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INSTALLATION OF MECHANICAL MEANS OF VOTING

Report of the Secretary-General

1. The General Assembly, at its twenty-second session, authorized the Secretary-General to proceed with the development of plans for the installation of mechanical voting equipment in one or two main committee rooms.<sup>1/</sup> In 1968, after enlisting the advice of the Permanent Missions of Member States and the representatives of three non-member States concerning the possible manufacture of such equipment in their countries, the Secretary-General sought, through international competition, offers for both the rental and/or purchase of suitable equipment.
2. In a report<sup>2/</sup> to the General Assembly at its twenty-third session, the Secretary-General explained that, while the offers received for the purchase of voting equipment had not been sufficiently precise or were otherwise unsatisfactory, a reasonable proposal had been made for the rental of equipment. In the absence of reliable data concerning equipment which could be purchased, the Secretary-General did not believe he was in a position to make a firm recommendation as to whether the long-range financial interests of the United Nations would best be served by an outright purchase or by the rental of voting equipment. Accordingly, he proposed to consult further with the manufacturers and endeavour to obtain more precise offers which would apply directly to the specific and unique requirements of the United Nations.

1/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Twenty-second Session, Annexes, agenda item 25, document A/6870.

2/ Ibid., Twenty-third Session, Annexes, agenda item 22, document A/7330.

3. In the course of further inquiries it became clear that no manufacturer was in a position to offer for sale equipment which would meet the particular needs of the United Nations. As in the case of the rented equipment currently installed in the General Assembly Hall, any company offering to bid on the installation of such equipment would need to develop a special design taking into account the unique requirements of the United Nations. The costs of developing such a design would eventually form a part of the purchase price for the United Nations.

4. Under these circumstances, it was decided that the United Nations should endeavour, using its senior engineering personnel, to design its own system just as it had done in the case of its sound reinforcement, simultaneous interpretation, recording and television installations. The actual implementation of the design, involving the preparation of detailed working plans and drawings and the assembly and installation of the equipment, would need to be done by contractual means. The Secretary-General is able to report that a basic design of a system, which uses available components and can be constructed on the premises, has already been completed. A small-scale demonstration model is in the process of assembly. When ready, it will provide a final check upon the correctness of the circuitry as well as other technical features of the design. It is expected that the model will be operable before the end of January 1970. On the basis of preliminary plans and drawings, as well as the pricing of components, it is estimated that the cost of constructing the system will amount to \$45,000, comprising \$5,000 for the preparation of final plans and drawings and \$40,000 for the procurement of components and the construction of the equipment. Installation costs are estimated at \$35,000. Although it is not possible, for the reasons explained in last year's report,<sup>3/</sup> to make a direct comparison with the purchase cost of other systems, the Secretary-General is satisfied that the development by the United Nations of its own system would be more desirable. The least expensive offer received last year was for a system costing \$56,000 (excluding installation costs)

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<sup>3/</sup> Ibid.

plus \$10,000 per annum for maintenance. Other offers ranged as high as \$314,500. Even assuming that these bids, now over one year old, would not have been affected by rising costs of materials and labour, the proposed United Nations system would be much less costly.

5. In proposing the construction by the United Nations of its own system, the relative merit of renting mechanical voting equipment has also been taken into account. The equipment currently in use in the Plenary Hall is rented on a year-to-year contract at an annual cost of \$10,000. This arrangement has obviously been advantageous to the United Nations during the period of experimentation with mechanical voting. It is likely that additional rentals could not be obtained at a comparably low cost and there is always the possibility that future contracts will involve an increase in the current rate. This is borne out by the fact that last year the supplier of the present equipment offered an additional system at an annual rate of \$18,000 for the first year and \$9,650 for succeeding years. Assuming that these figures would still be valid for purposes of cost comparison, it is clear that within four years rental costs would exceed the cost of construction of the United Nations system.

6. The construction of its own system also has other advantages for the United Nations. It would be a custom-made facility specifically designed to meet the particular needs of the United Nations and incorporating features which have proved to be desirable during the period of use of mechanical voting equipment in the Plenary Hall. Moreover, the installation would be maintained and serviced by United Nations staff. In addition to the savings this would entail, it would assure immediate service in the event of a breakdown. One of the dangers of the rented system currently in use in the Plenary Hall, and one which would exist with purchased equipment, is the possibility of the equipment being non-operable pending arrival from the outside of special maintenance personnel.

7. In evaluating the alternative systems, the Secretary-General would point out that the installation costs for any system, whether rented, purchased or constructed by the United Nations, would remain approximately the same.

8. In the light of these considerations, the Secretary-General believes it would be to the advantage of the United Nations to design and construct a mechanical voting system for installation in one main committee room. Before

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embarking on the project, however, he would wish to have the confirmation of its technical viability which would be available upon completion of the demonstration model early next year. At the same time, he appreciates that, if a decision were to be delayed until after the model has been completed, a full year would pass before the General Assembly could take action. In order to avoid this loss in time, the Secretary-General would propose that he be authorized to proceed with the project in 1970 on the understanding that no expenditures would be incurred until the demonstration model had been completed and confirmation of the technical accuracy of the design had been established. Following such confirmation, preparation of final plans, procurement of components and fabrication would take place in 1970, with the installation to be made in 1971 prior to the twenty-sixth session of the General Assembly.

9. The detailed cost estimates are as follows:

|   | <u>1970</u>   | <u>1971</u>   |
|---|---------------|---------------|
|   | \$            | \$            |
| Preparation of final plans and drawings ..... | 5,000         | -             |
| Procurement of components and assembly.....   | 30,000        | 10,000        |
| Installation.....                             | -             | 35,000        |
|   | <u>35,000</u> | <u>45,000</u> |

10. Accordingly, it is proposed that the Secretary-General's initial budget estimates for 1970, Section 7, be adjusted to include an additional amount of \$35,000 on the understanding that any portion of this credit which may remain unspent at the end of 1970 would be carried over to 1971. A further provision in the amount of \$45,000 for the completion of the project in 1971 would be included in due course in the budget estimates for that year.

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