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FIFTH COMMITTEE  
Item 110 of the provisional agenda\*

### PROPOSED PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 1984-1985

#### United Nations language training programme

#### Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of General Assembly resolution 36/235 (II)

1. In the Secretary-General's report 1/ on the review and evaluation of the United Nations language training programme which was presented to the General Assembly at its thirty-sixth session, the Secretary-General made a number of proposals with a view to improving the quality and the delivery of language training in the Secretariat. Those proposals included increasing the number of hours of teaching from the beginner's level to the highest level, improving the language teaching materials and teacher's manuals, and reducing the size of classes at Headquarters to within the optimum range of 12 to 18 students per class. Other improvements proposed covered the revision of the language proficiency examinations, the development of post-proficiency courses and increased assistance to offices away from Headquarters in terms of pedagogical materials and guidance.
2. On an experimental basis, in order to implement those recommendations within the budgetary appropriations for 1982-1983, the Secretary-General proposed to streamline the language training programme in the following ways.
  - (a) Charge the standard fee to staff members who repeated any level;
  - (b) Reduce the number of language proficiency examinations from three to two a year;

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\* A/38/150.

(c) Limit language studies to one language at a time;

(d) Set a maximum of two official languages which may be learned free of charge.

3. The Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) noted in its report 2/ that the recommendations were consistent with the objectives sought by the General Assembly in its resolutions on the use of languages in the Secretariat. ACABQ considered, however, that recommendation (a) in paragraph 2 above should not be applied to staff members who repeated a course because of absence from duty attributable to ill health, or to mission assignment of which they were unaware at the time they enrolled in the course, and noted with regard to recommendation (d) that a review would be carried out before the biennium 1984-1985 to ensure that the recommendation would not have an adverse effect on the enrolment for the language courses which attracted fewer students.

4. By section II of resolution 36/235 of 18 December 1981, the General Assembly approved the recommendations made by the Secretary-General in paragraphs 46 (a) to (c) of his report and endorsed the observation of ACABQ with respect to recommendation (a). With regard to recommendation (d), the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to conduct a review for the purpose of exploring the possible quantitative limitations of the number of official languages which may be learned free of charge and to report thereon to the General Assembly at its thirty-eighth session.

5. Accordingly, the present report contains the results of a review conducted at Headquarters and the other duty stations to determine the number of students who had studied two official languages at a United Nations language programme and were studying a third official language during 1981 and 1982.

6. Only New York, Geneva and Vienna reported having students studying a third language. As the following table shows, the totals for 1981 and 1982 for this category of students is clearly low and the introduction of a maximum of two official languages that may be learned free of charge would not result in substantial savings for the Organization. On the other hand, should such a measure be implemented, it could adversely affect the level of enrolment for all official languages and particularly for those which attract fewer students. Consequently, the Secretary-General proposes that recommendation (d) made in his report 1/ should not be pursued, and that no limitation be placed on the number of official languages which may be learned free of charge.

NUMBER OF STUDENTS WHO HAVE STUDIED TWO OFFICIAL LANGUAGES  
IN THE UNITED NATIONS LANGUAGE TRAINING PROGRAMME AND  
SUBSEQUENTLY STUDIED A THIRD OFFICIAL LANGUAGE

(Showing total course enrolment)

Third Language	1981							
	New York		Geneva		Vienna		Total	
Arabic	24	(328)	2	(110)	-	(79)	26	(517)
Chinese	5	(191)	1	(74)	-	(26)	6	(291)
English	7	(762)	-	(1 082)	-	(291)	7	(2 135)
French	21	(1 970)	-	(1 787)	-	(389)	21	(4 146)
Russian	14	(271)	2	(136)	4	(53)	20	(460)
Spanish	40	(1 587)	3	(699)	2	(218)	45	(2 504)
Total	111	(5 109)	8	(3 888)	6	(1 056)	125	(10 053)

Third Language	1982							
	New York		Geneva		Vienna		Total	
Arabic	10	(307)	2	(126)	2	(67)	14	(500)
Chinese	15	(143)	3	(59)	-	(11)	18	(213)
English	5	(693)	1	(1 059)	-	(311)	6	(2 063)
French	33	(1 785)	-	(1 786)	-	(458)	33	(4 029)
Russian	28	(232)	2	(138)	3	(73)	33	(443)
Spanish	32	(1 208)	4	(688)	2	(268)	38	(2 164)
Total	123	(4 368)	12	(3 856)	7	(1 188)	142	(9 412)

Notes

1/ A/C.5/36/2.

2/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Thirty-sixth Session, Supplement No. 7A (A/36/7/Add.1-21), addendum 2.

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