



CONTENTS

	Page
<i>Agenda item 74:</i>	
<i>Budget estimates for the financial year 1967 (continued)</i>	
<i>First reading (continued)</i>	
<i>Section 1. Travel and other expenses of representatives and members of commissions, committees and other subsidiary bodies (continued) . . . . .</i>	175
<i>Section 5. Travel of staff (continued) . . . . .</i>	175

*Chairman:* Mr. Vahap AŞIROĞLU (Turkey).

AGENDA ITEM 74

Budget estimates for the financial year 1967 (continued) (A/6305, A/6307, A/6385, A/6457 and Add.1 and Add.1/Corr.1, A/6502, A/C.5/1054, A/C.5/1055 and Corr.1, A/C.5/1056 and Corr.1, A/C.5/1060, A/C.5/1062, A/C.5/1065, A/C.5/1066, A/C.5/1074-1076, A/C.5/1081, A/C.5/L.868, A/C.5/L.871, A/C.5/L.875-877)

First reading (continued) (A/C.5/L.868, A/C.5/L.871)

SECTION 1. TRAVEL AND OTHER EXPENSES OF REPRESENTATIVES AND MEMBERS OF COMMISSIONS, COMMITTEES AND OTHER SUBSIDIARY BODIES (continued) (A/6305, A/6307, A/6457 AND ADD.1 AND ADD.1/CORR.1, A/6502, A/C.5/1056 AND CORR.1, A/C.5/1074)

SECTION 5. TRAVEL OF STAFF (continued) (A/6305, A/6307, A/6457 AND ADD.1 AND ADD.1/CORR.1, A/6502, A/C.5/1056 AND CORR.1, A/C.5/1074)

1. Mr. PALAMARCHUK (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that General Assembly resolution 2128 (XX) on travel standards had been adopted after detailed discussion of the question, and that no circumstances had since arisen which might prompt his delegation to change its position. It would accordingly abstain on the proposal that provision should be made for the reimbursement on a first-class basis of the travel costs of representatives of Member States and members of committees and commissions, and would vote against any increase in the number of Secretariat staff entitled to travel first class.

2. Mr. BARADEI (United Arab Republic) supported the Secretary-General's proposals contained in his report (A/C.5/1074) on the standards of air travel accommodation. As far as the members of subsidiary bodies were concerned, his delegation fully understood the reasons—set forth in paragraphs 9 and 10 of the report—that had induced the Secretary-General

to present his amendment to the rule adopted as recently as at the twentieth session. In the case of government representatives attending sessions of the General Assembly, his delegation supported the proposal that provision should be made for the heads of delegations to travel first class.

3. During the past year the question of staff travel standards had been the subject of further review by ICSAB and ACC. His delegation agreed with the latter that the appropriate criterion for the international civil service was the standard applied by national governments to officials of comparable rank and responsibilities. It would therefore approve the Secretary-General's proposal, on the understanding that he would authorize first-class travel only when the circumstances so required.

4. Mr. SANU (Nigeria) recalled that his delegation had expressed serious reservations concerning two of the recommendations on travel standards adopted by the Fifth Committee at the twentieth session. In the first place, Nigeria had taken the view that it was unfair to withhold due recognition from the heads of delegations, feeling that it would be incorrect to authorize first-class travel for any official of the Secretariat while foreign ministers were required to travel long distances in economy-class accommodation. Secondly, his delegation had felt that the recommendation that experts serving in their individual capacity should travel economy class was too rigid and would not encourage private individuals to serve the United Nations.

5. Nigeria's fears in the second case had been borne out by the report of the Secretary-General (A/C.5/1074, paras. 9 and 10). Not only had the Secretary-General been obliged to make exceptions on the grounds of age and health, there had also been cases of eminent individuals who had been humiliated at being asked to travel economy class and had for that reason not attended meetings of organs or subsidiary organs. The representative of Ceylon had stated (1145th meeting) that there was an inconsistency in the fact that many experts who served in their individual capacity were government experts; he himself thought that less than half of those who served in organs or subsidiary organs were government experts, and asked whether the Secretariat could provide any figures. While it was true that individuals should be proud to serve the United Nations, some incentive was still essential.

6. As far as staff members were concerned, his delegation had agreed with the decision taken at the twentieth session that the Secretary-General and persons accompanying him should travel first class only because of the Committee's attitude on the other two recommendations.

7. The report of the Secretary-General took account of past mistakes, and his delegation had no difficulty in accepting most of the recommendations of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (A/6502). It agreed that experts serving in their individual capacity or as representatives of Governments, and one member of each delegation attending sessions of the General Assembly, should travel first class. As far as staff travel was concerned, however, his delegation would have preferred that first-class travel should continue to be limited to the Secretary-General and officials at the Under-Secretary level; it shared the doubts expressed by previous speakers as to the need for officials at the D-2 level to travel first class. However, the recommendation had been adopted unanimously by ACC, and constituted an important step towards uniformity of practice throughout the United Nations system. He did not agree that the United Nations should take the lead in such matters, for such an approach failed to take into account the constitutional position of the agencies and would hinder effective co-operation. While the standards recommended by ACC might appear somewhat liberal to the United Nations, they would be quite restrictive to many of the agencies. In the belief that inter-agency co-operation would be strengthened, therefore, his delegation was prepared to accept the recommendation that staff members at the level of D-2 and above should travel first class. He hoped that the Secretary-General would authorize travel at that level only when the circumstances so required. Nigeria would support the Advisory Committee's recommendations on the three proposals on the understanding that they would be taken as a whole.

8. Mr. VAN GREVENYNGHE (France) said that his delegation would have preferred a comprehensive study of travel standards leading to proposals aimed at normalization of procedures throughout the United Nations system. As it was, the Secretary-General's proposals concerned only the United Nations. Moreover, they would mean that decisions taken at the twentieth session of the Assembly would have to be revised. He shared the views expressed by the Israel delegation (1145th meeting) on that subject. The Polish representative too (1146th meeting), had pointed to the consequences that would ensue from even a partial revision of the rules adopted at the twentieth session. His delegation doubted whether any amendments were desirable especially in regard to the travel of senior staff members and certain categories of experts. The Committee should refrain from doing anything to inflate the budget unless it was absolutely necessary. His delegation would abstain on the proposals.

9. Mr. TURNER (Controller) noted that the Polish representative had pointed to what he felt to be an inconsistency between the procedure followed by the Secretary-General during the past year and resolution 2128 (XX) on travel standards adopted by the General Assembly at the twentieth session. He recalled that in commenting on the Fifth Committee's report on the

item, the Secretary-General had stated that while he accepted the obligation to remain within the budgetary limits imposed, he deemed it essential to retain the discretionary authority vested in him under Staff Regulation 7.1 and make such arrangements as were in his judgement in the best interests of the United Nations (see A/C.5/1074, paras. 16 and 17).

10. In fact many exceptions had had to be made, in the case of both individual experts and staff members. A policy which did not lend itself to consistent application was clearly unsound; moreover, it was invidious that the Secretary-General should have to make exceptions in individual cases. It was better to have rules that could be equitably applied in all cases, and it was to that end that the Secretary-General had reluctantly decided to place his proposals before the Committee.

11. There was some misunderstanding as to how the modified policy would apply to persons serving the United Nations in their individual capacity. The types of bodies to which the provision applied were indicated in annex I to the Secretary-General's report (A/C.5/1074). It was true that in a minority of cases the members of those bodies were government officials, but they were in all cases serving as private individuals. It was hardly appropriate for the United Nations after inviting the services of such persons, often of international repute, to reimburse them for only economy-class travel.

12. There also appeared to be a misunderstanding to the effect that the Secretary-General was seeking to avoid using his discretionary authority. It was clear from the report, however, that even under the amended rules considerable exercise of judgement would still be necessary. As far as staff travel was concerned, it was worth noting that staff members not infrequently failed to exercise their entitlements—for example, the entitlement to home leave.

13. For fifteen years the problem of travel standards had been one of the most complex and intractable facing the United Nations system. Now, at long last, a consensus had been reached in ACC on the basis of the Secretary-General's proposals. If the General Assembly accepted those proposals, with the reservations and on the understandings expressed by the Advisory Committee, a major step would have been taken towards the adoption of uniform procedure throughout the United Nations system. If the Assembly did not accept the proposals, further efforts in the direction of co-ordinated action would be futile. The United Nations was indeed exercising leadership, since the specialized agencies were committed to compliance with the Assembly's decision in the matter. The Secretary-General's proposals were the result of years of patient effort, and he had commended them to the Committee in the belief that they would not only produce substantial savings but make possible greatly improved inter-agency co-ordination.

*The meeting rose at 1 p.m.*