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PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 1980-1981

Revised estimates under section 27, (Public information)

Development Forum

Twentieth 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 (A/C.5/35/52) in which he submits revised estimates in the amount of \$200,000 under section 27 (Public information), of the programme budget for the biennium 1980-1981, for the United Nations contribution towards the cost of continued publication of Development Forum in 1981.

2. The Secretary-General states that his report has been submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 34/182, section II, paragraph 3 of which:

"Affirms the importance of the role played by the periodical Development Forum in disseminating the objectives of the new international economic order and decides that the continued publication of Development Forum as an interagency project is essential and that United Nations participation in its production should be ensured",

and in response to paragraph 13 of the twenty-fourth report of the Advisory Committee to the General Assembly at its thirty-fourth session, in which the Committee expressed the opinion that:

"the Secretary-General should submit a comprehensive report to the General Assembly at its thirty-fifth session, which would contain an analysis of the criteria on which the proposed plan of financing is based, and also full budget details for 1980 and estimates for 1981". 1/

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1/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Thirty-fourth Session, Supplement No. 7 A (A/34/7/Add.1-28), document A/34/7/Add.23.

3. In part II of his report, the Secretary-General recalls that the general edition of Development Forum appeared in 1973 in response to paragraph 84, section E, of General Assembly resolution 2626 (XXV) of 24 October 1970. The business edition was launched in 1977. In October 1979 the Council of the United Nations University decided at its thirteenth session that the University would participate as co-publisher of the periodical during a two-year period from 1 March 1980 provided certain conditions were met, including the allocation from the regular budget of the United Nations of a subvention equal to the University's contribution. In parts III and IV, paragraphs 11 to 19 of his report, the Secretary-General discusses recent developments regarding the two editions of Development Forum and presents the budget for 1980 and the estimates for 1981. He addresses the financing of Development Forum in 1982 and beyond in part V, paragraphs 20 to 23.

#### 1980 Budget

4. As can be seen from table 2 of the report, the Secretary-General estimates that the production and distribution of Development Forum in 1980 will cost \$1,523,700, of which \$903,700 relates to the general edition (10 issues in 1980) and \$620,000 to the business edition (24 issues in 1980). According to the Secretary-General, each issue of the general edition is currently published in three language versions, English (35,000 copies), French (20,000 copies) and Spanish (15,000 copies), making a total press run of 70,000 copies (*ibid.*, para. 13). In response to inquiries, the representatives of the Secretary-General informed the Advisory Committee that copies of the general edition were distributed free of charge.

5. With regard to the business edition, the Secretary-General states that income in 1980 from some 3,800 paid subscriptions will amount to \$650,000. Thus, according to him, this edition is now financially self-supporting and may be expected to provide financial support to the general edition (*ibid.*, para. 14 and table 1). In this connexion, the representatives of the Secretary-General informed the Advisory Committee that the 1980 subscription rate was higher than in 1979 and that there were no plans to raise the subscription rates any further in 1981. They also indicated that the number of paid subscriptions to the business edition had been increasing by about 20 (net) per month.

6. In table 1, the Secretary-General estimates attainable income in 1980 at \$1,514,800. This estimate is \$8,900 less than the estimated expenditure (see para. 4). However, in response to inquiries, the representatives of the Secretary-General stated that, in all likelihood, there would be no shortfall as they expected that income from subscriptions to the business edition would be higher than indicated (\$650,000). In the event that a small deficit occurred, it would be carried forward to 1981.

7. Table 2 of the Secretary-General's report shows that, of the total estimated cost of \$1,523,700 for the production and distribution of Development Forum in 1980, \$750,000 or 49.2 per cent relates to salaries and common staff costs. As indicated in table 3 of the report, the staffing resources of Development Forum in 1980

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include 11 posts for the general edition (one P-5, two P-4 and eight General Service - all of them in Geneva) and 10 posts for the business edition (one P-5, one P-4, one P-2/1 and seven General Service: six at Geneva, one in New York and three at Washington). Contractual printing (\$290,000) and distribution costs (\$207,000) account for 32.6 per cent of the total cost. The balance covers temporary assistance and consultants (\$84,000), communications (\$77,700), other contractual services (\$64,000), travel (\$31,000) and supplies and equipment (\$20,000).

#### 1981 Budget estimates

8. The Secretary-General estimates total income in 1981 at \$1,491,800 2/ including a further subvention of \$200,000 from the regular budget of the United Nations.

9. In paragraph 18 of his report, the Secretary-General states that, in view of the anticipated decline in income 3/ and in order to maintain the 1981 staffing table at the 1980 level, there would be a need to reduce the number of issues of the general edition from 10 in 1980 to 8 in 1981. On this basis, the Secretary-General estimates total expenditure in 1981 at \$1,487,700 (table 2).

#### Observations of the Advisory Committee

10. In view of the continuing uncertainties faced by Development Forum in assuring its financing during 1981 and, bearing in mind the decision taken by the Fifth Committee at its 83rd meeting on 17 December 1979 concerning the size of the subvention for 1980, the Advisory Committee does not object to the Secretary-General's proposal to provide \$200,000 in 1981 from the regular budget of the United Nations towards the financing of the periodical.

11. With regard to the financing of Development Forum in 1982 and beyond, however, the Advisory Committee is of the opinion that the General Assembly need not pronounce itself at this time on whether to provide a permanent contribution from the regular budget of the United Nations. The Committee believes that there is a need for prior agreement among the participating organizations within the United Nations system (28 member organizations) as to the individual amounts they would contribute annually towards the long-term financing of Development Forum in the context of financial arrangements proposed by the Joint United Nations Information Committee and endorsed by the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination (described in A/C.5/35/52, paras. 20-23). Furthermore, the Advisory Committee is not convinced that the Secretary-General has fully explored all possibilities to increase income through additional notices in the business edition and increased paid circulation. In view also of the high cost of the general edition of Development Forum, which is now distributed free of charge for public information purposes (A/C.5/35/52, table 2), the Advisory Committee recommends that the Secretary-General explore the possibility of charging a nominal subscription.

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2/ The representatives of the Secretary-General have orally informed the Advisory Committee that total income for 1981 should now be estimated at \$1,499,800 because the World Health Organization has confirmed that it will increase its contribution from \$7,000 to \$15,000.

3/ See, however, foot-note 2 above.