



SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 42nd MEETING

Chairman: Mr. GODFREY (New Zealand)

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

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submitted in A/36/L.16 concerning agenda item 137

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The meeting was called to order at 10.50 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 100: PROPOSED PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 1982-1983 (continued)  
(A/36/6 (vol. I and II), A/36/7, A/36/38)

First reading (continued)

Section 27. Public Information

1. Mr. AKASHI (Under-Secretary-General for Public Information) said that the presentation of section 27 followed the framework established in the medium-term plan for the period 1982-1983 and reflected the priorities established by the General Assembly, in particular in its resolutions 33/115, 34/182 and 35/201. The information activities proposed for the biennium 1982-1983 were all based on legislative mandates, a large number of which had been set out in very recent resolutions. While some of the activities might not be regarded as deserving highest priority, they would still have to be included in the proposed programme of work. The Committee on Information had, moreover, requested the Department of Public Information to increase its output in all areas.
2. With regard to the financial resources requested for the biennium 1982-1983, he indicated that section 27 did not provide for any real growth in real terms, apart from a transfer of resources previously included under section 28D for communications and the diplomatic pouch and a non-recurrent expenditure for the World Assembly on Aging. The increase over the preceding biennium (approximately \$12.4 million) was attributable entirely to inflation.
3. In the area of planning and programming, the Department had made tangible progress as a result of the establishment in 1980 of a unit for planning, programming and evaluation in the Office of the Under-Secretary-General which would also be responsible for liaison and co-operation with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in activities related to the new world information and communication order. Member States had agreed on the basic need for a freer and more balanced flow of information within the framework of the new information order, which was to be an integral part of the new international economic order. The Department of Public Information had also made considerable progress in the systematic programming of information activities relating to the basic issues with which the Organization was concerned through its interdepartmental thematic task forces. While appreciating the co-operation received from other Secretariat departments, he noted that much still remained to be done and therefore endorsed the Advisory Committee's recommendation that the Secretary-General should in the future provide information on the totality of public information activities of the United Nations (see A/36/7, para. 27.4).
4. With regard to workload standards and staffing patterns, the Department of Public Information should be able to provide the Advisory Committee with a complete report on that subject in the course of 1982, after consultation with the Office of Financial Services. The Department of Public Information had made progress in

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(Mr. Akashi)

developing a more refined methodology for evaluating the effectiveness of information activities in every sector and thus hoped to be able to determine the relative priority of its programmes and identify activities which had been completed, or were obsolete, of marginal usefulness or ineffective.

5. Reference had been made during the general debate to the growth rate of the budget for DPI. It should be remembered, however, that the share of the regular budget allocated to the Department had steadily declined, from 13.3 per cent in 1948 to 3.6 per cent in 1980-1981.

6. With regard to the nature of the Department's work he stated that every effort was made to present the objectives and activities of the Organization in as objective and balanced a manner possible, while respecting the values embodied in the Charter of the United Nations and resolutions and decisions adopted by various legislative organs. The Department of Public Information was responsible for sensitizing the public, mobilizing world public opinion in support of the causes of the Organization and fostering attitudinal changes. It was therefore clear that it had a positive role to play and should not resign itself to being a passive information body.

7. The Advisory Committee had recommended in its report a reduction of \$400,000 in the amount requested as a contribution towards the publication of Development Forum, pending the submission of a report on the long-term financing of that publication (see para. 27.11). A detailed report on that subject had been prepared by the Department and would be considered by the Advisory Committee, which would make recommendations on the matter. Another report on the requirements for the World Assembly on Aging would also be submitted to the Advisory Committee for consideration.

8. Lastly, the Special Political Committee was currently considering draft resolutions which, if adopted by the General Assembly, would have financial implications. If the resolutions were adopted, he would inform the Fifth Committee of those financial implications through the Advisory Committee.

9. Ms. MUSTONEN (Finland), speaking on behalf of the Nordic countries, said that Development Forum was the only regular publication of the United Nations in the economic and social field. She emphasized the need for exploring the possibilities of long-term financing for the publication and shared the regret expressed by other delegations with regard to the delay in seeking a solution.

10. Mr. LAHLOU (Morocco) said that substantial progress had been made towards finding a solution to the many problems in the information field. The entire international community, especially the developing countries, were aware of the fundamental importance of public information. The ideas expressed in the United Nations would never bear fruit if the peoples with which they were concerned were not informed of them; hence the role to be played by the Department of Public Information.

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(Mr. Lahlou, Morocco)

11. The new world information and communications order was an original concept which formed part of the new international economic order. The new world information order was not an abstraction but the sum of the contributions made by Member States to information.

12. The United Nations information centres, which existed in many countries, were in permanent contact with the information organs to which they were accredited and therefore played an essential role.

13. Mr. BOUZARBIA (Algeria) expressed regret that the Committee had not had before it the report on Development Forum when the Chairman of the Advisory Committee had introduced that Committee's recommendations on section 27. Referring to the resolution that was under consideration in the Special Political Committee on questions relating to information, which dealt with Development Forum, he wondered whether there was any link between the draft resolution and the report to be submitted to the Fifth Committee.

14. Mr. KUYAMA (Japan) said that the work of the Department of Public Information should be encouraged since it was an indispensable means of promoting a better understanding of the Organization's activities. He noted, however, that the programme and resources allocated for information activities were not clearly identified and that the figure given in the proposed programme budget (see table 27.1) did not reflect all the resources allocated by the United Nations for public information. The Advisory Committee had, moreover, recommended once again that information on the totality of information activities of the United Nations should be included by the Secretary-General in future submissions.

15. The Department of Public Information was the main Secretariat unit responsible for the Organization's activities in the field of information and his delegation supported the Advisory Committee's recommendation to reject the establishment of a D-1 post under Section 25 (International Court of Justice). Similarly, his delegation endorsed the Advisory Committee's recommendation that the information activities to be undertaken by the secretariat of the World Food Council should be financed from the appropriation under Section 27 (see A/36/7, para. 1.16.). However, his delegation noted that the Department of Public Information would not be able to carry out that project unless resources were provided for that purpose. It was obvious that if the Department of Public Information could not carry out certain projects, the substantive departments would want to carry them out themselves, which would create a dilemma for the Committee.

16. His delegation endorsed the comments concerning priorities made by the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination in its report (A/36/38). Furthermore, it wondered whether the Department of Public Information was in a position to report on productivity norms applicable to technical service personnel. Finally, he endorsed the publication Development Forum and said that he was pleased that ways were being explored to find a long-term solution to the financing of that publication on the basis of the report to be submitted by the Secretary-General.

17. Mrs. LISBOA (Venezuela) said that Venezuela was a member of the Committee on Information and it supported the public information programmes of the United Nations

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(Mrs. Lisboa, Venezuela)

and appreciated the work of the Department of Public Information. It was evident from international developments that a far-reaching change in information and communications structures was needed in order to establish a new international economic order. Her delegation felt that, as the General Assembly had recommended in resolution 35/201, on questions relating to information, that the funds allocated for public information programmes should be proportionate to the increase in United Nations activities. The publication Development Forum must continue and she endorsed all efforts to ensure the financial survival of that publication.

18. Mr. BUNC (Yugoslavia) said that he was aware of the importance of public information programmes which made it possible to inform world public opinion about the work of the United Nations. He was pleased to note that the Department of Public Information had made great progress and that it should be able to play its role fully in that field provided it had sufficient resources in the future.

19. The United Nations public information programmes should help to draw closer the views of those who supported the work of the United Nations and those who showed very little interest in it. In particular, information activities directed at representatives of the private sector should be intensified so that such representatives might gain a better understanding of the purposes of the United Nations. His delegation endorsed Development Forum, which played a crucial role in the search for a new information order.

20. Mr. PAPENDORP (United States of America) drew attention to the reservations his delegation had expressed, during the general debate on the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1982-1983, concerning the nature and costs of United Nations public information activities. When it considered various sections of the programme budget, the Fifth Committee would be asked to approve funds for public information programmes; accordingly, it would have been helpful if the over-all costs of those activities had been consolidated in Section 27, particularly as the Committee had been requesting information on the total requirements for public information since the thirty-second session of the General Assembly. In that regard his delegation noted the observations made by the Advisory Committee and requested the Secretary-General to present that information at the thirty-seventh session in a progress report on public information activities.

21. His delegation was also dissatisfied with the over-all presentation of the budget section under consideration. It was unfortunate that there was no monetary breakdown by subprogramme as that would have made it possible to determine priorities. Furthermore, he asked for an explanation of the unusually high inflation factor of 17.4 per cent for 1982 and 1983. Lastly, in paragraph 27.22 of the proposed programme budget, the Secretary-General had requested resources in the amount of \$998,900 for public information supplies. The Secretariat should provide the Committee with detailed information on those expenditures as it had done in the case of public information equipment.

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(Mr. Papendorp, United States)

22. The budget of the Planning, Programming and Evaluation Unit was 18.5 times higher than the 1980-1981 appropriations, with a real resource growth of 300 per cent. He assumed that the increase was attributable primarily to the redeployment of posts to the Unit from other areas within the Department; however, there were no programme elements or outputs listed and no justification for the over-all increase.

23. In recent years the Department had benefited from year-to-year real increases in its budget without a significant increase in productive output. That situation was largely due to the rising staff and travel costs which had been taking an increasing share of the Department's resources - 74.6 per cent in the biennium 1982-1983. The Department must make savings in that area for a leaner, more efficient Department could better respond to the demand for new programming. His delegation therefore welcomed the Under-Secretary-General's commitment to economy and redeployment.

24. The task of the Department of Public Information was complex and difficult, for it was nothing less than to interpret the work of the United Nations to the world and to do so with an impartial hand. In that connexion his delegation deplored the pressures put on the Department by certain Member States in an attempt to have it advocate particular points of view on controversial issues. The budget of the Department was funded by all Member States and, by the same token, the Department should represent the views of all Member States - not those of any bloc or group - and it should do so with the highest possible degree of even-handedness.

25. Mr. ABRASZEWSKI (Poland) said that his Government attached great importance to the activities of the Department of Public Information. As a member of the Committee on Information, Poland was able to participate directly in the formulation of public information policies.

26. He approved the efforts made by the Under-Secretary-General for Public Information to co-ordinate all public information activities of the United Nations. As the Under-Secretary-General had noted in his introductory statement, significant progress was still needed in that connexion.

27. The lack of information on the totality of public information requirements, which the Advisory Committee had noted, was unfortunate. It was not simply a question of budget presentation; the fragmentation of resources devoted to public information activities might lead to duplication and a reduction in the efficiency of those activities.

28. With regard to the United Nations Yearbook, no mention was made in the programme budget of the publication delays although the Fifth Committee had expressed concern on the subject for several years. The Secretariat should report on the measures it had taken to remedy the situation.

29. He endorsed the comments of the Advisory Committee concerning Development Forum and hoped that the report on the long-term financing of that publication, which the Secretary-General was to submit to the Assembly at the thirty-sixth session, would contain information on the arrangements made.

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(Mr. Abraszewski, Poland)

30. He expressed concern at the increase in travel costs for the staff of the Department of Public Information. The Secretariat should endeavour to reduce costs by, where possible, combining missions with home leave travel of Department staff, as the Advisory Committee had recommended when it had considered the programme budget for the biennium 1980-1981.

31. Mr. SOKOLOVSKY (Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic) said that his delegation had pointed out, in a statement made in the Special Political Committee, the importance it attached to United Nations public information activities. The Department should disseminate more information on the activities of the Organization aimed at strengthening international peace and security, halting the arms race, combatting racism, colonialism and apartheid and on activities designed to enhance co-operation and understanding among peoples. The United Nations Information Centres in particular should endeavour to publicize the activities undertaken by the United Nations to avert a nuclear disaster.

32. The Secretary-General's estimate for section 27 represented an increase of 25.4 per cent over the revised 1980-1981 appropriation, or a rate of growth almost twice as high as that of the budget as a whole. Such growth did not seem warranted. Section 27 was fairly representative of the shortcomings of the proposed programme budget for 1982-1983. It provided no information on obsolete, ineffective or marginally useful activities. Also, as the Joint Inspection Unit had stated in its report on the co-ordination of public information activities in the United Nations system (A/36/218), many activities of the Department of Public Information overlapped, resulting in a constant increase of manpower and poor utilization of available resources.

33. The growth of the Department's budget derived in the main from the conversion of temporary posts to an established basis. His delegation was opposed for reasons of principle to such conversion and would not therefore be able to endorse the appropriation requested under section 27.

34. Mr. ALBORNOZ (Ecuador) said that his country was particularly interested in section 27 of the proposed programme budget, for the Organization's strength depended on the approval of world opinion. The tremendous task of imparting knowledge about the Organization's activities lay not only with the Department of Public Information but also, and primarily, with Member States and the major public and private information media throughout the world. The role of the Department of Public Information was to provide the information required for that purpose.

35. The establishment by the General Assembly of the Committee on Information was evidence of the importance it attached to information questions. That Committee had submitted to the Assembly at the current session some recommendations on action, which had been adopted by consensus by the representatives of States with different political systems. The representatives concerned had been able to agree on common positions with a view to increasing freedom of information, upholding human rights and explaining the problems of developing countries.

36. It was vital to inform world opinion of the activities conducted by the Organization in the economic and social sectors, as well as those aimed at

(Mr. Alborno, Ecuador)

strengthening international peace and understanding, in order to enable the development process to advance. Disarmament and combating colonialism and apartheid were other priority spheres of action for the Organization and the Department of Public Information.

37. The Department required additional resources if it was to embark on new activities and strengthen ongoing activities. It had also to respond to the wishes of the international community, which was anxious to see a more equitable geographical distribution of the personnel in the Department and the production of more publications in such languages as Spanish and Arabic. Consequently, a reduction in the resources requested under section 27 was not possible. On the contrary, the Department of Public Information should, if the need arose, command increased resources so as to be able to act on the recommendations of the Committee on Information, even if sound management and the identification of marginally useful activities gave rise to savings.

38. His delegation could not accept the Advisory Committee's recommendation to delete the amount of \$400,000 for financing Development Forum. That publication was perhaps the only one which reflected the achievements of developing countries in the economic, social and cultural sectors. It was a growing success and an essential element in the new world information and communication order which the developing countries wished to see instituted. It should not be forgotten that the major international information media too often overlooked the developing countries, where two thirds of the world's inhabitants were to be found. The United Nations must therefore disseminate information on activities in support of economic development which had been approved by the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and other competent bodies of the Organization.

39. Mr. AKASHI (Under-Secretary-General for Public Information) assured the Committee that he was determined to seek ways of utilizing the Department's resources more effectively and that, thanks to the introduction of new and more systematic programme evaluation procedures, existing opportunities for improvement in that regard would be utilized.

40. The Committee would be called on to consider the report on Development Forum separately from the draft resolution on that publication which had been before the Special Political Committee.

41. He was in favour of the idea of drawing up a report containing information on the totality of information activities in the Secretariat and a breakdown in monetary terms of the subprogrammes of the Department; however, only the Office of Financial Services was in a position to carry out those two tasks.

42. The Department intended in 1982 to reduce the publication time of the Yearbook of the United Nations to 18 months. The difficulties in that regard were due to the delay in the communication of information by the substantive departments to his Department.

43. The Department of Public Information was certainly one of the strictest when it came to applying controls on travel; in addition, wherever possible, mission travel and home leave travel were combined.

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(Mr. Akashi)

44. In response to a comment by the United States representative concerning the impartiality of the activities of the Department, he observed that the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council had adopted many resolutions requesting the Department of Public Information to mobilize opinion in favour of the objectives and policies advocated by the United Nations. Some examples were General Assembly resolutions 2567 (XXIV), 35/120 and 35/133.

45. The increase in the estimate for the Planning, Programming and Evaluation Unit was attributable in its entirety to a redeployment of resources. Replying to a question from the representative of Japan, he said that the comprehensive report on workload standards would not be ready until 1982 because of difficulties in quantifying the Department's activities.

46. Mr. BEGIN (Director Budget Division), replying to questions raised by the representative of the United States, said that the inflation rate of 17.3 per cent given in table 27.1 of the proposed programme budget was based on various assumptions concerning the increase in the cost of living at New York and Geneva and in the cities where the main information centres were situated. As far as the information centres were concerned, the rate of 15 per cent had been selected on the basis of past experience. If that assumption proved exaggerated, corrections would be made in the two future reports on budget performance.

47. Although the requirements in paragraphs 27.21 and 27.22 of the proposed programme budget carried similar estimates, they were not at all comparable: in the first case, resources were required for capital outlay and a detailed list had had to be drawn up for the Advisory Committee, whereas the second case concerned current and renewable expenses relating primarily to the cost of supplies required for the operation of equipment.

48. The CHAIRMAN said that, at the request of the United States representative, he would put the Advisory Committee's recommendation on section 27 to the vote.

49. The recommendation of the Advisory Committee for an appropriation in the amount of \$60,549,900 under section 27 of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1982-1983 was approved in first reading by 83 votes to 1, with 18 abstentions.

Administrative and financial implications of the draft resolution submitted in document A/36/L.16 concerning agenda item 137 (A/C.5/36/42)

50. The CHAIRMAN announced that the General Assembly was about to consider draft resolution A/36/L.16 in plenary meeting and must therefore be informed of its administrative and financial implications.

51. Mr. DUQUE (Secretary of the Committee), referring to document A/C.5/36/42, drew the attention of members to an error which had occurred in the fourth line of paragraph 2, where "\$174,100" should read "\$179,100".

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52. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions), introducing orally the Advisory Committee's report on document A/C.5/36/42, said that if the General Assembly decided to increase the membership of the International Law Commission from 25 members to 34, an additional amount of \$233,100 would be required under section 26 of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1982-1983. That amount would be apportioned in the following way: \$179,100 for travel and subsistence of members and \$54,000 for honoraria, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 35/218.

53. Mrs. MUSTONEN (Finland), speaking as the representative of the Chairman of the Group of Western European and other States, said that consultations on enlarging the membership of the International Law Commission had not been completed. The Fifth Committee might prejudge the outcome of those consultations if it took a decision on the administrative and financial implications of draft resolution A/36/L.16. Her delegation therefore wished a vote to be taken on the administrative and financial implications, in which it would abstain.

54. Mr. PALAMARCHUK (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that it would be premature for the Fifth Committee to take any decision on the administrative and financial implications of draft resolution A/36/L.16, given that the final membership of the International Law Commission had still to be determined.

55. Mr. BUNC (Yugoslavia) asked whether the Fifth Committee was being asked to vote on a formal proposal to enlarge the membership of the International Law Commission. He understood that a number of proposals had been made on the matter, and that the Committee was not required to take a decision on it.

56. Mr. DUQUE (Secretary of the Committee) said that the draft resolution had been formally submitted to the plenary Assembly. The Fifth Committee was merely required to inform the General Assembly of the administrative and financial implications of the draft resolution, which in no way prejudged the decision to be taken by the Assembly.

57. Mr. PAPENDORP (United States of America) said that his delegation fully supported the statement of the representative of Finland. He asked whether the Chairman of the Advisory Committee had information which had not been made available to members of the Fifth Committee. He understood that three separate proposals on the membership of the Commission had been submitted, and he asked why the Fifth Committee had not been requested to consider the administrative and financial implications of all three proposals.

58. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) said that the Fifth Committee had before it an official document (A/C.5/36/42), which set forth the administrative and financial implications of draft resolution A/36/L.16, which had been formally submitted to the plenary Assembly. Paragraph 1 of document A/C.5/36/42 stated that, under the terms of operative paragraph 1 of draft resolution A/36/L.16, the General Assembly would decide to increase to 34 the membership of the International Law Commission. Paragraph 2 of the same document stated that, if the membership of the International Law Commission was increased from 25 to 34, the additional costs for travel and subsistence would amount to \$179,100 and the honoraria paid to the

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(Mr. Mselle, ACABQ)

nine new members to \$54,000, or a total of \$233,100. Before the plenary Assembly took a decision on draft resolution A/36/L.16, it must be informed of the administrative and financial implications. Since those implications were not such as to require complex calculations, there had been no need for the Advisory Committee to consider them in depth. He had informed the members of the Advisory Committee that he would report orally to the Fifth Committee on the administrative and financial implications of draft resolution A/36/L.16, and the members of that Committee had not raised any objection.

59. Mr. PEREZ (Chile) said that the Fifth Committee had not been requested to take a decision on the membership of the International Law Commission, but only on the administrative and financial implications of draft resolution A/36/L.16. The question of enlarging the membership of the Commission had been discussed at length by the regional groups, and the draft resolution was sponsored by the chairmen of three regional groups (Benin, Mexico and Pakistan). The draft resolution apparently represented the beginnings of an agreement on the membership of the Commission, although consultations between the various groups had still not been completed.

60. Mr. LAHLOU (Morocco) reminded members of the Committee that one of their functions was to take decisions on the administrative and financial implications of draft resolutions which had not yet been adopted by any of the Main Committees or by the plenary Assembly. Accordingly, without prejudging the decision to be taken by the General Assembly, the Fifth Committee should take a decision on the administrative and financial implications of draft resolution A/36/L.16.

61. Mr. WILLIAMS (Panama) said that consultations among the regional groups on enlarging the membership of the International Law Commission were more or less finished. In accordance with rule 117 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, he requested closure of the debate.

62. At the request of the representative of Finland, the CHAIRMAN invited the Fifth Committee to vote on the proposal that the Committee should request the Rapporteur to report directly to the General Assembly that, should it adopt draft resolution A/36/L.16, a supplementary appropriation of \$233,100 would be required under section 26 of the programme budget for the biennium 1982-1983.

63. Mr. YOUNIS (Iraq), speaking in explanation of vote, said that his Government attached great importance to the work of the International Law Commission, a subsidiary organ of the Assembly responsible for codifying international law. Owing to the expansion of the Commission's activities, it was essential to increase its membership, and his delegation would vote in favour of the administrative and financial implications of the draft resolution.

64. Mr. BUNC (Yugoslavia) said that his delegation supported enlargement of the membership of the Commission because of its increased workload. It would vote in favour of the administrative and financial implications of the draft resolution.

65. Mrs. LOPEZ ORTEGA (Mexico) said that draft resolution A/36/L.16 was the outcome of lengthy consultations among the regional groups. Her delegation would therefore vote in favour of the administrative and financial implications of the draft resolution.

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66. Mr. DITZ (Austria) said that his delegation agreed with the representative of Finland and would abstain in the vote for fear of prejudicing the outcome of consultations which had not yet been completed.

67. The Chairman's proposal was adopted by 76 votes to none, with 28 abstentions.

68. Mr. PAPENDORP (United States of America), speaking in explanation of vote, said that the fact that his delegation had abstained in no way prejudged the position it would take when draft resolution A/36/L.16 was voted on in plenary Assembly. The hasty manner in which the Fifth Committee had proceeded was disturbing. At its thirty-fifth session the General Assembly had voted against increasing the honoraria of the members of subsidiary organs of the Assembly, and such honoraria were taken into account in the statement of the administrative and financial implications of draft resolution A/36/L.16.

69. Mr. PEDERSEN (Canada) and Mr. SAGRERA (Spain) said that their delegations had abstained in the vote in protest against the procedure followed by the Fifth Committee.

70. Mrs. DORSET (Trinidad and Tobago) said that her delegation had voted in favour of the administrative and financial implications of the draft resolution, on the understanding that the Fifth Committee had not been asked to take a decision on the number of members of the International Law Commission. Her delegation had not, therefore, prejudged the outcome of the consultations among the regional groups.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.