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**GENERAL
ASSEMBLY**

THIRTY-SIXTH SESSION

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FIFTH COMMITTEE

84th meeting

held on

Wednesday, 17 March 1982

at 10.30 a.m.

New York

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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 84th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. BRODININGRAT (Indonesia)

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

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82-55204 3234e (E)

Distr. GENERAL

A/C.5/36/SR.84

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

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

STATEMENT BY THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

1. The SECRETARY-GENERAL said that the Fifth Committee was the organ which most directly and decisively bore upon the function of the Secretary-General as the Chief Administrative Officer of the Organization and, indeed, upon the very life of the United Nations. It was in the Fifth Committee that the Financial and Staff Regulations were formulated, that the programmes of activities were brought into balance through the medium-term plan and that the means to implement them were provided through the programme budget which it approved. It was in the Fifth Committee that the activities of the Secretary-General as Chief Administrative Officer were evaluated by the consideration of his reports on the accounts, on personnel questions and on programme and budget performance. It was, in fact, in the Fifth Committee that the General Assembly, through its particular authority under Article 17 of the Charter, provided the means for the functioning of the entire Organization. He had therefore naturally wished to establish close contact with the Fifth Committee. In view of their common responsibility, it was essential that he and the Committee should speak to each other frequently, fully and openly. With that in mind, and with the aim of launching a new era of mutual understanding, trust and support, he wished to share with the Committee some thoughts about how his stewardship of the Secretariat could best help to fulfil the aims that they had in common.

2. In his address to the General Assembly on the occasion of his appointment, he had stated that "In order to galvanize the Secretariat and to integrate it more organically into the action of the United Nations as a whole, I need to count on the support of Member States. I am to head a Secretariat which must preserve its basic sense as an authentic international civil service so as genuinely to serve the interests of the international community" and "I fully trust the General Assembly, which lays down the rules for the appointment by the Secretary-General of Secretariat personnel, to provide me with the tools required for the full discharge of my task - not for the purpose of promoting greater growth in the Secretariat than is necessary, but rather with the main purpose of making the present Secretariat ever more efficient, morally committed, as I hope it will feel, to the goals of the international community as reflected in the Charter."

3. Much had been said in recent times about the relative powers and authority of the General Assembly, on the one hand, and of the Secretary-General, on the other, with regard to the functioning of the Secretariat. He did not believe it would be possible to define an absolutely precise and immovable boundary between the functions of the two organs. It might be more productive to conclude that developments over time and, consequently, the specifics of the existing situation required adaptation, in the spirit of the Charter, in order to achieve a well-balanced interaction of the legislative authority, on the one hand, and the administrative, on the other.

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(The Secretary-General)

4. There was one basic, inescapable fact: on a day-to-day basis it was the Secretary-General who must guide the work of the Secretariat. It was he, therefore, who must be held accountable to the legislative body for the tasks with which he was entrusted. His ability to perform such tasks efficiently depended not only on his commitment but also on whether he was provided with the tools to achieve the common goal.

5. One of his primary functions under the Charter was that of Chief Administrative Officer of the Organization, and he intended to fulfil it fully and effectively. It is his goal that after his tenure expired it should be said that a state of efficiency and competence existed in the Secretariat deserving the full confidence of all Member States. That would be a Secretariat whose members, individually and collectively, would have regained their sense of pride, dedication and loyalty, knowing that through their efforts they were in fact contributing to the achievement of the lofty ideals of the Charter.

6. It was obvious that the quality of the service rendered by the Secretariat depended to a large extent on the quality of its men and women - on their intelligence, their training, their integrity and their dedication. That, of course, necessitated a careful and exacting recruitment procedure in order to ensure that the Secretariat drew on the best available human resources from every Member State. As a parallel measure, he stressed the need to provide adequate conditions of employment to the staff generally and reasonable career prospects for those selected for long-term service in the Secretariat.

7. In the recruitment and administration of staff, he was seeking the co-operation and the help both of all Member States and of the staff itself, through their elected representatives and through their own individual good will. That co-operation was indispensable. He welcomed and, indeed, sought the active interest and assistance of Member States in identifying qualified candidates, as it was in everyone's interest that the Secretariat should be more reflective of the world it served. At the same time, it was likewise in the interest of Member States to allow him to take the necessary specific decisions regarding the recruitment, career development and general administration of staff.

8. He was fully aware that one of the main concerns of the Fifth Committee had been and remained that of the equitable geographical composition of the Secretariat; he shared that concern. If he was to enlist the full confidence of all Member States in the Secretariat, none of them should feel that its nationals were prevented from participating in the Secretariat's work. He therefore pledged that he would take the necessary measures to revitalize recruitment efforts and to redress existing geographical imbalances. That commitment also applied to the improved representation of women at all levels of authority and to the age composition of the staff.

9. On the subject of his relations with the staff, he said that his view was that strong and effective staff representation was essential to the constructive partnership not only envisaged but actually required by the regulations adopted by the General Assembly. As he had made clear in his address to the staff shortly

(The Secretary-General)

after he assumed office, a continuous, clear and frank exchange with the staff representatives would be one of the tenets of his administration - an exchange not in order to inform them about decisions taken, but to share concerns and proposals leading to more effective use of the human resources of the Organization.

10. As to the general performance of the Secretariat staff, he wished to comment on the very important matter of the need for a truly independent Secretariat. Because the word "independent" could be and had been, misconstrued, he wished to make it clear that what was meant was not that the Secretariat should be independent of the legislative organs. On the contrary, the Secretariat must co-operate with the legislative organs in order faithfully to execute the policies promulgated by the collectivity of Member States in their legislative decisions. What was required of the staff of the Secretariat, therefore, was independence with respect to external pressures, absolute impartiality in work performance and immunity to the influence of any country or group of countries. As part of the process of guaranteeing that all Member States had full confidence in the Secretariat, all of them must be convinced that every single staff member was unwavering in his or her commitment to the exclusively international nature of his or her responsibilities.

11. What was at stake was the need to ensure the faithful observance of Article 100 of the Charter, and he was referring both to paragraph 1 of that Article, which defined the conduct required of the Secretary-General and the staff in that respect, and to paragraph 2, under which each Member State had undertaken "to respect the exclusively international character of the responsibilities of the Secretary-General and the staff and not to seek to influence them in the discharge of their responsibilities". He intended to take vigorous action within the Secretariat in respect of the former and strongly urged the Fifth Committee to do likewise in respect of the latter.

12. A second major area of common concern was that of the procedures governing the planning, programming and budgeting of the vast array of activities undertaken by the Organization. The very fact that a draft resolution on that matter had remained in abeyance at the end of 1981 reflected a degree of concern and, on the part of many, dissatisfaction, about the existing state of affairs. In that regard, he wished to make several points.

13. First, there was obviously concern in not only the Fifth Committee but in other organs, such as the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination, the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions and the Committee of Governmental Experts to Evaluate the Present Structure of the Secretariat in the Administrative, Finance and Personnel Areas (Committee of 17), that greater attention and focus should be given to the programmatic content of the budget. I had already had consultations with the Chairmen of those organs, who had confirmed that need, and he himself agreed with that objective. A clear description of programmes would definitely facilitate the determination of priorities, which was essential to the entire programme budget formulation process, particularly since financial resources were not unlimited. Measures to ensure adequate monitoring and evaluation of programmes were also essential.

(The Secretary-General)

14. Secondly, an evident corollary was that the marriage between programme and budget required, at the Secretariat level, better co-operation and co-ordination between the units which over the years had acquired expertise in either programming or budgeting. That requirement was reflected not only in the draft resolution pending before the Committee, but also in the report of the Committee of 17, and he assured the Committee that it was a matter to which he would address himself carefully and forcefully. He did not intend to take hasty action on so important a matter and wished to consider all its aspects before proceeding further.

15. In that connexion, he was aware that the General Assembly had adopted several resolutions touching on the subject, among them those on the restructuring of the economic and social sectors of the Organization. The Committee of 17 had addressed itself to the question in its interim report, identifying it as one of the important areas to be considered in connexion with the administrative structure of the Secretariat. He was currently conducting an exhaustive review of the relevant resolutions and wished to have full consultations so as to ensure that any action he took was fully responsive to the expressed wishes of the Assembly.

16. The success of institutional improvements required a personal commitment, at the highest level, to the objectives pursued by the change. He considered the submission of the programme budget of the Organization to be one of his most important administrative responsibilities. In that endeavour, he would be assisted by his senior colleagues in the Secretariat, particularly, for the economic and social sectors, by the Director-General for Development and International Economic Co-operation. It was also his intention to consult with Member States regarding his over-all programme budget policy, so as to guarantee that it was as responsive as possible.

17. He considered it essential that there should be unity, consistency and, most important, efficiency in the management of the human and financial resources of the Secretariat. A unified and responsive structure was entirely consistent with his intended personal involvement in all important personnel and financial matters. He had already initiated a process of consultations with the Chairman of the Committee of Governmental Experts, and had assured him of his intention to pursue those contacts. He considered that procedure to be fully consistent with the provisions of General Assembly resolution 36/238 and looked forward to benefiting from that Committee's views and advice.

18. The cash situation of the Organization was a matter of immediate operational concern. The General Assembly had fully debated that matter and had adopted a resolution enacting a number of welcome measures, including an increase in the level of the Working Capital Fund. However, so far the collection of contributions in 1982 was falling far behind the required disbursements. He thanked those few Governments which had already paid all or most of their assessed contributions for 1982, and appealed urgently to all other Governments to give serious consideration to paying their contribution in full within the coming weeks.

(The Secretary-General)

19. He was seeking to forge a new partnership between the Fifth Committee and the Secretary-General. The new relationship would be ongoing, one in which the legislative body provided general guidance to the executive, while the executive was committed to be responsive to the suggestions and policies of the legislative body. In that partnership, he would personally strive to ensure the efficient and effective functioning of the Organization. He expected that Member States would, for their part, fully assist him in that effort and display the needed judgement and restraint in developing the future activities of the United Nations.

20. He intended to maintain contacts with the Fifth Committee, both formally and informally, so that a true dialogue was maintained during his term of office between the legislative body purveying resources and the Chief Administrative Officer of the Organization, who was responsible for the use of the resources.

The meeting was suspended at 11.45 a.m. and resumed at 11.55 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 110: FINANCING OF THE UNITED NATIONS PEACE-KEEPING FORCES IN THE MIDDLE EAST (continued)

(b) UNITED NATIONS INTERIM FORCE IN LEBANON: REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (continued) (A/36/865 and Corr.1, A/36/868; A/C.5/36/L.51)

21. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions), introducing the Advisory Committee's report on the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) (A/36/868), said that the Security Council had recently approved an increase in the strength of UNIFIL from approximately 6,000 to approximately 7,000 troops. In document A/36/865 and Corr.1, the Secretary-General had requested the authorization of a supplementary amount to meet UNIFIL requirements for the additional 1,000 troops for the period ending 18 June 1982. The costs for that mandate period were estimated at \$10,225,000 gross (\$10,222,000 net). The Secretary-General had also indicated that, should the Security Council extend UNIFIL's mandate for another period of six months, the estimated cost for the additional 1,000 troops for the period ending 18 December 1982 would be \$12,078,000 gross (\$12,062,000 net). The total estimated cost for the additional 1,000 men was therefore \$22.3 million.

22. The Advisory Committee was of the opinion that the additional requirements should not exceed \$21,303,000 gross (\$21,284,000 net). It therefore recommended that the total estimate should be reduced by \$1 million. It believed that, since there was already an administrative and support structure in the field, the absorptive capacity was adequate, especially in respect of supplies and common services.

23. The Advisory Committee had not made its recommendation on the basis of monthly commitments, as it had done in the past. That question was one to be worked out between the sponsors of draft resolution A/C.5/36/L.51 and the Secretariat.

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24. Mr. DUQUE (Secretary of the Committee), in reply to a question put by the Chairman, said that only items 100 and 110 were on the Committee's agenda for the resumed session. However, if the General Assembly were to take up proposals which had financial implications, the Committee would have to consider such financial implications.

The meeting rose at 12.10 p.m.