

40. His delegation therefore felt that, in future, all amendments to the Staff Rules proposed by the Secretary-General and which entailed financial implications should be considered by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions and submitted to the Fifth Committee and to the General Assembly for approval. His delegation reserved the right to make recommendations in future concerning amendments to various Staff Rules.

41. The CHAIRMAN said he assumed that the Committee wished to recommend to the General Assembly that it should take note of the amendments reported by the Secretary-General in document A/C.5/L.1514.

*It was so decided.*

*Differential treatment based upon sex under the Staff Regulations and Staff Rules (A/C.5/1519)*

42. Mr. OUEÐRAOGO (Upper Volta) noted that although the Secretary-General recognized that a so-called “distinction” based on sex was made in two fields—namely, travel expenses and separation payments—he had not suggested ways of ensuring equal treatment to all staff members. Despite the statement in paragraph 31 of his report (A/C.5/1519) to the effect that there appeared to be a compelling reason for eliminating present distinctions—which seemed to cast doubt on whether the Secretary-General entirely subscribed to that view—he assumed that the Secretary-General did intend to propose relevant amendments to the Staff Rules to achieve that purpose. His delegation would have preferred to see positive measures taken at the current session so that their financial implications could have been included in the biennial budget to be adopted by the General Assembly; however, it was prepared to bow to the arguments put forward in paragraph 32 in favour of deferring a decision to the twenty-ninth session of the General Assembly. In the meantime, the Assembly must state unequivocally that the differential treatment mentioned in paragraphs 12 to 25 of the report

must be eliminated without prejudice to the rights of male staff members. In that connexion he asked the representative of the Secretary-General to clarify what was meant by the expression “agreed proposal” in paragraph 32 of the report and whether revising the definition of “dependants” was likely to raise difficulties for certain organizations. If so, which organizations were they and what were the reasons for their difficulties?

43. On the understanding that the measures to be taken in regard to differential treatment would be comprehensive and would not prejudice the established rights of male staff members, his delegation would agree that the Committee should approve the Secretary-General’s report by consensus.

44. Mr. DAVIDSON (Under-Secretary-General for Administration and Management) said that the reference in paragraph 32 to the need for discussions and for a common set of proposals had been made in recognition of previous United Nations resolutions which called on agencies that were members of the common system to adopt uniform treatment standards for their staff with regard to rules and working conditions. He did not anticipate that any difficulties would arise in that regard. The results of the discussions with the other agencies would be reported to the General Assembly at the twenty-ninth session and, if any difficulties did arise, it would then be up to the General Assembly to decide whether the circumstances would justify departing from the rules of the common system.

45. The CHAIRMAN proposed that the Committee should recommend to the General Assembly that it should take note of the report of the Secretary-General (A/C.5/1519), on the understanding that specific proposals for action would be submitted at the twenty-ninth session.

*It was so decided.*

*The meeting rose at 1 p.m.*

## 1626th meeting

Thursday, 13 December 1973, at 10.55 a.m.

*Chairman:* Mr. C. S. M. MSELLE (United Republic of Tanzania).

A/C.5/SR.1626

### AGENDA ITEM 86

*Personnel questions (continued):*

(b) *Other personnel questions: reports of the Secretary-General (continued) (A/9008/Add.21, A/C.5/1514, A/C.5/1519, A/C.5/1522, A/C.5/1548, A/C.5/1584/Rev.1 and Corr.1)*

*Proposal for provision by UNITAR of international staff training (A/9008/Add.21, A/C.5/1548)*

1. Mr. RHODES (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) pointed out that

the proposal before the Committee was similar in substance to the original staff college proposal which had been debated for the last two years, although smaller in scale. However, for the reasons stated in paragraphs 3 and 4 of its report (A/9008/Add.21), the Advisory Committee’s doubts concerning the proposal had still not been wholly allayed. More discussions were needed with the organizations concerned to determine whether they agreed with the view expressed in the Secretary-General’s report (A/C.5/1548), namely, that emphasis should be placed on the training of senior personnel. Considering that the announced contributions of \$50,000 per annum from both UNDP and the United Nations were conditional, UNITAR should start

simply with a pilot scheme within its existing training programme. Referring to paragraph 9 of the Advisory Committee's report, in which it was noted that UNITAR estimated it would spend at least \$433,000 on training activities in 1974, he said that, if UNITAR found it had not sufficient funds, the United Nations and other organizations and agencies could contribute from the funds they appropriated for training activities on a user-charge basis.

2. Mr. STOTTEMYER (United States of America) recalled that his delegation had consistently supported the concept of establishing a means to provide staff training for the entire United Nations system, and expressed regret at the fact that those responsible had failed so far to formulate a viable plan for establishing staff training on a more permanent basis which commended itself to the Advisory Committee and his own delegation. His delegation supported the recommendation that available funds should be used for staff training activities by UNITAR on a user-charge basis and hoped that, if the recommendation was accepted, the competent authorities within the United Nations system would intensify their efforts to elaborate a generally acceptable plan. Finally, his delegation fully supported the Advisory Committee's report.

3. Mr. MILLAR-CRAIG (Director of Administration, United Nations Institute for Training and Research) said that the comments of the representative of the United States would be given careful consideration. Placing his comments within the context of the report of the Advisory Committee, whose recommendations UNITAR had noted, he stated that the Executive Director still felt that the provision of interagency training at the appropriate level was very important for the United Nations system. In that connexion, he thought the general view was that training should not be limited to senior officials but should extend to those expected to assume responsibilities in the very near future. Secondly, he pointed out that, if the \$50,000 per annum requested by the Secretary-General was not forthcoming, it was very doubtful whether other agencies and organizations would make substantial contributions. The Executive Director was engaged in an extensive review of UNITAR training programmes with officials of UNDP and the United Nations in order to ensure co-ordination of the activities of the three bodies, and similar consultations would be held with other agencies and organizations. In the course of that review, UNITAR would consider what proportion of its own resources could be allocated to the international staff training programme; the earlier announcement that \$50,000 would be allocated to the programme had been based on the assumption that substantial contributions would be forthcoming from other organizations. Finally, he pointed out that there was a danger in embarking upon a project with insufficient funds and that if the project suffered as a result of excessive economizing it would be set back many years. However, he assured the Committee that UNITAR would approach the matter in a positive spirit.

4. The CHAIRMAN suggested that the Committee should recommend to the General Assembly that it should take note of the report of the Secretary-General (A/C.5/1548) and endorse the observations and conclusions of the

Advisory Committee contained in its report (A/9008/Add.21).

*It was so decided.*

*Convention on Privileges and Immunities of the United Nations (A/C.5/1584/Rev.1 and Corr.1)*

5. Mr. DAVIDSON (Under-Secretary-General for Administration and Management), introducing the note by the Secretary-General (A/C.5/1584/Rev.1 and Corr.1), said that it had originally been intended to provide for the extension of the provisions of articles V and VII of the Convention on Privileges and Immunities to the prospective members of the International Civil Service Commission and to officials who, though not staff members, occupied full-time positions in the Organization and were responsible directly to the General Assembly, namely, the eight members of the Joint Inspection Unit and the Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions. Since the establishment of the International Civil Service Commission had now been deferred, that category had been omitted from the document under consideration.

6. Paragraph 2 of the note pointed out that, although under article V, section 17, of the Convention the Secretary-General had the right to specify the categories of officials to which articles V and VII should apply, the General Assembly, in adopting its resolution 76 (I), had, in effect limited the application of the Convention to members of the staff of the United Nations, except those recruited locally. If the Committee decided to approve the Secretary-General's proposal, it could either include an appropriate paragraph on the subject in its report or submit to the General Assembly a draft resolution similar to resolution 76 (I), along the lines of the draft annexed to the note.

7. Mr. HARAN (Israel) said that, although he had absolutely no objection to the proposal, it would have been more appropriate, since the matter related to privileges and immunities rather than administrative and budgetary questions, if the advice of the Sixth Committee had been sought on the subject.

8. The CHAIRMAN suggested that the Committee should recommend to the General Assembly that it should adopt the draft resolution contained in the annex to the note by the Secretary-General (A/C.5/1584/Rev.1 and Corr.1).

*It was so decided.*

**AGENDA ITEM 12**

**Report of the Economic and Social Council [chapters V (sections A, B and E), XXV, XXVIII, XXIX and XXXI (sections D to F)] (A/9003 and Corr.1, A/C.5/1552)**

9. Mr. PALAMARCHUK (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that his delegation wished to reaffirm the statements made and the positions taken by representatives of the Soviet Union in the various organs on all the questions now under consideration by the Committee.

10. The CHAIRMAN suggested that the Committee should recommend to the General Assembly that it should

take note of the parts of the report of the Economic and Social Council (A/9003 and Corr.1) which had been referred to the Fifth Committee, as set out in document A/C.5/1552.

*It was so decided.*

#### AGENDA ITEM 79

**Proposed programme budget for the biennium 1974-1975 and medium-term plan for the period 1974-1977 (continued)** (for the earlier documentation, see 1589th meeting; A/9008/Add.9, 11, 12, 16, 17, 18, 24 and 25, A/9444, A/C.5/1509/Add.2, A/C.5/1540, A/C.5/1543 and Corr.1 and 2, A/C.5/1544, A/C.5/1545, A/C.5/1547, A/C.5/1554, A/C.5/1566 and Corr.1, A/C.5/1571-1573, A/C.5/1590, A/C.5/L.1146, A/C.5/L.1155, A/C.5/L.1158, A/C.5/L.1159)

#### *First reading (continued)\**

SECTION 27—OFFICE OF PUBLIC INFORMATION (A/8997, A/9006, A/9008, A/9008/Add.24, A/9036, A/9052, A/C.5/1547, A/C.5/1590)

*United Nations public information policies and activities (A/8997, A/9008/Add.24, A/9036, A/9052, A/C.5/1547, A/C.5/1590)*

11. The CHAIRMAN invited the Committee to consider, in first reading, section 27, concerning the Office of Public Information. In his report on the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1974-1975 (A/9006), the Secretary-General requested an amount of \$23,129,000 for section 27, and the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, in its first report (A/9008, paras. 27.25 and 27.26) on the programme budget, recommended a reduction of \$421,000 in that amount, or an appropriation of \$22,708,000. Since the Secretary-General estimated that \$9,000 of the \$231,000 reduction recommended by the Advisory Committee (*ibid.*, para. 63) in respect of reclassification of levels D-1 and below corresponded to section 27, the total amount recommended by the Advisory Committee for the section for the biennium was \$22,699,000.

12. Mr. RHODES (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions), referring to the first report of the Advisory Committee, said that the increase proposed by the Secretary-General for section 27 was about the same as that for the budget as a whole, namely, 19 per cent. He pointed out that section 27 excluded the information activities relating to the regional economic commissions, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, UNCTAD, UNIDO and UNEP as well as some smaller units in the Secretariat, and recalled that the Advisory Committee had already commented on the proliferation of information activities, which currently amounted to some \$24.5 million, or almost 5 per cent of the entire budget of the United Nations. He drew attention to paragraph 27.4, and to paragraph 27.7 of that report, in which the Committee stated that it had not had sufficient information to be able to assess the effectiveness

of the change from the media-based to the thematic approach. Paragraph 27.14 contained the Committee's comments on the request for additional Office of Information posts at Headquarters, while paragraphs 27.17, 27.18 and 27.19 contained the Committee's comments and counterproposals to the request for 13 additional information assistants. He also drew attention to paragraph 27.30 and to the reductions recommended in paragraph 27.25. No reduction had been recommended under the heading dealing with equipment, since that had been included in the budget on the basis previously approved.

13. The Advisory Committee's comments on the Centre for Economic and Social Information could be found in paragraphs 27.9 and 27.10; however, in connexion with the Secretary-General's proposal that 10 posts now in the Centre should be incorporated in the regular establishment at a cost of \$431,000 for the biennium, he drew attention to paragraph 9 of the Advisory Committee's twenty-fifth report (A/9008/Add.24), which recalled the Committee's comments on the Joint Inspection Unit's report on trust funds of the United Nations (see A/8840). Those comments were relevant, since the question at issue was a programme which had been started with voluntary contributions and was gradually being taken over by the regular budget. The Committee had suggested that only 5 posts should be transferred to the regular budget, at a cost of \$221,000 for the biennium. Finally, he drew attention to the recommendations contained in paragraph 13 of the Advisory Committee's twenty-fifth report.

14. Mr. AKATANI (Assistant Secretary-General for Public Information), reviewing some of the specific steps the Office of Public Information had taken to implement the General Assembly's directives, recalled that a department-wide work programme which merged the efforts of all divisions had been introduced in 1972, thus enabling the Office to concentrate on the problems of major concern to the Organization. The Office of Public Information had acted upon the recommendation of members of the Fifth Committee that its work programme should be regularly updated and in that connexion, he pointed to the Office's coverage of the Sudano-Sahelian drought and the deployment of the United Nations Emergency Force. The "task forces" whose role was described in the Secretary-General's report (A/C.5/1547) had facilitated the development of that work programme. Those new instruments and the new working methods he had mentioned enabled the Office to monitor its activities and ensure that its total effort was at all times adequately balanced in accordance with the Fifth Committee's recommendations. The Office of Public Information had been assisted in that direction by the fact that the geographical distribution of its staff had improved thanks to recent measures. The Office was doing its utmost to appoint the most highly qualified candidates to replace departing incumbents and was conscious of the continuing need to recruit high-level staff members from developing countries.

15. With regard to the Office's field establishment, he said that he had begun the review of which he had informed the Committee at the preceding session but had been unable to go into that matter as deeply as he would have wished. The main reason was that the budgetary limitations were such as to prevent him from proposing the improvements which

\* Resumed from the 1615th meeting.

would seem to be required. He therefore intended to proceed with the review and to place before the General Assembly at its twenty-ninth session a number of proposals designed to modernize and improve the Office's field operations. The proposals were likely to include suggestions of an administrative character designed to enhance the position and status of information centre directors.

16. He was pleased to be able to report that, thanks to certain measures taken at his request, the \$288,000 deficit suffered in the previous year by the Visitors' Section, the only revenue-producing activity falling within the purview of the Office of Public Information was likely to be wiped out in 1973.

17. The Secretary-General wished him to express his deep appreciation for the advice he and the Office received from the Consultative Panel on Public Information. The wisdom of the Fifth Committee's decision that the Panel should be enlarged and reactivated was now apparent. Resumption of the dialogue between the Panel and the Office had made it possible for the Office to gain a better understanding of the viewpoints of Member States, while Panel members could better judge both the potential and the difficulties with regard to public information. The point might well have been reached where the Panel could be used as a channel to examine the type of information activities relating to United Nations matters in which governmental services were themselves engaged. The Office could not lose sight of the provisions of General Assembly resolution 13 (I), which stated that United Nations information services should primarily assist and rely upon the co-operation of the established governmental and non-governmental agencies of information to provide the public with information about the United Nations. The Office must be more fully aware than it was at present of the governmental information programmes of concern to the United Nations. He would therefore like to explore with the Panel the means whereby that could be done, so that co-operation could be enhanced and the Office's production be still better geared to national needs.

18. Turning to the question of the staffing of the Centre for Economic and Social Information, he said he had long been concerned at the fact that certain Centre posts had had to be financed from voluntary contributions and at the consequent deterioration in the financial situation of the Centre. He reiterated his gratitude to those Governments which had made voluntary contributions, particularly the Government of the Netherlands, and also the Governments of Denmark, Norway and Sweden. However, it was difficult to deny the validity of the argument that such contributions should be used to finance programmes and not regular staff. Clearly, such staff should be financed from the Organization's regular budget, not from extra-budgetary funds. He had examined the matter in close consultation with the Under-Secretary-General for Administration and Management. Initially, he had considered the possibility of reallocating the resources of the Office of Public Information with a view to strengthening the Centre, but he had reluctantly come to the conclusion that that was not feasible. The crux of the problem was that the Office had been given many public information mandates by the General Assembly and other organs and, in relation to those mandates, its resources were spread extremely thinly.

Reallocation of resources inevitably would have entailed a severe curtailment or even discontinuation of certain mandated work in areas other than economic and social information, such as information on the Organization's political work, on disarmament, decolonization, *apartheid*, human rights, and so on.

19. Against that background, the Secretary-General had suggested to the Consultative Panel on Public Information that it would be necessary to transfer to the regular budget a number of posts at the Centre for Economic and Social Information currently financed from extra-budgetary funds. There had been both support for and opposition to that suggestion in the Panel. The Secretary-General had thereupon examined the problem once again and had decided to request a transfer to the regular budget of only half of the posts listed in his original submission to the Consultative Panel. The reduced request had been embodied in a report<sup>1</sup> which the Secretary-General had submitted to the Economic and Social Council at its fifty-first session. The Assistant Secretary-General had attended that session and he was fully satisfied that the debate had shown a consensus on the importance of mobilizing public opinion in support of the objectives of the International Development Strategy for the Second United Nations Development Decade. So far as the Secretary-General's proposals for the staff of the Centre were concerned, several representatives had expressed the view that a greater part of the Centre's financing should be borne by the regular budget, since voluntary contributions were of a temporary and promotional character and were not primarily meant to cover salaries. At the same time, some representatives had thought that the Secretary-General's proposals should be considered by the Advisory Committee and the Fifth Committee. Accordingly, the Economic and Social Council had unanimously decided to draw the attention of the General Assembly to the suggestions made in the report of the Secretary-General relating to the functions of the Centre.

20. It was his considered view that the Secretary-General's proposal, as further modified by the Advisory Committee, represented the absolute minimum that was required if one accepted the essential principle that information activities in the field of economic and social development should be regarded as a continuing responsibility of the Organization. There could be no doubt that the demands placed upon the Centre would increase even further in the future, in view of the rapid growth of the concern of the international community with such subjects as population, multinational corporations, the resources of the sea-bed and the ocean floor and human settlements. He therefore strongly urged the Committee to place at least part of the Centre of Economic and Social Information on an adequate and secure financial basis.

21. Mr. EKKER (Netherlands) recalled that, in its resolution 1806 (LV), the Economic and Social Council had drawn the General Assembly's attention to the Secretary-General's suggestions relating to the functioning of the Centre for Economic and Social Information and to the views on the subject expressed during the fifty-fifth session

<sup>1</sup> Documents E/5358 and Corr.1 and Add.1 of 21 May and 6 June 1973.

of the Council. Before turning to that subject, he felt compelled to point out that the Centre was only one component of the Office of Public Information; the Organization's information activities covered more than its activities in the economic and social fields. Yet, unlike the Centre, whose activities were thoroughly analysed and discussed in the Economic and Social Council, the Second Committee and other bodies, the Office as a whole had no other public forum than the Fifth Committee. Once more, however, the Committee had been faced with so many urgent problems that it was left with insufficient time for a thorough discussion on the activities of the Office. The Office did not often receive the public attention which the importance of its activities warranted. Such lack of public attention could not be offset by the functioning behind closed doors of the Consultative Panel on Public Information. His delegation therefore felt that, since the General Assembly had dealt at its current session with the budget for 1975 as well as 1974, a debate on the Office of Public Information as a whole should be scheduled for the early weeks of the twenty-ninth session. That would be easier if, in 1974, the Secretary-General's report on public information policies and activities were made available in September rather than towards the end of November.

22. Turning to the report of the Secretary-General and the observations of the Advisory Committee in its related report (A/9008/Add.24), he said that his delegation strongly supported Economic and Social Council resolution 1806 (LV), in which the Council had noted that public interest in development was not commensurate with the gravity and urgency of the task of implementing the International Development Strategy for the Second United Nations Development Decade. The Council had therefore made the request contained in paragraph 8 of the resolution. It had invited the Secretary-General to convene the Consultative Panel on Public Information, at an inter-governmental expert level, to help him to investigate the possibilities of making increased use of modern techniques of mass information in order to encourage the mobilization of public opinion. It should be noted, in that connexion, that the Panel, the sole body capable of supplying the Secretary-General with expert advice on the techniques of public information, developments in the field of mass communication, and so on, was still mainly a gathering of political rather than information and communications experts.

23. It was to be hoped that the Secretary-General, with the support of the Council's recommendation, would be able to convince Governments of the importance of supplying him with the expert advice needed to improve the implementation of the Strategy. His Government considered that the Panel's advice concerning implementation of the Strategy might be further improved if experts in the field of information on economic and social development participated along with experts on mass communication. In paragraph 7 of his report, the Secretary-General suggested that the Panel should monitor the role played by Member States in informing the peoples of the world about the work and purposes of the United Nations. In the opinion of his delegation, evaluation of the activities and methods of States would make it easier to determine the extent to which national and international efforts complemented each other. The availability of replies

to a questionnaire on the activities of governmental and non-governmental information services of Member States could considerably increase the effectiveness of the discussions at the forthcoming meeting of the Panel. His delegation welcomed the Centre's intention to continue the regional meetings of government officials responsible for information activities in the field of development. The effectiveness of such meetings would be increased if the participants were experienced in the field of development.

24. In the addendum to his report to the Economic and Social Council,<sup>2</sup> the Secretary-General had warned that public information projects initiated by the Centre would have to be severely curtailed as a result of the depletion of the reserves in the Trust Fund for Economic and Social Information and of rising staff costs. Voluntary contributions to the Trust Fund were obviously intended to finance development information projects, not regular United Nations staff. Despite that, 7 posts in the Professional category and 8 posts in the General Service categories—all of them related to functions of a continuing nature—were carried against the Fund. At its twenty-seventh session, the General Assembly had approved the reorganization of the Office of Public Information, as a result of which the Centre had been fully integrated in the Office. Accordingly, the staff required for that important, regular unit of the Office of Public Information should be carried against the regular budget. The Secretary-General's recommendations to the Economic and Social Council, however, had been much more modest. In conformity with the Advisory Committee's suggestion that the incorporation of the staff of the Centre should be approached gradually, the Secretary-General had proposed only that 5 of the 7 posts in the Professional category and 5 of the 8 posts in the General Service category should be brought under the regular budget. In paragraph 11 of its resolution 1806 (LV), the Economic and Social Council had drawn the attention of the General Assembly to those recommendations. The Council's action was understandable, for it was obvious that a regular unit of the Secretariat entrusted with so many important mandates should not be forced to defer implementation of those mandates for lack of regular budgetary funds.

25. The Advisory Committee had now recommended that the Fifth Committee should approve about half the funds requested for that purpose by the Secretary-General. His delegation naturally attached great value to the reports of the Advisory Committee but, in view of the serious consequences indicated by the Secretary-General in the last sentence of paragraph 10 of his report, it felt that the Secretary-General should give priority to finding means for the incorporation of the regular staff of the Centre within the framework of the regular budget. That could be done by postponing appointments in other segments of the Office of Public Information, whether at Headquarters or elsewhere. His delegation would further suggest that personnel provided by the Centre for projects under programmes for which special funds had been supplied should be financed out of such funds. His delegation would also appreciate receiving more detailed information on the effect of the Advisory Committee's recommendation on the Centre's projects. It suggested that in its report to the

<sup>2</sup> Document E/5358/Add.1, of 6 June 1973, para. 7.

General Assembly the Fifth Committee should endorse the Secretary-General's recommendations as proposed in paragraph 13 of his report and as amended by the Advisory Committee.

26. In conclusion, he announced that, subject to parliamentary approval, the Netherlands Government intended to make another contribution to the Trust Fund for Economic and Social Information for 1974.

27. Mr. JAIN (India) agreed with the representative of the Netherlands that at the twenty-ninth session the Committee should allow sufficient time early in the session for an exhaustive discussion of the activities of the Office of Public Information. That was important, because it was only through the Fifth Committee that the Office could give the General Assembly, as opposed to the Economic and Social Council, an account of its achievements.

28. It was essential that the Office of Public Information should fulfil its role adequately and satisfactorily. There was sometimes a tendency to think that the Office's primary role was to serve as a channel of information for delegations and to ignore its more important role, which was to keep the public informed about the work of the United Nations. A better balance between the Office's two roles was therefore called for, with more emphasis being placed on attempts to project the Organization's image throughout the world.

29. As a member of the Consultative Panel on Public Information, India welcomed the constructive use the Secretary-General had made of the Panel. It was to be hoped that discussions in the Panel would become even more frank, for it was as a result of a useful dialogue between members of the Panel and the Secretariat that operations of the Office would be improved. The Fifth Committee, too, should take account of the views expressed in the Panel, whose members were fully alive to the needs of Member States and knew how information about the work and purposes of the Organization could best be disseminated in their various regions. It was very difficult for persons working at Headquarters to take universally applicable decisions. The importance of adequate co-ordination between the information services of Member States and the Office was therefore obvious. His delegation was pleased to note that the Secretary-General had stressed that point in his report, and it interpreted the suggestion that the Panel should monitor the role played by Member States in the dissemination of information as meaning that there should be greater co-ordination between national and international information services.

30. There was much to be said for the thematic approach to the problems of information dissemination, but it should never be allowed to degenerate into an *ad hoc* approach to various subjects. The total information requirements of the Organization must be borne in mind at all times and account must always be taken of the needs and problems of the different regions.

31. That led to the question of the relationship of the Office of Public Information with other United Nations bodies. In the practical sphere, much still remained to be done to avoid duplication of the information activities of

the specialized agencies and of United Nations Headquarters. It would seem necessary for the Fifth Committee to recommend giving the Office a greater co-ordinating role, for there must be a judicious balance between information put out about activities specific to a given agency and information put out about global activities undertaken with a view to achieving the objectives of the International Development Strategy.

32. The representative of the Netherlands and the Assistant Secretary-General for Public Information had referred to the need for a review and appraisal of the Office's activities. In the opinion of his delegation, what was needed was an objective study of the use made of information put out by the United Nations. It was necessary to know whether the information put out by the Office had an impact on public opinion in the regions to which it was directed and, if not, how it could be improved. In the case of Security Council meetings held away from Headquarters, for instance, it had been said that by the time the Office's news releases were issued the first accounts of the proceedings had already been circulated in national press media which were not always as balanced as they should be. Attention should be paid to ways of speeding up United Nations news releases on certain meetings.

33. His delegation had often stressed the importance it attached to information activities relating to achievement of the objectives of the Second Development Decade. It therefore agreed with the Secretary-General that information activities in the field of economic and social development should be regarded as a continuing responsibility of the Organization. It was time for activities of the Centre for Economic and Social Information to be conceived and executed in the over-all framework of the Office of Public Information and for the Centre to be regarded as an integral part of the Office, so that it could benefit from the new approach being brought to bear on the Office's activities. His delegation was prepared to support the Advisory Committee's recommendations in the matter of staff of the Centre. It agreed with the Advisory Committee that a more cautious approach should be adopted to the conversion of posts in the Centre from extra-budgetary to established posts, since it was essential that the incorporation of the Centre into the regular budget should not result in a reduction of the voluntary contributions on which the Centre had thus far depended. At the fifty-fifth session of the Economic and Social Council, several delegations had referred to the fact that the populations of some developed countries believed that they supplied funds to be spent by others and received nothing in return. That erroneous impression must be corrected and the need for mass information was therefore even greater in developed than in developing countries. It was to be hoped that Governments would continue to make voluntary contributions to the Centre, which supplied information to the developed countries.

34. It appeared that a proposal had been made to upgrade posts in information centres abroad. There was such a centre in New Delhi and, in view of the size of India and its population, his delegation could only support the proposal.

35. In conclusion, he drew attention to the draft resolution (A/C.5/1590) recommended by the Second Committee

for adoption by the Fifth Committee, which had been made in a positive and constructive spirit. The members of the Second Committee had wished to point out that, in its press releases and other information activities, the Office should endeavour to further the cause of international economic co-operation. In some ways, the questions on which the Second Committee had reached decisions by consensus at the current session—the future of the international monetary system, international trade negotiations, a world food conference—were more important than the questions on which the Office traditionally issued news releases.

36. Mr. TAKAHASHI (Japan) observed that the Office of Public Information had the very important responsibility of promoting and disseminating both written and spoken material that would lead to increased understanding of the objectives and activities of the United Nations; it thus had a crucial role to play in furthering the substantive work of the United Nations, and he welcomed the significant progress made in improving its activities and operations. He urged further development of the thematic approach, which would result in more systematic management of all United Nations activities in the field of public information.

37. That by itself, however, was not enough to assure the smooth and efficient operation of the Office. For the complete fulfilment of its mandate, all information activities of the United Nations should be integrated in a single unit of the Secretariat. That would, of course, be a long-term task, and the immediate problem of the difficult financial situation confronting the Office could not be disregarded. His delegation had always urged the Office to do its best to achieve maximum operating efficiency with the limited financial resources available to it. Its workload had greatly increased over the past 10 years, in relation to the over-all expansion of United Nations activities, particularly in the field of economic development and social affairs. Yet, in striking contrast to increased appropriations in other fields, the proportion of the United Nations budget allocated to public information activities had decreased over the past 10 years from 10 per cent to about 4.6 per cent. In addition, voluntary contributions for the activities of the Centre for Economic and Social Information had also begun to decline. It was clearly time to make gradual, balanced increases in the funds provided under the regular budget for the activities of the Office of Public Information. Accordingly, he supported the Advisory Committee's recommendations.

38. Mr. CLELAND (Ghana) said that the main thrust of the Secretary-General's report was the need to strengthen the Centre for Economic and Social Information. Its capacity to fulfil its mandate was limited by the amount of extra-budgetary resources at its disposal, which unfortunately were now greatly depleted because donor countries were no longer willing to make voluntary contributions. To enable the Centre to continue its work of making the objectives of the United Nations more acceptable to its mostly European audience, the Secretary-General had proposed that 10 posts, previously financed from extra-budgetary resources, should be financed from the regular budget. In making that request, the Secretary-General had stressed the role of public opinion in support of the Second Development Decade, whose objectives had been endorsed

by the General Assembly as one of the four major themes to be given priority by the Office of Public Information. The excellence of the work being done by the Centre was demonstrated by the fact that the Scandinavian countries, at least in the field of multilateral economic and social assistance, came closest to the ideal policy of aid for developing countries. Accordingly, his delegation agreed with the Secretary-General that information activities in the field of economic and social development, and especially in support of the objectives of the International Development Strategy, should be regarded as a continuing responsibility of the United Nations; that was particularly relevant when the targets were far from being reached and the developed countries were not living up to their promises of support for developing countries.

39. The Advisory Committee, in considering the Secretary-General's request relating to the 10 posts, had referred to the report of the Joint Inspection Unit on trust funds of the United Nations (see A/8840) and had suggested that the provision of voluntary funds for programmes to which the donors attached particular importance could distort the order of priorities determined by the General Assembly. His delegation whole-heartedly supported those views, as it had indicated during the discussion of the report of the Joint Inspection Unit. In the present case, however, the General Assembly had instructed the Office of Public Information to give priority to the Second United Nations Development Decade, including the International Development Strategy, and the Centre for Economic and Social Information was expected to promote economic and social objectives among its European audience; the Trust Fund for Economic and Social Information could not, therefore, be regarded as distorting priorities established by the General Assembly. Accordingly, his delegation opposed the Advisory Committee's use of that argument in support of its decision to recommend approval of only some of the resources requested by the Secretary-General.

40. As his delegation had indicated during the general discussion on the proposed programme budget, the Office of Public Information was an ideal means to influence the minds of men and convince the public of the extreme importance of the task of the United Nations in making the world a better place. He therefore regretted that the Advisory Committee had been unable to approve all the requests for resources made by the Secretary-General. However, if the Assistant Secretary-General for Public Information could assure the Fifth Committee that the Office could operate effectively with the resources recommended by the Advisory Committee, he would be able to support its recommendations.

41. His delegation supported the proposal in document A/C.5/1590 inviting the Office of Public Information, and in particular the Centre for Economic and Social Information, to give greater publicity to important developments in the economic and social fields, including pertinent decisions and resolutions adopted by the Second Committee.

42. Mr. LOGINOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) agreed with the representative of the Netherlands that public information activities should in future be considered at the beginning of the session so that there would be time for a fuller discussion.

43. With regard to the Secretary-General's report, he welcomed the statement in paragraph 1 that it had been possible, as a result of decisions taken by the General Assembly at its twenty-sixth and twenty-seventh sessions, to initiate certain new working methods within the Office of Public Information which were already having a positive effect on the output of the Office, and that the views expressed by the Consultative Panel on Public Information had proved of great value to the Secretary-General and to the Assistant Secretary-General for Public Information in the management of the Office. Thematic task forces had been set up to deal with matters relating to international security, disarmament, decolonization and *apartheid*, human rights and the environment. Moreover, the in-depth discussions between the Office of Public Information and the Sub-Committee on Petitions and Information of the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples had proved useful. He hoped that such co-operation would be extended to other fields in order to ensure a more effective work programme. Attempts had also been made to economize, in view of the financial situation of the United Nations, and they should be continued and expanded.

44. He regretted that not all that could be done to enhance the efficiency of the Office of Public Information had been done, for the Office was still far from what Member States wished. He also regretted that the United Nations was still carrying on information activities which were not objective. At meetings of the Consultative Panel on Public Information he had cited specific cases of non-objective approaches to information activities. He drew the attention of the Committee to the weekly news summary of 26 October 1973 concerning the Middle East, which had reported the facts incorrectly; he trusted that the Office of Public Information would look into the matter. He also drew attention to the weekly news summary of 27 July 1973, which had referred to a statement submitted by the Permanent Mission of Israel to the United Nations relating to the work of the Committee established in pursuance of Security Council resolution 253 (1968). He stressed the fact that the weekly news summaries should provide information on the activities of United Nations organs and not reflect statements submitted by permanent missions. His delegation had frequently drawn attention to that aspect of information activities and he trusted that it would not be necessary to do so again.

45. In his report the Secretary-General requested more funds for the Centre for Economic and Social Information and stated that, if they were not made available, it would be necessary to curtail severely the projects on which the Centre embarked in the future. He requested detailed information on what projects would be affected; after all, the projects that might have to be curtailed might be those of marginal usefulness.

46. There was no doubt that information activities relating to economic and social affairs were extremely important, but the Fifth Committee should have concrete information on why additional funds were being requested. The Secretary-General had not provided adequate information in paragraph 7 of his report. He stated that the Centre had organized a series of meetings in Africa, Asia, Europe and

Latin America, with the government officials responsible for information activities in the field of development and that "it was felt" that useful dialogue, co-ordination and results had been produced by those meetings. More specific information should be provided. The question of the Centre had already been discussed by the Consultative Panel on Public Information, the majority of whose members had expressed doubts regarding the proposal in paragraph 7 of the Secretary-General's report and had stressed the point that, before any decision was taken, the work of the Centre and its programme should be carefully assessed and analysed. Such an analysis ought to have been carried out. He himself had some doubts about the programme of the Centre. It had instituted a task force on population, although there was already a Population Division in the Secretariat, an Office of the Secretary-General of the United Nations World Population Conference, 1974, and a United Nations Fund for Population Activities with in UNDP, all of which dealt with population questions and had staff providing information on population activities. Another area in which there was considerable duplication was education. Accordingly, he could not but agree with the Secretary-General's comment, at his press conference in Geneva on 5 July 1973, that there was a clear centrifugal tendency in the United Nations system and that it was essential to bring it back to a more central approach, because success could be achieved only if there was full co-ordination. The Centre for Economic and Social Information was intended to strengthen information activities in the economic and social fields, but UNDP and the United Nations Environment Programme had their own information services and the Office of Public Information also publicized United Nations activities in the economic and social fields as part of its general operations. The Centre had its own branches in Nairobi and Geneva, as did the Office of Public Information; he wondered why one United Nations unit should have two representatives in the same city. In that connexion, he drew attention to General Assembly resolution 2897 (XXVI) regarding the need for centralized control of information activities.

47. His delegation could not endorse the Secretary-General's request that 10 posts, currently financed from voluntary contributions, should be brought under the regular budget. In view of the current financial difficulties of the United Nations, it was essential that all duplication should be eliminated. That would not only be in the interest of the information services themselves but would also reduce the amount of funds required for information activities and the savings could then be channelled into development. Increasing the staff would not resolve the problem of how to deal with United Nations information activities; it would merely increase the cost. It was therefore necessary to analyse in detail the work of the Centre and its programmes, to eliminate all duplication and to determine whether the staff was competent.

48. With regard to the appropriation requested for equipment, he recalled that the question had already been discussed by the Consultative Panel on Public Information and suggested that the conclusions of the Panel should be reported to the Fifth Committee. Many members of the Panel had expressed reservations concerning the amount requested. The argument put forward by the Secretary-General in his report in support of his estimate for



equipment was not convincing, as several members of the Panel had indicated. The Secretary-General was requesting an appropriation of \$100,000 for an electronic television colour camera, and \$125,000 for an electronic videotape recorder. The Soviet delegation was in favour of technological innovation, but he wondered whether, at a time of financial difficulty, there was any real need to spend so large an amount on replacing equipment which had been bought as recently as 1967 and 1968. Full use should be made of existing equipment. A study should be made of what additional financial resources were required for the Office of Public Information, and only after such an analysis had been made should any decision be taken.

49. The Secretary-General indicated, in paragraph 15 of his report, that a more detailed study of the field operations of the Office of Public Information was still being pursued. Once the study had been completed, it should be submitted first to the Consultative Panel on Public Information and then, together with the Panel's comments on it, to the Fifth Committee.

50. With regard to the global meeting of centre directors referred to in paragraph 17 of the Secretary-General's report, he doubted whether there was any real need for so costly a meeting; he suggested that the purpose of such meetings could be attained at a lesser cost.

51. Commenting on paragraph 7 of the Secretary-General's report, he wondered why Member States were called upon to engage in information activities only on "a variety of specific topics", rather than on United Nations activities in general. Reference was made in that paragraph to General Assembly resolution 13 (I), which stipulated that the role of the Office of Public Information should remain an essentially supportive one and that the main burden of informing the peoples of the world about the work and purposes of the United Nations rested with the established governmental and non-governmental agencies of information. To request those agencies to report only on certain specific activities seemed to contravene that resolution. Moreover, paragraph 2 of the report seemed to contradict paragraph 7 and the provisions of General Assembly resolution 13 (I). He did not see how the Consultative Panel could control the information activities of the information agencies of Member States, since that was certainly not one of its functions, and it had no means of doing so. He requested clarification from the representative of the Secretary-General on what exactly was intended by the proposal in paragraph 7 of the report. It was simply not realistic to try to place responsibility for monitoring the work of national information agencies on a United Nations body, particularly one with only consultative status.

*The meeting rose at 1.25 p.m.*

## 1627th meeting

Thursday, 13 December 1973, at 8.20 p.m.

*Chairman:* Mr. C. S. M. MSELLE (United Republic of Tanzania).

A/C.5/SR.1627

### AGENDA ITEM 79

**Proposed programme budget for the biennium 1974-1975 and medium-term plan for the period 1974-1977 (continued)** (for the earlier documentation, see 1589th meeting; A/9008/Add.9, 11, 12, 16, 17, 18, 24 and 25, A/9444, A/C.5/1509/Add.2, A/C.5/1540, A/C.5/1543 and Corr.1 and 2, A/C.5/1544, A/C.5/1545, A/C.5/1547, A/C.5/1554, A/C.5/1566 and Corr.1, A/C.5/1571-1573, A/C.5/1590, A/C.5/L.1146, A/C.5/L.1155, A/C.5/L.1158, A/C.5/L.1159)

*First reading (concluded)*

SECTION 27—OFFICE OF PUBLIC INFORMATION  
(concluded) (A/9006, A/9008)

*United Nations public information policies and activities (concluded)* (A/8997, A/9008/Add.24, A/9036, A/9052, A/C.5/1547, A/C.5/1590)

1. Mr. FARRELL (New Zealand), commenting on the question of regular budget appropriations for the Centre for Economic and Social Information, said that the Centre had shown itself to be a reasonably well-organized unit under-

taking useful information activities in the economic and social fields. His delegation attached particular importance to the Centre's efforts to co-ordinate United Nations publicity relating to the United Nations Second Development Decade and to population and environment matters.

2. It therefore noted with some concern that the extra-budgetary resources on which the Centre was heavily dependent had been dwindling and it accordingly supported the Secretary-General's suggestion that a greater share of the Centre's administrative costs could be financed under the regular budget, thus releasing voluntary funds for project implementation. At the same time, it endorsed the view of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions that a cautious approach should be adopted in converting posts in the Centre from extra-budgetary to established posts. It endorsed the Advisory Committee's proposal that only 3 Professional and 2 General Service posts should be converted at the present stage.

3. As an additional means of offering its tangible support, New Zealand was also giving serious consideration to the possibility of making a voluntary contribution to the Centre in 1974.