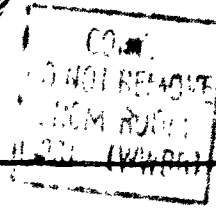


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THIRTY-SEVENTH SESSION

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FIFTH COMMITTEE

41st meeting

held on

Monday, 22 November 1982

at 10.30 a.m.

New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 41st MEETING

Chairman: Mr. ABRASZEWSKI (Poland)

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

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1 December 1982

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The meeting was called to order at 10.45 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 111: PERSONNEL QUESTIONS (continued) (A/36/407 and Add.1, A/36/432 and Add.1 and 2; A/37/30, annex I, A/37/143, A/37/378 and Add.1 and Add.1/Corr.1, A/37/469 and Add.1, A/37/528 and Add.1; A/C.5/37/5, A/C.5/37/6 and Corr.1, A/C.5/37/24 and 26, A/C.5/37/34 and Corr.1 and A/C.5/37/45)

1. Mr. KRISTIANSEN (Denmark), speaking on behalf of the 10 member States of the European Community, said that they fully shared the concern expressed by the Secretary-General on the subject of respect for the privileges and immunities of officials of the United Nations, the specialized agencies and related organizations, which was the subject of two reports before the Committee, one from the Secretary-General (A/C.5/37/34) the other from the staff unions and associations of the United Nations Secretariat (A/C.5/37/24). Article 105 of the Charter stated that such officials should enjoy such privileges and immunities as were necessary for the independent exercise of their functions in connection with the Organization, and there were similar provisions in relation to the specialized agencies and IAEA. It was the firm belief of the Ten that those privileges and immunities were essential for the efficiency of the work of the organizations of the system and for the protection of the basic civil rights of international officials. The Secretary-General and the executive heads of the various agencies had a duty to ensure that those privileges and immunities were honoured and to act on behalf of individual officials when they were not. It was equally the duty of the General Assembly to respond appropriately where the provisions of the Charter and of the various conventions and instruments had not been respected, and where no appropriate explanation had been given. They recognized, however, that the staff had an obligation to observe the laws of the host countries.

2. It was encouraging to note from the report of the Secretary-General (A/C.5/37/34) that in a number of cases of arrest and detention of United Nations officials, the executive head concerned had been able to secure substantial compliance with the relevant provisions of General Assembly resolution 36/232. It was, however, discouraging to note that the number of such cases was increasing and that many of the earlier ones remained unresolved. Many of the cases were undoubtedly complex. When an official was arrested or detained the executive head of the organization concerned had a duty to state the position of his organization on the capacity in which particular acts had been performed. For their part, all Member States had a duty to respect the basic right of international organizations to have access to detained staff members in order to verify the facts and to assist the staff members in securing legal representation. Those rights stemmed from the Charter, human rights instruments and from the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice in April 1949.

3. In his report, the Secretary-General outlined certain measures which had been adopted on recommendation of the Task Force on the Safety and Security of the International Civil Service (A/C.5/37/34, para. 42). The Ten welcomed the establishment of that Task Force and supported the measures outlined in the report as well as the recommendation that the intervention of the Secretary-General or his representative should be intensified in cases in which Governments had not

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(Mr. Kristiansen, Denmark)

fulfilled their obligations (para. 43). Concerning the format, they would welcome a greater degree of balance and detail in future reports of that kind.

4. The member States of the European Community appealed to all Member States to recognize and fully respect the independent status and the privileges and immunities of international civil servants and to enable the Secretary-General or the executive heads of the organization concerned to visit staff members who had been arrested or detained, to be informed of any charges and to secure the necessary legal assistance in each case.

5. Mr. MEESMAN (Netherlands) said that, in relation to agenda item 111 (a) concerning the composition of the Secretariat, it should be noted that, according to the information contained in paragraph 8 of the report of the Secretary-General (A/37/143), since the beginning of the year the Netherlands belonged to those countries which were within the desirable ranges of representation in posts subject to geographical distribution; however it was at the lowest level of the desirable range implying that there was room for improvement. The situation was precarious because of the high percentage of Netherlands citizens on fixed-term contracts: as of 30 June 1981 that percentage had been 33.3 per cent and by 30 June 1982 it had risen to 42.4 per cent. Moreover, with only two of its nationals in the category D-1 or above, the Netherlands was under-represented in the higher levels of a system to which it attached such importance and to which it contributed so much. He hoped that more attention would be given to the level of Netherlands representation.

6. With regard to agenda item 111 (b) concerning respect for the privileges and immunities of United Nations officials, which was dealt with in the relevant report of the Secretary-General (A/C.5/37/34), a fundamental divergence in opinion seemed to exist between, on the one hand, those delegates who voiced concern at the consequences for the personal and professional behaviour of staff members if there were to be a truly independent international civil service and, on the other, those delegates who voiced concern at the consequences for the efficiency of the United Nations if it were not served by a truly independent international civil service. His delegation shared the opinion that it was not desirable to have staff members who felt isolated from the realities of the world or who demonstrated a certain arrogance. The remedy to that phenomenon must be a careful selection procedure, focused as much on motivation and mental fitness as on the intellectual capabilities required to perform the duties. It would be detrimental to the efficiency of the United Nations if the question of the attitude of the staff were to be addressed by means which eventually led to a serious encroachment upon the independence of the officials.

7. The question of respect for the immunities and privileges of officials fell, as a necessary prerequisite, within the scope of the question of the independence of international civil servants. It was also closely related to respect for human rights. It was also an issue of personnel management and thus fell within the purview of the Fifth Committee.

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(Mr. Meesman, Netherlands)

8. The Secretary-General had on various occasions indicated his willingness to do his utmost to uphold the principles upon which resolution 36/232 rested; one could have wished that commitment to be better reflected in his report. Since the resolution called for an annual report on the subject, the Secretariat could be expected to improve the format and substance of future reports.

9. His delegation had learned with concern that since the beginning of the thirty-sixth session of the General Assembly the number of staff members detained or imprisoned had increased, instead of diminishing, while most of the action taken so far had yielded no tangible results. The personal involvement of the Secretary-General in such matters could be extremely useful. He therefore valued the fact that the Secretary-General had expressed to the Fifth Committee his great concern at what appeared to be a constantly deteriorating situation. The appointment of a Task Force to study the safety and independence of the international civil service was a concrete example of that concern. He supposed that the Task Force had taken as its starting point the criteria laid down in the Charter, the Convention on the Privileges and Immunities of the United Nations, the Convention on the Privileges and Immunities of the Specialized Agencies and the agreements between the various host Governments and the United Nations. The rights acknowledged in those agreements did not imply the granting of diplomatic immunity to staff members, nor the endorsement of undesirable action not falling within the range of official tasks. For that reason, resolution 36/232 also drew attention to staff members' obligations.

10. His delegation approved the steps taken by the Secretary-General to enhance the security of international civil servants (A/C.5/37/34, paras. 42 and 43). In cases where their privileges and immunities were violated, staff members' contractual rights should be preserved until their cases were settled to the satisfaction of the Organization. In the current unresolved cases, the Organization should restore contractual status to the staff members concerned; provide financial and other assistance to their families; and press claims for damages against Governments in cases that apparently involved governmental responsibility.

11. The best way of ensuring that Governments complied with obligations was to inquire periodically, at the highest level and at other levels, about the status of pending cases, and to report to the Staff Committee accordingly. The annual report of the Secretary-General was another important instrument, which should focus on the question whether or not Governments had complied with requests from the Organization, giving the names of those Governments that had not done so. It followed that the Secretary-General should be responsible for writing the report, although ACC approval was also required under General Assembly resolution 36/232 and ACC decision 1982/7.

12. Reports which reproduced, in extenso, reports received by the Secretariat without additional analysis or commentary did not appear to enhance the impact of the Secretary-General's report. He also felt that future reports could suggest alternative or supplementary measures.

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(Mr. Meesman, Netherlands)

13. Earlier in the debate on the current item, two delegations had spoken of the Netherlands and the troops it contributed to UNIFIL as if they were trying to speak on his delegation's behalf. His delegation could speak for itself, and would continue to do so.

14. Mr. KEMAL (Pakistan), referring to the composition of the Secretariat as dealt with in the report of the Secretary-General (A/37/143), said it was encouraging that, over the 12 months leading up to June 1982, 43.2 per cent of appointments had involved nationals of under-represented or unrepresented countries, 41 per cent nationals of States within their desirable ranges, and only 14.9 per cent nationals of overrepresented countries. Such figures had never been attained in previous years. There needed to be greater equity in geographical representation, and the Secretary-General must be supported in his efforts so that the current achievement could be sustained in future years, established targets could be reached and all Member States could come within their desirable ranges.

15. His delegation had always regarded the concept of desirable ranges as a flexible standard set by the General Assembly. At previous sessions it had expressed reservations as to the means used to calculate such ranges, believing that too much emphasis was placed on the contribution factor, and too little on the population factor. At its thirty-fifth session the General Assembly had begun a reform of the system to redress existing imbalances; the population factor must be taken into account in that context, also.

16. In its report contained in document A/37/378, the Joint Inspection Unit criticized the Secretary-General for his failure fully to apply the principle of equitable geographical distribution in the Secretariat, but the related comments of the Secretary-General (A/37/378/Add.1) provided satisfactory explanations. It was important for the major political and social groups to be represented in the Secretariat, but at the same time the highest degree of efficiency, competence and integrity must be ensured. He had some reservations concerning Recommendation 1 by JIU, since he did not believe that it was absolutely essential to apply the principle to each entity within the Organization. Such an approach presented both practical and theoretical problems, as the Secretary-General indicated in his comments. The case of DPI, referred to in paragraph 14 of document A/37/378, was an exception. That Department was of considerable political importance, being concerned with information on all United Nations activities, and thus it really was important to apply the principle of equitable geographical distribution there.

17. JIU recommended (Recommendation 2) a target of 60 per cent of vacancies to be filled by nationals of unrepresented or under-represented countries, but he believed that the 40 per cent figure established by the General Assembly was correct. He considered, moreover, that Recommendations 3 and 4 belonged within the province of ICSC.

18. In connection with Recommendation 5, he said that a proper balance must be struck between appointments of internal and external candidates in order to give the Organization the necessary dynamism while continuing to provide enhanced career prospects for the staff. He reiterated his support for competitive means of

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(Mr. Kemal, Pakistan)

selection, both of staff from the General Service category and when recruiting external candidates for posts in the Professional category. For the moment, the number of P-1 and P-2 posts reserved for the examinations should be increased to 35 or 40 per cent at the most.

19. Concerning the status of female staff members, his delegation was pleased to note that progress had been made, particularly at Headquarters; that was a natural development, since conditions at some field stations were not easy for women. He hoped that with the co-operation of departmental heads, the Office of Personnel Services and Member States, a growing number of female staff would be recruited so as to redress the current imbalance.

AGENDA ITEM 103: PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 1982-1983 (continued)

Administrative and financial implications of draft resolution A/C.4/37/L.6/Rev.1 and of draft consensus A/C.4/37/L.14 concerning agenda item 18 (Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples) (Question of Western Sahara) (A/C.5/37/46)

20. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) noted that the draft resolution and the draft consensus requested the Secretary-General to take certain measures. In paragraph 8 of document A/C.5/37/46, on the administrative and financial implications of the drafts, the Secretary-General stated that he was not in a position to make accurate estimates of the expenditures arising from the draft proposals and that he would seek the prior concurrence of the Advisory Committee to incur such expenditures as might be necessary under the provisions of resolution 36/241 on unforeseen and extraordinary expenses for the biennium 1982-1983. Acceptance of the Fourth Committee's proposals would not, therefore, necessitate any immediate appropriation.

21. Mr. LAHLOU (Morocco) reaffirmed the position of his delegation, which would spare no effort in seeking the approval of the draft consensus in document A/C.4/37/L.14 but which was opposed to draft resolution A/C.4/37/L.6/Rev.1.

22. The CHAIRMAN suggested that, on the basis of the Advisory Committee's recommendation, the Fifth Committee should inform the General Assembly that, should it adopt draft resolution A/C.4/37/L.6/Rev.1 and draft consensus A/C.4/37/L.14, it would have to authorize the Secretary-General to incur such expenditures as might be necessary with the prior concurrence of the Advisory Committee, in accordance with the provisions of Assembly resolution 36/241 on unforeseen and extraordinary expenses for the biennium 1982-1983.

23. It was so decided.

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Administrative and financial implications of the draft proposals contained in documents A/37/L.32 and A/37/L.33 concerning agenda item 18 (Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples) (A/C.5/37/47)

24. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions), introducing orally the report of the Advisory Committee, said that, in his statement of the administrative and financial implications of the draft proposals contained in documents A/37/L.32 and A/37/L.33 (A/C.5/37/47), the Secretary-General indicated that financial implications arising from draft resolution A/37/L.32 would entail expenditures estimated at \$276,600 which would relate to section 3A.2 of the budget. The Secretary-General also brought to the attention of the General Assembly that an amount of \$538,300 under section 3A.2 had been appropriated for the activities of the Special Committee during the present biennium. It was expected that the estimated expenditures to be incurred under section 3A.2 in connection with the implementation of draft resolution A/37/L.32 could be met from within those resources. The Fifth Committee might therefore wish to inform the General Assembly that, should the draft proposals contained in documents A/37/L.32 and A/37/L.33 be adopted, no additional appropriations would be required.

25. The CHAIRMAN suggested that, on the basis of the Advisory Committee's recommendations, the Committee should inform the General Assembly that, should it adopt the draft proposals contained in documents A/37/L.32 and A/37/L.33, the related expenditures would be met from within the resources appropriated under section 3A.2 of the programme budget for the biennium 1982-1983 and that, as a result, no additional appropriations would be necessary.

26. It was so decided.

AGENDA ITEM 104: PROGRAMME PLANNING (continued) (A/37/3 (Part II), chap. VI, sect. C, future A/37/6, A/37/7, A/37/38, A/37/154 and Corr.1 and 2, A/37/206 and Add.1 and Add.1/Corr.1, A/37/207, A/37/460; A/C.5/37/25, A/C.5/37/53; E/1982/INF.12, Decision 1982/173)

27. Ms. MUSTONEN (Finland), speaking on behalf of the five Nordic countries - Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden - observed that, for the first time, the Fifth Committee had an opportunity to consider the planning and management procedures of the United Nations as a whole. The draft regulations and the detailed rules governing programme planning, the programme aspects of the budget, the monitoring of implementation and methods of evaluation (A/37/206 and Add.1) were the culmination of efforts to develop the planning methodology of the United Nations. They would also make it possible to identify the organizational changes needed in the management structures of the United Nations. The delegations of the Nordic countries considered that the most important practical goals of the planning and programming process were: (a) to provide a framework for decisions which gave a clear picture of the various managerial alternatives which existed; (b) through medium-term planning, to facilitate the allocation of resources based on realistic programme planning; (c) to facilitate co-ordination within the United Nations system so as to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the Organization;

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(Ms. Mustonen, Finland)

and (d) to provide Member States with information on which to base their deliberations on future policies as part of the planning, programming, budgeting, monitoring and evaluation cycle.

28. With regard to the attainment of the first and last of those objectives, mention should be made of the approach to management and medium-term planning procedures found in the report of the Joint Inspection Unit entitled "Elaboration of regulations for planning, programming and evaluation cycle of the United Nations" (A/37/460). The delegations of the Nordic countries shared the view of JIU concerning the opportunities afforded by the planning-programming-evaluation system for reflection on the results achieved and the rational organization of work. Bearing in mind the importance of evaluation and of the introduction to the medium-term plan, the Nordic delegations endorsed the recommendations of JIU and CPC for the reform of the introduction. In addition, there was still a need to improve methodology and create better co-ordinated institutional machinery for carrying out the evaluation process, and to change the attitudes of Member States and the Secretariat towards that process.

29. The delegations of the Nordic countries did not agree, however, with the JIU proposal to include in the draft regulations a description of the evaluation before a description of the medium-term plan and the budget, and would prefer to retain the order of planning procedures proposed by the Secretary-General, i.e. programme planning, budgeting, monitoring and evaluation. They wished to emphasize the importance of the medium-term plan as an instrument and the framework for the adoption and formulation of concrete decisions.

30. It was also essential for the plan to be reviewed by the relevant United Nations bodies. The role of the Fifth Committee in that process should be geared towards improving methodology and management. In such a complex process as medium-term planning, many practical measures which were difficult to foresee were bound to arise. Therefore, the delegations of the Nordic countries hoped that the Secretary-General would provide to the General Assembly at its next session, through CPC, a report on the procedures for the review of the medium-term plan, taking into account the experience gained in reviewing the plan for the period 1984-1989.

31. Turning to the second goal, she emphasized that one of the most important functions of medium-term planning was to serve as a framework for the preparation of the biennial programme budget. The plan which the Committee was considering was based on two assumptions: first, that the process of redeployment of resources within the existing appropriations would continue in each biennium, and, second, that the real resources available to the Organization would increase moderately over the planning period. On the basis of those assumptions, four columns of alternative figures had been presented, which, in the view of the delegations of the Nordic countries, could not be considered as a framework for biennial budget planning.

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(Ms. Mustonen, Finland)

32. The delegations of the Nordic countries welcomed the approach adopted in the draft regulations (A/37/206) to the effect that the medium-term plan would include an indicative estimate of the necessary resources (regulation 3.2) and the programme budget would contain financial information corresponding to one of the three programming levels in the medium-term plan (regulation 4.1).

33. With regard to the third objective, the Secretariat would have to take special measures to implement the planning and programming procedures set forth in the draft regulations. It would be of interest to know how the activities of the Programme Planning and Budgeting Board and of the Central Monitoring Unit, established by the Secretary-General, would develop. Since the planning and organizational changes carried out in a number of units had not been sufficiently co-ordinated, it would be advisable to centralize the administrative management for that process.

34. Finally, it should be borne in mind that the medium-term planning system of the United Nations could never be considered complete, since it was an ongoing process and there must be a willingness to reformulate or even abandon methods in the light of new policies and experience. The delegations of the Nordic countries were willing to accept the proposals formulated by the Chairman of CPC and the Assistant Secretary-General for Programme Planning and Co-ordination, and to adopt a basic set of rules and regulations to be used in the preparation of the next programme budget.

35. Mr. TAKASU (Japan) said that the efforts of the Secretariat of the United Nations and of the intergovernmental bodies concerned to improve programme planning and to co-ordinate it with programme budgeting was culminating in a six-year medium-term plan, prepared on the basis of elaborate methodologies and regulations which codify the methods developed and refined by the General Assembly over many years.

36. Programme planning could be an extremely useful instrument for rationalizing activities and improving management efficiency. Nevertheless, to date the system had not made any significant progress towards that goal. In his opinion, the problem was not that existing methods were defective, but rather that there was a lack of interest and understanding on the part of those in a position to implement them. The system and the regulations, irrespective of their virtues, could not affect programme delivery unless the Secretary-General assumed strong leadership in implementing the regulations and all United Nations programme managers understood and put into practice each stage of the programme planning cycle, from the medium-term plan to programme delivery. There was no need to engage in a theoretical debate on methodology, since the relevant question was how best to implement existing methods and disseminate them throughout the system.

37. The proposed medium-term plan for 1984-1989 was the most comprehensive ever prepared by the Secretariat. Note should be taken of the considerable improvements which had been made in comparison with earlier plans in terms of content and programme description. The proposed plan, revised by CPC and the Economic and Social Council, was the end result of an attempt to incorporate the Secretariat's

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(Mr. Takasu, Japan)

mandates and to meet the most important priorities of the international community. The inclusion of a separate chapter on energy was cause for particular satisfaction, since it reflected the concerns expressed in the International Development Strategy.

38. Yet there were some shortcomings. For example, a number of intergovernmental bodies had not reviewed relevant chapters or made recommendations to CPC, while, in the proposed plan and the comments thereon of the Secretariat, no programme priority had been established, despite the procedure established by the General Assembly in resolution 36/228.

39. The medium-term plan was a commitment to carry out activities within its framework, but did not commit financial resources. Budgetary requirements should be established on the basis of detailed proposals within the framework of the programme budget. His delegation was not convinced that there would be a moderate increase in real resources, as assumed by the Secretary-General. Nevertheless, and despite his delegation's reservations, he recommended that the Committee should approve the proposed medium-term plan for 1984-1989.

40. His delegation considered that the draft rules and regulations governing programme planning, the programme aspects of the budget, the monitoring of implementation and methods of evaluation (A/37/206 and A/37/206/Add.1) represented an attempt to codify the overall methodologies which had been developed and defined over the years and appeared in various General Assembly resolutions, from resolution 31/93 to 36/228. CPC had thoroughly reviewed the draft regulations on the basis of those resolutions and had made a series of major revisions. It had then invited the Secretary-General to prepare draft rules and JIU to offer comments on the draft regulations. Although it found the report of JIU (A/37/460) intellectually stimulating, his delegation had observations to make on the comments submitted by the Unit.

41. Firstly, although it was interesting to separate activities into categories such as support for negotiations, joint action on agreed areas and administrative management, his delegation had reservations concerning the feasibility of separating the first two categories in terms of the regulations governing the medium-term plan. On the other hand, it endorsed the JIU suggestion that the Secretariat should play a more active role in the preparation of proposals, which was one of the activities in support of negotiations.

42. Secondly, he fully shared the view that evaluation was an integral part of the programme planning cycle and should be carried out systematically according to a time-table and an evaluation programme. However, it was more logical to follow the sequence of the programme planning cycle, which started with the medium-term plan as a framework for the entire process and he would also prefer the regulations governing evaluation to be as clear and concise as possible.

43. Thirdly, he recognized the importance of the JIU's suggestion that the objectives of the planning cycle should be made more specifically explicit in the preamble to the regulations.

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(Mr. Takasu, Japan)

44. Fourthly, he had serious reservations regarding the suggestion that the adoption of the regulations should be postponed to the next session of the General Assembly; he shared the opinion of the Chairman of CPC that every effort should be made to complete the review of the regulations and rules and as far as possible to adopt the documents at the current session, so that the necessary framework for programme planning would be in place for the preparation and review of the programme budget for the first biennium in the medium-term plan. Although his delegation had some detailed comments that it could make on the draft texts, it would be more productive for the Committee to conduct only a general debate on the matter and, as Mr. Bertrand had suggested, an open-ended working group should be set up on the draft regulations on programme planning.

45. The underlying objective of programme planning in general had been to forge stronger links between the planning and budgeting processes. Article IV of the draft regulations - programme aspects of the budget - contained important specific methods for doing that. His delegation shared the opinion of the Committee of Governmental Experts that the Programme Planning and Budgeting Board, as currently constituted, could not replace the need for integration of the whole system of programme planning, budgeting, monitoring and reporting.

46. With reference to the importance of effective monitoring, he said that, under the current system, the General Assembly adopted the medium-term plan and programme budget and, once that had been done, there was no mechanism for intergovernmental supervision of the manner in which activities were being eliminated until programme performance reports, evaluation studies or audit reports were presented to the relevant organs. He therefore welcomed the Secretary-General's recent decision, in response to General Assembly resolution 36/228 to establish a central monitoring unit.

47. Lastly, the Japanese delegation was disappointed at the way in which the Secretary-General's report on the special review of the ongoing work programme of the United Nations (A/36/658) had been treated. The document had been submitted too late in the thirty-sixth session for the Fifth Committee to use it in the review of programme budget for the current biennium; the same had happened in CPC, the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions and the Committee on Conferences; an opportunity to save money had thus been lost. He therefore supported CPC's recommendation that obsolete and low-priority activities should be eliminated and the resources released transferred to new activities having more priority, and the request that the Secretary-General should present an updated report on ongoing programmes well before the relevant intergovernmental bodies started their review of the programme budget for the biennium 1984-1985 in 1983.

ORGANIZATION OF WORK

48. Mr. PAPENDORP (United States of America) referred to three interrelated issues with a bearing on an important goal of the Committee, namely, the most efficient, economical and effective functioning of the United Nations. Firstly, he requested the Chairman to remind the Chairmen of the other Main Committees, and the President of the General Assembly, of the desirability of keeping more closely to the

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(Mr. Papendorp, United States)

provisions of paragraph 6 of resolution 35/10 A, whereby the Assembly had decided that all proposals affecting the schedule of conferences and meetings made at sessions of the General Assembly should be reviewed by the Committee on Conferences when administrative implications were being considered, as required under rule 153 of the Assembly's rules of procedure. At the thirty-sixth session, such reviews had been instrumental in various cases in improving the final text of draft resolutions and in avoiding unnecessary expenditure and conflicts in the use of conference services. Unfortunately, that process had been delayed at the current session, but it would still be possible to put it into effect.

49. Secondly, the United States endorsed the request of the representative of the Netherlands at a previous meeting regarding the Secretary-General's pending report on the identification of activities that had been completed or were obsolete, of marginal usefulness or ineffective, called for in resolution 35/209. In addition, it should be noted that in document A/37/7/Add.1 ACABQ had requested that an updated version of the Secretary-General's report on the special review of the ongoing work programme of the United Nations should be provided to the current session of the General Assembly so that it could be considered in the context of the medium-term plan. The Committee had started work on the item but the updated version had not yet reached the United States Mission.

50. Lastly, he drew attention to rule 154 of the rules of procedure, which stated that "the Secretary-General shall keep all committees informed of the detailed estimated cost of all resolutions which have been recommended by the committees for approval by the General Assembly". His delegation had calculated that, as at 18 November, the plenary Assembly or its Main Committees had before them proposals involving additional budgetary requirements of over \$5.5 million, not including conference-servicing costs.

51. Full cost estimates of conference-servicing had reached \$9 million. The United States delegation was very concerned about that upward spiral and considered that Member States should be kept informed of pending new demands. In that connection, paragraphs 97 and 98 of annex V to the Assembly's rules of procedure should also be borne in mind. His delegation accordingly suggested that the Secretary-General should take appropriate steps to provide the Assembly with the information sought in rule 154 on a continuing basis. The Journal might be a possible vehicle, not involving additional expenditure, for such reporting on a comprehensive and Committee-by-Committee basis.

52. The CHAIRMAN said that the United States representative had made an important statement. He hoped it would be able to provide a full and adequate reply as soon as possible.

The meeting rose at 12.35 p.m.