



Fifteenth session  
Agenda item 50

BUDGET ESTIMATES FOR THE FINANCIAL YEAR 1961

Architectural and engineering survey of the  
Headquarters buildings

Thirty-third report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary  
Questions to the General Assembly at its fifteenth session

1. The Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions has considered the report of the Secretary-General (A/C.5/848) on the architectural and engineering survey on an expansion of the permanent headquarters of the United Nations (A/C.5/L.631).
2. The initial projects proposed by the Secretary-General, at an estimated cost of \$7,732,400, spread over three years, are as follows:
  - (a) The conversion of the Plenary Hall and the existing four Main Committee rooms to accommodate a maximum of 120 Members as against 100 as temporarily provided for at present;
  - (b) The construction of two new Main Committee rooms to replace the temporary use at present, during General Assembly sessions, of the Economic and Social Council Chamber and the Plenary Hall as Main Committee rooms;
  - (c) The provision of facilities in the undeveloped area below the Plenary Hall to provide for the more satisfactory housing of television and related visual services.
3. A plan has also been presented for conversion of the Economic and Social Council Chamber to seat an increased number of delegations. The Secretary-General, however, recommends deferment of this project until such time as the need might arise.

4. Among the aspects remaining to be examined are those relating to facilities for delegates, such as the lounge and dining areas, and mechanical installations which have become over-taxed or outmoded. For the purpose of these studies, the Secretary-General recommends that the survey be carried on to completion in 1961, requiring the provision of a further amount of \$20,000 under section 7 of the 1961 budget.

5. In recognition of the fact that an extension of present facilities will in due course be a necessary consequence of the expanding membership of the Organization, the Advisory Committee, with the assistance of appropriate representatives of the Secretary-General, has examined in detail the technical aspects of the proposed plans as well as the various alternative schemes involved. At the same time, the Committee has kept in mind two important considerations arising from present circumstances. In the first instance, the Committee is conscious of the precarious financial position of the Organization at the present time and of the exceptionally heavy demands to be made on Members in the coming year. Secondly, and irrespective of the financial aspect, the Committee feels that it would be advisable to gain further experience of the operation of the expanded General Assembly before deciding on plans for permanent conversion and construction at such considerable expense. The General Assembly might also wish to consider the relevance of this question to the item which has been proposed for inclusion in the agenda of the fifteenth session concerning a review of the methods and procedures of the General Assembly.

6. In the light of the considerations set out above, the Advisory Committee has given special attention to the feasibility of postponing the implementation of the proposed plans until a later date. The following considerations are relevant in this regard:

(a) In the Plenary Hall, the possibilities for seating more than 100 Members on the present basis have been exhausted. The proposed reconstruction plan will need to be implemented at least in part to meet immediately foreseeable needs, unless Members were to content themselves, as a temporary measure, with an allocation of less than ten seats.

(b) In the four existing Main Committee rooms and in the Economic and Social Council Chamber, as temporarily converted for use as a Committee room,

such seating requirements as are likely to arise in 1961 might be met by a further temporary increase in seats within the existing arrangements, even at the risk of some discomfort.

(c) The equipment of the area destined for the use of the television and visual services has in any event been given a secondary priority by the Secretary-General.

7. The Advisory Committee has no reliable information at this juncture as to the number of new Members which might be admitted during the coming year. It would seem reasonable, however, to envisage no more than five such possible admissions. Should the views expressed in paragraph 5 above commend themselves to the General Assembly, the Advisory Committee would, therefore, recommend that, in the event of an addition to the membership, action in 1961 be confined to the following:

(a) In the general interest, and on a purely temporary basis, Members might agree to an allocation of less than 10 seats per delegation in the Plenary Hall. Alternatively, the proposed plan for the reconversion of the Plenary Hall might be partially implemented by installing new delegation seats on one side or both sides of the Hall in the space now devoted to seats for observers (extreme ends of area 2 of the plan on page 11 of the survey report A/C.5/L.631). This would provide seating for five additional Members on each side on the present basis or ten seats per delegation. To convert both sides would provide more seating than would be required in the immediate future, but might be considered to have the advantage of preserving the architectural balance of the Hall. The Committee understands that this part of the plan would cost less than the addition of a further row of seats at the back. Estimated costs would be \$67,875 for the conversion of one side of the Hall and \$135,750 if both sides were done. The temporary inconvenience to be suffered is that, for the time being, the number of seats allocated to observers will be limited to seats now available at the back of the Hall.

(b) In the Main Committee rooms and the temporarily converted Economic and Social Council Chamber, any new Members which might be admitted in 1961 should be accommodated by a further temporary increase of seats within existing arrangements. This might, in certain cases, require alternative seating arrangements for observers from the specialized agencies. The Committee trusts that every effort

will be made to minimize the temporary inconvenience which might be involved and that the agencies will be prepared, in the general interest, to make the necessary allowances. The Committee would therefore recommend that provision be made for five additional Members in these five rooms at an estimated cost of \$35,000.

(c) The architectural and engineering survey should be carried to completion in 1961 and an additional provision of \$20,000 should be included in section 7 for this purpose. In this regard, the Advisory Committee suggests that special attention might be given to the practicability of expanding the seating arrangements in the Trusteeship Council Chamber so as to make it available, when required, to serve as a Main Committee room.

(d) Subject to this broad approach, which is without prejudice to the further consideration, at the sixteenth session, of the over-all plan submitted by the Secretary-General, the Secretary-General might consult with the Advisory Committee during 1961 on details of financial requirements to make the temporary arrangements recommended above. On this basis, the General Assembly might wish to include an additional appropriation under section 7 of the 1961 budget in an amount of \$122,875, should it be decided that only one side of the Plenary Hall should be converted at the present time, and \$190,750 if both sides were done. Both amounts would include \$35,000 for additional facilities in the Main Committee rooms and in the Economic and Social Council Chamber and \$20,000 for the continuation of the architectural survey in 1961.

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