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*Chairman:* Mr. Milton Fowler GREGG (Canada).

AGENDA ITEM 58

Budget estimates for the financial year 1964 (A/5440, A/5505, A/5507, A/5529, A/C.5/973, A/C.5/982, A/C.5/L.792)

General discussion

1. The SECRETARY-GENERAL presented the budget estimates for the financial year 1964 (A/5505).<sup>1/</sup>
2. Mr. AGHNIDES (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) introduced the report of the Advisory Committee (A/5507) on the budget estimates for 1964.<sup>1/</sup>
3. Mr. VAN CAUWENBERGHE (Belgium) said that his delegation, having refrained from comment on the budget proposals so long as Belgium was suspending payments to the United Nations, was once again able to take part in the general discussion on the budget estimates, since the Belgian Government had just paid in the sum of \$1,682,757 as a contribution towards the latest regular budgets and was intending shortly to settle the balance due.
4. The budget estimates for 1964 reached the record level of \$99 million, if the revised estimates were taken into account; the reductions proposed by the Advisory Committee would bring the total down to \$97.9 million. The upward trend was continuing from one year to the next, but it seemed that the rate of increase had been slackening since 1962. Indeed, under pressure from Member States, the Organization's general expenses were subject to strict control, and the increase in costs, on the whole, could not be attributed to bad management. It must not be forgotten that the activities of the United Nations were expanding on all fronts, and that the increase in the cost of living was reflected in staff salaries. It was hardly conceivable, of course, that the Organization should reduce its economic and social activities, but the rising costs in those fields should be offset by strict programming and rationalization of the work. The

<sup>1/</sup> The complete text of the statement made by the Secretary-General was circulated as document A/C.5/988 and that of the statement made by the Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions as document A/C.5/989; both texts appear in the Official Records of the General Assembly, Eighteenth Session, Annexes, agenda item 58.

Secretariat's proposals would then be more likely to be approved by Members. Rationalization might consist, for the Economic and Social Council and its subsidiary bodies, in spreading their work over several years, and for the Secretary-General, in transferring staff from one department to another according to requirements. Documentation should also be limited; it would gain in quality from being presented more concisely. In addition, the Council would have to decide that its functional commissions should meet in future once every two years. The Advisory Committee had also taken up those questions in its report, and the Belgian delegation endorsed all the suggestions made. In particular, it approved the Advisory Committee's comments on the establishment of the Economic and Social Council's programmes, which, in present circumstances, hampered preparation of the budget; the revised estimates should be submitted to the Assembly promptly at the opening of its session. As for the supplementary estimates, they should contain only expenses that were truly unforeseen and extraordinary.

5. During the 1962 audit, the Board of Auditors and the Advisory Committee had noted a certain slackening in administrative discipline; the symptoms of that slackness appeared to be becoming more pronounced. The situation seemed to call for the formation of a staff of financial specialists, who might be recruited from outside until the Organization was able to train its own officials.

6. Apart from those considerations, the 1964 budget document was precise and clear, and it did honour to the Secretary-General and his associates. As to the Advisory Committee's report, it contained all the elements of a constructive examination of the budget estimates, and his delegation endorsed its conclusions. The important thing, in the long run, was to try not to allow expenditure to increase inordinately, and when it had to increase, to see that the money was spent prudently. Members must be able to satisfy public opinion that the contributions paid were really being used to defend the noble causes for which the Organization was working.

ORGANIZATION OF THE COMMITTEE'S WORK

7. Mr. HAGBERG (Sweden) observed that when the Committee came to consider the cost estimates for the United Nations Emergency Force (A/5495) it would also have before it a report of the Secretary-General on the organization and functioning of the Force (A/5494), in paragraph 5 of which the Secretary-General made the point that "the time may have arrived when it would be useful to look carefully into the question of whether there may be ways of redefining and limiting the functions of UNEF so as to reduce both its size and cost, without unduly increasing the risk of a resumption of warfare along the line". The Secretary-General added that he was willing to

undertake such a study and report on its result to the General Assembly. The Swedish delegation considered that it would be desirable for the Secretary-General to present the study in time for the Committee to examine it together with the cost estimates for UNEF.

8. Mr. TURNER (Controller) said that the Secretary-General was ready to undertake the study. He would, however, have to await the return to Gaza of the Commander of the Emergency Force, who was at present in Yemen where he was leading the United Nations Observation Mission. In the circumstances,

the Secretary-General would hope to be able to report to the General Assembly on the results of the study at the end of November or shortly thereafter.

9. The CHAIRMAN proposed that the Committee should request the Secretary-General to undertake the study mentioned in paragraph 5 of his report (A/5494) and report to the General Assembly on the results of the study during the current session.

*It was so decided.*

The meeting rose at 12:20 p.m.