



SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 40th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. TOMMO MONTHE (Cameroon)

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

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The meeting was called to order at 11.05 a.m.

AGENDA ITEMS 116 AND 117: PROPOSED PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 1986-1987 AND PROGRAMME PLANNING (continued) (A/40/3, 6, 7, A/40/38 and Add.1 and A/40/262; A/C.5/40/11 and A/40/7/Add.4; A/C.5/40/18 and A/40/7/Add.6; A/C.5/40/4 and Corr.1 and A/40/7/Add.2; A/C.5/40/21 and A/40/7/Add.7; A/C.5/40/19 and A/40/7/Add.8)

First reading (continued)

Section 28. Administration and management

1. Mr. YAKOVENKO (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) pointed out that the appropriations requested by the Secretary-General under section 28 amounted to more than \$33.5 million, or 11 per cent of planned expenditures for that purpose in the biennium 1984-1985. Such a rate of growth was unwarranted and was all the more surprising in that the units responsible for management should set an example of financial restraint.
2. The Soviet delegation welcomed the Advisory Committee's recommendations that the estimates should be reduced and that certain posts should not be maintained, established or reclassified, but considered that the Advisory Committee had not gone far enough. His delegation was fundamentally opposed to any policy of increasing the staff, which could only lead to higher costs which were all the more unacceptable since they related to ancillary activities and administrative overheads.
3. His delegation considered that it was not enough to freeze expenditure under the regular budget; it must be reduced. It reaffirmed its position of principle on how to deal with the impact of inflation and on the creation and reclassification of posts. His delegation was not in a position to support approval of the estimates under section 28.
4. The CHAIRMAN invited the members of the Committee to comment on the various subsections of section 28.

Section 28B

5. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions), drawing attention to paragraph 28B.4 of the Advisory Committee's report, called upon the Secretariat to speed up the completion of the project to streamline the payroll system.

Section 28C

6. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions), observed that the results of the Secretariat's efforts to re-order the presentation of section 28C so that it more closely reflected the programmes outlined in the medium-term plan were not very satisfactory. Although the Office of Personnel Services (OPS) remained responsible for implementing the major

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programme, the resources requested under section 28C did not represent the total requirements, some of which were still included under section 28J (Training). The reasons given by the Secretariat in that connection were not convincing. While recognizing that it was difficult in the area under discussion to comply with the rules governing planning and programming, the Advisory Committee considered that it was essential to make further efforts to avoid duplication and to make more effective use of resources. It hoped that future budget proposals would reflect improved co-ordination of the activities carried out by OPS.

7. It was from that perspective that the Advisory Committee had examined and submitted its recommendations on section 28C. He invited the Fifth Committee to recommend that the General Assembly concur in the observations and approve the recommendations on the appeals system for the staff as contained in the Advisory Committee's first report (chap. I, paras. 67-73).

8. After carefully reviewing the requests for temporary posts, the Advisory Committee had concluded that it could not support all the Secretary-General's proposals. With regard to the posts requested for the career development system, the report of the Secretary-General referred to in paragraphs 28C.33 and 28C.34 of the Advisory Committee's report, which had recently become available (A/C.5/40/27), should enable the Fifth Committee to have a clearer picture of requirements for that purpose.

9. He commended for the approval of the Fifth Committee the recommendation made by the Advisory Committee on the basis of its observations in chapter I of its report (paras. 67-73).

10. Mr. DEVREUX (Belgium), noting that, as shown in table 28C.5, two new posts would be added to the staffing table, asked the representative of the Secretary-General whether the conversion of UNIDO into a specialized agency should not result in a reduction in the work-load of OPS and hence a parallel reduction in staff.

11. Mr. JEMAIEL (Tunisia) expressed surprise at the Advisory Committee's opposition to the maintenance of the six temporary posts requested in paragraphs 28C.18 (1 G-4), 28C.28 (1 P-3 and 2 General Service posts) and 28C.38 (2 General Service posts). His delegation continued to support recruitment by competitive examination as the best means of bringing about equitable geographical distribution and did not understand why the Secretary-General should be denied the modest amounts he needed to carry out a task assigned to him by the General Assembly in paragraph 3 of resolution 39/245.

12. Mr. FIGUEIRA (Brazil) said that his delegation strongly supported the activities of the Recruitment Division and asked what impact on that Division the deletion of the P-3 and 2 General Service posts requested by the Secretary-General in paragraph 28C.28 of the budget "for the continuing functions related to the projection of vacancies" would have.

13. Mr. LADJOUZI (Algeria) said that he shared the concerns expressed by the representatives of Tunisia and Brazil. He would like to know whether the deletion of the temporary posts recommended by the Advisory Committee would have an adverse effect on the activities of OPS and hamper recruitment by competitive examination, which was of such importance for ensuring equitable geographical distribution. If the overall resources of OPS were adequate, as some claimed, how was it that it had been deemed useful to establish a post of Assistant Secretary-General to improve the recruitment and promotion of women in the Secretariat?
14. Mr. MAKTARI (Yemen) endorsed the comments made by the preceding three speakers. He asked how it was that "the distribution of the resources requested under the various programmes of the major programme does not totally coincide with the distribution between the major organizational units of the Office of Personnel Services", as indicated in paragraph 28C.5 of the proposed programme budget.
15. Mr. MICHALSKI (United States of America) fully endorsed the observations and recommendations of the Advisory Committee, particularly those aimed at reducing the travel costs and establishment of the Office of Personnel Services. His delegation was concerned about the lack of co-ordination between the Division of Policy Co-ordination and the Division of Personnel Administration revealed by the Advisory Committee in paragraph 28C.6 of its report.
16. Regarding the temporary post at the G-5 level which the Secretary-General requested be continued "as part of the Organization's support to the United Nations International School" (A/40/6, para. 28C.8), his delegation wished to know what legislative authority there was for including that post in the regular budget, for how long it had been included in the regular budget and whether the cost of the post in question was reimbursed to the Organization by the School. It also wished to know the nature of the services provided and asked whether they were reimbursed by the School.
17. Mr. RUSTICO (Benin) said that the Secretary-General must have had good reason to request the continuation of a number of temporary posts. He therefore asked the Advisory Committee to explain its reasons for opposing them.
18. Mr. SEFIANI (Morocco) said that his delegation agreed, for the most part, with the Advisory Committee's recommendations but hoped that the Committee, under the circumstances, would endorse the Secretary-General's proposals, which were supported by convincing arguments.
19. Mr. ZIDOUEMBA (Burkina Faso) said that he failed to understand why the Advisory Committee should have decided to reduce the resources of the Office of Personnel Services at a time when its efforts, particularly in the area of recruitment, were beginning to bear fruit. He was convinced that the requests made by the Secretary-General corresponded to objective needs.
20. Mr. NTSAMA (Cameroon) said that the cost of the three temporary posts and the services of a consultant referred to in paragraphs 28C.28 and 28C.29 of the Advisory Committee's report was modest considering the importance of the tasks to be carried out. He wondered whether, under those circumstances, the Committee could not grant the appropriation requested by the Secretary-General.

21. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) said that if one considered only those few areas in which the Advisory Committee's views differed from the proposals of the Secretary-General, one would have a false impression of the Advisory Committee's recommendations. The Advisory Committee had, for example, no objection to the resources requested to eliminate the backlog, since it considered that immediate action was needed in that important area.

22. The recommendation of the Advisory Committee contained in paragraph 28C.28 of its report had given rise to some concerns. In the Advisory Committee's view, the activities relating to the projection of vacancies, the selection of posts for competitive recruitment and the monitoring of the recruitment plan were, by their nature, permanent rather than temporary and that it was legitimate to ask why the Secretariat continued to assign those tasks to temporary staff. Consequently, the Secretariat should have requested the conversion of the posts in question to permanent posts, setting forth its reasons for the request. In any event, the Fifth Committee was free to decide whether to accept the Secretary-General's proposals or the Advisory Committee's recommendation.

23. Mr. NEGRE (Assistant Secretary-General for Personnel Services) said that to understand properly the budget of the Office of Personnel Services it was necessary to bear in mind the unique nature of the Office, whose complex and often contradictory responsibilities derived from its dual function: on the one hand, to service other departments of the Secretariat by supplying them with the necessary staff and by managing those staff, particularly at Headquarters, and, on the other hand, to discharge the mandate clearly defined by the General Assembly with regard, *inter alia*, to the geographical distribution, the sex distribution and the regional distribution of Secretariat posts.

24. The various tasks of the Office were carried out essentially by three divisions, with personnel administration accounting for the largest number of units. That was the reason for the apparent imbalance between the resources allocated to each division, about which the representative of Yemen had voiced concern.

25. Regarding the two temporary General Service posts in the Staff Service, whose continuation was requested in paragraph 28C.38 of the proposed programme budget and for which the Advisory Committee, in paragraph 28C.32 of its report, recommended termination, he pointed out that the Staff Service, which had very broad functions, currently administered approximately 6,500 civil servants and 1,000 short-term staff in New York. That Service, moreover, had to deal with some 1,200 project personnel and to follow up decisions regarding approximately 8,000 civil servants employed away from Headquarters. The Secretary-General attached particular importance to the quality of staff services provided by OPS, which was seeking to break with the image of a faceless bureaucracy unresponsive to the problems of staff members. In order to do that it had to have adequate resources. It was therefore essential to continue the two posts in Staff Service since, while they might be temporary in budgetary terms, they were certainly permanent as far as function was concerned.



(Mr. Negre)

26. In response to the question raised by the representative of Belgium as to whether the conversion of UNIDO into a specialized agency would have an impact on the work-load of the Office of Personnel Services, he said that the answer was no because UNIDO had always managed its own staff and would continue to do so.

27. On the subject of recruitment, the Advisory Committee recommended the abolition of three posts (one P-3 post and two General Service posts) requested for continuation in paragraph 28C.28 of the proposed programme budget. Those posts, however, were very important. Indeed, if progress had been possible towards better geographical distribution in the composition of the Secretariat, that was in part due to the efforts of the staff members holding those posts, who performed an essentially ongoing task. It would be regrettable to halt the momentum achieved and constrain efforts already made in that positive direction. It was as a result of those efforts that the number of unrepresented countries had fallen from 17 to 11, that the number of underrepresented countries had been reduced from 26 to 13 and that, for the first time, 100 countries were now within their desirable ranges.

28. Travel was another area of concern, in which, in spite of its vital importance, significant reductions had been made. Travel related mainly to participation in the meetings, now held once rather than twice a year, of the Staff-Management Co-ordination Committee, whose next meeting would be in 1986 at Baghdad. The cost of that meeting would be approximately \$100,000, much more than the amount of \$90,000 allocated under travel costs. Then, constituting perhaps the largest category, there were the journeys carried out by the Assistant Secretary-General for Personnel Services. Upon appointment in 1983, the Assistant Secretary-General had visited all the offices in duty stations away from Headquarters, where, it should not be forgotten, 60 per cent of the Organization's staff were employed. The majority of staff members in such duty stations complained of being neglected by Headquarters and it appeared essential for the Assistant Secretary-General for Personnel Services to meet them at least once a year in order to examine, and in some cases resolve locally, in co-operation with the administrations concerned, any problems which arose.

29. Mr. ANNAN (Director, Budget Division), replying to the question of the United States representative concerning support to the United Nations International School, indicated that the temporary G-5 post, for which continuation was requested in paragraph 28C.8 of the proposed programme budget, had been created in 1979. The Secretary-General was required to ensure effective liaison with the School in order to monitor its operation; that task was entrusted to an Under-Secretary-General, who was also Chairman of the School's Board of Trustees and was assisted in his work by a General Service staff member.

30. The CHAIRMAN recalled the Advisory Committee's observations about the presentation of activities and co-ordination among the divisions concerned, as mentioned in paragraphs 28C.3 to 28C.6 of its report. In paragraph 28C.3 the Committee noted that, although OPS was responsible for executing the major programme, some requirements continued to be shown under section 28J. If all 30 expenditure sections of the budget were looked at from the standpoint of

(The Chairman)

programmes and activities, they were seen to cover, in addition to the major programmes, roughly 100 programmes, 750 subprogrammes and 1,500 programme elements. In regulation 3.6 of the Regulations Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation, annexed to General Assembly resolution 37/234, it was stipulated that the medium-term plan covered major programmes consisting of all activities in a sector, which were under the responsibility of a distinct organizational unit, normally a division. It was perfectly understandable, therefore, that the major programme of personnel management and administration should be executed under more than one section of the budget.

31. The Advisory Committee, moreover, often noted that administrative units and activities were not coterminous. It should be recalled that activities were generally defined in the medium-term plan as a function not of administrative units but of targets, on the basis of main and support activities.

32. Mr. NTAKIBIRORA (Burundi) said that the Office of Personnel Services, although it sometimes deserved the criticisms levelled at it, nevertheless did a useful job; the appropriations referred to in paragraphs 28C.28 and 28C.29 of the Advisory Committee's report, relating to recruitment and consultants, respectively, were fully justified and should be supported by the Fifth Committee.

#### Section 28D

33. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions), introducing the Advisory Committee's observations on section 28D contained in its report (A/40/7), said that the Committee had subjected the appropriations requested under that section to especially close scrutiny. The Committee had had an exchange of views with the Assistant Secretary-General for General Services and had been apprised of several studies relevant to the section which had been completed or were under way. In paragraph 28D.9 the Committee brought to the attention of the Fifth Committee the information provided by the Secretary-General on measures taken in 1984-1985 to increase efficiency and productivity in a number of services.

34. Paragraphs 28D.10 and 28D.11 dealt with services provided to the Organization under contractual arrangements (telecommunications, electrical maintenance and construction services). As indicated in paragraph 28D.11, negotiations on the contract for the provision of those services were in progress. The Secretary-General had given the Advisory Committee a report on the results of negotiations. However, the Advisory Committee saw no need at the current stage to change any of its recommendations on section 28D.

35. Paragraph 28D.12 dealt with renewal of the lease for office space in the Alcoa building, which was due to expire in 1987. The Advisory Committee believed that the lease should not be renewed until a more detailed analysis of office space requirements was made, the results of which should be reported to it.

(Mr. Mselle)

36. In paragraphs 28D.22 and 28D.23, the Advisory Committee stressed that additional economies could be achieved in the areas of maintenance of premises and electrical maintenance and that expenditures on utilities could be further reduced. It therefore was recommending a reduction in the estimates for those items.

37. Paragraph 28D.33 dealt with the purchase by the United Nations of its own telephone system. The Advisory Committee's comments on the Secretary-General's report on that question (A/C.5/40/11 and Corr.1) were contained in document A/40/7/Add.4. The Committee considered that the purchase was justified and that the Secretariat should therefore proceed with its plans. Obviously, the savings which would result would be minimal at first, but the system would prove to be advantageous in the long term.

38. With regard to the Political Information News Service (PINS), referred to in paragraph 28D.26, the Advisory Committee awaited with interest the information promised to it when the matter had been raised in connection with section 2A, in particular paragraphs 2A.18 of the proposed programme budget and 2A.8 of the Advisory Committee's first report.

39. Mr. DEVREUX (Belgium) said that some services (telecommunications, installation and maintenance of electrical equipment) had been provided by the same company since 1946. The cost of those services was considerable - an estimated \$13.6 million for the biennium 1986-1987. The Secretariat ought to indicate why all or some of the services in question were not put out to tender. It should also show what was done to protect the Organization's interests by way of cost and productivity monitoring, checking of consultants' fees and market surveys.

40. The Advisory Committee had stated that the current service contract renewal talks had in no way affected its recommendations. Nevertheless, his delegation hoped that the Fifth Committee would receive a full report on the matter.

41. Mr. MICHALSKI (United States of America) said that according to paragraph 28D.8 of the Advisory Committee's report (A/40/7) the vacancy rate in the Office of General Services was 21.9 per cent for posts at the Professional and higher levels, and that the savings from the vacancies had been used to hire short-term staff. He wondered why no one had proposed that the posts should simply be abolished, since all the evidence was that the work involved could be done by short-term staff.

42. According to paragraph 28D.15 of the report, overtime in the Office of General Services as a whole had led to an over-expenditure of some \$1.1 million - a considerable sum. He wondered whether the overtime was fully justified and properly checked, and whether the payment for it was excessive.

43. Paragraph 28D.26 of the report showed that the purchase of teleprinters would entail additional expenditure; it seemed likely that the estimates would have to be revised upwards as a result.



(Mr. Michalski, United States)

44. With reference to paragraph 28D.27, his delegation would like to know whether the appropriation requested for rental of a chauffeured limousine and for the President of the General Assembly included the chauffeur's wages, and whether alternative solutions had been considered with a view to savings.

45. Mr. MAJOLI (Italy) reminded the Committee that, when discussing section 2, he had warned that there might be some duplication between the functions of the Political Information News Service (PINS) and those of the Department of Public Information. He would like to have clarification on the matter.

46. Mrs. WEIL (Assistant Secretary-General for General Services), replying to the Belgian representative, said that a complete study of the electrical maintenance system had been undertaken a few years earlier and had shown that it would be more impractical to invite tenders. The company which currently carried out the maintenance was completely familiar with the installations. Rather than go to another company, it was felt that it would be better to renegotiate the terms of contract with the company being used and to put the emphasis on management control, which had left something to be desired.

47. In reply to the representative of the United States, she said that electricians' pay conformed to the scales recommended for such trades by the unions and professional associations.

48. The high vacancy rate for Professional posts was due to the difficulty of finding candidates with the requisite technical qualifications. In addition, there had been many separations from service during the biennium 1984-1985. But it was essential to maintain the overall number of posts if the Organization was not to become totally dependent on outside contractors. Moreover, permanent staff were at best able to evaluate services provided from elsewhere.

49. The question of overtime was not new, and a lot of effort had been made towards reducing it. The real problem was to prevent the use of overtime from the becoming systematic. For that reason, the Office was experimenting with altered schedules establishing a shift system. Of course, there would always be unforeseen situations in which qualified staff would have to be called in at short notice; the fortieth anniversary itself had doubtless given rise to a great deal of overtime demand.

50. The cost of the limousine rental included a driver. The alternative would be to buy a limousine and assign a driver to it full-time; although that possibility had not been ruled out, it should be approached with care.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.