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REPRESENTATION BY AUSTRALIA

Reproduced below for consideration by the Committee on Contributions is an excerpt from a communication dated 10 March 1982 from the Permanent Representative of Australia to the United Nations to the Director of the United Nations Statistical Office.

"In response to this invitation the Australian statistical authorities have prepared two sets of figures, those for national income covering the calendar year period requested and a second series covering the equivalent fiscal years (annex I). In submitting fiscal year figures I should like to invite your attention and, through you, the attention of the Committee on Contributions to earlier correspondence relating to the scale of assessment struck for Australia for the biennium 1981-82. I refer in particular to the letter dated 29 January 1980 that I addressed to the Chairman of the Committee on Contributions.

"Briefly, that letter showed that an error had resulted in Australia's assessment for the current biennium stemming from the use of fiscal year data (extending from July to the following June) rather than calendar year figures. While nearly every other country had been assessed on the basis of national income from 1 January 1971 to 31 December 1977, the basis in Australia's case was its national income covering the period 1 July 1971 to 30 June 1978. In other words, in setting the scale, the Committee on Contributions used Australian statistics extending six months beyond the reporting period resulting in very substantial increase in the overall assessment.

"It did so since the effect of including the additional half year in 1978, while excluding the first six months of 1971, was to add a net \$26 billion to national income over the seven years, yielding a scale for Australia of 1.83 in lieu of the 1.70 which would have applied had

calendar year figures been used. In aggregate terms, the annual cost to Australia has been some \$650,000 in its contribution to the United Nations budget itself and something of the order of \$1.8 million in contributions to the United Nations system as a whole.

"An examination of the records of course will show that except for data supplied in 1976 and 1977 Australia had always provided fiscal year figures. The effect of this, however, has been exclusively to Australia's disadvantage. In other words, other than for the two assessment reviews in 1976 and 1977, when Australia was assessed on the same basis as others, Australia has been consistently over-assessed. In a sense Australia has been providing an unrequited benefit to the rest of the United Nations membership, a situation which clearly could not endure.

"In my letter of 29 January 1980, I canvassed a number of possibilities for rectifying the error that had occurred in Australia's 1981-82 assessment. It has been the view of the Australian authorities that the most viable, and most appropriate, approach would be an offsetting adjustment in the scale for 1983-84 to compensate for the over-assessment in 1981-82.

"This brings me back to the annexure attached to this letter. Calendar year figures have been provided as requested. It is the view of the Australian authorities, however, that in calculation of the assessment for 1983-84, it would be more appropriate to use again Australia's fiscal year figures, with the data this time subject to a lag of six months so that it would cover the ten years, 1970/71-1979/80. In short, since the error in the current scale arose from using Australian statistics covering a period six months later than the actual reporting period, there is every reason this time to use Australian statistics covering a period six months earlier than the applicable reporting period thereby offsetting the earlier miscalculation. Thereafter, of course, it would be intended that Australian information be submitted for calendar years only."

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Annex

National income covering the calendar years
1969-1980 and the equivalent fiscal years

<u>Year</u>	<u>National income</u>	
	<u>Calendar year</u>	<u>Fiscal year</u>
	(million Australian dollars)	
1969	25 985	24 763
1970	28 755	27 429
1971	32 476	30 446
1972	36 408	34 109
1973	43 228	39 012
1974	52 361	47 371
1975	61 911	57 052
1976	72 470	67 039
1977	79 743	76 581
1978	87 645	82 973
1979	99 614	93 352
1980	113 097	104 942