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PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 1980-1981

First-class travel in the United Nations organizations

Eighteenth report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative
and Budgetary Questions

1. The Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions has considered the report of the Secretary-General on first-class travel in the United Nations organizations (A/C.5/35/62). The report has been submitted in accordance with paragraph 4 of General Assembly resolution 32/198 of 21 December 1977, in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report annually to it on the implementation of the resolution, noting all exceptions made under paragraph 3 of the resolution, the reasons therefore and the savings achieved through utilization of economy and other air fares. In paragraph 3 of that resolution, the Assembly authorized the Secretary-General "to exercise his discretion in making exceptions in the most exigent circumstances to allow first-class travel on a case-by-case basis".
2. In its consideration of the question, the Committee also had before it detailed information on the individual exceptions referred to in the report of the Secretary-General.
3. The Secretary-General's report covers the period from 1 October 1979 to 30 September 1980. In paragraph 2, the Secretary-General indicates that the savings achieved as a result of the implementation of the resolution are estimated at \$229,000. In that connexion, the representatives of the Secretary-General informed the Committee that the amount given can only be regarded as a rough estimate.
4. In paragraph 3, the Secretary-General lists seven situations in which he had exercised his discretion in making exceptions to allow first-class travel under the provision of paragraph 3 of the resolution. The Advisory Committee has examined the detailed information provided to it. It notes that the exceptions to the travel standard were authorized in respect of 48 persons and involved 74 journeys. The corresponding figures provided to the Committee last year, for the period

from 1 October 1978 to 30 September 1979, were 29 persons and 46 journeys. Thus the number of exceptions approved during the most recent reporting period is higher by 28 or 60 per cent.

5. The Advisory Committee was also informed that the number of exceptions authorized by the Secretary-General for travel by the Concorde at a cost higher than first class ^{1/} had increased to 21 cases in the period from 1 October 1979 to 30 September 1980 from 11 cases in the period from 1 October 1978 to 30 September 1979. Of those 21 cases, 13 related to persons accompanying the Secretary-General for official work during the flights (8 cases) and for security purposes (5 cases).

6. The Advisory Committee believes that the increasing practice of allowing travel by first class and by Concorde is not consistent with the third, fourth and fifth preambular paragraphs of resolution 32/198 which read as follows:

"The General Assembly,

...

"Aware of the desirability for economy in the conduct of operations of the United Nations,

"Conscious of the considerable cost differential between first-class, economy class and other air fares,

"Desiring to achieve substantial savings by reducing as far as possible the amount expended on travel by the United Nations,".

7. In the circumstances the Advisory Committee recommends that the Secretary-General should exercise tighter control over exceptions to the travel standards set out in resolution 32/198 and that travel by Concorde at United Nations expense be authorized only for the security officer accompanying the Secretary-General.

8. In paragraphs 5 to 7 of document A/C.5/35/62, the Secretary-General discusses the need to review the practice of considering first-class travel by the Director-General for Development and International Economic Co-operation as an exception to the provision of paragraph 3 of General Assembly resolution 32/198. In this connexion, the Committee notes that the General Assembly invited the Secretary-General to appoint a Director-General (resolution 32/197) at the same session at which it adopted resolution 32/198 on first-class travel. As stated in paragraph 5 of the Secretary-General's report, when the Fifth Committee approved the draft resolution on first-class travel, it was not in a position to anticipate its relation to the conditions of service of the Director-General. In paragraph 7 of his report, the Secretary-General, bearing in mind the status of

^{1/} As an example, the representatives of the Secretary-General informed the Committee that a NY/Paris/NY journey by the Concorde (\$2,878) was \$530 higher than first class (\$2,348).

the Director-General, recommends that he should be included among the officials entitled to first-class travel under paragraph 2 (a) of resolution 32/198. The Advisory Committee concurs in the Secretary-General's recommendation.

9. Should the General Assembly approve the recommendation in the preceding paragraph, there would be need to amend the provisions of paragraph 2 (a) of resolution 32/198 as follows:

"(a) The Secretary-General, the Director-General for Development and International Economic Co-operation and one representative of each Member State attending regular, special or emergency special sessions of the General Assembly shall be entitled to first-class travel;"
