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JOINT INSPECTION UNIT

Department of Technical Co-operation for Development and
Department of International Economic and Social Affairs

Report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative
and Budgetary Questions

1. The Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions has considered two reports of the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) on the Department of Technical Co-operation for Development (DTCD) and the Department of International Economic and Social Affairs (DIESA), transmitted by the Secretary-General's notes A/38/172 and A/38/334, respectively. The Committee also had before it the comments of the Secretary-General thereon contained in documents A/38/172/Add.1 and A/38/334/Add.1. During its review, the Committee met with representatives of the Secretary-General.

2. As noted by JIU, both reports form part of a series designed to show how far General Assembly resolution 32/197, on the restructuring of the economic and social sectors of the United Nations system, has been put into effect. Because a number of policy issues have been raised which go beyond matters relating to the administration of the departments, the Advisory Committee is of the view that the two reports cover areas of concern of the Second, Third and Fifth Committees of the General Assembly.

A. Department of Technical Co-operation for Development

3. As shown in section V of the JIU report (A/38/172), the Inspectors have made six main recommendations in respect of the Department. In this connection, the Advisory Committee notes the Secretary-General's statement in paragraph 7 (a) of his report (A/38/172/Add.1) that:

"Although the Inspectors took into account the decline in the availability of resources for technical co-operation and its effects on the Department (in para. 35 on the decrease in the number of posts and in para. 44 on the size of total delivery) some of the arguments put forward in the report were formulated before the Department's financial position became as acute as it is at the present time as a result of a further erosion of its traditional funding sources (principally UNDP and UNFPA). The Inspectors' recommendations have therefore to be viewed in the light of a steady deterioration in the Department's financial situation in the months since the report was finalized."

Information on the Department's financial situation is contained in the Advisory Committee's report on the revised programme budget estimates for section 7 for the biennium 1984-1985 (A/38/7/Add.3).

4. Recommendation 1 of the JIU report urges the Secretary-General to issue terms of reference for the Department without delay and to ensure the co-ordination and harmonization of approach in respect of the policies and procedures followed by different departments and offices within the United Nations Secretariat which are responsible for technical co-operation activities. The Advisory Committee was informed that the terms of reference for the Department, which have not been issued since its establishment in March 1978, are being worked out. In the opinion of the Advisory Committee, these should be finalized as soon as possible. In this connection, the Committee recalls that, by its decision 83/16 of 24 June 1983, the Governing Council of UNDP reiterated this concern, stating that clearer terms of reference for the Department should be issued "so as inter alia to avoid duplication of existing structures within the United Nations Secretariat". With regard to the need to establish a proper degree of co-ordination and uniformity of approach within the Secretariat, the Advisory Committee notes the Secretary-General's intention to address the matter in the coming months. The Secretary-General also comments that the programme budget submission for the biennium 1984-1985 will provide the relevant intergovernmental bodies with the opportunity to consider the progress achieved to this end. However, the Committee questions whether the revised budget submission (A/C.5/38/2) can be considered to have fully addressed the issues raised by the Inspectors.

5. Recommendation 2 speaks of a forthcoming review of DTCD by the Administrative Management Service during which "AMS should consider the setting up of an organization by substance which integrates backstopping with the work of the substantive specialists". Although the Secretary-General states in paragraph 10 of his report that "many of the helpful suggestions of JIU have already been reflected in the proposals for streamlining put forward by the Department", the Advisory Committee considers that a more detailed analysis of the "streamlining", which is briefly described in the Secretary-General's revised programme budget proposals (A/C.5/38/2), could have been provided.

6. Recommendation 3 concerns the arrangements to strengthen the field representation of the Department. The Advisory Committee notes the comments of the Secretary-General that, for financial and other reasons, no change in existing arrangements is being considered.
7. Recommendation 4 calls for the establishment of a small unit in DTCD "with a mandate for introducing central evaluation (methodology, participation in specific evaluation) into the technical co-operation work of the Department". According to the Secretary-General, various steps have been taken by the Department during the year to "devise an appropriate methodology, guidelines, and procedures for more systematic evaluation in the field projects" and, as noted in paragraph 4 of the Secretary-General's report (A/C.5/38/2), the country programming and evaluation function will henceforth be carried out in the Policy, Programming and Development Planning Division of the Department. On the basis of this information, the Advisory Committee trusts that the Department will be able to implement its evaluation activities as an integral part of its operations.
8. In recommendation 5, JIU concludes that the Department should have increased authority in dealing with administrative, personnel and financial matters concerning its field experts. The Advisory Committee notes the Secretary-General's statement that he agrees with the thrust of the recommendation and that further steps can be taken in this direction, and that appropriate action is under way.
9. Recommendation 6, which deals with the purchasing authority of DTCD Chief Technical Advisers, is discussed by the Secretary-General in paragraph 14 of his report.
10. Section IV of the JIU report deals with the Department's relationships with other entities of the Secretariat. As noted in paragraph 64, "the absence of a clear definition of the Department's role which is understood and accepted throughout the Secretariat has led to some conflict with other organizational entities. A number of unresolved issues of restructuring, particularly those related to the decentralization and redeployment of resources continue to add to these difficulties". In this connection, paragraphs 66 to 71 deal with DTCD's relationship with DIESA, including its "provisional arrangement" with the Statistical Office. As indicated in paragraph 67, "the Inspectors formed the impression that problems flowing from the break-up of the old DIESA were still influencing relations between the two successor Departments, notably in the areas of statistics and the servicing of joint conferences and seminars". The comments of JIU in respect of the Statistical Office are contained in paragraphs 74 and 75 of its report on DIESA (A/38/334) wherein it is recommended that the Secretary-General should formalize the present situation and that an improved mechanism for co-operation on statistics between the two Departments be worked out.

B. Department of International Economic and Social Affairs

11. In paragraphs 79 and 80 of its report (A/38/334), JIU comments that, in the course of studying DIESA, a number of major issues and problems have been brought to light which have Secretariat or system-wide implications. JIU will address these issues more fully in its concluding report on restructuring to be completed in 1984.

12. Pursuant to General Assembly decision 37/442, the Secretary-General will also submit a report to the Assembly at its thirty-ninth session on restructuring. As indicated in paragraph 7 of his comments (A/38/334/Add.1), in preparing his report to the Assembly the Secretary-General will take into full account the reports of JIU on individual departments or offices and its final report on restructuring.

13. The Advisory Committee was also informed that the Secretary-General has recently established a high-level advisory group on administrative reform. As stated in paragraph 23 of his comments, the Secretary-General will submit a report to the General Assembly at its thirty-ninth session on the results of this ongoing review of the administration and management of the Secretariat.

14. In light of these more comprehensive forthcoming reports and in view of the fact that many of the JIU recommendations on DIESA, which are listed in section VI of its report, relate to the implementation of the restructuring resolution and to possible organizational changes in the Secretariat, the Advisory Committee has not attempted, at this stage, to address all of the recommendations. In the opinion of the Committee, the above-mentioned reports should also facilitate the General Assembly's review of these and other recommendations and, in this connection, it urges that the reports be issued in a timely manner.

15. With regard to the Secretary-General's comments on the report of JIU, the Advisory Committee notes that in paragraph 2 the Secretary-General enumerates some of the functions allocated to DIESA in the Secretary-General's bulletin ST/SGB/161. The full text of this bulletin, which includes additional functions, is reproduced in annex I to the JIU report.

16. In paragraphs 38 to 50 of its report, JIU discusses the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs (CSDHA) and identifies a number of problems relating to its location, problems which, according to the Inspectors, outweigh any positive effects which may have resulted from the move of the Centre to Vienna.

17. As stated in paragraph 43, difficulties of communication are compounded by what the Inspectors feel are overly bureaucratic administrative arrangements. "For example, all travel by staff must be authorized from New York. All communications to Governments must be approved in draft in New York before they can be issued and all documents have to be edited in New York". In the opinion of the Inspectors, "the whole Department, including the CSDHA itself, is suffering from being divided" (para. 48), and the recommendation is therefore made to move the Centre back to New York.

18. The Secretary-General comments on this recommendation in paragraphs 21 and 22 of his report. However, in the opinion of the Advisory Committee, the Secretary-General has not adequately addressed all the problems identified by the Inspectors. He has merely confined his response to the general statement that he "is actively seeking to overcome these problems and in particular to improve the communications and consultation system between Vienna and New York and to expand United Nations administrative and conference services at the Vienna International Centre" (para. 22).

19. With regard to the JIU's comment on editing, the Advisory Committee notes that editing services do exist in Vienna. For example, the proposed programme budget for 1984-1985 provides for 379 work days for editing under Conference Services, Vienna, in respect of United Nations units, other than UNIDO, located there. ^{1/} It would therefore appear that simple editing of documents could be done in Vienna. In addition, while the Advisory Committee acknowledges that the policy co-ordinating role of DIESA is centred in New York, it also believes that the head of CSDHA should be cognizant of the agreed upon policies and should therefore be capable of ensuring that communications and documents reflect those policies.

20. In respect of travel authorizations, the Advisory Committee was informed that, provided CSDHA submits a travel plan in advance, subsequent authorizations for travel included in the approved plan can be issued from Vienna.

21. In respect of the main thrust of recommendation 5, i.e. that the Centre should return to New York, the Advisory Committee recalls that the transfer of CSDHA to Vienna was on the basis of General Assembly resolution 31/194. For that to be reversed, the Advisory Committee believes that the Assembly should be provided with a more complete and thorough analysis than that which is contained in either the JIU report or the Secretary-General's comments.

Notes

1/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Thirty-eighth Session, Supplement No. 6 (A/38/6), vol. III, table 29.48.
