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OFFICE OF THE UNITED NATIONS DISASTER RELIEF CO-ORDINATOR

PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 1976-1977

Administrative and financial implications of
the draft resolution contained in document
A/C.2/31/L.55 as orally amended

Eighteenth report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative
and Budgetary Questions

1. The Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions has considered the statement by the Secretary-General (A/C.5/31/73) on the administrative and financial implications of the draft resolution (A/C.2/31/L.55), as orally amended, recommended for adoption by the Second Committee at its 59th meeting on 3 December 1976. In its consideration of the question, the Advisory Committee also had before it the report of the Secretary-General on the financing of emergency relief assistance and technical co-operation activities of the Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator (A/C.5/31/72).

2. As the Secretary-General points out in his statement (A/C.5/31/73, para. 11), adoption of the draft resolution recommended by the Second Committee would have no financial implications for the programme budget for 1976-1977. The Fifth Committee may wish to advise the General Assembly accordingly.

3. As regards the programme budget for 1978-1979, however, the Secretary-General estimates that financial implications of between \$690,000 and \$1,380,000 (at 1977 rates) for the biennium may arise pursuant to operative paragraph 5 of the draft resolution recommended by the Second Committee, which requests the Secretary-General:

"In formulating his draft programme budget for the biennium 1978-1979, to include provision for the financing from the regular budget of a substantial proportion of those core programme administrative activities currently financed from the Trust Fund established in pursuance of General Assembly

resolution 3243 (XXIX), as an initial step in the process of ensuring a sound financial basis for the Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator and to enable the General Assembly to reach a final decision on this matter on the basis of the fullest possible information."

4. The Advisory Committee notes that, in a statement made at the 54th meeting of the Second Committee, on 24 November, the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator indicated that:

"The core programme does not include technical assistance at the regional or country levels and similar activities such as training seminars. It also excludes earmarked contributions for specific activities from various sources, but most significantly from the UNEP. The annual cost of the core programme is estimated to be \$2,180,000, of which 60 per cent will be allocated to relief co-ordination; 30 per cent to preparedness and 10 per cent to prevention. Of this total, about \$800,000 or some 37 per cent, is carried on the regular budget and the remainder, some 63 per cent, on the Trust Fund" (A/C.2/31/15, p. 2).

5. The Advisory Committee notes from the Secretary-General's report (A/C.5/31/72, annex) that expenditure during the nine months ended 30 September 1976 on strengthening the capability of UNDRO amounted to approximately \$673,000, over 78 per cent of which consisted of salaries and common staff costs. The Committee was informed by the representatives of the Secretary-General that expenditure on staff would have been higher, were it not for the vacancy situation early in 1976. Full costs for a biennium were estimated by the Secretary-General at about \$2,760,000.

6. The estimate of between \$690,000 and \$1,380,000 for 1978-1979 referred to in paragraph 3 above corresponds to between one quarter and one half of those full costs (A/C.5/31/73, paras. 8 and 9).

7. Inasmuch as the biennium 1978-1979 falls within the period covered by the medium-term plan for the period 1978-1981, the Advisory Committee recalls that the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination recommended in its report on the medium-term plan that disaster relief should have an average biennial real growth area (taking into account also the extrabudgetary resources allocated to this programme). 1/

8. In a statement before the Second Committee at its 59th meeting, on 3 December, during the discussion of agenda item 64 (A/C.2/31/SR.59, para. 28) and also before the Fifth Committee at its 17th meeting, on 27 October, during the discussion of agenda item 93 (A/C.5/31/SR.17, para. 3), the Controller and Assistant Secretary-General, Office of Financial Services, indicated that, in preparing the proposed programme budget for 1978-1979, the Secretary-General would be guided by the need to maintain the over-all increase in the regular budget within the limit of a growth rate of 2 per cent, exclusive of the anticipated effects of currency fluctuations and inflation.

1/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Thirty-first Session, Supplement No. 38 (A/31/38), para. 88, table.

9. In paragraph 1 of its resolution 31/93 of 14 December, the General Assembly has accepted the medium-term plan "in the light of the recommendations and conclusions contained in the reports of the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination and the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions as the framework for the preparation of the 1978-1979 programme budget".

10. In the circumstances, and bearing in mind paragraph 8 of the same resolution, in which the General Assembly "reaffirms that supplementary estimates for expansion of existing activities or initiation of new programmes will be considered only after specific approval of the General Assembly", the Advisory Committee is of the opinion that paragraph 5 of the draft resolution recommended by the Second Committee will have to be interpreted in the context of the over-all policies laid down by the Assembly to guide the Secretary-General in the preparation of his programme budget proposals.

11. The Advisory Committee, for its part, will bear those over-all policies in mind when it considers, and makes recommendations on, the proposed programme budget for 1978-1979.

12. The Committee recalls that, when it reported on the administrative and financial implications of the draft resolution which was subsequently adopted by the General Assembly as resolution 3243 (XXIX) of 29 November 1974, it stated with reference to paragraphs 1 and 2 thereof relating to strengthening the capability of the Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator that

"The General Assembly cannot be asked at this stage to commit itself in advance - even implicitly - to budgetary provision for an operation the size and cost of which will depend on voluntary contributions received in 1975-1977. The Committee trusts, therefore, that, in preparing the plan and budget requested in operative paragraph 3 of the draft resolution, the Secretary-General will, to the maximum extent possible, synchronize the number and duration of employment contracts concluded to the actual and foreseeable availability of voluntary funds. To the degree that the Secretary-General is successful in this synchronization, the General Assembly will benefit from a resultant flexibility if and when voluntary contributions cease to be sufficient to support the enlarged Office." 2/

13. In the course of its consideration of the proposed programme budget for 1978-1979, the Committee will examine any request by the Secretary-General for additional posts for core programme administrative activities in the Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator on the basis of the justifications in terms of functions and grading to be furnished by the Secretary-General.

14. In conclusion, the Advisory Committee once again draws to the attention of the General Assembly the growing practice whereby matters which are within the competence of the Fifth Committee are considered and decided on in other Main Committees and other bodies.

2/ Ibid., Twenty-ninth Session, Supplement No. 8 (A/9608 and Add.1-23), document A/9608/Add.11, para. 5.