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PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 1978-1979

Revised estimates under section 23A (Department of Conference Services) and section 26B (Alteration and improvement)

Technological innovations in the production of the publications and documentation of the United Nations

Seventeenth report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions

1. The Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions has considered the report of the Secretary-General (A/C.5/33/35), in which he requests \$279,800 under section 23A and \$47,300 under section 26B for technological innovations in the production of the publications and documentation of the United Nations.

2. The introduction of the technological innovations in question was approved by the General Assembly at its thirty-second session in resolution 32/207. At the same session, the Assembly appropriated \$314,700 for the 1978 phase of the project. As the Advisory Committee recommended in its thirteenth report to the General Assembly last year "the resources which might be needed for the second year of the biennium can be determined at the thirty-third session of the General Assembly, in the light of a progress report by the Secretary-General reflecting experience in the first eight or nine months of 1978". 1/

3. In paragraph 4 of his report, the Secretary-General states that expenditure in 1978 will amount to \$174,900. He attributes the underexpenditure of approximately \$140,000 to several factors which accounted for less progress in 1978 than had originally been envisaged. In this connexion, the representatives of the Secretary-General informed the Advisory Committee that the introduction of the

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1/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Thirty-second Session, Supplement No. 8A (A/32/8/Add.1-30), document A/32/8/Add.12, para. 7 (a).

computerized text-processing subsystem was the key element in the technological innovations under discussion. The delays encountered in the operation of that subsystem led to the postponement of the implementation of the hard-copy reproduction subsystem and of the launching of the consultancy studies on photo-composition and the glossary subsystems.

4. The following table provides a comparative breakdown of the appropriation and estimated expenditure for 1978 and of the initial and revised estimates for 1979.

	<u>1978 appropriation</u>	<u>1978 expenditure</u>	<u>Increase (decrease)</u>	<u>1979 initial estimates</u>	<u>1979 revised estimates</u>	<u>Increase (decrease)</u>
	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
1. <u>Text-processing and hard-copy reproduction</u>						
(a) Rental and maintenance:						
Text-processing equipment .	142 600	78 300	(64 300)	362 500	274 000	(88 500)
Hard-copy reproduction equipment . . . . .	48 000	-	(48 000)	62 500	48 000	(14 500)
Subtotal of rental and maintenance . . . . .	190 600	78 300	(112 300)	425 000	322 000	(103 000)
(b) Shipping and installation .	4 200	27 100 <u>a/</u>	22 900	2 700	20 200 <u>a/</u>	17 500
(c) Supplies and miscellaneous equipment . . . . .	45 900	57 500	11 600	27 400	43 900	16 500
(d) Acquisition of multi-image platemaker <u>b/</u> . . . . .	35 000	12 000	(23 000)	-	-	-
Subtotal 1 . . . . .	275 700	174 900	(100 800)	455 100	386 100	(69 000)
2. <u>Photocomposition</u>						
(a) Consultant study . . . . .	15 000	deferred to 1979	(15 000)	-	15 000	15 000
(b) Equipment . . . . .	-	-	-	28 000	28 000	-
Subtotal 2 . . . . .	15 000	-	(15 000)	28 000	43 000	15 000
3. <u>Glossary subsystem</u>						
(a) Consultant study . . . . .	24 000	deferred to 1979	(24 000)	-	24 000	24 000
(b) Equipment . . . . .	-	-	-	13 800	13 800	-
Subtotal 3 . . . . .	24 000	-	(24 000)	13 800	37 800	24 000
Total 1, 2 and 3 . . . . .	314 700	174 900	(139 800)	496 900	466 900 <u>c/</u>	(30 000)

a/ Relates to installation and site-preparation expenditures by the Office of General Services under section 26B (Alteration and improvement).

b/ The purchase of equipment was deferred until the reproduction shop is moved to its new quarters, scheduled in mid-1980.

c/ Less the unspent balance of \$139,800 for 1978 = \$527,100, which is the additional amount requested by the Secretary-General.

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5. The Committee understands that the revised estimates for 1979 are predicated on the implementation of the second phase of installation of text-processing equipment as originally planned, except that delivery of the equipment would not take place until mid-1979. The following table compares the number of elements in the text-processing subsystem installed in 1978 and planned for 1979.

	<u>1978</u>	<u>1979</u>	<u>Increase</u>
Computer processing units (CPU) . .	4	7	3
Work stations . . . . .	30	56	26
Slow printers . . . . .	11	20	9
High-speed printers . . . . .	3	6	3
Communications systems . . . . .	4	7	3

6. In response to inquiries, the representatives of the Secretary-General informed the Advisory Committee that the delays that had occurred in 1978 in the introduction at Headquarters of the computerized text-processing and hard-copy reproduction subsystems were due primarily to the high vacancy rate in the typing units and to the reluctance of the staff to accept the computerized equipment for a variety of reasons. As a result, it had proved possible to train fewer than 15 typists, whereas the initial plan had been to train 50 typists. The Committee was also informed that no meaningful experience had been gained in the production of documentation with the new equipment and that consequently no cost reduction savings had been realized in 1978. It was, moreover, impossible at this stage to forecast precisely when the cost reductions and benefits of the projects would start to be realized, although the representatives of the Secretary-General informed the Committee that the savings forecast last year would eventually be achieved.

7. The Committee inquired whether the Secretariat would be capable of making the new equipment fully operational in 1979, considering the lack of trained staff and the fact that the equipment already installed had been underutilized. In their response, the representatives of the Secretary-General indicated that measures were being taken to train and/or recruit staff by early 1979 and that, on that assumption, they expected the operation to be productive by the next General Assembly.

8. The Advisory Committee notes that much remains to be done, particularly in the area of greater receptivity for the innovations. Because of this, and because it takes time to train or recruit qualified operators, the Committee doubts whether the computerized text-processing system will be fully operational by the beginning of the thirty-fourth session. There appears to be a possibility, if the expenditure proposed by the Secretary-General were to be approved in full, that in 1979, as in 1978, the equipment would be underutilized and there would be little or no cost reductions to offset the expenditure. The Committee therefore recommends that the

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installation of additional equipment in 1979 should be closely related to the availability of trained operators to ensure full use of the equipment.

9. Accordingly, the Advisory Committee has concluded that the additional resources which the Secretary-General is likely to need in 1979 will be less than he has requested in his report (A/C.5/33/35). Bearing in mind that a balance of \$140,000 of the appropriation approved for 1978 will be available to meet requirements in 1979, the Advisory Committee recommends that the General Assembly approve an additional appropriation of \$100,000 under section 23A of the programme budget for 1978-1979. The Advisory Committee is of the opinion that the Secretary-General should be able to meet from within already approved appropriations for section 26 such requirements as might arise in 1979 for site preparation and installation of additional equipment.

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