was likely that the figure of 10 per cent would be exceeded, but that assumption could not be confirmed as yet.

59. Mr. STUART (United Kingdom) said it was the understanding of his delegation that the International Civil Service Commission at present had only one full-time member. Unless the General Assembly appointed a Chairman of ICSC, only two officials would require compensation in 1980 under the terms of the draft decision and, therefore, the financial implications would amount to \$8,000, not \$12,000.

60. Mr. AYADHI (Tunisia) said that his delegation strongly supported the draft decision. The General Assembly must carry out its responsibilities under resolution 33/116 B, section VIII, without waiting for the Secretary-General to submit a report.

61. The CHAIRMAN invited the members of the Committee to vote on draft decision A/C.5/34/L.47.

62. Draft decision A/C.5/34/L.47 was adopted by 76 votes to 10, with 13 abstentions.

63. The CHAIRMAN said that, when similar cases arose in the future, he hoped that the Secretary-General would submit proposals on the implementation of General Assembly resolutions to the Committee.

64. Mr. SADDLER (United States of America), speaking in explanation of vote, said that his delegation had voted against the draft decision because the matter with which it dealt had been raised at a very late stage in the deliberations of the Committee and there was no factual basis for ascertaining whether an increase was justifiable or not. Furthermore, his delegation felt that a report should have been submitted by the Secretary-General, in keeping with established practice in all such matters.

65. Mr. STUART (United Kingdom) said that, although his delegation sympathized with the principle involved, it had voted against the draft decision because it felt that the terms of General Assembly resolution 33/116 B should be observed. If the consumer price index had actually risen by 10 per cent, there would have been grounds for the proposed interim measure in view of the lack of time for a full review.

66. Mr. RUEDAS (Assistant Secretary-General for Financial Services) said that, in view of the small amount of money involved, the Secretary-General would endeavour to meet the additional costs from existing appropriations.

The meeting rose at 1.30 p.m.