



General Assembly

Distr.
GENERAL

A/40/788
23 October 1985

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

Fortieth session
Agenda item 86

TRAINING AND RESEARCH: UNITED NATIONS INSTITUTE FOR
TRAINING AND RESEARCH

Report of the Secretary-General

1. The United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) has been experiencing serious financial difficulties for a number of years, as a result of which the General Assembly decided on several occasions to provide financial support from the regular budget of the United Nations. In 1982, the continuing deterioration of the financial situation of UNITAR led the General Assembly, in its resolution 37/142 of 17 December 1982, to request the Secretary-General to examine all possibilities for the financing of the Institute in order to place its funding on a more predictable, assured and continuous basis and to report thereon to the Assembly.
2. In his report to the General Assembly at its thirty-ninth session (A/139/148), the Secretary-General proposed alternative ways and means of securing long-term financing for the Institute. In paragraph 11 of the report it was concluded that: "unless Member States can agree on arrangements to ensure the long-term financial viability of UNITAR, it appears that there will be no alternative other than the closing down of the Institute after 20 years of existence".
3. The General Assembly was not able to reach a definitive position on long-term financial arrangements. In its resolution 39/177 of 17 December 1984, it requested the Secretary-General, to prepare a comprehensive study on UNITAR, its funding and its future role, keeping in mind related activities within the United Nations system and the relevant provisions of the Statute of the Institute, in order to determine the most effective manner of discharging those functions. The Assembly also requested the Secretary-General to submit the study to it at its fortieth session, together with the comments of the UNITAR Board of Trustees on the study.
4. The Secretary-General is of the view that, in addressing the question of the funding of UNITAR, attention has to be given in the first place to an examination

of the Institute's programmes and scope of work. The present report therefore places primary emphasis on the broad thrust and orientation of the future work of the Institute. The Secretary-General invited a senior consultant, Mr. Louis Emmerij, Rector of the Institute of Social Studies, The Hague, and President of the European Association of Development Research and Training Institutes, to assist in reviewing the future of UNITAR. In the preparation of the present report, the Secretary-General has taken full account of both the recommendations of the senior consultant and the views thereon of the Institute's Board of Trustees.

5. In his report to the Secretary-General, the senior consultant outlined three possible options for the future of UNITAR:

(a) The closing down of the Institute;

(b) The transformation of UNITAR into a perspective studies and analysis unit directly attached to the Office of the Secretary-General;

(c) The restructuring of UNITAR with alternative institutional arrangements.

6. Regarding the first option - the closing down of the Institute - the senior consultant concluded, after consulting a large number of government officials and senior United Nations Secretariat staff, that such a decision would do away with a very necessary instrument to strengthen the relevance and effectiveness of the United Nations as a whole. He was of the opinion that the mandate of UNITAR was more urgent and necessary than ever and that the entire effort of the Institute should be focused more strictly on it".

7. The UNITAR Board of Trustees, which met from 9 to 11 September 1985, examined the senior consultant's report. It agreed with the reasons advanced by the senior consultant that closing down the Institute was undesirable and added that if for any reason closing down the Institute were to become unavoidable, the Secretary-General and the General Assembly should give careful consideration to what, if anything, could be done to meet the unfulfilled needs.

8. The senior consultant's second option was to transform UNITAR into a perspective studies and analysis unit directly attached to the Office of the Secretary-General. According to the consultant, this would mean a return to a concept envisaged for UNITAR in the early 1960s which was to create a steering mechanism in the hands of the Secretary-General in order to enable him to make the organization more effective, in anticipating new and important problems and in launching new activities accordingly, by looking at the structure of the organization and where necessary adapting and changing it. The senior consultant observed that such an approach would mean a reduction in the autonomy of the Institute and lead to its financing from the regular budget of the United Nations.

9. The UNITAR Board of Trustees expressed the view that that option transcended the role of UNITAR in meeting its responsibilities vis-à-vis the Secretary-General, as set out in article II, paragraph 3, of the Statute of UNITAR, in that it envisaged think-tank functions relating to the staff and advisory role of the

Office of the Secretary-General. Since that option would also require revision of the Statute of UNITAR it would, in view of the Board, "be tantamount to the closing down of the Institute".

10. A third option examined by the senior consultant, which he recommended, involves a complete restructuring of UNITAR with alternative institutional arrangements. The senior consultant proposed that UNITAR concentrate its activities on policy-oriented research concerning the United Nations; that there be a small core staff and a larger rotating staff; that the research and training activities be integrated to the greatest degree possible; and that institutional links be established between UNITAR and the United Nations University. The UNITAR Board of Trustees stated that this approach came closest to its view of the future direction of UNITAR, although it did not agree with the proposed institutional links between the University and UNITAR (see para. 19 below).

11. Having examined carefully the report of the senior consultant, as well as the considerations thereon by the UNITAR Board of Trustees, the Secretary-General wishes to make the following preliminary observations on the future of the Institute. He is of the view that the mandate of UNITAR, namely to enhance the effectiveness of the United Nations, continues to be essential to the functioning of the Organization today. UNITAR can continue to provide a valuable centre for the study, analysis and reflection on the practices, activities and evolution of the United Nations. The Institute, by virtue of its autonomy, is in a position to conduct research on a variety of topics affecting international peace and security, development and multilateral co-operation - particularly perspective studies and analysis - that would complement and strengthen the work of the Secretariat and respond to the concerns of Member States. The reorientation of UNITAR along the lines suggested below would attract staff with a variety of backgrounds and interests that could enable the Institute to carry out its mandate. The Institute's training programmes, which should be more directly related to its research work, enable it to promote a better understanding among diplomats and the United Nations Secretariat staff of the purposes and functioning of multilateral co-operation through the United Nations.

12. The Secretary-General is of the opinion that the third option suggested by the senior consultant is the one most likely to result in the rejuvenation of the Institute. He therefore intends to pursue it, subject to the views expressed below and in light of comments of the General Assembly.

13. The UNITAR Statute stipulates that the Institute "shall conduct research and study related to the functions and objectives of the United Nations. Such research and study shall give appropriate priority to the requirements of the Secretary-General of the United Nations and of other United Nations organs and the specialized agencies". ^{1/} Because the Secretary-General feels that more advantage should be taken of that provision of the UNITAR Statute in the future, he is making appropriate arrangements for more active participation of senior staff of the United Nations in the elaboration of the programmes and priorities. The Secretary-General will therefore request the Executive Director of the Institute to collaborate with senior Secretariat staff in drawing up an integrated research and training programme covering a period of three to four years. The proposed

programme will aim at a significant qualitative improvement in the staffing of the Institute and will be drawn up in sufficient detail to permit decisions on long-term funding by the Board of Trustees and contributors.

14. A major characteristic of the senior consultant's recommendation under the third option concerns the staff of the Institute. He proposed that UNITAR should have a small core staff and a larger rotating staff. The rotating staff would be composed of four groups of persons interacting with each other and with the core staff around the Institute's work programme focused on the United Nations.

15. The first group would consist of mid-career United Nations officials who would be enabled to take a sabbatical leave at UNITAR, at no cost to the Institute, for the purpose of undertaking research and writing up their ideas regarding the priority activities of the organization. The second group of rotating staff would be composed of mid-career officials from Member States who would spend an active training-cum-research period at UNITAR and who would be financed by their Governments, by UNITAR or by the institution sponsoring the leave. The third category of rotating staff would be senior academics who would be paid either out of the UNITAR budget, at least initially, or by the institution sponsoring their association with UNITAR. The fourth group of persons would consist, as is already the case, of senior retired United Nations personnel who would be invited to spend up to three years at UNITAR to write about the major events in which they have been involved and the lessons drawn from them.

16. These four categories of personnel working together on problems of the United Nations combine the interests and experience of Secretariat staff members with those of government officials; the enthusiasm of younger officials would be balanced by the experience of elder statesmen; and the views of the practitioner of multilateral co-operation would be offset by those, perhaps more dispassionate, of the academic observer. This approach also combines elements of a career development policy for United Nations officials with the strengthening of the United Nations constituency in Member States and the building up of the institutional memory of the Organization.

17. The UNITAR Board of Trustees felt that the system of having several categories of rotating staff should be initiated on an experimental basis. The Secretary-General concurs with this suggestion and intends to implement it as suggested by the Board.

18. The Secretary-General would like to emphasize the importance of the training function of the Institute which, he is pleased to note, is perceived positively by Member States. When its research and training functions are integrated, UNITAR will continue to have an important role to play in enhancing the knowledge of diplomats and national officials with regard to multilateral co-operation in the areas of peace-keeping and economic and social development. Through its training activities, UNITAR is contributing to that goal and should continue to do so in the future.

19. In his third option, the senior consultant recommended that institutional links be established between UNITAR and the United Nations University. He

suggested an organizational structure by which UNITAR would be more closely related to the University focusing exclusively on the United Nations and its activities. Under such an arrangement, the Institute would have complete independence from a programme point of view, but would stand in an interdependent relationship on other matters.

20. The Board of Trustees of UNITAR, which includes members who are also on the Council of the University agreed that it was important to maintain effective links between the Institute and other United Nations institutions, in particular with the University. However, it concluded that, although much closer co-operation than at present and clear avoidance of duplication were essential, the existing formal arrangements were more appropriate than the type of institutional arrangement suggested in the report of the senior consultant. The Secretary-General agrees and intends to explore ways for closer relations between the two institutions within the present arrangements.

21. The Secretary-General is also exploring ways to reduce the operational and administrative costs of UNITAR so that resources can be concentrated on the Institute's substantive programmes. In recent years, the Institute's administrative costs have increased disproportionately to the costs of programme activities. The Secretary-General and the Executive Director of UNITAR are therefore studying ways in which the United Nations, in accordance with the Statute of UNITAR, might take fuller responsibility for the financial and administrative functions of UNITAR. This would lead to reduced requirements in the budget of the Institute. The Secretary-General and the Executive Director are also examining ways and means of reducing the cost of the functioning of the Board of Trustees of the Institute.

22. In its resolution 39/177, the General Assembly decided to grant UNITAR up to \$1.5 million, on an exceptional basis, to supplement the General Fund of the Institute in order to enable the Institute to carry out a minimum training and research programme in 1985 at a level to be decided by the Board of Trustees of the Institute, but not exceeding \$3 million. The Board of Trustees eventually decided to reduce the UNITAR budget somewhat more, so as to use as little as possible of the General Assembly grant; it subsequently approved a budget of \$2,634,955 for 1985. If all anticipated 1985 contributions (\$1,790,080) materialize, only about \$750,000 of the total \$1.5 million grant to UNITAR by the General Assembly will have been used. However, the Secretary-General observes that a significant portion of anticipated contributions remain to be paid.

23. Mobilization of additional resources, which the Executive Director is actively seeking, and prompt payment of outstanding pledges will materially improve the Institute's financial situation in 1985 and in 1986. However, and considering the uncertainty about the level of voluntary contributions to the Institute for 1986, it is recommended that the unused portion of the General Assembly's grant be made available to UNITAR in 1986. Such action will assist UNITAR in balancing its 1986 budget, which the Executive Director intends to propose to the Board at a level subject to the availability of resources. It will be noted that the Secretary-General has not proposed any further financing of the Institute's activities in the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1986-1987. The

Executive Director will include in the budget of UNITAR an amount of \$100,000 as the first instalment towards the reimbursement to the regular budget of the United Nations for the advance of \$886,000 approved by the General Assembly in resolution 38/177.

24. The results of the study to reduce operational costs, referred to in paragraph 21 above, will be reported to the Secretary-General at the earliest possible date. Any ensuing recommendations will have the objective of streamlining the operational and administrative apparatus of UNITAR so that funds can be concentrated on the Institute's substantive programmes. Consideration should also be taken of the appropriate quality and number of staff members required. Since special purpose funds are an equally important factor in determining the total resources available to the Institute, management of grants to UNITAR from this source should also be given careful consideration.

25. The Secretary-General looks forward to the views of the General Assembly on the approach being proposed for the future of UNITAR. Those views will be taken into account in its implementation. The Secretary-General would further report to the General Assembly at its forty-first session his proposals for the future of UNITAR.

Notes

1/ See Official Records of the General Assembly, Twenty-ninth Session, Annexes, agenda item 45, document A/6875, annex III, article II, para. 3.
