

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 56th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. PIRSON (Belgium)

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

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The meeting was called to order at 8 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 98: PROPOSED PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 1980-1981 (continued)

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

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

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

1. Mr. BRODODININGRAT (Indonesia) said that it was doubtful whether, in its present form, the medium-term plan really served its purpose. In addition, the volume and frequency of the planning exercise made it extremely difficult, if not impossible, for all concerned to conduct that exercise effectively. CPC had, however, found a way of remedying the situation and, as Mr. Bertrand had stated, the greatest difficulties had now been overcome.
2. In its report (A/34/38, Part I), CPC had identified a series of important principles on which the United Nations programme planning process should be based. For instance, the objective-oriented principle was very important for the simple reason that programmes which were not directed towards desired objectives could easily lead nowhere and simply waste resources. The principle that the medium-term plan should faithfully translate legislative mandates into programmes was self-explanatory. The extension of the planning period was the only way out of the difficulties experienced in the past when the frequency and volume of the medium-term plan had overwhelmed the capacities of all concerned.
3. His delegation agreed with CPC that intergovernmental organs should be involved in the planning process so as to reduce or even eliminate discrepancies between over-all central planning and sectoral planning and, between regional programmes of work. His delegation saw the merit of the recommendation of CPC that the introduction to the medium-term plan should be given special importance, particularly in order to help in the establishment of priorities. Having listened to the explanations given by the Director-General for Development and Economic Co-operation, his delegation believed that the idea was worth testing. It therefore subscribed to the conclusions drawn by CPC in paragraph 71 of its report (A/34/38, Part I) and was prepared to endorse the recommendations set out in paragraphs 72 and 73 thereof.
4. The members of CPC had been unable to reach agreement on the concept of time-limited objectives. That concept, as proposed by JIU, was very appealing. There appeared to be a clear distinction between three types of objectives: the general objectives set by the supreme organs, the national objectives pursued by Member States, and the objectives which should constitute a "working tool" for the secretariats of international organizations. Despite those distinctions, however, there should be an interrelationship between the three levels of objectives, in the sense that "working tool" objectives were simply a breakdown of general

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(Mr. Brotodiningrat, Indonesia)

objectives into a concrete form attainable within a specific time-frame. From that standpoint, time-limited objectives would be less a mere instrument for budget control than a rational system for helping to attain general objectives, a system in which working objectives would be progressive phases in efforts directed towards general objectives. He was, of course, aware that general objectives could not be attained by secretariats alone.

5. There were some areas of the Secretariat's activities in which the application of the concept of time-limited objectives might prove impossible in certain cases. Distinctions were made between programmable and non-programmable activities, and between continuous activities and activities on which a time-limit could be imposed, but the best way to differentiate between such activities was by reference to concrete examples. CPC intended to deal with that problem at its next session, on the basis of concrete examples provided by the Secretariat; by then, the Committee should be in a better position to make a final judgement.

6. With regard to the choice between a rolling and a fixed-horizon planning system, his delegation would prefer a medium-term plan based on a six-year period, which would roll after four years and be subject to a smaller adjustment exercise at the end of the second year. Such a solution would respond to the mostly unpredictable nature of the problems faced by the United Nations and the often continuous character of its activities. That meant that the system chosen must be highly flexible and adaptable. A fixed-term planning system might, on the contrary, diminish time projection or shrink the horizon of the programme. Now that the acceptance of the time-limited objective concept was being considered seriously, the imposition of a uniform horizon for the entire planning system would complicate the setting of time-limits for programmes and subprogrammes which, in some cases, would require time-limits longer than the planning horizon.

7. According to the report of CPC, the rolling system would have various drawbacks. First, it would create a heavier workload. His delegation believed, however, that a six-year cycle with a small adjustment exercise after two years and a greater review after four years would, over 12 years, require four new planning exercises and three small adjustment exercises. In the same period, a fixed-horizon planning system would require three new planning exercises, two smaller adjustment exercises and two larger reviews.

8. CPC also believed that a rolling system would have the disadvantage of causing the over-all evaluation to coincide with the reviews of a new plan. It should be noted, however, that the same weakness existed in the fixed-horizon system. Moreover, once the concept of the time-limited objective was applied and achievement indicators were built into programmes, the evaluation task would be much easier.

9. Finally, CPC believed that the rolling system would pose difficulties in the harmonization of interagency planning. Harmonization did not, however, necessarily mean total synchronization of planning cycles, and would not resolve the highly complex problem of the co-ordination of agency activities. All the foregoing considerations had led his delegation to maintain its preference for a rolling planning system, which it believed would best serve the interests of the Organization.

10. Mr. BUNC (Yugoslavia) said that the Committee should endorse the recommendations put forward by CPC in its report on the process of programme planning in the United Nations (A/34/38, Part I). As paragraph 71 (a) of that report indicated, the planning process, which was part of the over-all management process, should be forward-looking and dynamic. The strategy and orientation of the medium-term plan, as well as its specific objectives and activities at all levels, should be derived from the objectives and policy orientations set by the intergovernmental organs. Moreover, the programme budget should be formulated within the framework of the medium-term plan, keeping in view its objectives and strategy. In addition, as recommended by CPC in paragraphs 71 and 72 of its report, the plan should contain time-limited and quantifiable objectives, all the indications of the strategy to be followed to achieve them, estimates of completion time for different phases of work, and achievement indicators.

11. While it should suffice in the medium-term plan to indicate the kind of activity that would be carried out under each programme, the budget should describe all the activities under the subprogramme, whether programmable or not, as well as completed or obsolete activities. Thus, the planning process should take into account the need for joint planning, programme co-ordination and harmonization within the United Nations system. Co-ordination, however, was not an end in itself; its aim should be to maximize the efficiency, effectiveness and impact of the entire United Nations system. Since performance reports and evaluation were the key elements in the planning, programming, monitoring and evaluation cycle, his delegation strongly supported the view that the evaluation mechanism should be strengthened and that the use of achievement indicators as a tool for evaluation should be developed.

12. The report of the Secretary-General (A/C.5/34/4 and Corr.1) on activities that had been completed, were obsolete, of marginal usefulness or ineffective, was clearly inadequate. It should have been prepared in time, so that Governments could gain a clearer insight into the budget. His delegation therefore endorsed the views of other members of CPC that the Secretariat should submit to CPC at its next session a report setting up the precise procedure for the preparation of the programme budget, including extrabudgetary resources. Such a procedure should be examined and approved by the Economic and Social Council and by the General Assembly at its thirty-fifth session.

13. His delegation had already stated that extrabudgetary resources should not be used to finance activities of a permanent nature and that posts financed from such funds should not be transferred to the regular budget. The utilization of extrabudgetary funds for continuing activities was liable to distort programme priorities set by the General Assembly, particularly where posts were transferred to the regular budget without any transfer of the corresponding functions themselves.

14. To clarify the links between the activities of the Department of International Economic and Social Affairs and those of the Office of the Director-General for Development and International Economic Co-operation, the Fifth Committee should have at its disposal an organizational chart as provided for in General Assembly resolution 32/197 on the restructuring of the economic and social sectors of the United Nations system.

15. Mr. LAHLOU (Morocco) said that the concept of medium- and long-term planning did not date from the twenty-eighth session, when the General Assembly had laid down guidelines for medium-term planning and had requested the Secretary-General to establish the order of priorities in the economic, social and human rights fields.

16. In fact, the earliest signs of such planning in the United Nations went back to 1964. The idea had then taken root and developed and in 1972 the Secretary-General had drawn up a document entitled "Form of presentation of the United Nations budget and duration of the budgetary cycle", with a six-year medium-term plan. Initially, the type of planning in question had been designed for the International Development Strategy for the second United Nations Development Decade and its aim was to harmonize the various activities to formulate programmes that combined contributions from the States directly concerned with support from various bodies within the United Nations system. Results had been disappointing and it should be remembered, in that connexion, that for developing countries planning was only meaningful in so far as it incorporated the targets and general principles of the new international economic order and the International Development Strategy. The credibility of international organizations concerned with economic and social matters depended on the suitability of their machinery for showing that they were capable of reaching goals that were, on the whole, accessible.

17. The latest medium-term plan for the period 1980-1983 was the epitome of improvisation, but the responsible officials in the Secretariat were not solely to blame; the reluctance of the wealthy countries to commit themselves to financing for the period of the plan was, actually, the chief obstacle. The donor countries claimed that the only programmable activities were those based on probable income yield. Thus, they, too, were partly responsible for the planning crisis.

18. What was a plan if not the harmonization of the means of reaching reasonably accessible goals in accordance with a given order of priorities? It was the task of deliberative bodies to set initial policy guidelines, and questions raised at that level could be solved through the participation of intergovernmental organs at every level of the conception and implementation of the plan. The latter was undeniably the way to make decisive progress and assist the Organization to improve. For the moment, the most urgent task was to make corrections to the plan to be initiated in January 1980 and to make careful preparations for the 1984-1989 plan on the basis of an objective predetermined framework.

19. It seemed that activities that could be planned should be separated from those that could not. Study of the plan fell solely within the purview of the competent intergovernmental organs, whose function it was to state their views on the content of programmes, their relative priority, and the urgency of the activities planned under each of them. For its part, the Secretariat suggested ways and means of achieving the aspirations voiced by the deliberative bodies and of translating the general policy guidelines set by the United Nations into specific objectives. It would be noted, however, that the statement of objectives was often extremely ambitious and that strategies proposed were out of step with available or probable resources.

(Mr. Lahlou, Morocco)

20. That situation was due to the fact that the industrialized countries were becoming increasingly demanding in their financial assistance. Faced with budgetary uncertainty, those in charge of programmes were drawing up strategies vague enough to cover any activities they might have to undertake. If that basic weakness could be rectified, the point would be passed at which planning was conceived merely as a tool for budgetary control or as a framework indicating the volume of funds to be obtained or invested. It was at the level of the mobilization of resources that the United Nations medium-term plan resembled the national plans of Member States. If one segment of the international community refused to take part in any mobilization of that kind, it should not then be claimed that a better designed plan would produce more spectacular results.

21. In any case, it would be desirable to prepare a pre-planning document, setting out guidelines and various orders of priority, in order to determine the formal objectives guaranteeing the political viability of proposals and of possible amendments to them. The deliberative bodies could then express the will of Member States and could make the necessary corrections or modifications. The plan itself could only play its full part if it was drawn up sufficiently far in advance for national planners to study it and see how it might fit in with the objectives of their own countries.

22. During the transitional period, it would be unwise to change anything in the administrative and operational structures or to overestimate the degree of participation by various intergovernmental organs in the development process, since that process varied according to whether the organs concerned were central, sectoral or regional. The present structures derived from the current economic situation and the staggering of different planning phases stemmed from the need to present activities proposed under the plan in accordance with the available means of action. Reform of the medium-term plan was doubtless an important step forward, but an analysis of trends in a number of programmes and subprogrammes included in the various medium-term plans so far drawn up was not conclusive.

23. With regard to the choice between a fixed-horizon plan and a rolling plan, the representative of the United Republic of Cameroon had rightly noted that the distinction could not be an absolute one. Above all, the plan should be considered as the basic means of bringing order into everything in United Nations activities, which could be organized.

24. In that area, the Secretariat was doing pioneer work. With regard to the improvement of planning procedures, his delegation welcomed the recommendations put forward by the Joint Inspection Unit in its report (A/34/84). It supported recommendation No. I, on the adoption of a plan with fixed-time horizons, and recommendation No. III on the adoption of an "in-depth study" system, provided that Member States could have the pre-planning documentation examined by their national civil services. With regard to recommendation No. VI, it was clear that the introduction to the medium-term plan could serve for collecting the comments of Member States, which would discuss it within the deliberative organs so as to produce a consensus establishing the tasks of the departments assigned to achieve the objectives set in the plan.

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25. Mr. KOZUBIK (Czechoslovakia) said that his delegation had always recommended that the United Nations system should adopt a medium-term plan, which it believed should become an important tool in controlling the budget, which was growing at an alarming rate. His delegation continued to encourage the rational and effective deployment of the financial resources of the United Nations. Unfortunately, he was forced to note that some problems remained unsolved and that the practice of requesting supplementary appropriations, sometimes without foundation, was still continuing.

26. Not only should such tendencies be suppressed, but the problem as a whole should be solved through a rational allocation of resources to activities conducted by the United Nations in accordance with the Charter. If the medium-term plan was to yield better results, the Joint Inspection Unit and the United Nations Secretariat should systematically focus their efforts on the practical application of more effective methods; in view of the constant increase in the budget, it was high time to pass from the experimental stage to that of direct planning.

27. There were persistent gaps between the various programmes and plans of the United Nations, on the one hand, and those of the specialized agencies, on the other, which hampered efforts to co-ordinate them. In order to make effective use of available budgetary resources, they should be allocated among existing programmes according to an order of priorities which should be established. The medium-term plan should act as a brake on the undesirable growth in the budget and should result in savings, since that was the objective of the administrative and budgetary policy of the United Nations. His delegation, for its part, was ready to support any steps to redistribute resources and manpower by taking them from programmes which had already been completed and transferring them to priority tasks.

28. The problems raised in the consideration of medium-term planning were not new ones and his delegation had on numerous occasions given its opinion as to how they should be solved. Those problems, which had also been criticized by other States Members of the United Nations, were not always dealt with systematically. Only through a rapid improvement of medium-term planning could the United Nations escape from the financial deadlock in which it found itself.

29. Ms. MUCK (Austria) said that her delegation, attaching great importance to programme planning in the United Nations, had participated actively in the May 1979 session of the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination devoted to the refinement process. Now that CPC had decided on its major aspects, the medium-term plan should enable Member States and the Secretariat to decide how the objectives laid down in resolutions were to be translated into programmes that would achieve the maximum impact. In its new format, the medium-term plan would facilitate co-operation between the United Nations and the specialized agencies and, where appropriate, joint planning of activities in order to avoid duplication and waste of resources. Lastly, it would assist programme managers and intergovernmental bodies to evaluate United Nations activities and would act as a framework for the preparation of the programme budget.

(Ms. Muck, Austria)

30. Agreement seemed to have emerged in the Fifth Committee on eight main points, the subjects of the conclusions and recommendations submitted by CPC in paragraphs 71 (g), (h), (j), (l) and (m) and 72 (a), (e) and (f) of its report (A/34/38, Part I, pp. 16-17). Her delegation endorsed all those points and was particularly interested in the concept of time-limited objectives and the role of the introduction to the medium-term plan. The introduction should enable Member States to reach agreement on priorities in the light of the main resolutions of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council, in particular those relating to the new international development strategy and the new international economic order, and should also give Member States an indication of the degree of importance they should attribute to the various sectors dealt with by the principal specialized agencies.

31. The preparation of the two model programmes that the Secretariat would present to CPC at its twentieth session would help to clarify the questions of the programme structure of the medium-term plan and the various levels of detail required in programme narratives. In view of the importance of those matters, the model programmes should be submitted to the Fifth Committee in order that all Member States might understand and approve the final conception of the medium-term plan. Lastly, the calendar of preparation to be submitted by the Secretariat would change the existing method of work of all the technical and governmental committees by allowing them, as well as the regional economic commissions, to contribute to the preparation of the plan. After it had been considered by CPC and the Committee on Conferences, that document should also be submitted to the Fifth Committee at its next session.

32. Mr. BERTRAND (Joint Inspection Unit) said that he had been greatly impressed by the quality of the debate on planning, which had certainly advanced the concept of the medium-term plan. Now that a wide measure of agreement on the fundamental points had emerged, the plan was beginning to take shape. It would now be part of the negotiating process among all Member States, thus filling the gap that had existed between the negotiations on the main principles and the strategy, on the one hand, and the budget, on the other. As supplemented by the introduction, the plan constituted both a negotiating instrument for Member States, in so far as the order of priority and the main guidelines of Secretariat activity were concerned, and a refined management tool for the Secretariat itself. As the Chairman of the Fifth Committee had suggested, it would be useful if the debate could culminate in a decision or a resolution.

Eleventh report on the activities of the Joint Inspection Unit (A/C.5/34/1)

Glossary of evaluation terms (A/34/286 and Add.1)

Inter-Organization Board for Information Systems (A/34/153)

Initial guidelines for internal evaluation systems of United Nations organizations (A/34/271 and Add.1)

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United Nations Information Centres (A/34/379 and Add.1)

Implementation of the recommendations of the Joint Inspection Unit (A/C.5/34/6; A/34/562)

Identification of outputs in the United Nations programme budget (A/C.5/34/2)

Establishment of internal work programmes and procedures for reporting on programme implementation (A/C.5/34/3)

33. Mr. BRYNTSEV (Joint Inspection Unit), introducing the eleventh report on the activities of the Joint Inspection Unit (A/C.5/34/1), said that its main feature was a summary of the reports and notes produced by JIU during the period July 1978 to June 1979. Of the 18 reports and notes, 9 were addressed to the United Nations, 4 to both the United Nations and the specialized agencies, and the remaining 5 to individual specialized agencies. It was the first report on a full year's activities since the entry into force on 1 January 1978 of the new statute, whereby JIU was to work in both inspection and evaluation. During the reporting period, JIU had put out two reports devoted exclusively to evaluation, and it was currently working on additional evaluation studies, including an evaluation of technical co-operation activities of the United Nations system in Sri Lanka and an evaluation of the translation process.

34. Mr. METELITS (United States of America) said that the annual report of JIU (A/C.5/34/1) was a useful summary of the various studies it had undertaken in the year from July 1978 to June 1979 and a condensation of their main findings and recommendations. That condensation could be of use to delegations in the Fifth Committee as a good summary of worth-while proposals in areas in which the Committee might be called upon to make decisions, as for example the Inter-Organization Board for Information Systems and medium-term planning.

35. In his delegation's view, the most important JIU reports were the three on the theory, techniques and organization of programming and evaluation. The glossary of evaluation terms (A/34/286), which defined evaluation as a management tool and a learning tool, would make it possible to harmonize the terminology used in that field and, once the Advisory Committee on Co-ordination had approved it, would be able to serve as a standard reference document for the staff of United Nations organizations and for members of permanent missions.

36. Similarly, the report on initial guidelines for internal evaluation systems of United Nations organizations (A/34/271) was a useful study of the various structures that organizations could adopt to establish viable internal-evaluation mechanisms, and it too should serve as a basic reference document for internal evaluation throughout the United Nations system. His delegation, which was keenly interested in evaluation, particularly endorsed paragraphs 85 and 86 of the JIU report, which requested information from United Nations organizations on the progress they had made in their evaluation systems, and it hoped that the Fifth Committee would also endorse that recommendation.

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(Mr. Metelits, United States)

37. The two brief reports from the Secretary-General on the identification of outputs in the United Nations programme budget (A/C.5/34/2) and the establishment of internal work programmes and procedures for reporting on programme implementation (A/C.5/34/3), which were a follow-up to the recommendations in a 1978 JIU report on programming and evaluation in the United Nations (A/33/226), demonstrated the efforts that the Secretariat was making to improve its techniques and operations in that area.

38. The JIU report on medium-term planning in the United Nations (A/34/84) had been the subject of considerable in-depth discussion in the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination and in the Fifth Committee. Thus, CPC had been able to make considerable progress in that field, and it would continue its study of the matter at its twentieth session. The Joint Inspection Unit had made a substantial contribution to the work done in the field of medium-term planning and would continue to play an important role by assisting CPC.

39. The JIU report on the Inter-Organization Board for Information Systems (A/34/153) had been the subject of intense debate in CPC and at the joint CPC-ACC meetings in June 1979. His delegation believed that, given high-level support and good management, electronic data processing could save the United Nations substantial amounts of resources, increase productivity and speed up operations. An effective Inter-Organization Board could assist the entire United Nations system to control overlapping and incompatible computer systems, to the advantage of all Member States. If the Board was to carry out its tasks of co-ordination effectively, all United Nations organizations must be represented on it by high-level officials. In addition, the Administration of the United Nations should take the necessary steps to ensure that any new information system was submitted to the Board for review and approval before being implemented.

40. Regarding the Joint Inspection Unit report on United Nations Information Centres (A/34/379), he said it was important for the Committee that had been set up for the purpose of re-examining United Nations information policies and activities to take a detailed look at the operation of those Centres, on the basis of the JIU report and the comments of the Secretary-General, and without prejudice to the deliberations on that subject in the Special Political Committee.

41. Mr. VON HARPE (Federal Republic of Germany) said that the series of valuable reports provided by the Joint Inspection Unit again proved that it could play the important role in the field of inspection and evaluation that had been mandated by the Member States. Document A/C.5/34/1 contained a very useful summary, and his delegation hoped that it would pave the way for improvement of evaluation procedures in United Nations bodies and for refinement of the medium-term plan.

42. From the very beginning of the planning process, evaluation had seemed to be the necessary link between programming and budgeting. His delegation had always called for harmonization of the evaluation procedures followed throughout the United Nations system, so that evaluation results in the different organizations could be compared.

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(Mr. Von Harpe, Federal
Republic of Germany)

43. Evaluation consisted of two elements: the machinery that had to be set up, and the psychological support that was needed from the heads of secretariats and the members of policy-making bodies. Without that support, it would be difficult to get the necessary feedback and output from the evaluation procedures for adjusting and regulating programmes. It was clear that evaluation procedures should not take the form of a rigid system of new definitions and internal guidelines. Yet the necessary flexibility should not be used as an excuse for deferring action on the JIU recommendations. His delegation welcomed in that regard the fact that ACC and CCAQ had already accepted the JIU proposals as a general framework for evaluation procedures. It would like all the organizations represented in ACC to take the necessary steps and, if need be, hold additional consultations with JIU.

44. Mr. TORRES (Brazil) said that the United Nations Information Centre in Brazil had been performing its duties in a most satisfactory manner, through a series of activities which enhanced its important role. His Government believed that the Centre could serve as the permanent focal point for the dissemination of information to Portuguese-speaking countries. It was further convinced that the existing structure of the network of United Nations Information Centres was quite adequate and did not require immediate changes. Brazil was therefore in agreement with the Secretary-General's comments on the Joint Inspection Unit report and believed that attempts at "regionalization" were premature and did not in any way reflect current needs and situations.

45. Mr. PICO DE COAÑA (Spain) said that document A/C.5/34/1 was a very useful and very well-organized summary that would facilitate the work of delegations.

46. Mr. LAHLOU (Morocco) said it was disturbing to find the implications of additional languages in the United Nations system included once again in document A/C.5/34/6. The General Assembly had taken a decision in the matter at the preceding session. He wished to know whether that decision was being questioned.

47. Mr. RUEDAS (Assistant Secretary-General for Financial Services) said that the Secretary-General, as was clear from paragraph 1 of document A/C.5/34/6, was only acting in accordance with resolution 32/199 in submitting a report on the implementation of the recommendations of the Joint Inspection Unit. The Secretary-General, in fact, made comments only on three of the recommendations, those relating to controlling the production of documents, the proportion of temporary staff in the language services, and facsimile transmission of documents; he had made it clear that the other 13 recommendations were the exclusive province of Member States.

48. Mr. LAHLOU (Morocco) pointed out that documents were submitted to the Committee in order that it might study them and take a decision. Document A/C.5/34/6 contained elements that had been rejected the preceding year by the Committee. He would not want the Committee to take a decision contradicting a previous one, and he therefore proposed deleting paragraphs 4 and 5 of document A/C.5/34/6.

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49. Mr. SESSI (Italy), referring to the recommendations of the Joint Inspection Unit in its report on United Nations Information Centres (A/34/379, p. 40), said with regard to recommendation 2 that it was his understanding that the Centres' budgets allocated 85 per cent to staff costs, which was indeed too high a percentage. Concerning recommendation 3, the problem was not a shortage of staff but rather one of redeploying resources, similar to that faced by the regional commissions. The number of vacant posts was indeed very high. To remedy the situation, the Secretariat could appoint staff members from the countries where the Centres were situated.

50. Mr. HAMZAH (Syrian Arab Republic) said that he believed two principles should govern the establishment of United Nations Information Centres: equitable geographical distribution and the need to increase the number of Centres in the developing countries. For instance, the Middle East had only five Centres, a very low number in comparison with the number of countries in the region. Similarly, the establishment of Centres in the developing countries had not kept pace with the great increase in the number of developing countries since 1950.

51. A balance must be struck between the budget for Information Centres and the United Nations budget as a whole. His delegation believed, as did the Joint Inspection Unit (A/34/379, p. 40), that the Centres' share of the total Department of Public Information budget, currently at 35 to 40 per cent, should be raised to 50 per cent. He observed that staff costs had been rising faster than the costs of other objects of expenditure. If that trend continued without the appropriation of additional funds for information activities as such (travel, communications, publications), the United Nations would be evincing a lack of flexibility with regard to the Centres. The travel costs of the staff of Centres covering several countries or large countries were an essential object of expenditure if the Centres were to have a real impact outside the city in which they were situated.

52. His delegation supported the Joint Inspection Unit's recommendations to increase the share of the total DPI budget being devoted to Information Centres and to change the distribution of the Centres' budgets in such a way as to provide more funds for information activities.

53. Mr. GRODSKY (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics), noting the fact that delegations had begun to comment on the various JIU reports, pointed out that two of them could not yet be considered by the Fifth Committee, namely, the report on the Inter-Organization Board for Information Systems (A/34/153) and the report on the United Nations Information Centres (A/34/379).

54. With regard to the report on the Inter-Organization Board for Information Systems, the Committee did not yet have before it the comments made by the Secretary-General on behalf of ACC. It was customary not to consider JIU reports until the Secretary-General had made his comments available.

(Mr. Grodsky, USSR)

55. As for the report on the United Nations Information Centres, it should be borne in mind that even though the Fifth Committee had considered information policies in the past, the Special Political Committee had been responsible for such questions for the past several years. The JIU report on the United Nations Information Centres contained many recommendations which would bring about a change in the policies and structures of information activities, and thus it touched upon substantive questions that were within the competence of the Special Political Committee. His delegation therefore feared that the report might be studied twice, once by the Fifth Committee and once by the Special Political Committee. Moreover, a number of the JIU recommendations had financial implications. The report on the United Nations Information Centres should therefore be accompanied by a report of the Advisory Committee, which did not seem to have been drawn up. Under the circumstances, the Fifth Committee should not begin to consider the JIU report on the United Nations Information Centres.

56. The CHAIRMAN recalled that all the JIU reports had been submitted to the Fifth Committee for consideration. That meant not that the Committee should study each one of them in detail but rather that it should conduct an over-all study of the work of the Joint Inspection Unit.

AGENDA ITEM 100: ADMINISTRATIVE AND BUDGETARY CO-ORDINATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS WITH THE SPECIALIZED AGENCIES AND THE INTERNATIONAL ATOMIC ENERGY AGENCY: REPORT OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON ADMINISTRATIVE AND BUDGETARY QUESTIONS

Feasibility of establishing a single administrative tribunal (A/C.5/34/31, A/C.5/34/L.21)

57. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) said that the Advisory Committee had discussed document A/C.5/34/31 concerning the feasibility of establishing a single administrative tribunal. It had taken note of the document, which clearly indicated the problems to be overcome in establishing a single administrative tribunal. It had concluded that the possible creation of such a tribunal was a general policy issue on which it was reluctant to give an opinion. It preferred to leave the matter to the Fifth Committee.

58. Mr. PEDERSEN (Canada) said that he was aware of the problems which would be caused by the possible merger of the Administrative Tribunals of the United Nations and ILO, even if he was not convinced that the task would be as difficult as the report of the Secretary-General (A/C.5/34/31) made out. It was hard to see why what was possible in most countries, which had a single legal system, should not be possible in the United Nations.

59. His delegation could accept the conclusions appearing in paragraphs 12 and 13 of the report, but wished to leave open the possibility of establishing a single tribunal at a later date. For that reason, in conjunction with the Japanese delegation, it had submitted draft decision A/C.5/34/L.21 in which the General Assembly would request the Secretary-General and ACC to examine the creation of joint machinery allowing potential judicial conflicts between the two administrative tribunals to be settled - for the risk of such conflicts was very

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(Mr. Pedersen, Canada)

real, particularly in cases where plaintiffs could choose which tribunal to take their case to - and to pursue a progressive harmonization of the statutes, rules and practices of the two tribunals in order to facilitate the possible establishment of a single tribunal.

60. He wished to make a slight change in the draft decision, by making the second part of paragraph (b) - "and to report to the General Assembly at its thirty-sixth session" - into a separate paragraph (c) applying only to the Secretary-General. He hoped it would be possible for the Committee to adopt the draft by consensus.

61. Mr. KUYAMA (Japan) reminded the Committee that his delegation had, the previous year, been a co-sponsor of the draft which had given rise to resolution 33/119. Having considered the report of the Secretary-General, it believed that progressive harmonization in that sphere should be pursued with a view to establishing a single tribunal. That was the sense of the draft decision which it had submitted with the Canadian delegation.

62. Replying to a question from Mr. KEMAL (Pakistan) on the interpretation to be given to the expression "some kind of joint machinery" appearing in paragraph (a) of the English text of the draft decision, Mr. PEDERSEN (Canada) suggested that the English text should be brought into line with the French, in which the expression used was "un mécanisme commun".

63. Mr. LAHLOU (Morocco) stressed that the studies which had been carried out had revealed no judicial conflict between the two tribunals. It was clear from the discussions which the Fifth Committee had held on the item the previous year that the intention was to establish a single tribunal at the end of the necessary interim period. In his delegation's view that idea had been weakened in the draft decision, which spoke only of the "possible" establishment of a single tribunal. He would prefer to delete the word "possible" and advocate only that the progressive harmonization and improvement of the statutes, rules and practices of the two tribunals should be pursued, without insisting on the creation of joint machinery.

64. The CHAIRMAN suggested that the last part of paragraph (b) of the draft decision should read: "and to facilitating the later establishment of a single tribunal".

65. Mr. Van NOUHUYS (Netherlands) pointed out that the expression "some type of joint machinery" appeared in paragraph 12 of the report of the Secretary-General (A/C.5/34/31) and asked the Secretariat for an explanation of what that joint machinery might be.

66. Mr. METELITS (United States of America) said that the matter under consideration was of great importance since it concerned the legal remedies available to staff members of the United Nations and specialized agencies. His delegation favoured the course proposed in the draft decision submitted by Canada and Japan.

67. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) stated that the expenses of the Administrative Tribunal were borne by the United Nations. The requirements in 1980-1981 of the Administrative Tribunal and its secretariat were included in section 26 of the proposed programme budget, and amounted to \$480,000, of which \$191,900 was for apportioned costs and \$288,100 for direct costs (A/34/6, table 26.5).

68. Mr. SZASZ (Office of Legal Affairs) said that there were several possible formulas for resolving the judicial conflicts which might arise between the two tribunals. For example, a structure could be introduced comprising three judges from the United Nations Administrative Tribunal, the three judges from the ILO Administrative Tribunal and a seventh judge belonging to neither tribunal, to which either tribunal could apply for an opinion on questions of law concerning the common system, or there could be recourse to a body made up of judges from the International Court of Justice. Other variants were also possible.

69. Replying to a question by the representative of Pakistan, he specified that in some situations the risk of conflict between the two tribunals was very real. That was the case when a given problem fell within the competence of both tribunals; for example, questions concerning the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund which sometimes, in some organizations, gave rise to problems coming under the jurisdiction of the ILO Administrative Tribunal. There could, in addition, be judicial divergences when the United Nations Administrative Tribunal and that of ILO had different interpretations of the statutes and rules which they were called upon to apply.

70. Replying to a question by the representative of Belgium, he said that under article 14 of the Statute of the United Nations Administrative Tribunal, the Tribunal's competence could be extended to any specialized agency by an agreement to that effect concluded by the Secretary-General with the agency concerned. The list of agencies with which such agreements had been reached appeared as an annex to the report of the Secretary-General. All such agreements provided for the agency to contribute towards the resulting additional expenses. In fact, those provisions had not been applied, since it had not been possible to demonstrate that supplementary expenses were incurred.

71. As far as the ILO Administrative Tribunal was concerned, the administrative arrangements provided for the operating expenses of the tribunal to be shared between the various organizations bound by its decisions, in accordance with the size of their respective staffs.

72. Mr. DOWSE (United Kingdom) said that he could not accept the proposal by the Moroccan representative to delete the word "possible" from paragraph (b) of the draft decision, since the result would be to ignore totally the arguments militating against the establishment of a single tribunal, as well as the conclusions of the Secretary-General's report.

73. Mr. PEDERSEN (Canada) said that it was preferable to proceed slowly, for some organizations which had accepted the tribunals' jurisdiction, not all of which belonged to the United Nations system, were hostile to any modification. The merging of the two tribunals could therefore only be a long-term objective. In any case, the problem was not so much to determine whether such a merger was possible from the administrative point of view as to find out whether it was politically desirable.

74. He considered that the draft decision in its current form took account of all the views expressed on the possibility of establishing a single tribunal.

75. Mr. HAMZAH (Syrian Arab Republic) said he understood that the joint machinery which it was proposed to establish was intended to institute a sort of appeal body to which judgements of both administrative tribunals would be sent for a final decision. From a legal point of view, the establishment of a single tribunal seemed to be the only way to avoid any judicial differences. His delegation therefore supported the proposal by the Moroccan delegation and suggested that delegations should consult on the matter.

76. Mr. GRODSKY (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) proposed that the phrase "with due regard for the considerations set forth in paragraph 9 of document A/C.5/34/31" should be added at the end of paragraph (b) of the draft decision. It was important that the establishment of a single tribunal should not entail greater expenditure than that occasioned by the two existing tribunals.

77. Mr. PEDERSEN (Canada) stated that the co-sponsors of the draft decision would report back to the Committee after consulting with the representatives of Morocco and the USSR to try to produce a joint text.

The meeting rose at 11.20 p.m.