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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 9th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. MAYCOCK (Barbados)

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

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The meeting was called to order at 3.20 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 115: SCALE OF ASSESSMENTS FOR THE APPORTIONMENT OF THE EXPENSES OF THE UNITED NATIONS: REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON CONTRIBUTIONS (continued) (A/39/11 and Corr.1)

1. Mr. FALL (Mauritania), after noting that the real capacity of States to pay should remain the fundamental criterion on which the scale of assessments was based, pointed out that the developing countries' capacity to pay had been seriously diminished because of the international economic situation. It was therefore all the more disappointing to note that attempts to take account of a complete range of socio-economic indicators had not been conclusive since the results obtained appeared to be less advantageous for most of the developing countries than was the present allowance formula. His delegation approved in principle the raising of the upper limit used to calculate the allowance formula. That the burden of financing the relief should fall to the industrialized countries was fair since the developing countries had to devote a considerable part of their earnings to the development effort. It was necessary to place a limit on increases in rates of assessment from one scale to another, and his delegation therefore approved of revised scheme III set forth in paragraph 49 of the report of the Committee on Contributions. It had no objection to the retention of the 10-year base period, but would prefer a five-year extension, which would have made it possible to reflect the economic situation of countries more accurately. In conclusion, his delegation supported the recommendation contained in paragraph 69 of the Committee's report.

2. Mr. KOCATURK (Turkey) said that his delegation was not satisfied with the preliminary results of the thorough study on alternative methods to assess the real capacity of Member States to pay carried out by the Committee on Contributions. Given the complexity of the question, his delegation felt that new variants should be considered in order to reach a formula which would yield a scale fair to all Member States. It nevertheless supported that Committee's recommendations with regard to the method based on national income and the low per capita income allowance formula, the retention of the 10-year statistical base period, the establishment of an upper limit of \$2,200 for the allowance formula and the use of a relief gradient of at least 85 per cent. The mechanism set forth in paragraph 49 of the Committee's report should be considered further.

3. Mr. ZSOHAR (Hungary) said that only per capita national income, which was the basis of the present methodology, could indicate with accuracy the real capacity of States to pay. The different economic and social indicators considered by the Committee on Contributions could, at best, constitute a supplementary criterion if adequate and comparable data were available. With regard to the conversion method based on the use of purchasing power parities and price-adjusted exchange rates, his delegation considered that it would be no improvement over the present method and would leave room for subjective decisions. An established base period should be retained for at least two or three consecutive periods, and the 10-year base should therefore be retained for the next scale. His delegation approved of the raising of the upper limit used in calculating the low per capita income allowance formula.

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(Mr. Zsohar, Hungary)

4. His delegation considered that the methods to avoid excessive variations of individual rates of assessment between two successive scales had more disadvantages than advantages and went against the principle that relative capacity to pay should serve as a basis for establishing the scale of assessments. Since convertible currency reserves and variations in terms of trade had a considerable effect on the capacity to pay of all States, the Committee on Contributions should take due account of those two factors. The financial burden on Member States should be eased by strict control and limitation on the United Nations budget and by increasing its effectiveness, not by artificial changes in the principles used in calculating the scale of assessments. His delegation therefore fully supported the Committee's conclusion that the current methodology must be used in the establishment of the next scale of assessments.

5. Mr. NUEK (Malaysia) said that, on the basis of the study carried out by the Committee on Contributions, the present method of calculating assessments remained the most equitable. It should therefore be retained for the next scale of assessments, while other possible variants should continue to be studied. His delegation also supported the retention of the 10-year statistical base period and the raising to \$2,200 of the upper limit used in calculating the allowance formula.

6. Mr. ORTEGA (Mexico) said that the results of the efforts by the Committee on Contributions to find new methods of assessing the real capacity of Member States to pay had been disappointing because short-term indicators had not been properly taken into consideration. He pointed out that, of the seven elements that the General Assembly, in its resolution 36/231 A, had determined should be taken into account in order to prevent anomalous assessments, four had to do with the particular situation of Member States, especially the developing countries and those whose earnings depended heavily on one or a few products (subparas. (a), (c), (d) and (e) of para. 1). While recognizing the difficulty of reconciling the two contradictory requirements mentioned by the Committee on Contributions in paragraphs 35 and 37 of its report, namely to lessen the effects of economic fluctuations and to take account of the actual economic situation of Member States at the time of payment of contributions, he felt that that Committee should continue its work in the manner proposed in paragraphs 26 and 54 of its report. He urged that prime importance should be given to economic factors, a need that had been recognized by some members of the Committee (paras. 25 and 36 of the report). It was all the more essential to improve the methodology since the application of the present formula, without indicators, would result in increasing the assessments of all developing countries except one. In that regard, it would be useful to know the effects of raising to \$2,200 the upper limit for the application of the allowance formula. In carrying out its task, the Committee on Contributions should perhaps seek the assistance of other United Nations organs.

7. He welcomed that Committee's decision, recorded in paragraph 54 of its report, to take account of external indebtedness, and pointed out that the relevant data - of which data concerning debt servicing were no doubt the most important - were easy to gather and compare.

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(Mr. Ortega, Mexico)

8. It seemed that, given the reservations expressed by the majority of delegations, consensus might be reached on the shortening of the statistical base period. He agreed with the Committee on Contributions that a decision on the subject of limiting extreme variations was timely (para. 49 of the report). The adoption of a limits formula would make the retention of the 10-year statistical base period less essential. There was no connection between the adoption of such a formula and recourse to the informal mechanism of relief measures to correct the most flagrant anomalies arising from the application of the present allowance formula.

9. Mr. MALIK (India) said that the Committee on Contributions had not recommended that socio-economic indicators should be incorporated in the assessment methodology since the results obtained on that basis would entail raising the assessments of the majority of developing countries and lowering those of the developed countries. The results might well have been appreciably different if the values for the economic indicators or the norms used to gauge the different levels of development had been applied more realistically. For example, it was not necessary to include in the calculations the socio-economic indicator values of a developing country (Brazil), which distorted the methodology used. Another approach might consist in establishing an initial scale of assessments on the basis of the current methodology and then incorporating the socio-economic indicators so as to obtain a final scale which would reflect the different stages of development much more accurately.

10. It seemed that the methods of conversion based on the use of purchasing power parities (PPP) and price-adjusted exchange rates would make it possible to offset a number of disparities arising from inflation and exchange rate conversion. However, because of the lack of adequate benchmark data, the Committee on Contributions had not considered it possible to apply, for the moment, the PPP method. Since it was obvious that there were many diverse views among Member States on that question, his delegation concurred with the Committee that it was necessary to give further consideration to the relative advantages of the traditional conversion method and the proposed new method. It was, moreover, surprised that the assessments of a certain number of countries showed a tendency to decrease while their national incomes had experienced steady growth. The Committee on Contributions should clarify that anomaly and suggest means for corrective action.

11. With regard to the methods to avoid excessive variations of individual rates of assessment between two successive scales, his delegation felt that any limits formula would distort the measurement of the capacity of States to pay. Should the proposed formula be adopted by the General Assembly, his delegation would like the Committee on Contributions to clarify the possible role of the traditional mitigation process. It felt, in any case, that the question required further study in view of the number of issues still to be settled.

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(Mr. Malik, India)

12. It was regrettable, given that disparities in the scale of assessments entailed considerable variation in the amount of contributions, that a small group of countries should have been in a position to exert pressures that were not necessarily prompted by a concern for fairness or by the desire to strengthen the United Nations.

13. Pending the formulation of other methods of establishing the scale of assessments, his delegation supported the conclusions of the Committee on Contributions set forth in paragraphs 51 and 52 of its report.

14. Mr. NUGALI (Saudi Arabia) said it was intolerable that, in spite of the undeniable efforts of the Committee on Contributions since 1969, the current methodology must, according to the conclusions set out by the Committee in paragraph 51 of its report, necessarily be used in the establishment of the next scale of assessments. That methodology penalized a number of countries, including Saudi Arabia, whose rate of assessment had increased by 1.333 per cent over the last seven years despite the provisions of paragraph 4 (c) of General Assembly resolution 36/231 A. Fairness required that, during the present session, the Fifth Committee should adopt some of the measures proposed by the Committee on Contributions in order to establish a more equitable scale and, in particular, that it should decide to limit the increases between two successive scales in accordance with revised scheme III devised by the Committee on Contributions (combining percentage limits with percentage point limits). That scheme, which established the highest percentage variation at 30 per cent, would be applied in establishing the scale of assessments for 1986-1988 and would also be applied, with effect from 1 January 1980 at least, to countries whose rates of assessment had increased considerably, particularly since 1976.

15. In keeping with the same concern for fairness, a more just and effective way of applying the per capita income allowance formula would be to take into account not only per capita income but also the gross national product for which an upper limit would also be established. Thus, several categories of countries would be created, with relief and the burden of financing relief shared on the basis of the two criteria and with low-GNP countries which had the same per capita income benefiting from more substantial relief. The Fifth Committee should request the Committee on Contributions to undertake the necessary studies, making a clear distinction between developed countries and developing countries.

16. With regard to countries whose revenues were mainly derived from the consumption of a non-renewable asset, the Fifth Committee should recommend the adoption, in good time for the calculation of the next scale of assessments, of mechanisms to adjust downwards the national income of such countries. In order better to reflect the present economic situation of Member States, the statistical base period should be reduced to three years. Whatever the length of the base period ultimately adopted, a decision should be made not to raise the rate of assessment of countries whose average national income over the previous three years was lower than their average national income for the three years preceding that. Such a measure was required given the fact that the scale of assessments was reviewed every three years.

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(Mr. Nuqali, Saudi Arabia)

17. With regard to the efforts of the Committee on Contributions to find indicators of the degree of development of Member States, his delegation considered that studies should concentrate on long-term social and economic concerns. Use should be made of the seven indicators mentioned in paragraph 23 of the Committee's report as soon as possible, since the results obtained from those indicators (with the exclusion of per capita income), and set forth in column (12) of annex III to the report, were fair to all Member States.

18. Mr. AL-JARRAH (United Arab Emirates) said he had no objection to the proposal to raise the upper limit used for the allowance formula to \$2,200, as long as the burden of financing the relief was borne entirely by the developed countries. The longer the base period, the better it reflected the economic situation of countries; the 10-year base period should therefore be retained. The scheme which made use of percentage limits and percentage point limits was acceptable since it seemed to guarantee, up to a point, that there would be no excessive variations of rates of assessment between two successive scales. He agreed with the Committee on Contributions that it was necessary to examine further the advantages of the method of conversion based on price-adjusted exchange rates and purchasing power parities.

19. It was regrettable that the attempt to take into account socio-economic indicators in assessing the real capacity of States to pay should have produced negative results. Those indicators should be studied further with a view to arriving at a formula which would be favourable to the developing countries and which would not involve an additional burden for them. Like the representatives of Iraq and of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, he called the attention of the Committee on Contributions to the fact that the current methods of calculation tended to overestimate the national income of countries which, like the United Arab Emirates and other oil-producing countries, derived the greater part of their income from the exportation of a non-renewable resource. That factor should be taken into account when those States' capacity to pay was being determined.

20. Mr. BHATIA (Pakistan) said that his delegation was not in favour of using socio-economic indicators, given that the attempts to apply them showed that the majority of developed countries would experience a lowering of their rates of assessment while the majority of the developing countries would see theirs increase. The Committee on Contributions should endeavour to solve the problems posed by the fact that comparable national data were not available for many countries by, for example, emulating the methods used by other organizations - within as well as outside the United Nations system - to apportion the burden of expenditures among their members.

21. Given the gravity of the economic crisis confronting the developing countries, including Pakistan, which, among other acute problems, had to assume the burden of more than 3 million refugees, any formula leading to an increase in the rates of assessment of the developing countries certainly did not reflect their real capacity to pay. He hoped that, at its next session, the Committee on Contributions would take account of the particular situation of countries which derived the greater part of their income from the exportation of a small number of products, which were mainly depletable natural resources.

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(Mr. Bhatia, Pakistan)

22. His delegation would go along with the conclusion of the Committee in paragraph 51 of its report. As to the recommendations in paragraph 52, it believed that the statistical base period should be shortened in order to provide a more objective picture of the current situation of Member States. However, it was willing to join in any consensus aimed at raising the upper limit of the per capita income allowance formula to \$2,200 provided that the burden of relief was redistributed in a fair manner.

23. While his delegation supported the idea of devising a mechanism to limit the excessive variations in rates of assessment between two successive scales, it felt that the formula stipulating the combination of percentage limits and percentage point limits should be studied more carefully so that a formula acceptable to all Member States could be arrived at.

24. Finally, he stressed the importance of the Committee being composed of independent experts.

25. Mr. KEYES (United States of America), referring to the technical aspects of setting assessments, said that on the whole he was satisfied with the manner in which the Committee on Contributions had done its work, even if he was not convinced by the arguments advanced in the report to explain why the assessment of the members of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA) continued to decline while their growth rate continued to increase. He wished to know the source of the statistics used to justify that disparity.

26. The principles which guided the Committee's work were political in nature and, consequently, the fact that there was currently no consensus on those principles was of special concern to the United States and should concern all Member States.

27. The system currently used for assessing contributions, based on "capacity to pay", was unbalanced, since it created a gap between the majority of Member States, which contributed little to the financing of the Organization but determined through their vote how the money was spent, and the small number of States which financed the Organization yet were hardly allowed to say a word when decisions were being taken. Thus, the United States paid an assessment that was 2,500 times as much as that of 79 other Member States; it represented a sum equal to the total contributions of 149 Member States.

28. "Capacity to pay" was the principle on which assessments had been based since the founding of the Organization. Originally, that might have been the best solution. However, the United Nations had evolved, and so had the concept of capacity to pay. The United States was therefore convinced that the current system no longer served the interests of the Organization, that it was an impediment to dialogue and consensus, and was a serious threat to the future of the Organization.

29. The reason for the current malaise concerning the sharing of financial responsibility within the Organization was that Member States had not lived up to the fundamental principles on which it was based, and would admit as much if they

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(Mr. Keyes, United States)

were honest with themselves. The Charter had of course recognized that not all States were equal, but laid down the principle of the sovereign equality of Member States, which meant that they enjoyed equal rights in the Organization but also accepted equal responsibilities.

30. The concept of collective responsibility for the Organization had been eroded over the years with the emergence of political blocs (the Group of Eastern European States, the Group of 77 and the European Economic Community) whose rigid solidarity harmed the Organization. The majority of Member States now sought to preserve their short-term political and economic self-interests rather than the well-being of the Organization. The current system of assessments was imposed on the main contributors by vote. It was a system which in many respects defied the principle of sovereign equality and fairness.

31. The lack of incentive for self-restraint inherent in the current system of assessments seriously threatened the long-term viability of the United Nations. Seventy-nine Member States paid a contribution so small that no amount of additional spending bothered them. For example, the new construction for the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) would be financed mainly by the United States, which would pay close to \$20 million, while the ECA countries as a whole would pay only about 1 per cent of the cost. How could it be expected under such circumstances that those countries, to cite just one example, would show restraint?

32. Pushed by its "subsidized majority" the General Assembly for several years had sought not to correct the faults in the system, but to compound them. When the developing countries had been growing rapidly, the General Assembly had been induced to lengthen the statistical base period in order to continue to take into account the poverty that had preceded that growth. Measures had been proposed at the current session to increase the income allowance formula in favour of countries with a low per capita income. It had now reached the point where 80 per cent of Member States benefited from that formula. Even more recently, the Committee on Contributions had been instructed to try to manipulate a variety of social and economic indicators aimed at increasing the subsidy for developing countries. It had been unable to do so.

33. It would be illusory to think that the main contributors, who up to the present had demonstrated remarkable patience, would accept indefinitely a situation in which their obligations were disproportionate to their rights. Altruism had limits. To press those limits was to invite the main contributors to take unilateral action to redress that situation, a move that would be likely if current trends continued unchanged. Sad to note, the countries which stood to lose the most if the United Nations was destroyed were the very ones that were doing everything to destroy it.

34. The question was what could be done about that problem. In the short run, the trend towards granting additional benefits must be reversed. In that regard, it was worthwhile commenting on two recommendations in the Committee's report. The first concerned increasing the per capita income limit from \$2,100 to \$2,200. Most

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(Mr. Keyes, United States)

developing countries currently received, under the income allowance formula, a benefit at least equal to that received when the system had begun in 1948. His delegation believed that the Fifth Committee should reject the proposed increase in the limit. Secondly, the Committee on Contributions had recommended continuing the 10-year statistical base period. His delegation was convinced that that practice distorted the calculation of national income by taking the past too much into account in relation to the present. A five-year period would avoid drastic short-term fluctuations in assessments while better reflecting the current situation. His delegation therefore urged that the statistical base period be moved back to five years and be held there.

35. In the long term the Fifth Committee must re-examine some of the methods which the Committee on Contributions had proposed for consideration at the thirty-eighth session. In any case, capacity to pay was not a good criterion for establishing the scale of assessments, which should not be a mechanism for transferring wealth from the rich to the poor. Such a concept of assessment was contrary to the spirit of the Charter and tarnished the image of the Organization with the public. All Member States must display a spirit of co-operation in the search for viable solutions to ensure the survival of the United Nations.

AGENDA ITEM 109: PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 1984-1985 (continued)

First report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (continued) (A/39/7)

Meetings in Addis Ababa and Bangkok

36. Mr. GARRIDO (Philippines) asked when the report of the Secretary-General on the planned expansion of the ESCAP conference facilities would be issued.

37. Mr. FORAN (Controller) replied that it was being submitted to the Advisory Committee in two to three weeks.

Satellite communications for peace-keeping and emergency relief activities of the United Nations

38. Mr. GARRIDO (Philippines) asked under which section of the budget the proposed appropriations for satellite communications would be made.

39. Mr. FORAN (Controller) replied that they would be distributed among several sections which could not be indicated at that time, since the report which was to be submitted to the Advisory Committee was still in the process of being drafted.

Parking in the United Nations garage

40. Mr. MURRAY (United Kingdom), Mr. PEDERSEN (Canada) and Mr. MARRON (Spain) asked whether the posts for one clerk and six Security Officers intended to augment the Garage Administration staff (A/39/7, para. 42) were really necessary and what the functions of those posts would be.

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41. Mr. FORAN (Controller), replying to the representatives of Canada, Spain and the United Kingdom, said that the proposed clerk post would make it possible to reduce the backlog which had arisen in the issuance of parking permits, for which there was currently a waiting list, and to monitor accounting operations more closely. As for the six Security Officers requested, two would patrol the garage between 4 p.m. and midnight, two more would do so from midnight to 8 a.m., and another two would be kept as back-up. They would make it possible to patrol the garage round the clock, which was not the case at present. The capacity of the garage had increased and the number of comings and goings had multiplied; it was therefore imperative that security should be reinforced.

42. Mr. NYGARD (United States of America) asked how those posts would be financed.

43. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions), replying to the United States representative, said that the proposed posts (costing \$242,600) would be financed from gross income from the garage (\$989,900).

44. Mr. MAJOLI (Italy) wondered where the chauffeurs who would no longer be allowed to park their own vehicles in the garage (para. 41 (d)) would park. Fortunately, he had been given to understand that the proposed measures were to be implemented only on an experimental basis and would be evaluated.

45. Mr. MARRON (Spain) said he did not understand why the parking of rented cars would be permitted only if they belonged to an established and bona fide rental company (para. 41 (e)).

46. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions), replying to the representative of Spain, explained that the rule was designed to prevent people from giving the name of a fictitious rental company when parking in the United Nations garage.

47. Mr. YONIS (Iraq) asked for details with regard to paragraph 41 (f), which sought to limit parking privileges to one car per delegate.

48. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) explained that representatives would be allowed to park only one car, even if they owned more than one. That recommendation was connected with the one in subparagraph (e) of the same paragraph, which in fact was designed to prevent a representative from renting one of his cars to someone else for purposes of parking in the garage. The host country issued only one set of DPL licence plates per diplomat and only cars with such plates could park in the garage.

49. Mr. TAKASU (Japan) said he wished to know whether the addition of six Security Officers to the Garage Administration staff was really justified when security, which was provided by two Officers at present, seemed to be satisfactory.

50. Mr. FORAN (Controller) said that the six Officers would be responsible for patrolling the garage between 4 p.m. and 8 a.m., which the two Officers could not do efficiently.

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51. Mr. ZIDOUEMBA (Burkina Faso) asked why delegation chauffeurs would no longer be allowed to park their own cars in the garage in parking places vacated by official cars, as recommended in paragraph 41 (d); that would inconvenience not only chauffeurs but diplomats as well.

52. Mr. FORAN (Controller) said that the measure was intended to prevent parking places from being occupied 24 hours a day.

53. Mr. MURRAY (United Kingdom) said he wished to have it made clear that the addition of six Security Officers to the Garage Administration staff would entail no additional appropriations under section 28 of the programme budget, but a reduction under income section 3.

54. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) said that there would be a reduction in income section 3. However, thanks to the approved fee increase, the garage operation would result in net earnings.

55. The CHAIRMAN suggested that the Fifth Committee should recommend to the General Assembly that it should endorse the recommendations in paragraphs 41-43 of the Advisory Committee's report. Implementation of the recommendations in paragraph 42 would entail an increase in operating costs in the amount of \$242,600 (gross) under income section 3 (Revenue-producing activities), which would be partially offset by the inclusion of an amount of \$43,900 under income section 1 (Income from staff assessment). If he heard no objection, he would take it that the Committee wished to adopt that suggestion.

56. It was so decided.

57. The CHAIRMAN suggested that the Fifth Committee should take note with satisfaction of the Advisory Committee's report in so far as the other matters dealt with in section K were concerned.

58. It was so decided.

Revised estimates under section 29 A (Chinese as a working language of the General Assembly and the Security Council) (A/C.5/39/12)

59. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions), introducing the Secretary-General's report in document A/C.5/39/12, recalled that the General Assembly had decided in resolution 3189 (XXVIII) that Chinese would be included among the working languages of the General Assembly and the Security Council. However, all the required facilities were not yet provided. At the Advisory Committee's spring session, the Secretary-General had requested and obtained the Advisory Committee's concurrence to enter into additional commitments in an amount not exceeding \$998,400, in connection with unforeseen and extraordinary expenses for the biennium 1984-1985, for the purpose of providing Chinese language facilities on a full-service basis in 1984. The Secretary-General's request had concerned the formation, as a temporary measure, of

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(Mr. Mselle)

a nucleus of a Chinese Verbatim Unit for the period from 1 August to 31 December 1984, as well as the approval of 24 temporary posts for the period from 1 October to 31 December 1984 in order to ensure the provision of Chinese verbatim records during the General Assembly session.

60. In his report (A/C.5/39/12), the Secretary-General requested that the staff resources authorized by the Advisory Committee for 1984 should be approved for 1985. The Advisory Committee had approved that request, which appeared in paragraph 7 of the report, and recommended the inclusion of an additional appropriation in the amount of \$1,114,400 under section 29 A (Department of Conference Services, Headquarters) and of an amount of \$137,000 under section 31 (Staff assessment) to be offset by the inclusion of an equivalent amount under income section 1 (Income from staff assessment).

61. The Advisory Committee would consider the final proposals for the restructuring of the Chinese language services when they were submitted to it by the Secretary-General.

62. The CHAIRMAN suggested that the Fifth Committee should approve the inclusion of an additional appropriation in the amount of \$1,114,400 under section 29 A (Department of Conference Services, Headquarters) and an amount of \$137,000 under section 31 (Staff assessment), to be offset by the inclusion of an equivalent amount under income section 1 (Income from staff assessment). If he heard no objection, he would take it that the committee wished to adopt that suggestion.

63. It was so decided.

64. Mr. NYGARD (United States of America) said that his delegation had joined in the consensus in the hope that the necessary appropriations could be made from within existing resources.

The meeting rose at 5.50 p.m.