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FORTY-FIFTH SESSION

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FIFTH COMMITTEE  
23rd meeting  
held on  
Tuesday, 6 November 1990  
at 3 p.m.  
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 23rd MEETING

**Chairman:** Mr. MAYCOCK (Barbados)

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

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The meeting was called to order at 3.25 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 118: PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 1990-1991 (continued)

Programme budget implications of draft resolution A/45/L.3 concerning agenda item 29 (A/45/7/Add.2 and Add.4; A/C.5/45/2 and A/C.5/45/25 and Corr.1)

1. Mr. SUMI (Japan) said that his Government was determined to maintain its support for the good offices functions of the Secretary-General specified in draft resolution A/45/L.3. On the other hand, he trusted that the Secretary-General would provide information on the points raised by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions in paragraphs 5 and 7 of its report (A/45/7/Add.4) to the Advisory Committee and the General Assembly in the course of 1991 and, in particular, on the requirements of the Office of the Secretary-General in Afghanistan and Pakistan for local premises and services, as well as the actual support and accommodation provided by the host Governments, bearing in mind the staff resources required to achieve the objectives of the mission.

2. His delegation was concerned that the Secretary-General should continue to view as extraordinary in nature all additional requirements for activities relating to the maintenance of peace and security, which would therefore continue to be treated in accordance with established procedures and under the relevant provisions of the Financial Regulations and Rules (A/C.5/45/25, paras. 17 and 18). That approach was merely a modus vivendi and should not in any way prejudice efforts to achieve a comprehensive solution to the problem of all additional expenditures which, as noted in annex I, paragraph 10, of General Assembly resolution 41/213, should be accommodated within the overall level of the budget, either as a reserve or as a separate part of the contingency fund. The Assembly should therefore establish an appropriate mechanism for the appropriation of additional requirements to cover extraordinary expenses.

3. Mr. KINCHEN (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland) had no objection to the activities provided for under draft resolution A/45/L.3, although his delegation had traditionally expressed reservations concerning the form in which such estimates were presented, as well as their substance. The major difficulty had always related to the rental and operation of aircraft. The estimates for 1991, although lower than the initial estimates for 1990, exceeded the revised estimates for that year. He was not sure that so large an item of expenditure as that proposed could really be justified. His delegation therefore endorsed the related comment made by the Advisory Committee in paragraph 6 of its report (A/45/7/Add.4).

4. Following a procedural discussion in which Mr. IRUMBA (Uganda), Mr. KINCHEN (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland), Mr. KALBITZER (Germany), Mr. DANKWA (Ghana) and Mr. VISLYKH (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) took part, the CHAIRMAN said that the meeting should be suspended for consultations.

The meeting was suspended at 4.40 p.m. and resumed at 5.05 p.m.

5. The CHAIRMAN proposed that, based on the statement of programme budget implications of draft resolution A/45/L.3 (A/C.5/45/25 and Corr.1) and on the recommendations of the Advisory Committee (A/45/7/Add.4), the Fifth Committee should inform the General Assembly that, should it adopt draft resolution A/45/L.3, an additional non-recurrent appropriation of \$6,150,000 would be required under section 1 of the programme budget for 1990-1991, without recourse to the contingency fund, as well as an additional appropriation of \$336,100 under section 31 (Staff assessment), to be offset by an equivalent amount under income section 1 (Income from staff assessment).

6. It was so decided.

7. Mr. TAEB (Afghanistan) said that his Government had provided the local support and services required for the United Nations Good Offices Mission in Afghanistan and Pakistan (UNGOMAP) until the termination of its mandate, in accordance with the provisions of the Geneva Agreements of 14 April 1988. The Office of the Secretary-General in Afghanistan and Pakistan had been established at the beginning of 1990 in order to facilitate the fulfilment of the mandate entrusted to the Secretary-General under pertinent General Assembly resolutions. His Government had been asked to continue providing local support and services to that Office, and he was pleased to report that the request had been granted. Consequently, his Government was providing support and services to the Office of the Secretary-General, bearing in mind the difference between its size and that of UNGOMAP, and wished to assure the Committee, the Secretariat and the Secretary-General in particular that it would continue to do so in the future.

AGENDA ITEM 117: REVIEW OF THE EFFICIENCY OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE AND FINANCIAL FUNCTIONING OF THE UNITED NATIONS (continued) (A/45/16 (Part I) and Add.1 and A/45/16 (Part II), A/45/226, A/45/370 and A/45/617)

AGENDA ITEM 119: PROGRAMME PLANNING (continued) (A/45/6, A/45/16 (Part I) and Add.1 and A/45/16 (Part II), A/45/204, A/45/218 and Corr.1 and Add.1 and Add.1/Corr.1, A/45/279 and A/45/617; A/C.5/45/CRP.1)

Proposed medium-term plan for the period 1992-1997 (continued)

8. Mr. KARBUCZKY (Hungary) said that every organization, particularly those with huge bureaucratic staffs, tended to favour the conservation of old structures rather than the introduction of new ones. In the case of the United Nations, everything possible must be done to create a flexible administrative structure which could respond rapidly to changes. The process of reform provided for under General Assembly resolution 41/213 must be kept in motion. Accordingly, the limited resources available to the United Nations must be focused on priority activities; outdated programmes should be abolished; and the corresponding administrative structures should be eliminated. In that connection, he proposed that the Secretary-General should, in the introduction to his budget proposals, give a brief description of reform measures taken or planned, together with suggestions for necessary legislative action.

(Mr. Karbuczky, Hungary)

9. He wondered whether, in its present form, the medium-term plan was consistent with established criteria. Given his own country's mostly negative experience in terms of medium-term planning, it was unlikely that a detailed plan would allow the Organization to react better to the rapidly changing needs of Member States. On the contrary, a rigid and detailed plan tended to conserve outdated programmes and created contradictions when unforeseen problems arose. Programme performance could be improved considerably by strengthening and harmonizing the work of the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination (ACC) and the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination (CPC), without the adoption of a complicated medium-term plan.

10. The Organization must know what it was about when setting priorities. Priority did not mean merely a preferential rating for the allocation of resources but also increased attention, which in the present circumstances was perhaps more important. His delegation shared the view of the Advisory Committee that the competent reviewing bodies should provide specific guidelines to the Secretary-General, including recommendations on priorities (A/45/617, para. 8). As indicated in the introduction to the proposed plan, the highest priority would be peace-making and peace-keeping activities and the enhancement of the well-being of all the peoples of the world (A/45/6 (Introduction), para. 39). But the well-being of the peoples of the world must not be described only in material terms but also in terms of the enjoyment of human rights. It was therefore difficult to accept the omission of the promotion and protection of human rights from the priorities listed in the programme budget outline for the biennium 1992-1993. Other delegations had already voiced that concern, so that a way must be found to make good the omission. Furthermore, the zero-growth referred to in the outline was of political rather than programme-planning significance. With regard to the mathematical operations carried out with respect to the non-recurrent items, it must be acknowledged that, zero-growth or not, the Member States had to pay the cost of those items as well.

11. Mr. CLAVIJO (Colombia) said that efficiency was a relative concept connected with the result obtained from the use of a given quantity of resources. A reduction of resources, for example a staff cut or a freeze on budget growth, was not in itself a sign of efficiency unless it could be demonstrated that an equal or greater product had been obtained. Several delegations had pointed out that the defective evaluation machinery still impeded an accurate determination as to whether the products obtained by the United Nations system were tending to increase or decline. In view of the new challenges facing the Organization, an absolute increase in resources would seem reasonable, but there were no reliable indicators of efficiency.

12. Another matter of crucial importance was a suitable policy for the selection of the Organization's managerial staff. Without prejudice to the usefulness and urgency of the structural reorganization, in the short term it was essential to carry out the recommendations approved by the General Assembly in its resolution 41/213 that objective technical criteria should be applied to personnel selection and that both the monopoly of posts by certain countries and the indefinite occupation of high-level posts should be avoided. Experience showed that the

(Mr. Clavijo, Colombia)

administrative efficiency of any team of workers depended largely on the abilities of its managers. In order to achieve excellence in that respect it was necessary to avoid placing the selected staff members under the pressure of the possibility of reappointment. The intellectual freedom which a prohibition on their reappointment would give to the most senior managerial staff, including staff in the specialized agencies, would substantially enhance their performance. That could mean modification of their terms of office and their mandatory separation from the system for a reasonable period once they had served their terms. Similar criteria could be applied to top-level officials, such as those at the Assistant Secretary-General and higher levels, whose appointment should be for a fixed term and non-renewable, in order to ensure a healthy renewal of the Organization's personnel.

13. The recent joint meeting of CPC and ACC had shown that a technical body was needed to evaluate the large number of proposals arising from resolution 41/213. Only thus would it be possible to submit to the General Assembly the proposals which were most viable and most consistent with the established goals. In order to carry out that task CPC might establish a group of experts, including as far as possible experts from non-governmental organizations and having specific terms of reference.

14. The proposed medium-term plan gave rise to several questions which confirmed the need for such a technical body. The presentation of the proposed plan no doubt represented a degree of methodological progress but, despite the many revisions to which it had been subjected, doubts remained as to the mechanisms for translating the priorities set in the plan into budget decisions.

15. With regard to programme 1 of the proposed medium-term plan (A/45/6 (Prog. 1)), his delegation endorsed the reservations stated by the delegations of Cuba and Venezuela concerning the inclusion of subprogramme 1 (Good offices and peace-making) in programme 1 (Good offices and peace-making, peace-keeping, research and the collection of information). The subprogramme required a specific legal mandate stemming unambiguously from the Charter of the United Nations. Article 99 of the Charter provided a clear guideline for action by the Secretary-General when it was necessary to act to maintain international peace and security. In contrast, peace-making activities derived from concepts which were still being developed and still lacked universal acceptance. The establishment of an independent subprogramme for peace-making ought to be studied in greater detail by the competent political organs. The Secretary-General's initiatives would then have a clearer legal as well as budgetary basis.

16. Ms. GOICOCHEA (Cuba) said that in the process of drafting and approving the medium-term plan there was a need for broader participation by Member States at the stage of prior consultations. It was obvious that some very important programmes, including some with controversial content, had not been considered by the competent organs. That was true of programme 1 of the proposed medium-term plan which, although concerned with peace-keeping activities, had not been examined by the Special Committee on Peace-keeping Operations. Her delegation wished to know why

(Ms. Goicochea, Cuba)

that had happened and also requested information from the Secretariat about all the programmes which had not been the subject of consultations with the competent organs. The Fifth Committee, which was a technical body, had before it programmes of a clearly political nature which had not been considered by the competent organs. The Committee could not of course be expected to take any decisions in the matter until it had the opinions of such organs, opinions which would constitute the legislative mandates.

17. Cuba fully agreed with the view stated by the Advisory Committee in paragraph 10 of its report that the format of the consolidated summary of comments and recommendations on the draft introduction to the medium-term plan (A/45/279) did not facilitate consideration of the plan. The consolidated summary should be improved in the future, both in form and content.

18. The opinions of Member States had not always been taken into account in the formulation of the proposed medium-term plan. Moreover, some of the Secretariat's proposals were not in accordance with the Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning. The introduction to the proposed plan showed an outlook in line with the report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization and with documents submitted by some Member States but out of line with the provisions of regulation 3.7, paragraph (b), of the Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning. Member States must bear some of the responsibility for the situation, since on many occasions, and especially in the reports of CPC, the use of such formulas as "several delegations" did not clearly express the majority view. Perhaps that situation ought to be corrected in the future.

19. It was regrettable that the Secretariat, in breach of the relevant regulations, had made programme proposals in respect of certain programmes for which there was no mandate, such as the proposal relating to the programme on peace-making activities. Acceptance of the argument that the authority for those programmes was provided by the view held by the Secretary-General and some Member States appeared to negate the validity of General Assembly resolution 37/234, in which the Regulations Governing Programme Planning were adopted, and the statement in paragraph 1 (d) of the preamble to the Regulations, concerning the establishment of objectives politically acceptable to Member States as a whole. Careful thought was needed if the principles underlying the programming and budgeting process were to be upheld.

20. Attention should also be drawn to the obvious imbalance in the introduction to the plan, in which insufficient emphasis was placed on components such as the elimination of apartheid, the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and the economic and social problems of the developing countries. It would therefore also be necessary to consider carefully the priorities proposed by the Secretary-General before their final approval. Similarly, Cuba regretted that there was no indication in the draft medium-term plan of the resources that would be needed, in spite of the provisions on that matter in the regulations. The Secretariat should make available to members an official document providing additional information.

(Ms. Goicochea, Cuba)

21. With regard to programme performance, the report of the Secretary-General (A/45/218 and Add.1) did not give a clear and objective picture of the way in which programmes had been implemented. Improvements should be made in the presentation of such reports. In addition, it was not possible to support the recommendation by the Advisory Committee in paragraph 23 of its report (A/45/617) that issuance of programme performance reports should be suspended pending a resolution of the underlying methodological difficulties. Member States must be kept informed about programme performance in view of the persistent financial crisis of the United Nations. In that connection, Cuba endorsed the conclusions and recommendations made by CPC in paragraphs 334 to 341 of the report on its thirtieth session (A/45/16 (Part I)). It would also be useful for the programme performance report for the biennium 1988-1989 to be supplemented by a full-scale evaluation of performance.

22. Cuba took note of the proposed structure for the new medium-term plan and requested the Secretariat to make available to the Fifth Committee a conference room paper explaining the changes as compared with the previous structure and setting out the reasons to justify such changes.

23. With regard to consideration of the draft medium-term plan, the late submission of documents to CPC had made it difficult for specialists from the Member States to examine the various programmes in detail. Moreover, there had been serious difficulties in securing support for CPC's conclusions in the Third Committee of the Economic and Social Council, support having been granted on the understanding that the plan would be subject to future reviews by the General Assembly. For that reason, it was hoped that the Fifth Committee was not being expected to accept certain components on which the Member States would give their views when analysing the individual programmes, in accordance with the provisions of the Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning.

Major programme IV. International economic co-operation for development (continued)

24. Mr. MEDINA (Israel), referring to the activities for assisting the Palestinian people which were included in programme 15 of the draft medium-term plan (A/45/6 (Prog. 15)), said that there was no need to continue to accumulate surveys by UNCTAD and other United Nations bodies on different aspects of development in the Israeli-administered territories of Judea, Samaria and the Gaza district. Moreover, Israel was not unaware of the political aims behind such surveys, namely, the surreptitious introduction of elements pertaining to the political future of the region rather than to the economic future of its inhabitants. Israel would not approve resolutions and reports containing such provocative elements. Any study of projects intended for the Palestinians must be carried out in co-operation with Israel, which, in accordance with international law, bore sole responsibility for the well-being of the population. Israel had done its utmost in the prevailing situation to ensure the well-being of the Palestinian population in the administered territories and would continue to do so until a political settlement was reached.

Major programme VII. Human rights, fundamental freedoms and humanitarian affairs

Major programme VIII. Public information

25. Mr. ABRASZEWSKI (Chairman of the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination), introducing the part of CPC's report relating to major programme VII (Human rights, fundamental freedoms and humanitarian affairs) (A/45/16 (Part I), paras. 284 to 319), said with regard to programme 35 (Promotion and protection of human rights) that CPC had recommended approval of the programme as proposed by the Secretary-General. In contrast, CPC had recommended that programme 36 (International protection of and assistance to refugees) should be approved with some modifications, including reference to the legislative authority for certain subprogrammes and to the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and the Security Council. With regard to programme 37 (Disaster relief and mitigation, and special emergency programmes), the Committee had stressed the need to ensure effective system-wide co-ordination and to utilize fully the designated focal points at the country level; it had recommended that high priority should be given to subprogramme 4 (Special emergency programmes); and had agreed on the need to incorporate in the programme the activities of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction.

26. With regard to major programme VIII (Public information), referred to in paragraphs 320 to 322 of the report, CPC recommended that its single programme should be approved, on the understanding that the necessary measures should be adopted to take into account the Committee's conclusions and implement its recommendations.

The meeting rose at 5.20 p.m.