

United Nations

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

THIRTY-FOURTH SESSION

Official Records*



FIFTH COMMITTEE

48th meeting

held on

Thursday, 15 November 1979

at 10.30 a.m.

New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 48th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. ABRASZEWSKI (Poland)

later: Mr. PIRSON (Belgium)

Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative
and Budgetary Questions: Mr. MSELLE

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Distr. GENERAL

A/C.5/34/SR.48

30 November 1979

ENGLISH

ORIGINAL: SPANISH

The meeting was called to order at 10.40 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 101: JOINT INSPECTION UNIT: REPORTS OF THE JOINT INSPECTION UNIT
(continued)

Medium-term planning in the United Nations (A/34/84 and Add.1)

AGENDA ITEM 98: PROPOSED PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 1980-1981 (continued)
(A/34/6 and A/34/7)

Report of the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination (A/34/38)

1. Mr. GRODSKY (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) thanked Mr. Bertrand for his work in preparing the report of the Joint Inspection Unit (A/34/84) and said that he shared his concern about the large number of problems still pending in the area of medium-term planning in the United Nations. Such planning did not present any problems in terms of theory, but a great deal remained to be done in terms of the actual application of such concepts. Accordingly, the Secretariat and the Joint Inspection Unit should concentrate on the practical aspects of the problem.

2. The Soviet Union had always believed that medium-term planning should play an important role in attaining the objectives of the Charter and in establishing the priorities and defining the scope of financial activities. Medium-term planning should also be an important tool in organizing work and in identifying obsolete programmes or those of marginal usefulness in the United Nations system.

3. It was important fully to utilize the advantages of medium-term planning in drawing up the United Nations budget, for the growth rate of the budget was worrying Member States, which felt that that trend must be halted. The budget growth was currently one of the main problems affecting United Nations administrative and budgetary matters.

4. However, although medium-term planning was a factor of considerable importance, that importance should not be exaggerated, since it was only an initial stage of planning; the two-year planning, as in the proposed programme budget, was the decisive stage, since the relationship between programmes and resources was determined at that time. Therefore, the function of medium-term planning was to ensure a clearly delimited framework in which to prepare the programme budget.

5. The successful application of medium-term planning would make it easier to determine the scope and time frame for United Nations programmes and activities and to take into account the various financial indicators, particularly the volume of resources available for such programmes. In order to ensure that that objective was attained, rigid priorities should be established, taking into account the importance and urgency of the different activities and the possibility of executing programmes within the time allotted. By the same token, the possibilities offered by the specialized agencies and extrabudgetary funds should be utilized.

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(Mr. Grodsky, USSR)

6. Moreover, it was clear that there was no basic difference between the rolling plan and the fixed time horizon plan, since both plans were reviewed periodically, with due consideration for such important factors as financial indicators. In his opinion, the main problem for the United Nations in that respect was to find the best way of ensuring that the plan reflected the changes which occurred and the new mandates. In so doing, it was important not to incorporate new programme proposals in the programme budget unless they had previously been included in the medium-term plan. It was also important to ensure respect for the framework determined by the financial indicators. If those factors were taken into account, the six-year time period would not pose any problems, since a broader outlook could thus be adopted.

7. His delegation thought that, since the medium-term plan was a basic planning tool, it should be strengthened in order to prevent it from being used only for certain specific activities, on the pretext that other activities were non-programmable. United Nations activities could be considered either as programmable or non-programmable but, in order to guarantee the efficiency of the Organization, as many activities as possible must be considered as programmable and be included in the medium-term plan. In accordance with that line of thinking, an attempt should be made to expand the contents of the plan and, thus, to include joint services and conference services in it, since those activities were undoubtedly programmable.

8. With regard to the division of activities into continuous and time-limited activities, his delegation thought that such division was relative. In that connexion, it was important to avoid defining a large number of activities as continuous, since such activities would then not be considered in the drafting of the budget. On the contrary, as many activities as possible should be considered as time-limited activities. Accordingly, dates must be set for the periodic review of continuous activities by subsidiary bodies of the United Nations, in order to determine whether or not all such activities should continue to be so categorized. Expansion of the category of time-limited activities would make it possible not only to rationalize and economize United Nations resources, but also to improve monitoring and evaluation arrangements in future.

9. As for the recommendation of the Joint Inspection Unit concerning the establishment of an objective-based programme structure, he thought that emphasis should be placed on objectives and strategy, alike. In his opinion, it was very important not to lose sight of the need to strengthen the connexion between the medium-term plan and the budget. Obviously, the medium-term plan was a framework in which to draw up the proposed budget and, accordingly, the strategy adopted for the medium-term plan with regard to each subprogramme should in fact constitute a specific series of activities at the programme element level.

10. If the Joint Inspection Unit's recommendation concerning the preparation of in-depth studies was adopted, the medium-term plan would be expanded considerably, and there would then be some question as to whether the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination, or any other United Nations organ, could examine such a voluminous plan.

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(Mr. Grodsky, USSR)

11. The recommendation of the Joint Inspection Unit concerning the role of the introduction to the medium-term plan in the establishment of priorities was acceptable. However, the time allowed for preliminary consultations should be kept to a minimum. The main purpose was to establish priorities among the major programmes in accordance with the views of the the Secretary-General and with the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly. The establishment of priorities should not rule out the need to set relative growth rates for the major programmes.

12. Logically, it was difficult to oppose the Joint Inspection Unit's reasonable recommendation concerning consultation with officials responsible for executing the major programmes on the improvement of planning and programming methodology. However, the problem was not to organize consultations, but rather to determine the responsibilities of the officials entrusted with the task of executing the major programmes, because then it would be easier to settle questions of methodology.

13. His delegation thought that, in the consideration of medium-term planning, it was important to formulate not only general recommendations, but also recommendations that were sufficiently detailed to permit their prompt implementation. In his delegation's opinion, current practice in medium-term planning in the United Nations, which was based on the fact that the main responsibility for achieving the objectives set by the General Assembly was borne by programme managers, was inadequate and was not even viable, and should therefore be replaced by a different practice, based on an increase in the role of Member States in the definition of time-limited activities with a view to attaining the objectives set by the intergovernmental bodies of the United Nations.

14. Lastly, his delegation endorsed the view expressed in paragraph 102 of the report of the Joint Inspection Unit (A/34/34) that "the trends towards growth or reduction defined as a result of decisions on priorities could be reflected not in percentage increases in the funds made available but in decisions to institute or eliminate programmes".

15. Mr. KUYAMA (Japan) said that, as the Chairman of the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination had stated, CPC had reached broad agreement on certain aspects during its consideration at the resumed nineteenth session of the process of programme planning in the United Nations, but had left other issues for further consideration, including two matters which his delegation wished to mention.

16. First, CPC had recommended that the period covered by the medium-term plan should be increased from four to six years, but had not reached agreement on whether the plan should be rolling or have a fixed horizon. CPC had agreed, however, that the programme planning process should be based on a "deductive" rather than an "inductive" approach. In other words, the medium-term plan should be formulated primarily on the basis of objectives and policy orientations laid down by the intergovernmental organs. As a consequence of the increase of the time

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(Mr. Kuyama, Japan)

span and the adoption of a deductive approach, it should be possible to adopt a fixed-horizon plan, on the understanding that adjustments would be made later. However, it might be desirable to reflect more thoroughly on that issue.

17. A more important matter was to recognize the positive impact that agreement on a longer duration of the medium-term plan would have on the planning preparation process. As Mr. Bertrand had pointed out, that agreement, seemingly of a merely technical nature, could have far-reaching consequences permitting the working methods of central, sectoral, regional and technical bodies to be modified and improved, and leading to the better co-ordination and integration of United Nations economic and social activities at different levels.

18. Secondly, his delegation had noted that in its report (A/34/38, part I, para. 71) the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination had agreed that the introduction to the medium-term plan should constitute a key integral element in the planning process. One of the crucial elements in that context was priorities. It went without saying that the United Nations was no longer in a position to prepare its plans without considering budgetary constraints. The time had therefore come for the principle of "scrap and build" to be applied in identifying activities that were obsolete, ineffective and of marginal usefulness.

19. In describing priorities in the introduction to the medium-term plan, the priorities set by more than one intergovernmental organ at different levels must be reconciled. In his delegation's view, the Director-General for Development and International Economic Co-operation should take that matter into account when preparing the introduction. Another important unresolved question, namely the extent to which all organs could be involved in the formulation of the medium-term plan, could be handled in the same context.

20. As Mr. Okeyo had pointed out, the resumed nineteenth session of the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination held in September had not been as meaningful as it could have been, primarily because of the delay in submitting documentation and the limited time available for its consideration.

21. His delegation wished to stress two aspects of that session. First, it would have been logical to expect better co-ordination between the Advisory Committee and the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination. It was unfortunate that the views of CPC had not been available to the Advisory Committee when it had started its consideration of the programme budget in the current year. Secondly, during the session a number of delegations had pointed out the increasing tendency to rely on consultants and ad hoc expert groups. In many cases, information on the legislative basis of each programme element or task assigned to consultants and experts had not appeared in the relevant documents, which had made it almost impossible to judge the justification and value of those activities. It would be reasonable to expect the Secretariat to scrutinize further the use of consultants, despite the difficulties it faced in that regard.

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22. Mr. SWEGER (Sweden) said that his delegation had studied the report of the Joint Inspection Unit on medium-term planning in the United Nations (A/34/84) with great interest, and had been impressed by its quality and the many constructive suggestions made regarding the future planning of the work of the United Nations. It might be a slight exaggeration to speak of a planning crisis in the United Nations, but the discussions that had taken place the previous year on that subject indicated that all members of the Fifth Committee agreed on the urgent need for reforms in the planning system.

23. His delegation had voiced its concern over increasing United Nations expenditure, and had stressed that due attention should be paid to the resources already allocated to the United Nations. Clearly, the Organization's budgetary policy could not stand in isolation from the financial preoccupations of Member States. Consequently, it was essential to examine the programmes carefully, in order to achieve maximum efficiency and give greater emphasis to evaluation of the current use of resources. Priorities must be established, in line with the policies laid down by the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council, for everything could not be emphasized, and it should be kept in mind that the desired results might be achieved without increased budgetary allocations.

24. At present, however, the United Nations lacked the tool which would help it to achieve the ultimate objective that programmes should serve their purposes and be carried out in the most effective manner. Clearly, a medium-term plan that was thoroughly prepared and oriented towards clearly identified objectives was a prerequisite for efficient programme planning.

25. One of the most important suggestions in the report of the Joint Inspection Unit concerned the introduction of time-limited target-objectives, which would help to identify activities that had been completed or were obsolete, of marginal usefulness or ineffective. Continuous activities must be kept at a reasonable level and monitored regularly. On the whole, the objectives must be translated into concrete, operative terms. The objectives for the main programmes must be divided into subobjectives on which the programme of work would be based.

26. It was difficult for his delegation to take a firm position at present on the proposal in the report of the Joint Inspection Unit regarding the future programme structure. His delegation was inclined to agree with CPC that the outcome of the 1980 discussions on the model medium-term plan for the transnational corporations and commodities programmes must first be taken into account.

27. In general, his delegation felt that the programme structure should be related as closely as possible to the organizational structure, provided the latter had been drawn up on the basis of the main activities of the United Nations. In order to provide an over-all picture of the activities and their relation to the programme budget, some kind of link between programmes and organizational units seemed necessary and would facilitate an effective and methodical examination of the activities. One of the main objectives of the medium-term plan should be to introduce proper methods for evaluating activities.

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(Mr. Sweger, Sweden)

28. The medium-term plan must be worked out in close co-operation with other United Nations organizations which, along with all subsidiary organs, must be involved in the preparation of the plan in order to harmonize activities.

29. His delegation hoped that the discussion in CPC in 1980 would result in constructive proposals on the medium-term plan. It was essential that all Member States should have sufficient time to study all aspects of those proposals.

30. An exercise of paramount importance for the future planning of the work of the United Nations had been started, and all Member States should be involved in it. Unfortunately, they had often been deprived of that opportunity due to the late submission of documents. A schedule that gave all States time to become involved in the preparation of the plan must be established; the final medium-term plan would then be more likely to be a good plan and acceptable to all.

31. Mr. METELITS (United States of America) said that his delegation believed that both the report of the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) and the Secretary-General's comments on it (A/34/84/Add.1) had made an important contribution to the substantial progress that the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination (CPC) had been able to achieve in its May 1979 session on the medium-term plan. The JIU report contained several very useful suggestions and recommendations, among which were the adoption of time-limited target-objectives and some other administrative and planning elements that would be advantageous for the United Nations and would give CPC a good basis for its future decisions on the planning process.

32. The Assistant Secretary-General for Programme Planning and Co-ordination had been of great help because his comments on the JIU report added information that could only come from the Secretariat.

33. It was very gratifying that CPC had made significant progress in its consideration of the planning processes in the United Nations. For the first time in almost eight years, the Economic and Social Council had endorsed the conclusions and recommendations of CPC. The Fifth Committee would, hopefully, do the same. His delegation hoped that CPC would make further progress in its discussions in 1980, which would be reflected in its report to the Assembly at its thirty-fifth session.

34. Mr. Pirson (Belgium) resumed the Chair.

35. Mr. AYADHI (Tunisia) said that his delegation had studied the important report by JIU and had greatly appreciated the new ideas it contained. He would, however, like to know to what extent the International Development Strategy for the Third United Nations Development Decade could be taken into account and reflected in the plan.

36. Mr. BERTRAND (Joint Inspection Unit) said that the answer to the question by the representative of Tunisia could be found in the part of the report that dealt with the introduction to the medium-term plan (A/34/84, paras. 102-107). There had been a broad debate on the introduction in CPC, in which the Director-General

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(Mr. Bertrand)

for Development and International Economic Co-operation had taken part, explaining his own position in a statement that had been published as a document and could be made available to the Committee. His statement made it clear that, although there were slight differences between his approach and that proposed in the JIU report, there was agreement on basics, namely, on the role that should be played by the introduction and on the idea that the introduction should be formulated in a series of stages with the participation of Member States, thus giving them an opportunity to review it. It had been debated whether the Secretary-General should submit a draft introduction to be amended by the Member States, or whether another procedure should be followed. The Director-General for Development and International Economic Co-operation had suggested that a series of questions should be submitted to the Member States, whose replies would serve as the basis on which the Secretary-General and by the same token the Director-General himself, would formulate the introduction, which would later be submitted together with the plan for the approval of the Member States. The introduction represented something new because, even though an introduction had been prepared two years earlier at the request of CPC, it had been no more than an unsatisfactory summary allowing no consideration of priorities. As conceived in the JIU report, the introduction gave the perfect answer to the question of how the Development Strategy could be reflected in the plan. That must be the first document submitted by the Secretary-General to the Member States in the various forums which considered economic and social questions, such as CPC and the Economic and Social Council. The Member States would thus have an opportunity to express their views on the importance they attached to having the Strategy duly reflected in the plan.

Section 10. Economic Commission for Europe

37. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) said that the Advisory Committee had no difficulty in accepting the total appropriations requested by the Secretary-General for the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE).

38. Mr. SESSI (Italy) asked the Secretariat to explain why in table 10.10 of the proposed budget (A/34/6, vol. I), such a large amount (\$12,400) had been estimated for inflation in the entry for established posts. In all the other tables in section 10 the estimated rate of inflation varied between 1.8 per cent and 6.1 per cent.

39. With regard to external printing and binding costs, he wished to know why there were such marked differences in the rates of inflation estimated under the various programmes.

40. Mr. DENIS (France) noted from paragraph 10.1 of the proposed budget that all efforts were made to employ resources released from completed projects to carry out new ones. His delegation would like the Secretariat to provide information on the projects already completed.

41. In paragraph 10.2 of the proposed budget, one reclassification from P-4 to P-5 for the industrial development programme was requested. His delegation wished to know on what basis that request was made.

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(Mr. Denis, France)

42. Paragraph 10.6 of the proposed budget indicated that the two annual joint meetings of the RID Safety Committee and the ECE Committee on the Transport of Dangerous Goods would be held in Berne. He wished to know why those meetings were not being held in Geneva.

43. In paragraph 10.9, under subprogramme 1 (Agriculture), one of the programme elements (1.1) was the review of long-term trends in agriculture. He wished to know if those trends referred to the past or to the future.

44. In paragraph 10.66, under subprogramme 1 (Development of inland transport facilities), one of the programme elements (1.2) referred to co-operation with Senior Economic Advisers to ECE Governments on the over-all economic perspective for the ECE region to 1990. He wished to know what specific form that co-operation would take.

45. He also requested information on what was entailed in element 1.3 of subprogramme 1, entitled "Development of a coherent navigable inland waterway network in Europe".

46. Regarding elements 1.7 and 1.8 of subprogramme 1 (Road traffic censuses and maps of inland waterways used in international traffic, respectively), his delegation felt that those subjects had already been sufficiently studied. It believed that maps of waterways were already available.

47. It would like further details on the Convention on international intermodal transport and preparatory work on container standards (para. 10.66, programme element 2.5 of subprogramme 2).

48. Programme element 2.9 referred to "member countries of the ECE region which are developing from an economic point of view". In his delegation's opinion, all the countries of the region were developing from an economic point of view.

49. As for programme element 2.18 of subprogramme 2 (para. 10.66), concerning energy problems, his delegation believed that such problems were very timely but wondered what concrete results could be obtained in that field.

50. With regard to subprogramme 3 (Transport technologies), under paragraph 10.66 of the proposed budget, his delegation would like further information on the technological problems referred to in programme elements 3.1 and 3.2.

51. Finally, again under subprogramme 3, it was stated that the output would consist of sessions of working parties, groups of experts and groups of rapporteurs and possible seminars. It was to be hoped that all such sessions would result in a better utilization of resources.

52. Mr. LÖSCHNER (Federal Republic of Germany) paid a tribute to ECE for the important and diverse programme of activities it was carrying out. The Commission was doing particularly efficient work in its environment programme. In that connexion, he emphasized the value of the transboundary air pollution monitoring

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(Mr. Löschner, Federal Republic of Germany)

programme (para. 10.21, programme element 3.1 of subprogramme 3). His delegation was pleased with the next-to-zero growth rate of the budget estimate for section 10 and with the successful efforts of the Executive Secretary of ECE to redeploy resources. In paragraph 10.5 of the proposed programme budget, it was indicated that the resources currently available under the programme "Executive direction and management" for consultants might be transferred to the environment programme. The other regional commissions differed from ECE in those two respects.

53. In the light of those considerations, his delegation supported the Secretary-General's estimate for section 10, the adoption of which had been recommended by the Advisory Committee.

54. Mr. SERBANESCU (Romania) said that the proposed budget for the biennium 1980-1981 gave the impression that ECE would continue to receive marginal attention, or even be treated with some indifference, considering the level of budgetary resources allocated to it for "substantive activities" and the fact that its extrabudgetary resources were virtually nonexistent.

55. Contrary to what might be thought from the level of resources proposed for ECE, the Commission had not remained stagnant. On the contrary, the range of its activities had been constantly increasing. That was not surprising, since the membership of the Commission included countries with different economic and social systems, developing countries and averagely developed countries, which were working intensely to solve specific problems involving other regions and which were making a contribution to important efforts to promote industrialization, the application of science and technology for development, the development of international trade and interregional transport. The process of strengthening security and broadening co-operation, which had been set in motion by the Final Act of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe, had given ECE a great responsibility in its geographical area, and, by implication, in neighbouring areas such as the Mediterranean. Highly complex questions relating to energy, transport and the environment were coming to the fore in the activities of ECE.

56. Despite all those objective factors, the level of resources allocated to ECE had, in real terms and with very few exceptions, remained virtually unchanged for several years. It was reasonable to expect that ECE should, as it had been doing for some time, obtain maximum results with a minimum of expense. But it was one thing to operate efficiently and quite another to have to "tighten the belt" by postponing programmes or by carrying out only parts of them, as ECE seemed to have had to do more than once. Perhaps the officials of ECE did not request the necessary resources, but in Geneva they had asserted that that was not the case.

57. Mr. BUNC (Yugoslavia) said that the work of ECE and its role as a catalyst for economic co-operation between the socialist countries and the countries with developed market economies, and between the developed and the developing countries in the European region, were well known. Thus, ECE was making a major contribution to understanding among countries with different economic and social systems.

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(Mr. Bunc, Yugoslavia)

58. His delegation was therefore pleased that the Advisory Committee had supported the Secretary-General's estimates for section 10 of the budget.

59. Mr. ABRASZEWSKI (Poland) said that his delegation had on various occasions expressed its support for the work of ECE. With regard to section 10 of the proposed budget, he noted the considerable restraint shown by ECE in the use of consultants and its efforts to rely on permanent staff. Whenever funds were requested for consultants, ECE properly substantiated its reasons for so doing.

60. Mention should also be made of the considerable redeployment of resources in section 10. In that connexion, he endorsed the request that the Secretary-General should provide more information on the redeployment of resources in the next budget.

61. Mr. KHAMIS (Algeria) said that his delegation supported the Advisory Committee's recommendation that the Secretary-General's estimates for section 10 should be approved; he hoped the Committee, too, would accept the Advisory Committee's recommendation. He wished to highlight the fact that ECE and the other regional commissions received approximately the same volume of appropriations. The other commissions, however, which serviced regions with developing countries, obtained a large share of their resources from extrabudgetary sources. It should also be noted that the apportioned costs of ECE were particularly high, since the other commissions had to provide their own conference servicing.

62. He appealed to other delegations to show the same spirit of understanding when the estimates for other regional commissions were under consideration that his country had shown with regard to the estimates for ECE.

63. Mr. RUEDAS (Assistant Secretary-General for Financial Services), referring to questions asked by the French delegation, said that more could be done in presenting detailed justification for the various programmes included in the proposed budget. In the case of the section relating to ECE, for example, while reference had been made to the medium-term plan, no mention had been made of the various documents reflecting the deliberations and decisions relating to the inclusion of the various programme elements in the work programme of ECE. It might be useful in future to include a reference to such documents.

64. The CHAIRMAN said that, if the programmes had been considered in CPC, the questions asked by the French delegation might have been avoided. Unfortunately, the proposed budget had not been ready in time for the session of CPC.

65. Mr. BEGIN (Director, Budget Division), replying to the Italian delegation, said that in the column relating to inflation in table 10.10 the figures did not represent rates of inflation, but rather the amount by which the estimates would be increased as a result of inflation in 1980 and 1981.

66. With regard to the question asked by the delegation of France, he said that every section in the budget included a paragraph along the lines of paragraph 10.28, which indicated which elements had been terminated on the ground that they were obsolete, of marginal usefulness or ineffective. In addition, for each subprogramme

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(Mr. Begin)

information was provided concerning the resources that had been released or the increase which would be needed. With regard to the reclassification which had been requested, he said that the staff member in question was an economist and the only staff member in ECE working on programmes relating to the chemical industry, which was one of the major activities of the Commission. With regard to the holding in Berne of the joint meetings of the RID Safety Committee and the ECE Committee on the Transport of Dangerous Goods (para. 10.6), he said that those meetings were held alternately in Geneva and Vienna and that the costs were shared, since the RID Safety Committee was not a United Nations body. Referring to the doubts which had been cast on the value of a report on past trends in agricultural output as a basis for studying long-term trends in agriculture, he said that the only way economists could project the future was by studying the past.

67. Lastly, he indicated that the representative of France might find replies to his remaining questions in the ECE report.

68. Mr. KHAMIS (Algeria) proposed that the Secretary-General's estimate for section 10 should be put to the vote.

69. An appropriation of \$24,014,000 under section 10 was approved in first reading by 91 votes to none, with 1 abstention.

70. Mr. KHAMIS (Algeria) said that his delegation was pleased that the estimates for ECE had been approved with no negative votes and only one abstention.

71. Mr. TUNSALA (Zaire) said that his delegation had abstained because it was dissatisfied with the fact that the other regional commissions had to provide their own conference servicing and general services, while ECE could rely on the services of the United Nations Office in Geneva.

ORGANIZATION OF WORK (A/C.5/34/L.1/Add.1/Rev.1)

72. Mr. DUQUE (Secretary of the Committee) said that, in document A/C.5/34/L.1/Add.1/Rev.1, an entry reading: "Revised estimates, Section 28J - Staff training activities (Headquarters, Geneva and the regional commissions)" should be added to the documentation for item 98 under heading XV. The documentation shown under heading XXIV could be deleted, since there would be no revised estimates for the Office of the Co-ordinator of Assistance for the Reconstruction and Development of Lebanon. Two additional documents would be submitted, namely, revised estimates under section 2D (UNTSO) and a consolidated statement of conference servicing requirements.

73. The CHAIRMAN suggested that 23 November should be the deadline for the submission of documents to be considered by the Committee, with the exception of those relating to budget performance for 1978-1979 and the revised estimates concerning science and technology. He pointed out that the Advisory Committee had to consider all documents beforehand in order to submit its recommendations to the Fifth Committee, a task which generally took about a week. The Fifth Committee

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could therefore consider those documents in the first week of December and the administrative and financial implications of draft resolutions proposed by the other Main Committees in the second week of December, once they had been considered by the Advisory Committee.

74. Mr. MAJOLI (Italy) said that he agreed in principle with the suggestion that 23 November should be the last day for the submission of documents, since it was important to set a deadline and try to impose some discipline on the submission of documents. However, he did not think that the deadline should be immutable, because of the risk that some interested parties who did not want a certain subject to be considered might achieve their aim by causing delays in the documentation. Too rigid a deadline would give the Secretariat a virtual veto over matters to be considered by the Committee. His delegation did not believe that the Secretariat would ever engage in such manoeuvres, but it considered it desirable to proceed with caution and not to set an inflexible deadline.

75. Mr. SADDLER (United States of America) expressed his delegation's concern over the availability of documents, particularly the reports of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions. It seemed unrealistic to hope that the Committee could conclude its work on time. In view of the amount of work outstanding, the Advisory Committee would hardly be able to give documents requiring it the kind of detailed scrutiny they had traditionally received. According to document A/C.5/34/L.1/Add.1/Rev.1, 18 reports were to have been issued by mid-November, but they had not yet appeared. The Advisory Committee had to prepare reports not only on those documents, but also on statements of the financial implications of draft resolutions submitted in the Main Committees. His delegation reiterated its willingness to co-operate, but it felt bound to draw attention to the gloomy prospects so far as the work of the Advisory Committee was concerned.

76. It would be helpful if, in future, documents like document A/C.5/34/L.1/Add.1/Rev.1 were to indicate in some way - for example, by stating the number of pages - the volume of the documentation. For the rest, his delegation agreed with the Chairman's suggestion that a deadline should be set for the submission of documents, and it hoped that the Committee would complete its work within the specified time.

77. Mr. STUART (United Kingdom) said that, after considering the status of documentation of the Fifth Committee (A/C.5/34/L.1/Add.1/Rev.1) in the light of the limited information at its disposal, his delegation had wondered how much time the Fifth Committee and the Advisory Committee would need to study the documents in question and had reached the conclusion that, if they did their duty and examined them thoroughly, the task would prove too much for them. His delegation agreed with the suggestion that a deadline should be set, but would point out that that would not mean an end to problems, since there would remain the problem of how the work was to be completed once the documentation was available.

78. His delegation felt that, if the Committee was to finish by the suggested date, consideration of some topics would have to be deferred until the following session. He hoped that there were enough subjects that could be held over without

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(Mr. Stuart, United Kingdom)

adversely affecting the work of the United Nations in 1980. He suggested that it might be possible to postpone the comprehensive study on the question of honoraria, which had already been held over from the previous year, and the report of the Advisory Committee on administrative and budgetary co-ordination of the United Nations with the specialized agencies and IAEA, since that was a factual document which did not contain any studies requiring decisions by the Fifth Committee. Consideration of the impact of inflation on the budgets of organizations in the United Nations system could also be postponed.

79. He repeated his delegation's conviction that it was essential to defer the consideration of some topics until the following session in order to be able to complete the Committee's work within the allotted time.

80. The CHAIRMAN said he agreed that setting a deadline would not mean an end to the problem but was only one part of a possible solution. At the meeting of the General Committee that morning, mention had been made of the fact that it might prove necessary to defer the consideration of some reports until the following session.

81. Mr. BUJ FLORES (Mexico) agreed with the representative of Italy that the Committee should retain some flexibility in regard to the deadline for accepting documents. His delegation shared the concern that some unit of the Secretariat might take advantage of a rigid attitude on that point in order to defer consideration of a subject by delaying the preparation of the relevant documentation. Flexibility was particularly necessary in the case of programmes of interest to the developing countries; it would be a serious matter if such programmes were left without sufficient funds.

82. His delegation agreed with the United States and United Kingdom delegations that setting a deadline would not in itself solve all problems. With regard to the United Kingdom representative's suggestion that some topics should be postponed, he proposed that at the morning meeting on 23 November a few minutes should be spent on deciding, in the light of the actual situation with regard to the submission of documents, whether or not to postpone certain subjects.

83. Mr. PALAMARCHUK (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) recalled that at both the preceding session and the current one his delegation had drawn attention when the Fifth Committee had been beginning its work, to the difficulties which existed with regard to the preparation of documentation. All delegations now seemed to agree on the need to impose some order. His delegation fully agreed with the setting of a deadline - 23 November - for the submission of basic documents; otherwise, the Committee would find itself in a most difficult situation.

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(Mr. Palamarchuk, USSR)

84. Document A/C.5/34/L.1/Add.1/Rev.1 did not include certain information that was needed in order to have a complete picture. The estimated time for documentation to be issued was given in the document as "mid-November" or "late November". That wording was very vague, so that the dates remained indefinite; moreover, they had not been adhered to, since the current meeting was actually being held in mid-November and the documentation supposed to have been issued by then was not available to delegations.

85. The heading of the second column, "Documentation issued", was also ambiguous, since it did not allow for the lapse of time between the various stages of preparation of documentation and its availability in the conference room. In fact, documentation should be considered to have been issued only when it was in the hands of delegations.

86. His delegation supported the United Kingdom delegation's view that the Committee must be realistic and adopt a decision on what topics could be postponed. The Committee could finish its work by the deadline only if it confined itself to what it could really handle. His delegation could not at present express an opinion on what subjects should be deferred, but it suggested that the Bureau should consider the matter and submit its conclusions to the Committee so that a decision could be taken.

87. Finally, he noted the difficult position in which the Advisory Committee found itself owing to the volume of its work, and pointed out that the Fifth Committee could do nothing without the ACABQ reports. In the view of his delegation, time was not properly apportioned between ACABQ and the Fifth Committee, and a way of dealing with that problem must be found.

88. Mr. PEDERSEN (Canada) said the United Kingdom delegations's proposal that some subjects might be postponed and the Mexican delegation's proposal that the Bureau should consider which subjects could be dealt with in that way seemed interesting to his delegation.

89. Mr. RAMZY (Egypt) said that hasty decisions must be avoided. His delegation therefore supported the Mexican delegation's proposal to wait until 23 November, when the actual situation with regard to documentation would be known and an appropriate decision could be taken on whether to postpone consideration of some subjects.

90. Mr. GARRIDO (Philippines) said that he too was against taking hasty decisions, and supported the Mexican delegation's proposal to wait until 23 November. His delegation felt that consideration of the question of first-class travel, the comprehensive study of the question of honoraria, and the reports on administrative and budgetary co-ordination of the United Nations with the specialized agencies and IAEA could probably be deferred. On another matter, he requested the Secretariat to provide some clarifications concerning the depositary functions of the Secretary-General and registration and publication of treaties.

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91. Mr. KUYAMA (Japan) said that, in the circumstances, any topics which were not urgent and any on which discussions were not expected to produce substantial results at the present stage should be postponed.

92. His delegation supported the Canadian suggestion that the Bureau should submit specific proposals concerning topics which could be postponed.

93. The CHAIRMAN said that the Fifth Committee was, of course, free to decide at any time whether it wished to consider an agenda item, regardless of the availability of a report by the Secretary-General. That should not, however, prevent it from setting deadlines for the Secretariat, since otherwise there was a risk that the members of the Committee might be prepared to consider an item but might not have before them the relevant reports.

94. He suggested that the Committee should endorse the proposals of the representatives of Mexico and Italy, should request the Bureau to submit recommendations, at the morning meeting on 23 November, on the possibility of postponing specific items or reports, and should retain the deadline for the issue by the Secretariat of any documents which it wanted the Committee to consider. That deadline would also be the morning of 23 November.

95. With regard to the time-table of meetings, both he and the Chairman of the Advisory Committee wanted the General Assembly to be in a position to finish its work on time, and they would therefore make every effort to ensure that the Advisory Committee and the Fifth Committee could carry out their work as well as possible.

96. Mr. RUEDAS (Assistant Secretary-General for Financial Services), referring to the status of documentation still to be submitted by the Secretary-General to the Fifth Committee for its consideration (see A/C.5/34/L.1/Add.1/Rev.1), said that the documents relating to Arabic language services in UNCTAD, first-class travel, organizational nomenclature in the Secretariat, United Nations accommodation in Nairobi and at Headquarters, the United Nations International School, classification of posts and revised estimates for UNCTAD and the World Conference of the United Nations Decade for Women were being processed in the Documents Control Section, in translation or in reproduction and would be available shortly. In fact, in some cases, he was surprised that documents had not yet been issued; the revised estimates relating to UNCTAD, for example, should appear within a day or two at the latest.

97. In the case of the reports of the Advisory Committee on the United Nations Conference on New and Renewable Sources of Energy, on the revised estimates under section 6 (International Year for Disabled Persons), on the depositary functions of the Secretary-General and registration and publication of treaties and on posts lent to UNEP which it was proposed should be restored to UNTSO, the situation was less satisfactory; in general, however, he believed that there would be no difficulty in meeting the deadline referred to during the debate, namely, 23 November. On the other hand, the reports on accommodation at the Vienna International Centre and on the revised estimates under section 7 (Department of Technical Co-operation for Development) were not likely to be ready by that date. In the case of accommodation in Vienna, the reason was that a great deal of information had to be assembled and transmitted between Geneva and New York.

(Mr. Ruedas)

98. Referring to a comment made by the United Kingdom representative, he said that the Committee should consider one point in the light of previous decisions by the legislative bodies, namely, the costs of the transfer of the secretariat staff of the United Nations Fund for Drug Abuse Control, which had originally been borne by the Fund in accordance with previous proposals by the Secretary-General. At its second session of 1979, the Economic and Social Council had requested the Secretary-General to seek General Assembly approval for the financing of those costs from the regular budget instead of from voluntary funds.

99. The report on the revised estimates under section 7 (Department of Technical Co-operation for Development) dealt with an extremely complicated question, and a decision had only recently been reached on the proposals to be submitted to the Fifth Committee. The report containing those proposals was now being prepared. The Secretariat would do all it could to overcome the difficulties involved, but he did not believe that the report could be finished by 23 November.

100. The report of the Advisory Committee on first-class travel, to which the representative of the Philippines had referred, was a very brief document informing the Fifth Committee of the exceptions made by the Secretary-General, in exercise of his discretionary powers, to the standards approved by the General Assembly. The Secretary-General had the authority to make exceptions but was required to report annually to the General Assembly on the matter.

101. The Fifth Committee must take a decision concerning the Secretary-General's depositary functions. During the debate on section 26 of the proposed budget, at least one representative had stated that his approval in first reading of the appropriation under that section was subject to the outcome of the Fifth Committee's consideration of the proposal submitted by the Secretary-General on the subject, on which the Advisory Committee had commented in paragraph 26.9 of its first report (A/34/7).

102. The CHAIRMAN urged the Secretariat to spare no effort to ensure that on the morning of 23 November the Committee would have the reports on accommodation in Vienna and the revised estimates under section 7. In September, the Secretary-General had assured the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination that the report on the revised estimates would be circulated very shortly to members of the Fifth Committee; yet two months had elapsed without the Committee's being able to adopt a decision on the matter.

103. Mr. SERBANESCU (Romania) asked whether the Committee could be provided with a list showing the exact status of each document, since so far the picture was very confused.

104. The CHAIRMAN said that such a list would be requested of the Secretariat.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.