



SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 80th 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 10.35 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 101: JOINT INSPECTION UNIT: REPORTS OF THE JOINT INSPECTION UNIT  
(continued) (A/C.5/34/L.44)

1. The CHAIRMAN suggested that the Committee should adopt draft resolution A/C.5/34/L.44 by consensus.
2. Mr. LAHLOU (Morocco) said that his delegation did not object to the adoption of the draft resolution by consensus. He recalled, however, that at the 56th meeting, in connexion with the discussion of document A/C.5/34/6, he had asked a question concerning the use of the Arabic language which had not been answered. He would appreciate receiving a reply from the Secretariat.
3. The CHAIRMAN said that the Secretariat would look into the matter and reply to the representative of Morocco at a later stage.
4. Draft resolution A/C.5/34/L.44 was adopted by consensus.

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

Administrative and financial implications of the draft resolution submitted by the Third Committee in document A/C.3/34/L.53, as revised, concerning agenda item 80 (e) (A/34/7/Add.17, A/34/657/Add.1)

5. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) said that the Secretary-General had originally indicated that an amount of \$931,623, of which \$483,720 were for non-conference costs, would be required in connexion with the World Conference of the United Nations Decade for Women. However, during the Advisory Committee's discussion of the Secretary-General's estimates, a number of corrections had been made and, in addition, the Third Committee had revised the text of draft resolution A/C.3/34/L.53. As a result, the Secretary-General's current estimate of the requirements was \$715,493, of which \$266,390 were for non-conference costs. The non-conference costs were broken down in paragraph 4 of the Advisory Committee's report (A/34/7/Add.17). In paragraph 6 of its report, the Advisory Committee recommended a reduction of \$7,800 in the estimated requirement for the preparation of documentation, and in paragraphs 15 to 17 it gave its reasons for recommending a reduction of \$40,400 in the estimated requirement for staff resources and travel. Accordingly, the Advisory Committee was recommending that the Fifth Committee inform the General Assembly that, should it adopt the draft resolution recommended by the Third Committee, additional appropriations would be required in the amount of \$179,290 under section 4 and \$38,900 under section 27 of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1980-1981, and that an appropriation of \$10,200 would also be required under section 31, to be offset by an increase in the same amount under income section 1. It further recommended that conference servicing costs not exceeding \$449,103 on a full-cost basis would be considered in the context of the consolidated statement of conference servicing requirements to be submitted before the end of the current session.

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6. Mr. PAPENDORP (United States of America) said that his Government was whole-heartedly in favour of the Conference and was making special efforts to ensure its success. In keeping with the reservations his delegation had expressed in connexion with a previous decision concerning the payment from the regular budget of travel costs of delegations, he objected to the funding of the travel of representatives from least developed countries, as called for in the draft resolution. His delegation hoped that continued efforts would be made to find extrabudgetary resources for that purpose. He referred to General Assembly resolution 1798 (XVII) and said that the funding of travel for some delegations under the regular budget was contrary to the principle of universality and against the best interests of the Organization.
7. Mr. SWEGER (Sweden) said that his delegation supported the holding of the Conference and believed that it was in the common interest for all countries to participate in it. However, in accordance with the principle of universality, his delegation objected to the payment of travel expenses for the delegations of some countries only. If assistance was necessary, it should be given from extrabudgetary resources. He urged the Secretary-General to spare no effort to ensure the participation of all Member States in the 1980 Conference.
8. Mr. LAHLOU (Morocco) said that his delegation was willing to endorse the payment of travel expenses for some delegations from the regular budget but that the provisions of draft resolution A/C.3/34/L.53 relating to travel should not constitute a precedent. Financial orthodoxy would require that the Fifth Committee should carefully scrutinize each similar situation which might arise in future.
9. Mr. KHAMIS (Algeria) said that his delegation supported the provision of assistance from the regular budget to enable representatives of least developed countries to attend the World Conference. Of course, if extrabudgetary funds become available, they could be used for that purpose; however, that was not likely to be the case.
10. Should the Committee approve the Advisory Committee's recommendation that the two Professional posts requested should not be provided, the secondment of the two staff members of the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs should be extended if the secretariat of the Conference required additional assistance in the post-Conference period.
11. The Advisory Committee's recommendation (A/34/7/Add.17, para. 23) was adopted.
12. Mr. PALAMARCHUK (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that, had the Advisory Committee's recommendation been put to a vote, his delegation would not have been able to support it, since it believed that the amounts already requested by the Secretary-General were sufficient to finance the Conference. In addition, there was no justification for financing from the regular budget the travel costs of representatives of some countries, which should instead be financed from extrabudgetary resources. The decision just taken did not constitute a good precedent.

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13. Mr. DOWSE (United Kingdom) said that his delegation would have abstained if a vote had been taken on the Advisory Committee's recommendation. Although it attached great importance to the participation of all Member States in the Conference, his delegation believed that assistance to cover travel costs should be provided from extrabudgetary resources. He hoped that the Secretary-General would make every effort to find extrabudgetary resources for that purpose.

14. Mr. PAPENDORP (United States of America) said that, if the Advisory Committee's recommendation had been put to a vote, his delegation would have voted against it.

15. Mr. BROCHARD (France) said that, for the reasons given by the preceding speakers, his delegation would have abstained if the Advisory Committee's recommendation had been put to a vote.

Administrative and financial implications of the draft resolution submitted by the Third Committee in document A/34/782 concerning agenda item 79 (A/34/7/Add.18, A/34/158/Add.1)

16. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) said that the Secretary-General estimated the requirements for the International Year for Disabled Persons to be \$2,051,900 for the biennium 1980-1981, and that he forecasted the requirements for 1982-1983 to be \$140,500, for a total of \$2,192,400 for the two biennia. Of the total estimated requirement for the biennium 1980-1981, \$551,300 represented conference servicing costs but, as indicated in paragraph 5 of the Advisory Committee's report (A/34/7/Add.18), \$550,400 would be considered in the context of the consolidated statement of conference servicing requirements to be submitted before the end of the session. As indicated in paragraph 9 of the Advisory Committee's report, an amount of \$5,000 could be deducted from the estimates since the design for the Year's logo would be donated. In paragraphs 10 to 12 of its report, the Advisory Committee was recommending a reduction of \$70,600, relating mainly to public information. In addition, it believed that an amount of \$43,200 for common services could be absorbed given the size of the total appropriation requested under section 28. Thus, the Advisory Committee recommended a total reduction of \$113,800 in the estimated requirements, leaving an amount of \$1,381,800 to be appropriated under sections 6, 8 and 27, in the manner indicated in paragraph 14 of its report.

17. Mr. ALLAFI (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) said his delegation attached special importance to the programme of the Year, which would help to focus attention on the situation of disabled persons throughout the world. His delegation was proud to have been associated with the initiative that had led to the proclamation of the Year, and was prepared to support the financial implications outlined by the Secretary-General. Great restraint had been shown in calculating the estimated requirements, the preparatory meetings and the information activities recommended by the Advisory Committee for the International Year for Disabled Persons were vital to the attainment of the objectives of the Year. His delegation therefore would welcome comment by the Secretariat on the extent to which it was feasible to absorb the reductions recommended by ACABQ and to what extent DPI would be able to carry out the information programme for the Year if the recommended reductions were approved.

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18. Mr. PALAMARCHUK (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics), referring to paragraph 17 of the report of the Secretary-General (A/34/158/Add.1), observed that the report of the Advisory Committee (A/34/7/Add.18) made no reference to the question of the additional costs that would arise if the venue of the proposed symposium were Bangkok. He wished to know how that problem was going to be solved. Moreover, he wished to have confirmation that General Assembly resolution 31/140 on the pattern of conferences was not going to be violated - in other words, that the additional costs in question would be borne by the host country.

19. Miss MUCK (Austria) endorsed the statement made by the representative of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya. She requested clarification of the apparent contradiction in the information given in paragraphs 31 and 64 of document A/34/158/Add.1 and paragraph 11 of document A/34/7/Add.18 regarding Professional and General Service staff.

20. Mr. LAHLOU (Morocco) said that his delegation supported the request made by the Libyan representative that the Secretariat should inform the Committee whether it had the means to perform the necessary tasks in connexion with the International Year for Disabled Persons.

21. In connexion with paragraph 11 of the report of the Advisory Committee (A/34/7/Add.18) and paragraphs 63 and 64 of the report of the Secretary-General (A/34/158/Add.1), he wondered how the staff at Vienna and in New York reached agreement on questions and whether there was any possibility of avoiding duplication of effort.

22. His delegation noted that the report of the Secretary-General had not been issued in Arabic. It was most regrettable that apologies for such situations were made at the end of meetings, after the Arabic-speaking delegations had expressed dissatisfaction in that regard, rather than at the beginning of meetings. The Arabic-speaking delegations considered it highly regrettable that the Secretariat had not made the necessary effort. They felt that, because they had initially accepted a compromise, the Secretariat had allowed the situation to remain the same or even to worsen. The Arabic-speaking delegations were entitled to bring the work of the Committee to a halt, rather than continue to work under unfavourable conditions. The Secretariat should show more understanding with regard to that unacceptable situation. Those delegations wished the Secretariat to inform them, once and for all, which documents would not be issued in Arabic and why. It was the third time that such a situation had arisen.

23. The CHAIRMAN said that he had not been aware that the report of the Secretary-General in document A/34/158/Add.1 had not been issued in Arabic. Since the Committee had recently taken steps designed to improve the situation regarding documentation in Arabic by the following year, he wished to ask the representative of Morocco not to insist that all the documents in question should be issued in Arabic. However, it was necessary for the most important documents to be made available in Arabic before the relevant decisions were taken. At the same time, he recognized that the Secretariat was encountering real difficulties where documentation in Arabic was concerned.

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24. Mr. RUEDAS (Assistant Secretary-General for Financial Services), referring to the question raised by the Libyan representative, said that, whenever the Advisory Committee recommended a reduction in resources and the Fifth Committee approved such recommendations, the Secretary-General endeavoured to execute the programme in question with the reduced resources. With regard to the question before the Committee, he saw no particular difficulty, except in the case of the Advisory Committee's recommendation against the provision of one General Service post in New York (A/34/7/Add.18, para. 11). The workload situation in the Division of Economic and Social Information was already critical.

25. With regard to the question raised by the representative of the Soviet Union relating to paragraph 17 of the report of the Secretary-General (A/34/158/Add.1), he pointed out that paragraph 74 (b) of the report of the Advisory Committee for the International Year for Disabled Persons (A/34/158) indicated that the symposium in question would be held in a developing country in 1981. It had been made clear that payment of the additional costs involved would constitute an exception to General Assembly resolution 31/140, and information on the financial implications was before the Committee, which had to reach a decision on the matter.

26. Mr. PALAMARCHUK (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that the answer supplied by the Assistant Secretary-General for Financial Services did not solve the problem.

27. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) said that, since the symposium in question was to take place in 1981, the conference servicing costs of \$41,800 would be considered in the context of the consolidated paper to be submitted to the Committee during the following session of the General Assembly. If the symposium was held in Bangkok, the fact that the headquarters of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) was located in that city would mean that a waiver of General Assembly resolution 31/140 might not be required. He suggested that the question should be left pending, so that it could be considered in the context of the consolidated statement.

28. Mr. PALAMARCHUK (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) agreed that the question of the additional costs should be left pending until the following session of the General Assembly. However, he considered that the fact that Bangkok was the seat of ESCAP did not mean that General Assembly resolution 31/140 was not applicable.

29. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) said that no country had yet offered to host the symposium and it was therefore not possible to judge whether the requirements of General Assembly resolution 31/140 would need to be waived. The Advisory Committee for the International Year for Disabled Persons had recommended that the symposium should be held in a developing country. If the General Assembly adopted that recommendation, the developing country in question could not be expected to bear the additional costs unless it had itself issued an invitation in that connexion.

30. The CHAIRMAN drew the Committee's attention to paragraphs 14 and 15 of the report of ACABQ (A/34/7/Add.18), concerning additional appropriations required under the regular budget for the biennium 1980-1981.

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31. Mr. ALLAFI (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) expressed his delegation's desire that the entire programme for the International Year for Disabled Persons should be implemented. In view of the fact that the Secretariat had indicated that it would not be in a position to absorb the recommended reduction of resources under section 27, his delegation wished to make a formal proposal that the sum of \$46,600 should be restored.

32. Mr. SWEGER (Sweden) supported the proposal put forward by the Libyan representative.

33. Mr. PALAMARCHUK (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that such attempts to reverse decisions taken by the Advisory Committee were out of place. His delegation had intended to support the Advisory Committee's recommendations relating to the International Year for Disabled Persons. However, in view of the proposal just put forward by the Libyan representative, his delegation would now vote against rejection of the Advisory Committee's recommendations. He requested a recorded vote on that question, as well as on all the Advisory Committee's recommendations.

34. Mr. ALLAFI (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) requested that his proposal to restore the sum of \$46,600 under section 27 should be put to the vote.

35. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) said he understood from the statement of the Assistant Secretary-General for Financial Services that the post in question would accommodate a clerical staff member; it should therefore be at the G-3 or G-4 level, rather than at the G-5 level as stated in paragraph 11 of document A/34/7/Add.18. The sum in question would then be \$43,200 instead of \$46,600.

36. At the request of the Soviet representative a recorded vote was taken on the Libyan amendment calling for an increase of \$43,200 in the recommended appropriation.

In favour: Afghanistan, Algeria, Argentina, Austria, Bahrain, Bhutan, Burundi, Cape Verde, Chad, Costa Rica, Cuba, Cyprus, Democratic Yemen, Egypt, Ethiopia, Gabon, Ghana, Grenada, Guatemala, Guinea, Guyana, India, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kenya, Kuwait, Lesotho, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Malawi, Malaysia, Mauritania, Mexico, Morocco, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Qatar, Rwanda, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Somalia, Sudan, Sweden, Syrian Arab Republic, Thailand, Togo, Turkey, Uganda, United Arab Emirates, United Republic of Cameroon, United Republic of Tanzania, Upper Volta, Yugoslavia, Zaire, Zambia.

Against: Australia, Bulgaria, Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic, France, German Democratic Republic, Germany, Federal Republic of, Hungary, Israel, Italy, Ivory Coast, Japan, Mongolia, Poland, Spain, Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Uruguay, Venezuela.

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Abstaining: Bahamas, Barbados, Belgium, Benin, Brazil, Central African Republic, Chile, China, Colombia, Congo, Denmark, Ecuador, Greece, Ireland, Liberia, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Peru, Portugal, Romania, Sao Tome and Principe, Singapore, Trinidad and Tobago.

37. The Libyan amendment was adopted by 62 votes to 20, with 24 abstentions.

38. At the request of the Soviet representative, a recorded vote was taken on the recommendations of the Advisory Committee as amended.

In favour: Afghanistan, Algeria, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Bahamas, Bahrain, Barbados, Belgium, Benin, Bhutan, Brazil, Burundi, Cape Verde, Central African Republic, Chile, China, Colombia, Congo, Costa Rica, Cuba, Cyprus, Democratic Yemen, Denmark, Ecuador, Egypt, Ethiopia, Gabon, Germany, Federal Republic of, Ghana, Greece, Grenada, Guatemala, Guinea, Guyana, India, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Ivory Coast, Jordan, Kenya, Kuwait, Lesotho, Liberia, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Malawi, Malaysia, Mauritania, Mexico, Morocco, Mozambique, Netherlands, New Zealand, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Peru, Philippines, Portugal, Qatar, Romania, Rwanda, Sao Tome and Principe, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Singapore, Somalia, Spain, Sudan, Sweden, Syrian Arab Republic, Thailand, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Turkey, Uganda, United Arab Emirates, United Republic of Cameroon, United Republic of Tanzania, Upper Volta, Venezuela, Yugoslavia, Zaire, Zambia.

Against: Bulgaria, Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic, German Democratic Republic, Hungary, Mongolia, Poland, Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

Abstaining: France, Japan, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America.

39. Mr. DOWSE (United Kingdom) and Mr. PAPENDORP (United States of America) stated that, while they fully supported the programmes and activities of the Department, they had abstained in the vote as a mark of their dissatisfaction at the overturning of the recommendation of the Advisory Committee.

Revised programme and budget proposals under section 7: Department of Technical Co-operation for Development (A/34/7 and Add.19; A/C.5/34/72)

40. The CHAIRMAN pointed out that members of the Fifth Committee had repeatedly complained about the late submission of the revised estimates and budget proposals. It was entirely unacceptable that revised proposals should be issued at the very end of the General Assembly session.

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41. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions), introducing the Advisory Committee's report on the revised proposals (A/34/7/Add.19), said that, in addition to the \$12,477,500 which the Advisory Committee had already recommended that the Fifth Committee accept provisionally, the Secretary-General's new submissions called for the establishment of two new posts: one D-2 post and one General Service post. The Advisory Committee recommended that those two posts should be accepted.

42. In paragraph 4 of its report, the Advisory Committee indicated that it wished to reserve its position concerning extrabudgetary posts in the Department until it received the additional information it had requested from the Secretariat in connexion with the Secretary-General's report on services provided to activities financed from extrabudgetary resources (A/C.5/34/21), which would be considered at the thirty-fifth session of the General Assembly.

43. Subject to that reservation, the Advisory Committee recommended acceptance of the Secretary-General's revised proposals.

44. Mr. KUYAMA (Japan) said that his delegation was prepared to accept the Advisory Committee's recommendations. It was concerned, however, that some of the Department's programmes contained activities and functions, particularly those related to policies and resources planning and those within the office of the Under-Secretary-General, which might duplicate the work of other organs. It expected that that factor would be taken into account in the preparation of the programme budget for the biennium 1982-1983.

45. Mr. KEMAL (Pakistan) said that his delegation whole-heartedly supported the activities of the Department, which would continue to play an important role in the United Nations. It had been surprised to note that the real rate of growth within the Department under the revised estimates was only 0.2 per cent, which was below the over-all rate of growth of the budget. He was confident that the Department would co-operate with other Departments and would take care to avoid any duplication of work. His delegation would support the Secretary-General's proposals.

46. Mr. GARRIDO (Philippines) expressed support for the Secretary-General's policy, as recalled in his report (A/C.5/34/72, para. 5), of concentrating staff resources financed from technical co-operation funds in the Department of Technical Co-operation for Development and in DIESA for technical back-stopping. He inquired how far the realignment exercise in the Department of Technical Co-operation for Development, referred to in paragraph 8 of the same report, had gone. Noting, further, that one of the main outputs listed under programme A.2, was the co-ordination of the preparation of medium-term plans, he asked for assurances that the work would be carried out in a comprehensive and substantive manner and presented in suitable form for consideration by CPC, the Advisory Committee and the Fifth Committee.

47. Mr. MARTORELL (Peru), supported by Mr. JALIL (Ecuador), said that the United Nations technical co-operation programme had originally been virtually a transfer of technology from the industrialized countries to the developing countries. The industrialized countries, mainly the European ones, had established efficient

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(Mr. Martorell, Peru)

machinery to channel their non-financial aid to United Nations technical co-operation projects. By providing an outlet for their human and technical resources left inactive as a result of decolonization, those projects had benefited the industrialized countries as well as the developing countries. Although some of the relatively more developed of the non-industrialized countries had had qualified human resources that would have enabled them to participate to a greater extent in the programme, they had not mounted a similar machinery and their participation had thus never been systematic and they had lost some of their best human resources to the "brain drain". As the non-industrialized countries had progressed in their development, the problem of utilizing their qualified human resources had increased. At the same time, the developed countries had begun to realize the advantages of using experts who were more familiar with the problems and situations of the developing countries. The United Nations had recognized that need in several resolutions of the General Assembly and other legislative bodies which had urged the Secretariat to make greater use of the developing countries' resources in the technical co-operation programme, the main component of which was the human element - in other words, the technical co-operation experts.

48. Nevertheless, action by the Secretariat had been only minimal. Despite the fact that the budget approved for 1976-1977 had provided for the establishment of regional offices in Africa, Asia and Latin America for purposes of co-operating with the Governments of those regions in establishing machinery to allow more systematic participation of those Governments, the only ones that had been established, with minimum resources, were the small offices in Latin America (Lima) and Asia (Kuala Lumpur). The office for Africa (Nairobi) had never been established. The existing offices had only one Professional staff member and one locally recruited secretary each and had insufficient funds for extending their work throughout their respective regions. The contrast with the situation in Europe was obvious, although it should be acknowledged that the two existing offices had been useful to most of the countries of their regions, which had established a total of 16 national offices to propose candidates for the programme.

49. The Secretariat should not only maintain, but should expand that effort. Since the responsibility for implementing the programme lay with the Department of Technical Co-operation for Development, it should provide information on what budgetary measures were being proposed for that purpose for 1980-1981.

50. Mr. OKEYO (Kenya) expressed support for the Advisory Committee's recommendations. His delegation shared the Peruvian representative's views, and had been surprised that the offices which were supposed to undertake technical co-operation activities in the field were not dealt with in the Secretary-General's revised budget proposals. He asked whether the Secretariat had any established policy governing the establishment and operation of offices such as those in Kuala Lumpur and Lima.

51. Mr. DEBATIN (Under-Secretary-General for Administration, Finance and Management) said that the proposals concerning the structure of the Department had to be considered in the light of the way the restructuring exercise had developed. That was the reason for the delay in the submission of the documentation on the matter. Clearly, the structure of the Department would be reviewed in the light of

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(Mr. Debatin)

practical experience: the Department had to be able to adapt its functions in order to respond to the needs of the developing countries. In that context, he stressed that the Secretariat was mindful of the need to avoid duplication.

52. The question of the regional offices, referred to by the representatives of Peru and Kenya, was under review; the Secretary-General would be submitting a report on the matter at the thirty-fifth session.

53. The low rate of growth proposed for the Department should be seen in the context of the Department's continuing development. It was not the Secretariat's intention that the current growth rate of 0.2 per cent should become a definitive or restrictive figure. At the same time, proposals for the Department had to be considered in the framework of over-all budgetary policy. The Secretary-General's proposals did not simply indicate a reaction to the wishes of one group of countries; the Secretary-General would never pursue such a course. But in formulating budget proposals, he was obliged to take account of the whole course of the general debate on the budget, which in recent years had reflected diminishing financial support for the Organization. The revised proposals for the Department for Technical Co-operation for Development had been prepared against that background.

54. The CHAIRMAN said that, if he heard no objection, he would take it that the Committee agreed to approve in first reading the revised programme and budget proposals under section 7, giving rise to a total appropriation of \$13,110,000 under section 7, with an additional appropriation of \$7,600 under section 31 to be offset by a corresponding amount under income section 1.

55. It was so decided.

Expansion of meeting rooms and improvement of conference servicing and delegate facilities at United Nations Headquarters (A/C.5/34/34 and Corr.1 and Add.1; A/34/7/Add.20)

56. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions), introducing the report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (A/34/7/Add.20), drew attention to the report of the Secretary-General on expansion of meeting rooms and improvement of conference servicing and delegate facilities at United Nations Headquarters (A/C.5/34/34 and Add.1), which provided information on the status of construction work at Headquarters. The projects in question were divided into three phases, as follows: phase I, projects approved in 1976; phase II, projects approved in 1977; and phase III, projects approved in 1978. The report also showed which projects had been completed, which were in progress and which would commence if the General Assembly took a decision to that end in the context of the report of the Secretary-General. The total cost for the three phases had originally been estimated at \$37,500,300. The Secretary-General had now reported that the original amount would not be sufficient and that an additional \$19,430,700 would have to be appropriated if the General Assembly still wished to go ahead with the total construction package. The Secretary-General was deeply concerned at the serious divergence between the original submission and the current cost estimate. The Advisory Committee was very concerned about that problem.

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(Mr. Mselle)

57. The cost of the construction programme was now estimated at \$56,931,000. The discrepancy between original and current estimates had been attributed to inflation and costing errors. The Advisory Committee had not been fully satisfied with that explanation and had requested the Board of Auditors to investigate the situation; its findings appeared in annex I to the report of the Advisory Committee (A/34/7/Add.20). Despite the work done by the Board of Auditors, the Advisory Committee was convinced that current procedures for estimating and bidding for United Nations construction projects left much to be desired. Therefore, the Advisory Committee now recommended an independent full-scale study of procedures for obtaining estimates and soliciting bids on United Nations construction projects at Headquarters and in other United Nations Offices. The Advisory Committee recommended that such a study should be entrusted to the Joint Inspection Unit and that outside experts should be used if that was considered essential to the successful implementation of the recommendations of the Advisory Committee. The study should also include comparative and analytical information concerning the experience of other organizations in the United Nations system, with a view to finding out if the United Nations might learn something from the agencies' experience in the matter. It was to be hoped that United Nations officials and the specialized agencies would fully co-operate with the Joint Inspection Unit in that endeavour.

58. In paragraph 9 of its report (A/34/7/Add.20), the Advisory Committee recommended that the General Assembly should take a policy decision whether the projects it had initially authorized should be discontinued, modified or carried through to completion. The Advisory Committee also gave its views with regard to the implications of deferral or modification of the projects.

59. Mr. STUART (United Kingdom) pointed out that the cost overrun on the improvement programme at Headquarters represented an increase over original estimates of approximately 50 per cent and that the main increases had been for projects under phase II and phase III, with phase II showing an overrun of almost 100 per cent and phase III of approximately 40 per cent. In that connexion, two main questions came to mind. Should the work be continued or should all or part of it be discontinued? How could the Organization avoid such cost escalations on building projects in future? In paragraph 9 of its report (A/34/7/Add.20), the Advisory Committee had made a strictly neutral statement on the question. Thus, a formal proposal would have to be made by a delegation. Consequently, the United Kingdom delegation wished to propose that the Fifth Committee should recommend approval of an additional appropriation of \$18,760,700 in the proposed programme budget for 1980-1981 for completion of phase II and phase III of the expansion and improvement programme.

60. The General Assembly had agonized for years over the work involved in the programme and had taken the right policy decisions. The cost escalation was serious, but it made no sense to discontinue any part of the work. In the case of phase II projects, it was best to proceed with the work under way. In the case of phase III projects, since bids had only recently been received, it might be easier to discontinue the work if the Fifth Committee thought that was right. However, the General Assembly had already considered the content of the phase III projects

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(Mr. Stuart. United Kingdom)

and had decided that they were necessary. His delegation therefore believed that work should proceed on the basis of the best bid, despite the 40 per cent increase in the estimated cost.

61. The question remained as to what should be done in future. The Board of Auditors had already submitted a report designed to avoid errors in estimating costs, and its recommendations should be taken into account by the Secretariat. His delegation also agreed with the Advisory Committee that the Joint Inspection Unit should be requested to carry out a full-scale study of procedures followed in obtaining estimates and soliciting bids for construction projects at Headquarters and other United Nations offices, and that the Unit should have the assistance of outside experts as necessary.

62. The CHAIRMAN said it was deplorable that the report of the Secretary-General (A/C.5/34/34 and Corr.1 and Add.1) should have been distributed only a few days ago. Although it was dated 16 November, it had not been distributed on that date. It was absolutely unacceptable for the General Assembly to be invited to take a decision involving approximately \$20 million when the documents had not been distributed in time. The report should have been available to delegations six weeks previously.

63. Mr. KUYAMA (Japan) said his delegation found itself in the same position as the United Kingdom delegation. It was concerned about the cost overrun, but felt that it would serve no purpose to block continuation of the work. His delegation endorsed the view expressed by the Advisory Committee in paragraph 10 of its report (A/34/7/Add.20) that the current procedures for estimating and bidding for United Nations construction projects left much to be desired. He strongly urged the Secretary-General to ensure that such serious miscalculations should not be repeated.

64. Mr. KEMAL (Pakistan) said he would like to ask the representative of the Secretary-General whether some legal remedy and compensation for damages resulting from faulty professional advice might not be available to the Organization. In presenting his estimates to the Committee, the Secretary-General had no doubt relied on expert advice for which the Organization had paid large fees.

65. He supported the United Kingdom proposal that work should continue on the phase II and phase III projects. He trusted that, in taking its decision, the Committee would also include the recommendation made by the Advisory Committee in paragraph 11 of its report (A/34/7/Add.20) and other appropriate recommendations. It should also take note of the summary of the main findings of the Board of Auditors reproduced in annex I of the report of the Advisory Committee (A/34/7/Add.20).

66. Mrs. DORSET (Trinidad and Tobago) said that her delegation was appalled at the situation with which the Fifth Committee was faced. Obviously, someone was not doing his job. In paragraph 3 of annex II of the report of the Advisory Committee (A/34/7/Add.20), the Administration, in response to the recommendations of the Board of Auditors, had pointed out that cost estimates were prepared on the basis of preliminary drawings and that it was only after the detailed working drawings

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(Mrs. Dorset, Trinidad and Tobago)

had been prepared that more accurate estimates of cost became possible. That was standard procedure in any such project and should be taken for granted. It was amazing that the Organization should now have to provide more than \$19 million to continue the work and that it should find itself in a position where it was unable to block completion of the projects because large sums had already been paid for basic drawings. Modification of projects would not provide savings, since it was well-known that alterations usually involved additional expenses. The suggestion made by the representative of Pakistan, concerning the possibility of seeking legal redress, should be considered. Despite her delegation's dissatisfaction at the situation, it had no alternative but to agree that the work should be continued. It hoped that no further requests for additional funds would be made.

67. Mr. OKEYO (Kenya) fully endorsed the comments made by the representatives of Pakistan and of Trinidad and Tobago. He merely wished to emphasize that, if such situations continued to arise, the Organization would be faced with very serious financial difficulties.

68. Since there was not much choice, he supported the United Kingdom proposal, but wished to emphasize the need to seek some legal redress.

The meeting rose at 1.30 p.m.