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GENERAL  
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ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON ADMINISTRATIVE  
AND BUDGETARY QUESTIONS

SUBSISTENCE ALLOWANCES FOR MEMBERS OF COMMISSIONS,  
COMMITTEES AND OTHER SUBSIDIARY BODIES OF THE  
GENERAL ASSEMBLY AND OTHER ORGANS OF THE  
UNITED NATIONS

(Report by the Secretary-General)

1. During the review of the 1950 budget, the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions recommended that the question of the adequacy or otherwise of subsistence allowances for members of United Nations commissions, committees, etc., should be the subject of a comprehensive review, with a report to be submitted to the fifth session of the General Assembly (A/1051, 25 October 1949 paragraph 6, regarding the budget estimates for the International Law Commission):

"The Committee considers that any question as to the adequacy or otherwise of a rate of subsistence allowance paid to the members of commissions, committees or other subsidiary bodies of the General Assembly and other organs of the United Nations should be the subject of a comprehensive review by the Secretary-General, in consultation with the Advisory Committee. It is recommended that a report, which should take account of such factors as revaluation of currencies and changes in the cost of living, be submitted to the fifth regular session of the General Assembly."

2. In its 24th report of 1949 regarding the budgetary implications of the draft resolution on the question of the disposal of the former Italian colonies (A/1091, 15 November 1949, paragraph 7), the Advisory Committee stated:

"A subsistence allowance at the rate of \$20 per day is proposed for the members of the three bodies under reference. This is, in the opinion of the Advisory Committee, in excess of actual needs in the territories concerned. While the Committee submits no specific recommendation at the present time, it nevertheless draws attention to the observations already made in its eleventh report of 1949 (A/1051, paragraph 6), in which the Committee recommended a comprehensive review by the Secretary-General of the rate of subsistence allowance, to take account of factors such as the revaluation of currencies and changes in the cost of living. The results of such review could no doubt be implemented by the Secretary-General in advance of the submission of his comprehensive report on the subject to the fifth regular session of the General Assembly."

3. The categories of organs or subsidiary organs whose members should be eligible to receive subsistence allowances from the United Nations budget was elaborated in the first Advisory Committee report of 1948 (A/534) and approved by General Assembly resolution 231 (III) of 8 October 1948. Hence, it is not considered that there is any intent or any need to re-open this question at the present time.

4. In making a comprehensive review of subsistence allowance rates for members of such bodies, the Secretariat has considered first the situation at Headquarters. The present allowance rate of \$20 per day was fixed in 1946 for the New York area, prior to the time when the post-war increase in prices had been fully realized. The cost of living for average and low-income families in the New York area has increased since that time (as reported by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics) by approximately 25 per cent; it may be safely estimated that costs for higher-income groups have increased at least in this proportion.

On the basis of this percentage increase in costs, it would be necessary to increase the present subsistence allowance to \$25 per day, in order to provide approximately the same purchasing power as when the rate was first fixed in 1946.

5. Considering the standard of accommodations which members of commissions and committees might be expected to utilize, it is estimated that the cost of food and lodging alone in the New York area would now average \$20 per day. However, various incidental expenses are incurred in addition, such as laundry, tips, transportation, etc. In fixing subsistence allowance rates for staff members, the cost of incidentals is considered to be about 25 per cent of the cost of food and lodging. If this same ratio is applied in the case of members, the allowance for incidentals would be \$5, making a total allowance of \$25 per day for the Headquarters area.

6. Although members of commissions are normally expected to live at the best hotels in an area and in general live at a standard entailing substantially higher subsistence costs than staff of the Secretariat, the costs between members and the staff do bear a certain relationship one to another. At Headquarters, the standard subsistence allowance rate for the professional staff of the Secretariat is \$12.50 per day (those in the lower grades receive \$10). Assuming that the allowance for members of commissions were fixed at \$25 per day, the rate would thus be twice that paid to the professional staff of the Secretariat. This ratio might be of some guidance in fixing the subsistence allowance rates for members of commissions, etc., serving away from Headquarters.

7. In proposing that a comprehensive review be made of subsistence allowance rates for members of commissions, the Advisory Committee recommended that account be taken of such factors as revaluation of currencies and changes in the cost of living. The Secretary-General has made such a review for members of the staff serving on United Nations missions and has made a number of revisions in their per diem rates based on studies of actual expenditures and adjusted to take account of the revaluation of currencies. It might be helpful, therefore, to note the allowance rates now in effect for staff members serving in the various mission areas. These rates are as follows:

/Greece

	<u>With Dependents</u>	<u>Without Dependents</u>
Greece	\$ 9.50	\$ 6.50
Palestine	10.00	7.00
Korea	11.50	8.50
Indonesia	11.00	8.00
India and Kashmir	9.50	6.50
Pakistan	12.50	9.50
Libya	11.50	8.50

8. As stated above, the rates for the staff are fixed to cover the cost of food and lodging plus 25 per cent for incidental expenses. It will be seen that, while there is a difference in these rates, the variation from one area to another is not very great and there is a tendency towards a rate of about \$10 per day for staff members with dependants.

9. It was found that for the New York area, which is recognized to be a high-cost area, the subsistence expenses for members of commissions, etc., are about twice the allowance rate for the staff. In the case of United Nations missions, a rate of \$20 per day would thus be double the staff's rate.

Experience has shown, however, that on United Nations missions, which normally operate in under-developed areas, the relationship between costs for the staff and members may be somewhat less than two to one, due to the lack of any great variety of accommodations on the one hand or due to the absence of any first-class accommodations such as are available at Headquarters for members. A more accurate relationship in many cases is perhaps that costs for members are 50 per cent higher than for staff rather than double. Thus, the average costs for subsistence would be more nearly \$15 per day.

10. But factors other than food and lodging should perhaps be taken into account in the case of members of commissions meeting away from Headquarters. For example, assignments in some areas undoubtedly require the purchase of special clothing. Furthermore, the long absences required from home may necessitate their making special arrangements for families incurring extra expense. Then too, perhaps there should be some compensation for the fact that the types of accommodations which the mission members could expect to enjoy are not always available.

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11. In the interest of simplicity in administration, it is believed that a flat allowance rate for members of commissions, etc., serving away from Headquarters has great merit. The rates fixed for the staff of the missions would indicate that a flat rate could be established without doing any serious injustice to any of the members, whether serving in one area or another. While the factors mentioned in paragraph 10 are not all pertinent for commissions meeting in Geneva, the cost data available to the Secretary-General indicates that a \$20 rate is reasonable for that area.

12. Considering the various factors involved - namely, the average subsistence costs for the staff, the relationship between costs for the staff and the members, as well as the related expenses and hardships faced by members of Commissions of Inquiry or Conciliation - the Advisory Committee might wish to recommend continuation of the \$20 per day allowance for members of Commissions, etc., serving away from Headquarters. At the same time, a rate of \$25 per day might be recommended for the Headquarters area.

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