



SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 45th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. GODFREY (New Zealand)

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

CONTENTS

- AGENDA ITEM 107: PERSONNEL QUESTIONS (continued)
- AGENDA ITEM 108: REPORT OF THE INTERNATIONAL CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION (continued)
- AGENDA ITEM 105: PATTERN OF CONFERENCES (continued)
- (a) REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON CONFERENCES (continued)
- (b) REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (continued)
- AGENDA ITEM 100: PROPOSED PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 1982-1983 (continued)
- First reading (continued)
- Section 29. Conference and library services (continued)
- Section 32. Construction, alteration, improvement and major  
maintenance of premises (continued)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 107: PERSONNEL QUESTIONS (continued) (A/C.5/36/31)

1. The CHAIRMAN invited the Committee to consider the procedure to be followed for consideration of the Secretary-General's report on respect for the privileges and immunities of officials of the United Nations and the specialized agencies (A/C.5/36/31), submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 35/212.
2. Mr. KUDRYAVTSEV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that, in view of the fact that the Secretary-General's report (A/C.5/36/31) had already been submitted to the Fifth Committee and the desirability of dealing with it in a single Committee at the current session, his delegation would withdraw its suggestion that the report should be considered by the Sixth Committee. Delegations could decide later whether the Fifth Committee should continue to deal with the question at subsequent sessions, or whether it should then be referred to the Sixth Committee.
3. Mr. von HELLENBERG HUBARI (Netherlands), supported by Mr. AMNEUS (Sweden), recalled that at the time of the adoption by consensus of General Assembly resolution 35/212 his delegation had pointed out that, depending on the contents of the report, the General Committee would decide which Main Committee or Committees should consider it, and under which agenda item, since there might be legal aspects and the Sixth Committee might then be involved. In a second statement, his delegation had referred to the understanding of the sponsors of the resolution that consideration of the legal implications was within the competence of the Sixth Committee and that the question should therefore be referred to that Committee.
4. Since the report of the Secretary-General (A/C.5/36/31) was mainly factual, the Fifth Committee should hold a substantive debate on it, in the course of which it might or might not decide that there were some legal aspects requiring consideration by the Sixth Committee.
5. Mr. HAND (United Kingdom), speaking on behalf of the States members of the European Economic Community, welcomed the statement made by the USSR representative. The report of the Secretary-General was factual and raised no direct or immediate legal issue; if such issues came to light in the course of the discussion, it would be right for the Fifth Committee to refer them to the Sixth Committee. The 10 EEC countries also held the view that, as the Fifth Committee was responsible for personnel issues, including the welfare of the staff, it was right and proper that the substantive debate on the item should take place in that Committee, as the General Committee had decided.
6. Mr. GUBCSI (Hungary) said that the report should be discussed as part of the general debate on personnel questions, and not as a separate issue. That would be in conformity with the Committee's traditions in discussing personnel questions and with the General Committee's decisions on the allocation of items to the Main Committees.

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7. Mr. LAHLOU (Morocco) said that the Fifth Committee was required to deal with personnel questions, and it was only in that context that it could consider the question of privileges and immunities. It would be exceeding its mandate if it considered such issues as the granting of additional privileges and immunities or the curtailment of those already existing. It must confine itself to consideration of specific questions relating to the application of existing privileges and immunities.

8. The CHAIRMAN noted that it appeared to be the general wish that the Secretary-General's report should be considered by the Fifth Committee at the current session. Delegations might wish in due course to submit a draft resolution, on which specific comments could be made. They might also wish to comment on the matter in their general statements on personnel questions.

9. If there was no objection, he would take it that the Committee decided to discuss the substance of the report, without prejudice to the possibility of referring to the Sixth Committee any legal aspects of that or future reports.

10. It was so decided.

AGENDA ITEM 108: REPORT OF THE INTERNATIONAL CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION (continued)  
(A/36/30; A/C.5/36/26, A/C.5/36/29)

11. Ms. MUSTONEN (Finland), speaking on behalf of the Nordic countries of Denmark, Iceland, Norway, Sweden and Finland, welcomed the report of the International Civil Service Commission (A/36/30) and the comments of the Federation of International Civil Servicants' Associations (A/C.5/36/26). The Nordic delegations wished to emphasize the paramount importance of maintaining high standards of efficiency, competence and integrity in the international civil service, both in its employment and in the determination of its conditions of service as provided for in the Charter of the United Nations.

12. The Nordic Governments supported the Noblemaire principle, which meant that the international civil service should be compensated in accordance with the standards of the highest-paying national civil service. ICSC had done valuable work over the years in studying the applicability of that principle. The Nordic delegations particularly welcomed the comparison of total compensation between United Nations staff and the United States civil service based on non-expatriate benefits. While the Commission's technique was praiseworthy, its highly complicated and sophisticated methodology gave rise to some problems, as described by the Chairman of CCAQ and referred to in paragraph 61 of the ICSC report. The Nordic delegations regretted that it had not been possible to take into consideration all the necessary parameters for a comprehensive comparative study between the civil services of the Federal Republic of Germany and the United States. They noted from paragraph 78 of the report that there was at present no evidence to suggest that the United States federal civil service should be replaced as the comparator under the Noblemaire principle. It was important, however, to continue to compare and develop new ideas to test that principle. Attention might be drawn to other comparative factors, such as a broader definition

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(Ms. Mustonen, Finland)

of living conditions. The World Bank/IMF study referred to by FICSA could also be taken into consideration.

13. The Nordic delegations agreed with the Commission's conclusions (A/36/30, paras. 126-138) concerning the fundamental issue of implementation of the revised General Service salary scales at Geneva. It was important not to undermine the common salary scales or the collective approach of the Geneva organizations to determining appropriate salary levels under the Commission's guidelines. The unilateral decision of ILO to grant a 3 per cent increase went directly against the Commission's attempt to achieve a unified international civil service through the application of common salary scales, and ultimately called in question the mandate given to ICSC by the General Assembly. The Commission's recommendations should be brought before the governing bodies of the various specialized agencies in order to promote consistent decisions. The Nordic delegations therefore concurred fully with the conclusion in paragraph 138 of the ICSC report.

14. At the thirty-fifth session, it had been widely agreed that the promotion of a common system of job classification standards was one of the most notable steps taken by the Commission. The Master Standard of job classification offered an analytical, quantitative and objective approach to job analysis and evaluation. However, account should be taken of the heterogeneous working conditions in the various organizations, and flexibility in the classification process should be maintained. Since the implementation of the Master Standard had begun only in January 1981, it might be too early to reach any conclusions about the results achieved. A number of organizations were still considering their plans, or had developed only provisional plans for implementation. Paragraph 174 of the report explained that there had also been a number of constraints on the organizations, which had sometimes made it difficult to proceed with the desired speed. Budgetary factors should not, however, impede the implementation of the job classification process.

15. Machinery to establish a close link between the Master Standard and career planning should be set up. The Master Standard should facilitate career planning and mobility, and should not impair career prospects. One of the objectives of the development and implementation of a common system of job classification standards was to ensure the application of a uniform system of salaries and allowances. The Nordic delegations therefore welcomed the Commission's instruction to the Secretariat to report on the relationship between the grading standards and the methodology for the next New York salary survey, so as to ensure proper co-ordination of those two interrelated processes.

16. The Nordic delegations regarded training opportunities as an essential part of the development of the international civil service system. The closed nature of the system of international organizations intensified the need for such training. The objectives of training policies were governed by the goals of the organizations. Another aspect was the need to regard training as the development of individual abilities, aptitudes and intellectual awareness.

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(Ms. Mustonen, Finland)

Specific training requirements for those objectives could be determined, and the necessary resources could then be defined.

17. The Nordic delegations agreed with the three purposes of training set forth in paragraph 203 of the ICSC report, although they would have liked to see definitions covering the whole range of training described there. They hoped that it would be possible in the future also to assess the training expenditures and the number of training staff required. The figures in paragraph 205 of the report gave a regrettable impression that low priority was given to training.

18. The Nordic delegations supported the idea presented in paragraph 206 of the report, of developing further interagency co-operation. They also welcomed the recommendation for a model management training programme and agreed with the three areas of basic knowledge required for management. The system-wide approach and the requirement for knowledge of programme and project evaluation were particularly welcome and were of significance in the light of the Committee's discussion on item 101.

19. The Nordic delegations also supported the proposal in paragraph 216 of the report for closer study of the possibility of establishing a common fund for training, and would like to emphasize the need for linking training with career development planning. Both internal and external training should be so linked. She drew attention to the use of competitive methods at the P-1 and P-2 levels, as envisaged in General Assembly resolution 35/210, and to the development of the structure of Professional posts in recent years, when the number of P-1 and P-2 posts had decreased by 20 per cent.

20. Performance appraisal was a significant element in personnel management, particularly in career development planning. Existing practices in that regard had not given good results. In planning the performance appraisal system, it was essential to keep in mind its applicability to the entire personnel management system. The performance appraisal form should take account of protection of individual privacy and of the need to guard against possible misuse of information.

21. Referring to part I, section 7, of the ICSC performance appraisal form (A/36/30, annex X), she asked what was the total figure against which the quartiles of those meeting objectives were supposed to be judged. With regard to part III of the form, she observed that there did not appear at present to be any career development system on which the individual career planning in question would be based.

22. The Nordic delegations considered it important to improve the current performance appraisal system, and they suggested that a pilot study on the proposed system should be made before it was put into effect. Such a study could take place in, say, two organizations side by side with the implementation of the old performance appraisal system, so that comparisons could also be made between the two systems.

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(Ms. Mustonen, Finland)

23. A sound career development system appeared essential. Career questions could not be separated from personnel planning as a whole. Career planning was a complex area having many interrelated aspects and a significant bearing on other areas of personnel planning, such as organizational planning, recruitment, job classification, performance appraisal, training and mobility, and on staff morale. It was central to all personnel planning procedures. Career planning by ICSC must be carried out in close co-operation with the organizations and with the staff representatives. The Nordic delegations understood the difficulties ICSC had had, under pressure of time, in providing substantive recommendations as called for in General Assembly resolution 35/210 in time for the thirty-sixth session. They considered that ICSC had a significant role to play in career development, as in other areas of personnel policy for the development of a unified international civil service. They would particularly emphasize the Commission's role in introducing new theoretical knowledge into the planning procedures of the entire United Nations system, its co-ordinating work among the organizations and its links to the staff representatives.

24. Mr. ZINIEL (Ghana) said that his delegation, which was committed to the efforts of the International Civil Service Commission to consolidate and refine a single unified international civil service, deplored any deviation by member organizations from the guidelines in the Commission's statute. It had therefore noted with great concern ILO's decision to grant a 3 per cent salary increase to its General Service staff. While his delegation agreed that there should be equal pay for equal work and shared the legitimate concern that the ILO decision raised problems of equity among the other members of the common system, it hoped that other organizations of the system would refrain from taking any unilateral action that would further damage the Commission's credibility and the entire concept of a single unified international civil service. It therefore urged Member States to renew their efforts for the development of a single unified system through the application of common personnel standards. ILO should be urged to bring its position into line with that of the other members of the system.

25. His delegation wished to reaffirm that international civil servants must have the highest standards of efficiency, competence and integrity. Since those qualities were not the preserve of any particular geographical entity, that was not incompatible with the principle of equitable geographical representation. The introduction of the Noblemaire principle had been the logical consequence of the collective determination to attract the best-qualified men and women to the United Nations system. His delegation welcomed the Commission's continued review of the levels of remuneration of the United States Federal Civil Service, as the comparator, and of the United Nations common system, in accordance with the General Assembly's directives, and it supported the Commission's decision (A/36/30, para. 44) to use grades D-1 and D-2 as the basis for the current calculation of the margin until the General Assembly decided otherwise.

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(Mr. Ziniel, Ghana)

26. Paragraphs 71 to 74 of the Commission's report showed that there had been divergent and discordant views on the question whether the United States civil service should continue to be used as the comparator for determining salaries in the Professional and higher categories of the United Nations common staff system. His delegation therefore understood the Commission's inability to take a final decision, and agreed that the Commission's secretariat should conduct a further study on the question. Without prejudice to the proposed study, however, his delegation had some doubts about the wisdom of investing the Commission's time and resources in a study of what appeared to be a peripheral problem. Were Member States entirely convinced that the United States Federal Civil Service should be replaced by another service as the comparator? His delegation noted from paragraph 78 of the report that there was at present no evidence in favour of such a replacement. However, it hoped that the Committee would recommend the General Assembly to do more than merely take note of the preliminary findings.

27. On the question of salary increases, it was quite revealing to note that, while the Secretary-General had proposed a zero growth budget, the staff of the United Nations system were demanding a 10 per cent increase as an interim measure. That demand came at a time when, as the Secretary-General had rightly pointed out, the Organization had limited resources to meet its crying and growing needs, and when many children in Asia, Africa and Latin America had not enough to eat. The United Nations system was increasingly criticized not only for its size but also for the high salaries paid to its staff. His delegation therefore strongly supported the decision of ICSC not to yield to FICSA's request for a 10 per cent salary increase for Professional staff. In considering that question in the future, the Commission should take into account not only the problems referred to in paragraph 84 of its report but also the disquieting world economic crisis. However, his delegation supported the Commission's recommendations in paragraph 161 on staff assigned to what were described as difficult field stations.

28. With regard to the studies which the General Assembly, in its resolution 35/210, had requested ICSC and JIU to carry out, he recalled that his delegation had expressed some reservations at the preceding session and had reminded the Committee that ICSC was responsible, under article 14 of its statute, for making recommendations to the organizations on, inter alia, career development and types of appointment. He was pleased to note that the report submitted by JIU was a useful contribution, but it should be studied further by ICSC, since the Commission had a statutory obligation to consult the staff while JIU did not. The roles of JIU and ICSC in the personnel field should be complementary and not mutually exclusive.

29. Mr. STUART (United Kingdom), speaking on behalf of the 10 States members of the European Economic Community, noted that six of the seven Geneva-based organizations had initially accepted the recommendation of ICSC on the question of General Service salary scales, which had been based on the 1980 survey of best prevailing conditions in Geneva. The decision of ILO to grant a 3 per cent

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(Mr. Stuart, United Kingdom)

increase to General Service staff raised the fundamental question whether ICSC was to continue to be the chosen arbiter of General Service pay rates in Geneva. The United Nations and other Geneva-based organizations, including ILO, had agreed in 1977 to ask the Commission to act for them in determining the facts relating to General Service pay rates in Geneva and to make recommendations. It was therefore inconsistent for ILO to act contrary to the determination and advice of ICSC, and equally inconsistent for the executive heads of the other organizations, including the United Nations, to follow ILO instead of standing by the advice of ICSC.

30. The Secretary-General had shown that he was aware of the crucial importance of the issue by referring it to the General Assembly before implementing his provisional decision to grant the 3 per cent increase. The 10 members of EEC considered that, in so doing, he had acted wisely. They had concluded, however, that the 3 per cent increase should not be granted. Their overriding concern was to confirm the role of ICSC as the chosen instrument of Member States for the development of a single, unified international civil service. The membership of those other organizations which did not automatically follow the decisions of the United Nations was largely similar to the membership of the United Nations. Member States therefore had the power and the prerogative to take the same decision also in the other organizations and thus to demonstrate anew their confidence in the central and paramount role of ICSC in that field.

31. Mr. PIRSON (Belgium) said that the divergent views of the International Civil Service Commission and the Joint Inspection Unit with regard to their respective responsibilities and areas of competence should not be allowed to delay the work of the General Assembly on such vital matters as personnel policy. He called upon those two subsidiary bodies of the Assembly to ensure that the reports requested in resolution 35/210 were submitted to the Assembly in time for its thirty-seventh session. He also called upon all concerned to participate actively in the necessary consultations so that the Assembly could take action at that session.

32. ICSC was faced with a difficult task. Amid constant lobbying by various interest groups, the Commission had limited its efforts over the years to correcting the most glaring anomalies affecting conditions of service in the United Nations system. It had helped to identify the short-comings of the existing system and lay the groundwork for radical reform. The Commission should, without further delay, indicate to the General Assembly the approaches to reform which it considered appropriate, and the Assembly should then embody those approaches in guidelines for the Commission. The report on personnel policy options prepared by JIU at the request of the Assembly would be useful to the Commission in that connexion.

33. At the preceding session, his delegation had stated that the reform of conditions of service, and in particular of salaries and benefits in the United Nations system, should have three main objectives: observance of the Noblemaire principle; equal remuneration and conditions of service for all

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(Mr. Pirson, Belgium)

staff members, irrespective of their nationality and duty station; and moderation in the level of total compensation. The Commission should focus on those three objectives and not dissipate its energies in the study of secondary issues.

34. The Noblemaire principle applied to the entire range of conditions of service, or what had come to be called total compensation, including pension entitlements. The Commission had made remarkable progress in comparing total compensation of the international civil service with that of the comparator, the United States Federal Civil Service. The methods it used to calculate the margin between the total compensation of United Nations staff and that of United States federal civil servants were, in the view of his delegation, sound and sufficiently sophisticated. He saw no need to continue the work referred to in paragraph 65 (d) of the Commission's report. His delegation supported the preliminary conclusion of the Commission that there was at present no evidence to suggest that the United States Federal Civil Service should be replaced as the comparator under the Noblemaire principle. It also believed that, in view of the current monetary situation, the work under way on a comparison between the total compensation of the United States civil service and that of the Federal Republic of Germany should be terminated as constituting a waste of time and money. Even before the Commission had begun that study and before the dollar had begun to appreciate in relation to European currencies, his delegation had expressed the view that the United States Federal Civil Service continued to be by far the most favourable comparator for the staff. He suggested that all those who held an opposing view, including the secretariats of the specialized agencies and the staff associations, should acquaint themselves with the facts of the matter. If work on such a comparison was continued, it might lead the General Assembly to adopt a new basis of comparison - for example, the average total compensation of two comparator civil services - less favourable to the staff. He was sure that that was not the aim of FICSA.

35. The margin between the compensation of staff in the United Nations system and in the United States civil service was widening, and his delegation therefore endorsed the conclusions of ICSC that a salary increase was not called for at the present time. In that connexion, he pointed out that, through the workings of the post adjustment system, salaries automatically kept pace with the cost of living.

36. He urged the Commission to study the impact of the so-called Washington formula on the level of pensionable remuneration. His delegation had expressed serious reservations with regard to the Washington formula at the preceding session, and unfortunately events had proved its misgivings to be well-founded. The application of the Washington formula had proved to be extremely expensive for the organizations and should be reconsidered. Pensionable remuneration was now 128.2 per cent of gross salary. Over the past decade, in order to take account of inflation, particularly outside the United States, and of the increased cost of living, primarily in Europe, pensionable remuneration had been increased

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(Mr. Pirson, Belgium)

on the basis of the weighted average of post adjustments (WAPA). The Washington formula had added inflation in the United States to European inflation. As a result of the appreciation of the United States dollar, WAPA had declined by 4.9 per cent in 1981. Under the previous system, that would have resulted in a decrease in pensionable remuneration, but under the Washington formula pensionable remuneration was to be calculated on a basis of WAPA or the movement of the United States consumer price index, whichever was more favourable. Thus, instead of decreasing by 4.9 per cent, pensionable remuneration had increased by 8.7 per cent, at a cost to Member States of nearly \$14 million. That did not seem reasonable to him, and he urged the Commission to undertake without delay a comparison of the pension entitlements of United Nations staff and those of United States civil servants. In that connexion, he recalled that the Commission had only recently, on its own initiative, suggested freezing temporarily the level of pensionable remuneration because WAPA had the effect of raising it to an excessively high level.

37. In eight years, from July 1973 to October 1981, pensionable remuneration of staff members at the P-5 level and above had increased by at least 139 per cent, and in some cases by as much as 145 per cent, while the cost of living in the United States had risen during the same period by 75 per cent. Such increases were difficult to justify in the light of conditions in the comparator civil service and the actuarial difficulties of the Pension Fund. There was also the danger of discrimination with regard to pension benefits between staff members who had retired during the last decade and those retiring in the 1980s. ICSC and the Joint Staff Pension Board could not close their eyes to that situation, which called for an urgent review. He paid tribute to the working group of the Advisory Committee on Post Adjustment Questions for its contribution to the fundamental and comprehensive review of the purposes and operations of the post adjustment system which the Commission was carrying out. His delegation had for years been expressing doubts about the current system, which had accelerated the rise in pensionable remuneration and in the financial burden on Member States. That matter should continue to be studied by the Commission.

38. The total remuneration of United Nations staff should not be substantially higher than that of employees of the comparator civil service. The economic situation was serious in the developed countries and disastrous in many developing countries. Developed countries were taking steps to reduce budgets, hold down government salaries, and place ceilings on pensions. Earnings were declining in real terms. In the United Nations system, as a result of the incorporation into gross salary of 30 points of post adjustment, many benefits had been substantially increased, the highest pensions had risen needlessly, and the basis on which States contributed to the Pension Fund had been increased further. Over the past 34 years, the compensation of the international civil service had improved markedly in relation to that of the comparator civil service. The Commission should ensure that the margin between the various elements of total compensation in the international civil service and in the comparator civil service remained reasonable, and he called upon the Commission to submit recommendations to the General Assembly to that end.

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39. With regard to General Service salary scale in Geneva, measures must be taken to prevent a recurrence of the events deplored by the Commission. It was the duty of the executive heads of agencies to draw the attention of intergovernmental organs to any proposal which was at variance with recommendations made by ICSC in exercise of its mandate. His delegation's views on that subject were as stated by the representative of the United Kingdom on behalf of the States members of EEC.

40. His delegation shared the concern of executive heads and staff representative with regard to the integrity of the international civil service and the security and independence of staff members. The privileges and immunities to which they were entitled under the various conventions referred to in resolution 35/212 must be respected.

41. Mr. FRANSSEN (Netherlands) said his delegation considered it a positive development that the Fifth Committee was beginning to pay more attention to internal relations within United Nations system. The aims set by the United Nations had to be pursued and realized by staff of all ranks within the organization, working in close co-operation. All concerned needed a high degree of idealism and motivation and must therefore be as free as possible from personal concerns, whether at Headquarters or in the field. It was very important to provide material and other working conditions which all employees of the Organization perceived as just and equitable.

42. The question what was just and equitable must be decided in close co-operation with all concerned and not unilaterally - which in practice meant intensive collaboration between the competent bodies and representatives of the staff. Staff representatives must be given an opportunity to put forward their opinions before policy decisions were taken; in formulating their opinions, however, they must be expected to pay due regard to the financial realities limiting the Organization's capacity to satisfy their demands. The United Nations Administration should apply the principle of just distribution and examine whether staff of all ranks got their fair share. If, as had been contended, the highest-paid officials had also been given the highest share in the recent adjustments of salaries and pensionable remuneration, that was not in keeping with his delegation's principles.

43. Reorganizing conditions of employment was a time-consuming process which should probably be approached over a number of years; however, if the Fifth Committee became bogged down in the conceptual phase, it would be detrimental to staff motivation. The proposal made by Mr. Bertrand in introducing document A/36/432, that a list of options should be submitted to Member States so as to obtain detailed replies on the various suggestions made by JIU was rather unusual but might be helpful in speeding up the process. However, such a list of options should be submitted to Governments only after ICSC and the organizations representing the staff had had ample time to make their own input.

44. The practice of additional payments by Governments to staff members of their nationality was unnecessary and dangerous, because it could too easily impair

(Mr. Franssen, Netherlands)

the independence of the international civil servant. Fixed-term contracts implied the same dangers, and made career planning very difficult.

45. Lastly, his delegation was opposed to a certain tendency to discuss personnel matters - namely, the subject of equitable geographical distribution - in other subsidiary organs of the General Assembly, such as the Committee on Information. The principle of equitable geographical distribution should be considered in relation to the United Nations as a whole and not to individual departments.

AGENDA ITEM 105: PATTERN OF CONFERENCES (continued)

(a) REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON CONFERENCES (continued) (A/36/32)

(b) REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (continued) (A/36/167 and Add.1 and 2)

46. Mr. BRACHO (Venezuela) said that the problem of documentation in the United Nations was threefold: there were too many documents, they were issued too late and - largely because of that - they were of insufficient quality. The problem was well illustrated in the reports of the Secretary-General and Joint Inspection Unit. Delegations often received documents so late that they could not discuss an item properly, and in many cases the debate had to be postponed until the documents were finally available. All too often, the welter of documentation produced so late was simply discarded by permanent missions - a waste of resources which could please neither the Secretariat, whose efforts had thus been in vain, nor representatives, whose productivity was impaired by the futile attempt to keep up with the unending spate of paper. As noted by JIU in paragraph 36 of its report (A/36/167), a common complaint was that documents were unclear, verbose and poor in style. The lack of "feed-back" from representatives who did not read the documents and thus remained in ignorance of the pattern of output of the Secretariat unit concerned compounded the problem and created a vicious circle. The budgetary implications were enormous, bearing in mind that 15 to 20 per cent of the regular budget was spent on the production of documents.

47. A great deal of documentation seemed to be closely associated with the proliferation of meetings; in paragraph 60 of its report, JIU presented information suggesting that a reduction in the number of meetings would have a marked influence on the volume of documentation produced. The fault did not, however, lie with governmental bodies alone; some segments of the Secretariat tended to create work by trying to "sell" delegations ideas about studies to be carried out. The Secretariat was primarily responsible for the late issue of documents, as indicated by the Committee on Conferences in its report (A/36/32), but primary responsibility for the documentation problem necessarily rested with representatives themselves or with Governments, which all too often engaged in rhetoric "for the record" or called for additional studies or meetings in order to avoid taking a political or substantive decision.

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(Mr. Bracho, Venezuela)

48. Basic attitudes must necessarily be the subject of discussion in a broader context; however, the Fifth Committee could take practical steps to encourage changes in those attitudes and could certainly come to grips with the administrative aspects of the documentation problem. The General Assembly had already given itself a firm mandate to deal with the subject by endorsing Economic and Social Council resolution 1981/83. Sweeping measures were required, and the emphasis should be on rules to be complied with by Governments. The Committee on Conferences pointed out in paragraph 40 of its report that most of the present rules were directed at the Secretariat, which was only responsible for a small part of the total documentation issued by the Organization. As there might not be time at the current session to deal exhaustively with so serious and complex a problem, the Fifth Committee should perhaps consider calling for a further study by an ad hoc group of experts, acting in their personal capacity and appointed by the Secretary-General, which would be given the necessary freedom and resources to take an honest and forthright approach to the extremely serious problem of documentation.

49. Mr. BUNC (Yugoslavia) said that his delegation would support the further strengthening of the role of the Committee on Conferences in its efforts to achieve economical and effective use of conference facilities and related budgetary resources.

50. The growing tendency of many bodies to seek changes in the calendar of conferences for reasons of convenience rather than necessity was unacceptable. It raised the problem of adjusting an already full calendar of conferences and disrupted planning. Such requests were usually made by the Secretariat because documentation had not been prepared in time. In such cases, the Secretariat should inform the Committee on Conferences as far in advance as possible and present substantive reasons for the delay. The timely provision of documents was important for the normal functioning of the Organization. Existing rules and regulations should be enforced to ensure quality, efficiency and economy in the preparation of documents. Reports on the status of documentation should be circulated for all subsidiary bodies with explanations in case of delay. The possession of drafting skills should be an important factor in the recruitment and promotion of Secretariat staff, and improvement of skills should be viewed as a continuous management task. The discontinuation of redundant or marginally useful documents would produce obvious benefits.

51. Conference facilities and resources should be utilized in accordance with the relevant General Assembly resolutions, and developed countries and intergovernmental organs should provide appropriate support and assistance to developing countries in promoting their economic co-operation. However, such measures should have no financial implications for the regular budget.

52. The criterion of universality could not apply to all meetings. Informal and regional groups played a crucial and constructive role in preparing resolutions and decisions. The preparation of common positions by groups of States frequently saved time and effort at subsequent conferences and meetings. His

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(Mr. Bunc, Yugoslavia)

delegation opposed the establishment of any new machinery to service special conferences. Existing staff should be strengthened during such conferences or, if the meetings were held away from Headquarters, local staff should be used. Preparatory committees for special conferences should only be established when existing intergovernmental bodies were inadequate.

AGENDA ITEM 100: PROPOSED PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 1982-1983 (continued)  
(A/36/6, A/36/7, A/36/38 (chaps. V and VII D))

First reading (continued)

Section 29. Conference and library services (continued)

53. Mrs. DORSET (Trinidad and Tobago) said that the Under-Secretary-General for Conference Services and his staff were in an invidious position. The question of documentation and conference servicing should be viewed from a new perspective. Conferences took place at the request of Member States, and it was not fair to expect the Secretariat to solve the resulting problems. Attempts should be made to streamline conferences and requests for documents, in order to ease a burden on a system which Member States had created. It was true that many documents were issued late, but a huge number were requested, to the point where small delegations were unable to cope with the flood of documentation on a given agenda item. When requests for documents were made, the Secretariat should draw attention to existing documentation so that it would be clear whether the ground had already been covered. It was frustrating for the Secretariat to have to reproduce material which already existed. If Member States considered their requests for documentation more carefully, the problem would be mitigated. Member States bore the responsibility for the current difficulties.

54. It would be helpful if informal access to the figures contained in the consolidated statement were possible before the statement was issued, since it appeared late in the session and was hard to digest at that time. That would enable members of the Committee to take more informed decisions.

55. Mr. EL SAFTY (Egypt) said that the question of documentation was complex. Part of the problem lay in the fact that some delegations did not wish to resolve outstanding issues, such as Namibia and the law of the sea. The developing countries, of course, wanted to resolve those problems and eliminate the attendant documentation; yet they were blamed for the volume of documentation produced at the United Nations.

56. There was indeed waste at the United Nations, as exemplified in the case of the Department of Conference Services by the heap of documents present in the conference room. His delegation, along with many others, was certainly not impressed by the mass of documents which had been assembled. The Department must have excess funds if it could afford to pay overtime for staff members to assemble an exhibition which had no meaning and utterly failed to impress. His delegation wished to know exactly how much the exhibition of documentation had cost.

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57. Mr. MARTORELL (Peru) said that his delegation would also like to know how much the exhibition had cost.

58. Mr. YOUNIS (Iraq) said that the report of the Secretary-General on Arabic language services, which should have been issued in October, was still not available. The delay was unjustified, since the document related to the essential question of the career development of language staff. It was of particular relevance to section 29, and until it had been issued his delegation could not endorse the appropriations requested under that section.

59. The CHAIRMAN said that he would inquire when the document would be available.

Section 29A. Department of Conference Services, Headquarters

Section 29B. Conference Services, Geneva

60. Mr. EL SAFTY (Egypt) said that his delegation could not take any decision on subsections A and B until, as the representative of Iraq had stated, all the relevant information was before the Committee.

Section 29C. Conference Services, Vienna

61. Mr. PAPENDORP (United States of America) said that his delegation wished to know whether any changes would be made in conference servicing arrangements at the Vienna International Centre if and when UNIDO became a specialized agency.

62. Mr. LEWANDOWSKI (Under-Secretary-General for Conference Services) said that there was as yet little experience of conference servicing at the Vienna International Centre. However, it seemed foolish to develop three separate conference services in the same building. Proposals would be made in due course on how conference servicing at Vienna should be organized. Any change in the status of UNIDO should be immaterial, as conference services should be used equally by all three components at the Centre. Whether conference servicing should be the responsibility of a particular component or an independent function could be determined later, when all the relevant data was available.

63. The CHAIRMAN said that the Committee would conclude its consideration of section 29 when the documentation referred to by the representatives of Iraq and Egypt was available.

Section 32. Construction, alteration, improvement and major maintenance of premises (continued)

64. Mr. BEGIN (Director, Budget Division), replying to a question raised at the 43rd meeting, said that the consulting engineers' fees referred to in paragraph 32.12 of the proposed programme budget represented an average lump sum fee, as normally paid to consulting engineers for such projects. The consulting engineers were not necessarily individual consultants, but rather offices which might include several individuals over a period of time.

The meeting rose at 6.05 p.m.