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held on

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at 10.30 a.m.

New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 64th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. ABRASZEWSKI (Poland)

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

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The meeting was called to order at 11 a.m.

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

United Nations accommodation at Nairobi (A/37/7/Add.17; A/C.5/37/66)

Common services at the United Nations accommodation, Nairobi (A/37/7/Add.17; A/C.5/37/49)

1. The CHAIRMAN drew attention to the reports of the Secretary-General on the United Nations accommodation at Nairobi (A/C.5/37/66) and on the question of common services at the United Nations accommodation at Nairobi (A/C.5/37/49). The report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions dealing with both issues appeared in document A/37/7/Add.17 and was self-explanatory.

2. Mr. KELLER (United States of America) said his delegation noted with regret that the Secretary-General was proposing in his report (A/C.5/37/66) the additional construction of an office block and a visitors' and tours pavilion at the United Nations accommodation at Nairobi. The construction project, which had a long history and had at one point been simplified in the interests of economy, now seemed to be returning to its earlier more elaborate form.

3. The United States was particularly concerned by the apparent sentiment that, once an appropriation was made, that money was available for new initiatives even without prior approval from the General Assembly. In the case at issue, the money which had not yet been spent was money belonging to the Member States; it was not an ephemeral resource that needed to be fully consumed on the spot. The United States could not, therefore, concur in the recommendations of the Secretary-General and of the Advisory Committee.

4. Incidentally, it was strange that the Fifth Committee should be considering four significant construction projects in the last days of the General Assembly. Why could not such matters, involving appropriations in excess of \$10 million, have been considered in October?

5. Mr. SCHMIDT (Assistant Executive Director, Environment Fund and Administration, United Nations Environment Programme) recalled, with reference to the comments made by the United States representative, that in the past the question of cutting costs had centred on conference rooms and facilities, not on the construction of buildings; the estimates of the facilities required had indeed at first been curtailed but had later been raised once more. The Nairobi accommodation would, as far as the United Nations itself was concerned, house HABITAT, UNEP, and a small information centre. United Nations space requirements had been included only partially in previous assessments, which had now been found to be too low. The space requirements for the other agencies to be accommodated at Nairobi were determined by those agencies themselves, and the United Nations could only accept them at face value. If the additional building was not constructed, the choice would be either to tell those agencies that they could not move in or to ask them to make do with less space than they said they needed.

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6. Mr. RUEDAS (Under Secretary-General for Administration, Finance and Management), replying to the United States representative, said that the documents regarding the accommodation at Nairobi had been made available so late because they dealt with questions of construction and not merely with appropriations and had thus called for a particular degree of time-consuming detail, precision and correctness, in the interests of achieving the lowest possible cost.

7. Mr. MAYCOCK (Barbados) observed that for the third year in succession the Committee was being asked to consider new or alternative proposals regarding the construction at Nairobi; and the latest set of proposals was being presented regrettably late in the session. The whole case was an example of how not to construct a site. UNEP should have some help in arriving at final proposals, perhaps from the Administrative Management Service at Headquarters. Barbados was very dissatisfied with the handling of the question. Any decision the Committee reached now should be able to stand the test of time.

8. The CHAIRMAN invited the Committee to take a decision on the United Nations accommodation at Nairobi. Based on the recommendations of the Advisory Committee he suggested that the Committee should recommend to the General Assembly the adoption of the following draft decision:

"The General Assembly,

"Having considered the report of the Secretary-General on United Nations accommodation at Nairobi (A/C.5/37/66) and the related report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (A/37/7/Add.17),

"Approves the Secretary-General's proposals contained in paragraphs 24 and 27 of his report, subject to the conditions specified in paragraph 10 of the report of the Advisory Committee."

9. It was so decided.

10. Mr. MURRAY (United Kingdom) said that he wished to record his delegation's concern over the speed with which a decision had been reached on the subject. It would have been helpful to have the relevant documentation earlier.

11. Mr. YAKOVENKO (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that, if the draft decision had been put to the vote, the Soviet Union would have voted against it. The funds which the Secretary-General had indicated in his report (A/C.5/37/66) as not having been spent belonged to the Member States and there was no need to go to great lengths to spend them.

12. Mr. KELLER (United States of America) said that the United States would also have voted against the draft decision if it had been put to the vote.

13. Mr. TOMMO MONTHE (United Republic of Cameroon) said his delegation felt that the Secretary-General's report had justified the need for additional office space at Nairobi and agreed with both the Secretary-General and the Advisory Committee

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(Mr. Tommo Monthe, United Republic of Cameroon)

that it would be economical to construct an additional office block while the contractor was still on the premises, since at a later date it would cost more to call back construction firms and it would be difficult to obtain the needed appropriations. If the draft decision had been put to the vote, Cameroon would therefore have strongly supported it.

14. The CHAIRMAN invited the Committee to take a decision on the question of common services at the United Nations accommodation at Nairobi. Based on the recommendation of the Advisory Committee, he suggested that the Committee should recommend to the General Assembly that it should take note of the report of the Secretary-General (A/C.5/37/49) and of the related report of the Advisory Committee (A/37/7/Add.17), and that it should concur with the observations and recommendations contained in paragraphs 15 and 16 of the Advisory Committee's report.

15. It was so decided.

Adequacy of the conference facilities of the Economic Commission for Africa at Addis Ababa (A/37/7/Add.18; A/C.5/37/67)

16. The CHAIRMAN drew attention to the report of the Secretary-General on the adequacy of the conference facilities of the Economic Commission for Africa at Addis Ababa (A/C.5/37/67) and the related report of the Advisory Committee (A/37/7/Add.18), which was self-explanatory.

17. Mr. PAPENDORP (United States of America) said that excessive programme growth inevitably led to the construction of more facilities; each year the United Nations conference schedule grew longer, and as a result existing conference facilities became increasingly inadequate. If a proposal similar to the one the United States had made at the current session to reduce the number and duration of meetings had been accepted years earlier, the United Nations might not be facing the prospect of another multi-million dollar construction project.

18. The United States concurred with the Advisory Committee's recommendation in paragraph 3 of its report (A/37/7/Add.18), and would expect the Secretary-General in future to follow the building construction procedures laid down by the Joint Inspection Unit and approved by the General Assembly at its thirty-sixth session.

19. Paragraph 9 of the Advisory Committee's report suggested that detailed information on the exact nature of the conference-servicing problem was not available. It was premature to embark on so costly a project without the pertinent facts regarding the number, attendance and duration of meetings at ECA headquarters. While there might be a problem of overcrowding, his delegation wondered whether less costly options had been taken fully into account; for example, had all possibilities of adjusting ECA's calendar of conferences and meetings to the available capacities been explored? ECA should attempt to reduce the frequency and duration of meetings as much as possible in order to reduce the space problem.

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(Mr. Papendorp, United States)

20. Another solution would be to shift some meetings from ECA headquarters to the new United Nations accommodation at Nairobi. The United States was not, of course, advocating a violation of the headquarters principle; but Member States had invested approximately \$30 million in the accommodation at Nairobi and it would be more cost-effective to maximize the use of those facilities rather than to expand at Addis Ababa. His delegation did not believe that a sufficiently strong case had been made for the expansion of the facilities of the Economic Commission for Africa and could not support the Secretary-General's proposals.

21. Mr. KAZEMBE (Zambia) said his delegation believed that improvement of the conference facilities at Addis Ababa was essential to promote decentralization within the United Nations. It was regrettable that there had been such long delays in approving the expansion of those facilities, since the problem had been identified a decade previously.

22. In paragraph 13 of its report (A/37/7/Add.18), the Advisory Committee recommended that the \$15,000 requested by the Secretary-General for furniture should not be approved; he asked whether the Advisory Committee was aware that the furniture was to be purchased specifically for temporary conference use at ECA.

23. Mr. ZINIEL (Ghana) said the report of the Secretary-General identified problems that had been before the Committee for nearly two years. The Secretary-General suggested a number of options which could be achieved at a minimum cost. His delegation was impressed by the fact that the Secretary-General was requesting that an architectural or engineering study should be carried out before work began on additional facilities. It could support that request for the sake of efficiency and prudence. It noted that the Secretary-General's estimate for the cost of the study had been reduced by the Advisory Committee to \$400,000, and hoped that that reduction would not further delay completion of the work on the expansion of facilities.

24. His delegation did not agree that the need for the expansion of conference facilities was the result of excessive programme growth; as was rightly noted by the Secretary-General, it resulted from the increase in the membership of ECA. His delegation was prepared to support the Advisory Committee's recommendations, on the understanding that they would not cause any further delay in completion of the work.

25. Mr. GEBRU (Ethiopia) said that the report of the Secretary-General clearly revealed the gross inadequacy of the existing conference facilities of ECA to service its growing number of activities. When the Economic and Social Council had established ECA, in 1958, the Commission had had no secretariat or conference facilities; the existing conference facilities had been donated to the United Nations by the Government and people of Ethiopia in 1961. Since the early 1960s the continent of Africa had undergone a process of decolonization, as a result of which the membership of ECA was constantly increasing; there had also been a steady increase in the number of institutions and regional and national organizations attending ECA conferences as observers. The inadequacy of ECA's facilities had been recognized as early as 1969.

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(Mr. Gebru, Ethiopia)

26. The Secretary-General's proposals for resolving the problem in the short and long term were reasonable; although the Advisory Committee's recommendations in paragraphs 8 and 13 of its report fell short of meeting the needs identified by the Secretary-General, his delegation could support them.

27. Mr. TOMMO MONTHE (United Republic of Cameroon) said that, since the facilities of ECA were old and inadequate, they clearly needed to be either remodelled or replaced. An architectural and engineering study was clearly needed, and his delegation could support the Advisory Committee's recommendations in that respect. Since it would not be possible to begin the construction or renovation work before 1989-1990, ad hoc measures were clearly needed; a regional commission which was faced with an increasing number of problems and therefore had to hold an increasing number of meetings could not meet without facilities. His delegation could therefore support the Advisory Committee's recommendation for an appropriation of \$235,000, and its overall recommendation for an additional appropriation of \$635,000.

28. Mr. GRODSKY (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said his delegation believed that the existing conference facilities at ECA were inadequate and that the necessary facilities must be provided for meetings and conferences held at Addis Ababa. It therefore supported the Secretary-General's proposal for the construction of new facilities at Addis Ababa and the Advisory Committee's recommendations concerning the appropriation of the necessary funds.

29. Mr. FONTAINE ORTIZ (Cuba) said that the item under consideration dated back for more than a decade, and the delay in settling the question was inexplicable. His delegation supported the necessary investments to renovate or expand the conference facilities of ECA, which would benefit not only African States but also the United Nations as a whole. It therefore felt that the architectural and engineering study should be started as soon as possible, and it supported the Advisory Committee's recommendations even though they were not entirely satisfactory.

30. Mr. HADID (Algeria) said that, over the 24 years of ECA's existence, its facilities had become inadequate. The reasons were the continuous increase in the membership of ECA and the important responsibilities entrusted to the regional commissions under General Assembly resolution 32/197. His delegation therefore agreed on the need for an architectural and engineering study. While supporting the Advisory Committee's recommendations, it hoped that at the thirty-eighth session the Committee would be presented with additional proposals to solve the short-term problem in an effective manner.

31. Mr. BANGURA (Sierra Leone) said that he associated himself with the remarks made by the representative of Ethiopia. In the light of the explanations provided by the Secretary-General concerning the existing conference facilities at ECA, he felt that there was an urgent need to adopt the Advisory Committee's recommendations. It was regrettable that delegations which had spoken against the project had viewed it purely from a financial angle. If the United Nations was

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(Mr. Bangura, Sierra Leone)

responsible for activities to contribute to economic and social development in the regions, it should invest in conference facilities; the money would be well spent, and the earlier it was spent the better.

32. The CHAIRMAN suggested that, based on the Advisory Committee's recommendations, the Committee should approve additional appropriations totalling \$635,000 under the programme budget for the biennium 1982-1983, apportioned as follows: \$175,000 for section 13 and \$460,000 for section 32; and that it should recommend to the General Assembly that it should take note of the report of the Secretary-General on the adequacy of the conference facilities of the Economic Commission for Africa at Addis Ababa (A/C.5/37/67) and of the related report of the Advisory Committee (A/37/7/Add.18).

33. The representative of the United States had requested a vote on the proposal.

34. Mr. MAJOLI (Italy), speaking in explanation of vote before the vote, said that his delegation was in favour of providing adequate facilities for ECA, a very important regional commission which needed to function properly. It would abstain in the vote because it believed that, when major issues were being considered, the Secretariat should not submit proposals at the last moment. The situation at ECA had been acknowledged some years previously and there was no reason why a proposal involving substantial financial implications should be made midway in the biennium.

35. Mrs. de HEDERVARY (Belgium) associated herself with the remarks made by the representative of Italy; the Committee was being asked to approve large appropriations on the basis of documents which it had barely had time to consider. Since Belgium contributed 1.28 per cent of the United Nations budget, it had to be careful in financial matters. She would therefore abstain in the vote.

36. Mr. KBAIER (Tunisia) said that for the reasons advanced by certain delegations, including the delegation of the United Republic of Cameroon, he would vote in favour of the Advisory Committee's recommendations.

37. Mr. TOMMO MONTHE (United Republic of Cameroon) said that his delegation would vote in favour of the decision. Perhaps at the end of the session the Committee would be able to revise the budget downwards; as for those countries which were concerned about the costs of the proposal before the Committee, it was possible that their companies would be given the contracts to construct the facilities at Addis Ababa.

38. The proposal was adopted by 62 votes to 1, with 10 abstentions.

39. Mr. FONTAINE ORTIZ (Cuba) said that his vote in favour of the proposal had not been recorded by the voting machine.

40. Mr. PEDERSEN (Canada), speaking in explanation of vote, said his delegation realized that the facilities at Addis Ababa were inadequate and was not opposed to the Advisory Committee's recommendations. However, it felt that such sizeable

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(Mr. Pedersen, Canada)

appropriations should be included in the budget for the biennium, and it had therefore abstained.

41. Mr. SAGRERA (Spain) said that Spain was the ninth largest contributor to the United Nations regular budget and provided 1.93 per cent of the total. It had therefore abstained in the vote for purely financial reasons.

42. Mr. CROM (Netherlands) said that his delegation had abstained for the same reasons as the representatives of Belgium and Italy. It was important that the United Nations should have proper accommodation, but financial implications of such magnitude should be dealt with in a proper way.

43. Mr. MERIEUX (France) said that his delegation fully recognized the need for new accommodation for ECA at Addis Ababa but believed that the decision just adopted should have been taken in the context of the programme budget, especially since it involved such substantial sums. It was regrettable that the Advisory Committee's report had not been made available earlier. His delegation had therefore abstained in the vote.

44. Mr. MURRAY (United Kingdom) said that his delegation had abstained in the vote because it was not entirely convinced of the need for the proposed expansion of conference facilities at ECA. Moreover, it felt that the procedure followed was not the best way of taking decisions with major financial implications.

45. Mr. ZINIEL (Ghana) said that his delegation had already indicated its support for the Advisory Committee's recommendations. It too was concerned about the need for maximum financial caution and was therefore pleased that the Secretary-General was not asking the Committee to approve the construction of new facilities within the current biennium. The Advisory Committee's recommendations were based essentially on the report of the Secretary-General, which had been issued more than a week before; thus, the time factor had not been a problem. His delegation would not have supported any suggestion to move meetings from Addis Ababa to Nairobi, since that would contravene the provisions of General Assembly resolution 31/140.

46. Mr. GEBRU (Ethiopia) noted that a number of speakers had felt that the Committee had not had sufficient time to consider the proposals. He recalled that the General Assembly, in its resolution 36/176, had requested the Secretary-General to undertake a study of the adequacy of conference facilities at ECA and the Secretary-General had submitted a report (E/1982/111) to the Economic and Social Council clearly indicating the woeful lack of such facilities. The matter had also been considered by ECA at its April 1982 session.

AGENDA ITEM 112: REPORT OF THE INTERNATIONAL CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION (continued)
(A/37/7/Add.11, A/37/30; A/C.5/37/37; A/C.5/37/L.38/Rev.1, A/C.5/37/L.43)

47. The CHAIRMAN announced that, following consultations with interested delegations, the sponsors of draft resolution A/C.5/37/L.38 had produced a revised version which appeared in document A/C.5/37/L.38/Rev.1.

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48. Mr. DUQUE (Secretary of the Committee) pointed out that the word "be" in the first line of paragraph 4 of section III of draft resolution A/C.5/37/L.38/Rev.1 should be corrected to read "remain".

49. Mr. PEDERSEN (Canada), introducing the revised draft resolution on behalf of the sponsors, said that, following further consultations with interested delegations, the sponsors had been able to arrive at a text on which there was almost full agreement. Some differences remained, however, and the sponsors would be prepared to have the draft resolution put to a vote if any delegations insisted on it.

50. For technical reasons, the sponsors wished to make a slight change in the wording of paragraph 4 of section III: the words "duty stations in" should be inserted after the words "returning to", since it was clear that, if an expatriate official returned to his home country but did not remain in the employ of the United Nations, he would not be eligible for the education grant. In the English text of paragraph 8 of section III, the word "ration" should be corrected to read "ratio".

51. The sponsors hoped that the draft resolution would now be acceptable to a majority of the members of the Committee.

52. The CHAIRMAN announced that the United States representative had indicated that, following consultations with other members of the Committee regarding draft resolution A/C.5/37/L.38/Rev.1, his delegation did not wish to press for a vote on it.

53. Mr. BOUSHEV (Bulgaria) observed with regard to paragraph 4 of section IV of the draft resolution, that there was a risk that personnel policy might stray from the overall planning process. The human resources planning process could not be an end in itself; human resources were only one aspect of the overall planning process. In fact, human resources were determined by the Organization's present and planned future activities, and planning them independently would mean putting the cart before the horse and perhaps perpetuating marginally useful or obsolete programmes. He therefore proposed that the words "human resources" should be deleted from the paragraph in question.

54. Mr. YAKOVENKO (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) requested that, since draft resolution A/C.5/37/L.38/Rev.1 had only just been circulated and his delegation intended to hold further consultations with a view to improving it, a decision on the revised draft resolution should be deferred for 24 hours in accordance with rule 120 of the rules of procedure.

55. It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 12.55 p.m.