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FIFTH COMMITTEE

50th meeting

held on

Wednesday, 1 December 1982

at 10.30 a.m.

New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 50th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. ABRASZEWKI (Poland)

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

CONTENTS

AGENDA ITEM 106: ADMINISTRATIVE AND BUDGETARY CO-ORDINATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS WITH THE SPECIALIZED AGENCIES AND THE INTERNATIONAL ATOMIC ENERGY AGENCY (continued)

(b) IMPACT OF INFLATION AND MONETARY INSTABILITY ON THE REGULAR BUDGET OF THE UNITED NATIONS (continued)

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

Administrative and financial implications of the draft resolution submitted by the Third Committee in document A/37/629, para. 17, concerning agenda item 77

Administrative and financial implications of the draft resolution submitted by the Third Committee in document A/37/632, para. 14, concerning agenda item 89

Administrative and financial implications of the draft resolution submitted by the Third Committee in document A/37/631, para. 11, concerning agenda items 82 and 83

Report of the Committee of Governmental Experts to Evaluate the Present Structure of the Secretariat in the Administrative, Finance and Personnel Areas (continued)

AGENDA ITEM 17: APPOINTMENTS TO FILL VACANCIES IN SUBSIDIARY ORGANS AND OTHER APPOINTMENTS (continued)

(d) CONFIRMATION OF THE APPOINTMENT OF THREE MEMBERS OF THE INVESTMENTS COMMITTEE

OTHER MATTERS

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

AGENDA ITEM 106: ADMINISTRATIVE AND BUDGETARY CO-ORDINATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS WITH THE SPECIALIZED AGENCIES AND THE INTERNATIONAL ATOMIC ENERGY AGENCY
(continued):

(b) IMPACT OF INFLATION AND MONETARY INSTABILITY ON THE REGULAR BUDGET OF THE UNITED NATIONS (continued) (A/C.5/37/39 and A/C.5/37/L.31)

1. Mr. FONTAINE-ORTIZ (Cuba), introducing draft resolution A/C.5/37/L.31, announced that Madagascar had become a sponsor of the draft resolution.
2. On behalf of the sponsors of the draft resolution, he said that the financial crisis of the United Nations, which was primarily due to the high and constantly increasing cost of goods and services in the developed countries where United Nations bodies were located, was a source of serious concern.
3. It was precisely that concern which had led the General Assembly to adopt resolution 36/230 in which it had requested the Secretary-General to prepare a detailed study on the question. The report submitted in accordance with that request, while not fully meeting the wishes of the General Assembly, constituted a basis for establishing more specific objectives. It was in that spirit that the sponsors were submitting draft resolution A/C.5/37/L.31.
4. The sponsors were prepared to receive any constructive suggestion which might enhance the draft resolution.

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

Administrative and financial implications of the draft resolution submitted by the Third Committee in document A/37/629, para. 17, concerning agenda item 77 (A/37/7/Add.9; A/C.5/37/42)

Administrative and financial implications of the draft resolution submitted by the Third Committee in document A/37/632, para. 14, concerning agenda item 89 (A/37/7/Add.9; A/C.5/37/43)

Administrative and financial implications of the draft resolution submitted by the Third Committee in document A/37/631, para. 11, concerning agenda items 82 and 83 (A/37/7/Add.9; A/C.5/37/44)

5. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) drew attention to a typographical error in the report of ACABQ (A/37/7/Add.9). The date which should appear in the last sentence of paragraph 10 was 1983, and not 1984.

6. Referring to the three statements submitted by the Secretary-General (A/C.5/37/42, A/C.5/37/43 and A/C.5/37/44), he said that a breakdown by budget section of the estimated additional requirements for 1983 was provided in

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(Mr. Mselle)

paragraph 2 of the ACABQ report. In its consideration of the statements submitted by the Secretary-General, the Advisory Committee noted that all three related to the activities of the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs. The current staff resources of the Centre financed from the regular programme budget and from extrabudgetary resources were described in paragraph 3 of the report, and details on the posts in the Professional category and above were provided in paragraph 4.

7. As indicated in paragraph 7 of the report, the Advisory Committee had concluded that, by making careful use of the Centre's existing staff resources, it should be possible to carry out the activities envisaged without approving the establishment of all the posts requested by the Secretary-General.

8. The Advisory Committee had also noted that it was not possible to study in detail the impact which the decisions embodied in the documents under consideration would have on the overall work programme of the Centre. Such an analysis could be carried out only in the context of the programme budget proposals for 1984-1985 to be considered in 1983. For that reason, the Advisory Committee suggested that the posts it recommended for approval should be authorized on a temporary basis and that the possibility of converting them into permanent posts should be considered during the examination of the proposed programme budget for 1984-1985.

9. The Advisory Committee had made recommendations on the three draft resolutions recommended by the Third Committee. The recommendations of ACABQ concerning draft resolution I were contained in paragraphs 8 to 11 of its report. In paragraph 10, in particular, the Advisory Committee recommended the approval of a post at the P-4 level instead of the two posts requested by the Secretary-General.

10. The requirements for the implementation of draft resolution II were considered in paragraphs 12 to 16 of the Advisory Committee's report. The related recommendations were contained in paragraphs 13, 14 and 15, and paragraph 16 contained a summary of the Advisory Committee's proposals.

11. Lastly, the requirements relating to the draft resolution entitled "Question of Aging", were dealt with in paragraphs 17 to 21. The Advisory Committee proposed that the existing P-5 post should be maintained on a temporary basis, in accordance with paragraph 7 of its report. Paragraph 21 contained a summary of the Committee's other recommendations.

12. A table recapitulating the appropriations required under the various budget sections was provided in paragraph 22.

13. Mr. KELLER (United States of America) introduced orally, on behalf of Belgium, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America, the following draft resolution:

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(Mr. Keller, United States)

"With respect to resolutions A/C.3/37/L.16, A/C.3/37/L.21 and A/C.3/37/L.22/Rev.1, the Fifth Committee recommends that the General Assembly should advise the Secretary-General that the question of additional posts for the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs should be considered in the context of the biennial budget and that any requirements for 1983 should be met through redeployment of existing resources."

14. Since United Nations expenditure had quadrupled in 10 years, stricter control was indispensable. While his delegation was not opposed to the implementation of new programmes, it believed that the requirements of good management demanded a systematic attempt to control budget growth.

15. The United States endorsed the Advisory Committee's recommendations, but felt they did not go far enough. The Administrative Management Service would be conducting a new survey of the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs. Only in the light of the results of that survey, would it be possible to assess the Centre's staffing requirements. That was why his delegation requested the Committee to defer any decision to increase the staff of the Centre until the next biennium.

16. Mr. NICULESCU (Romania) said that if the Secretariat did not have the necessary resources, it would be unable to implement the provisions of the draft resolution, which gave concrete shape to the recommendations adopted by consensus at Vienna by the Advisory Committee for the International Youth Year. He therefore appealed to the United States and the other sponsors of the draft decision not to insist on their proposal.

17. The amount of \$US 67,300 recommended by ACABQ involved virtually no additional requirements for 1983, if one took into account the savings of \$68,400 realized in the budget estimates approved for the biennium 1982-1983.

18. Mr. VELLA (Malta), referring to the draft resolution on aging, said that the agenda item had not caused the United Nations any additional expenditure since 1969. If it was considered necessary to submit, at the current session, a draft resolution which had very modest financial implications, it was because of a plan of action approved by the entire international community.

19. As to the argument that a survey of the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs would be conducted in 1983, since ACABQ had taken that factor into consideration, there was no reason to defer the implementation of its recommendations.

20. The Plan of Action could be put into effect only if the momentum was maintained. He therefore joined in Romania's appeal to the United States and the other sponsors not to insist on their draft decision.

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21. Mr. DITZ (Austria) said that, while it was important to limit the growth of the United Nations budget, it was also essential to give the Organization the resources to meet the needs of the international community. Admittedly, redeployment of existing resources was necessary; however, there were limits to redeployment, which could not be used to finance all new activities.

22. In the present case, the additional appropriations requested for new programmes relating to youth, the disabled and the aged were rather modest. Moreover, the Advisory Committee had recommended reductions. His delegation believed that the United Nations must be given the resources it needed to carry out such major social programmes.

23. Mr. FONTAINE ORTIZ (Cuba) said that his delegation had always spoken out against the excessive increase in United Nations expenditure. It believed, however, that expenditure could be limited if the Organization's resources were used as efficiently as possible. Cuba could not accept decisions that were contrary to the interests of the international community and, particularly, the interests of the developing countries. His delegation therefore subscribed to the observations made by the representatives of Romania, Malta and Austria.

24. Mr. OKEYO (Kenya) said that while his delegation was fully aware of the need for prudent management of United Nations resources, it could not accept the argument that all new activities should be financed from existing resources. That would be tantamount to paralysing the United Nations, inasmuch as the programme budget for the biennium 1982-1983 had been adopted on the basis of zero growth. The United Nations was constantly being entrusted with new tasks by the international community; in order for it to carry them out, the necessary resources must be made available. Accordingly, his delegation could not accept restrictions that would prevent the Secretary-General from implementing programmes decided on by the General Assembly. Kenya therefore endorsed the Advisory Committee's recommendations.

25. After a procedural discussion in which Mr. GARRIDO (Philippines), Mr. WILLIAMS (Panama), Mr. ZINIEL (Ghana) and Mr. LAHLOU (Morocco), took part, the CHAIRMAN invited the Committee to vote on the draft decision submitted by Belgium, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America.

26. The draft decision was rejected by 69 votes to 24, with 3 abstentions.

27. Mr. EL SAFTY (Egypt) said that his delegation had voted against the draft decision because its effect would have been to assign to the Secretary-General the responsibility of determining the fate of the various programmes, whereas, in his delegation's opinion, it was for the General Assembly to take such decisions. If Member States wished to initiate new activities, the Organization must have the necessary additional funds for their implementation.

28. Mr. GEPP (Brazil) said that his delegation had voted for the draft decision which was consistent with the views it had expressed in the Third Committee.

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29. Mrs. CONWAY (Ireland) said that she had abstained in the vote for technical reasons. On the other hand, her delegation had voted in the Third Committee for a similar proposal concerning the implementation of the International Plan of Action on Aging and the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons.
30. Mr. ZINIEL (Ghana) recalled that on several occasions he had expressed his concern about the establishment of new posts in the Secretariat. It was, however, important to respect the decisions of the Main Committees of the General Assembly and his delegation had therefore voted against the draft decision and had supported the recommendations of the Advisory Committee.
31. Miss CASTILLO (Dominican Republic) said that her delegation had voted against the draft decision because in the Third Committee it had been in favour of the draft resolutions on the question of the elderly and aged and International Youth Year.
32. Mr. FONTAINE ORTIZ (Cuba) said that he had voted against the draft decision because his country strongly supported any decision designed to further the cause of youth, the elderly and the disabled. He reiterated that the Fifth Committee should be fully aware of the administrative and financial implications of any draft resolution before it was adopted by one of the Main Committees.
33. Mrs. DORSET (Trinidad and Tobago) said that she had voted against the draft decision submitted by the United States because, even though the Organization was passing through a period of financial crisis, zero budget growth was not the result of a decision by the legislative bodies. The United Nations could not be asked to carry out programmes without being given the necessary funds. The Advisory Committee had already made the necessary reductions. To accept the kind of reduction proposed in the draft decision might paralyse the Organization.
34. The CHAIRMAN suggested that the Committee should inform the General Assembly that, if it adopted draft resolution A/C.3/37/L.16, it would be necessary to include in the programme budget for the biennium 1982-1983 an additional appropriation of \$67,300, to be apportioned as follows: \$64,300 for section 6 and \$3,000 for section 28M.
35. It would also be necessary to include in section 31 (Staff assessment) the amount of \$13,700 to be offset by the inclusion of an equivalent amount in the estimates under income section 1 (Income from staff assessment).
36. Conference-servicing on a full-cost basis, were estimated at \$764,300. The estimated requirements for that purpose would be considered in the context of the consolidated statement of total conference-servicing requirements to be submitted to the General Assembly towards the end of the current session.
37. It was so decided.

38. Mr. KELLER (United States of America) noted that several delegations seemed to be accusing the United States of wishing to straitjacket the Organization. It was his view that some delegations apparently wished to adopt a balloon approach, involving the risk that the balloon might burst. Dynamism was not a matter of constantly asking for more funds and staff. His delegation would thus have voted against the draft resolution if it had been put to the vote.

39. Mr. YAKOVENKO (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that his delegation had supported the programmes on youth, the elderly and the disabled. It therefore believed that the requests for additional appropriations should be covered from existing resources. Accordingly, it would have been unable to support the draft resolution if it had been put to the vote.

40. The CHAIRMAN suggested that the Committee should inform the General Assembly that, if it adopted draft resolution A/C.3/37/L.22/Rev.1, as orally amended, it would be necessary to include in the programme budget for the biennium 1982-1983 an additional appropriation of \$66,900, to be apportioned as follows: \$50,700 for section 6; \$15,000 for section 27 and \$1,200 for section 28M.

41. It would also be necessary to include in section 31 (Staff assessment) the amount of \$8,600, to be offset by the inclusion of an equivalent amount in the estimates of income under income section 1 (Income from staff assessment).

42. It was so decided.

43. The CHAIRMAN suggested that the Committee should inform the General Assembly that, if it adopted draft resolution A/C.3/37/L.21, as orally amended, it would be necessary to include an additional appropriation of \$82,000 in section 6 of the programme budget for the biennium 1982-1983.

44. It would also be necessary to include in section 31 (Staff assessment) the amount of \$17,700 to be offset by the inclusion of an equivalent amount in the estimates of income under income section 1 (Income from staff assessment).

45. It was so decided.

46. Mr. MURRAY (United Kingdom) recalled that his delegation urged that any new or expanded programmes should be funded from existing resources. The Vienna Centre already had 60 Professionals to do the work, the usefulness of which was certainly not questioned by the United Kingdom. It would have been helpful for the Fifth Committee to have, for the purpose of discussing the question, a Secretariat document consolidating all the financial implications, in accordance with the recommendation of the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination which had been adopted by the General Assembly.

Report of the Committee of Governmental Experts to Evaluate the Present Structure of the Secretariat in the Administrative, Financial and Personnel Areas (A/37/44)

47. Mr. EL HASSAN (Sudan) congratulated the Committee of experts on its work, in which the Sudan had participated. He regretted that, in its report (A/37/44), that Committee had decided not to make specific recommendations. The work accomplished by it the previous year should have enabled it, if it had shown boldness and imagination, to make recommendations to the General Assembly. Those recommendations would have facilitated the discussions and would have helped the Secretary-General to carry out the necessary administrative reforms.

48. Policy functions and service functions should be strictly delimited, in accordance with the structure proposed in paragraph 18 of document A/37/44. Planning, programming and budgeting services would be regrouped as one department, whereas personnel services, which had political implications, financial services and general services could be separate departments.

49. The establishment by the Secretary-General of the Programme Planning and Budgeting Board was an excessively timid measure. The General Assembly should therefore be recommended to give priority attention to the question of the organization of the Secretariat.

50. As the Committee's conclusions showed, the General Assembly was competent to determine the best structure for the Secretariat, taking account of the interests of Member States. That competence did not encroach upon the Secretary-General's prerogatives, since his functions and those of the Assembly were complementary. The General Assembly should pronounce on administrative and management questions whenever there were political implications. The resolution establishing the Committee of Governmental Experts clearly illustrated the General Assembly's competence in that respect. It went without saying that the Secretary-General's recommendations would always be taken into consideration.

51. One of the problems raised by the Committee of Governmental Experts - that of decentralization - deserved to be studied further. Some of the relevant proposals were still at the experimental stage, while others were as yet only being studied.

52. It appeared that the United Nations, a complex organization by reason of its size and composition, tended to be conservative when there was a question of altering the structure of the Secretariat. That was why the General Assembly must provide the drive for structural reforms.

53. Mr. PRASAD (India) said that the seriousness with which the Committee of 17 had addressed itself to important tasks had rendered superfluous the initial reservations of his delegation, which was surprised at the objections raised on various occasions to the Committee's work.

54. One of the main concerns voiced was based on the notion that the Secretary-General, as the Chief Administrative Officer of the United Nations, should have complete freedom to run the Secretariat, without Member States having the right to interfere, in particular to change the structure of that organ. But

(Mr. Prasad, India)

that would be contrary to the provisions of the Charter. The work of the Committee of 17 was an exact parallel to that undertaken by the President of the Economic and Social Council, with the assistance of Member States, to revitalize the Council. The position of the Secretary-General was undermined only if Member States bypassed the inter-governmental process and tried in private to influence his decisions on crucial administrative questions which had broader political implications.

55. The second argument put forward was that a new Secretary-General had been appointed since the establishment of the Committee, which amounted to saying that unlike his predecessors, the current Secretary-General, contrary to his repeated affirmations, liked neither the provisions of the Charter nor the recommendations of intergovernmental bodies designed to improve the efficiency of the United Nations. That argument was unfair not only to the Secretary-General but also to the Under-Secretary-General for Administration and Management and the Assistant Secretary-General for Personnel Services.

56. With regard to the issues studied by the Committee, the most important without question was the one concerning the process of programme planning and budgeting, which the current structure did not allow to be carried out efficiently. The problem was very clear. The Department of Administration and Management was a service unit which, to be efficient, had to be able to concentrate on the tasks for which it was set up, namely, the management of human resources and money, without having to define policies. It was in the interests of the United Nations, now that its budget was no longer fixed by objects of expenditure, that the two functions should be separated. The specialized agencies had all adopted systems under which planning, programming and budgeting were carried out by a single unit separate from that responsible for administration. Thus, ILO had a Bureau of Programme and Management which was responsible for preparing both the plan and the budget and for monitoring and evaluation, and a Department of Finance responsible for financial control, investment, etc.

57. While regretting that the Committee of 17 had, for various reasons, been unable to propose a set of recommendations, his delegation unreservedly supported the suggestion made by the Committee in paragraph 31 of its report that the practice in the system should be taken into account when a final decision on the structure of the Secretariat was taken. It hoped that the General Assembly would take up the suggestions of the Committee when it made its own recommendations.

58. Mr. MERIEUX (France) recalled that his delegation had voiced reservations at the time the Committee of 17 was established because it believed that the Secretary-General, as the Chief Administrative Officer of the United Nations, was in the best position to know people and to decide on the reforms needed to enable them to work together most effectively. It was therefore particularly gratified to note that the Committee of 17, while pointing out that it was the General Assembly's responsibility to give overall guidance on the structure of the Secretariat, had agreed with the French delegation's interpretation and had not thought it necessary to formulate precise and restrictive recommendations. Nevertheless, the various points raised in the report were such as to give the Secretary-General powerful assistance in exercising his various responsibilities.

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AGENDA ITEM 17: APPOINTMENTS TO FILL VACANCIES IN SUBSIDIARY ORGANS AND OTHER APPOINTMENTS (continued)

(d) CONFIRMATION OF THE APPOINTMENT OF THREE MEMBERS OF THE INVESTMENTS COMMITTEE (A/37/184; A/C.5/37/56)

59. The CHAIRMAN recalled that, in accordance with article 20 of the regulations of the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund, the Secretary-General, after consultation with the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Board and the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, submitted for confirmation by the General Assembly the names of those whom he had appointed as members of the Investments Committee. After holding the required consultations, the Secretary-General was submitting for confirmation by the General Assembly, in document A/C.5/37/56, the names of those whom he had appointed as members of the Investments Committee for three-year terms, from 1 January 1983: Mr. Aloysio de Andrade Faria (reappointment), Mr. Braj Kumar Nehru (reappointment) and Mr. Stanislaw Raczkowski (reappointment).

60. If he heard no objection, he would take it that the Committee wished to recommend that the General Assembly should confirm those appointments.

61. It was so decided.

OTHER BUSINESS

62. Mr. FONTAINE ORTIZ (Cuba) asked that, at the end of paragraph 1 of draft resolution A/C.5/37/L.31, the symbol of the document in question, namely, A/C.5/37/39, should be added in brackets.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.