

UNITED NATIONS  
**General Assembly**  
FORTY-FIFTH SESSION  
*Official Records*

FIFTH COMMITTEE  
16th meeting  
held on  
Monday, 29 October 1990  
at 10.30 a.m.  
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 16th MEETING

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

**later:** Mr. KOULYK (Ukrainian Soviet  
(Vice-Chairman) Socialist Republic)

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

CONTENTS

AGENDA ITEM 126: PERSONNEL QUESTIONS (continued)

AGENDA ITEM 117: REVIEW OF THE EFFICIENCY OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE AND FINANCIAL  
FUNCTIONING OF THE UNITED NATIONS (continued)

AGENDA ITEM 119: PROGRAMME PLANNING (continued)

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

This record is subject to correction.  
Corrections should be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned  
within one week of the date of publication to the Chief of the Official Records Editing Section, Room DC2, 50  
2 United Nations Plaza, and incorporated in a copy of the record.

Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a separate corrigendum for each Committee.

Distr. GENERAL  
A/C.5/45/SR.16  
12 November 1990  
ENGLISH  
ORIGINAL: FRENCH

The meeting was called to order at 10.25 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 126: PERSONNEL QUESTIONS (continued) (A/45/541 and 548; A/C.5/45/3, 10 and Corr.1, A/C.5/45/11, 12, 18 and 19)

1. The CHAIRMAN said that, in accordance with the usual procedure, the Committee would hear a staff representative.
2. Mr. RAMADAN (Egypt) said he wished to reaffirm the importance his delegation attached to personnel questions and to the working conditions of the entire United Nations staff, particularly within the present context. However, at the preceding meeting, the staff representative had made unfounded accusations against some Member States, which was unacceptable. It was to be hoped that such incidents would not be repeated at the current meeting and that the staff representative would confine his intervention to relations between the United Nations and its staff.
3. Mr. FLANDERS (Chairman of the Staff Council) said he was speaking on behalf of the staff representatives at all duty stations, who had approved the report issued with the symbol A/C.5/45/19, which contained the views of the representatives of the Secretariat staff. In approaching the various questions which concerned them, staff members did not act solely in their own interest but also out of a concern to make the Organization an instrument which contributed more effectively to peace and development in the world. Since that objective could be reached only through a constructive dialogue among the Member States, the Administration and the staff, it was to be hoped that staff representatives would be included in informal consultations held on personnel questions and ICSC issues.
4. The security and independence of the international staff remained a critical problem as in other years since no truly effective measures had been taken to put an end to the violations of the rights of staff members, as shown by the list of staff who had been killed or were currently under detention, which was included in document A/C.5/45/19. The large number of staff members imprisoned in the Middle East was a reminder of the scant attention paid by the States of that area to the various resolutions adopted by the General Assembly on that issue. In that regard, the staff representatives urged the adoption in 1990 of a much more forceful text which, in line with the action proposed by ACC, would call upon the States concerned to put an end to violations of the rights of United Nations staff members on the understanding that, in countries which did not comply, all United Nations activities and programmes other than those of a purely humanitarian nature, would be suspended.
5. The question of seconded staff and the position taken by the Administration in that connection constituted another source of concern. The issue was not secondment per se, which was a mechanism adopted by quite a few countries as the exclusive means of appointment of their nationals under a system of rotation which had ruled out the possibility of their being given career appointments pursuant to General Assembly resolution 37/126. The Secretariat should be free to offer an

/...

(Mr. Flanders)

individual whatever contractual arrangements it wished on the basis of his performance and merit and the needs of the Organization rather than on that of the specific interests of a Government. Frequent rotation of seconded staff members also put the Organization to considerable expense relating to their recruitment and repatriation. The problem would not be solved by increasing the ratio of fixed-term appointments to career appointments; quite the contrary. Nor would the answer be found in the Administration's proposals contained in document A/C.5/45/12, which represented an attempt to whitewash existing practices.

6. In Judgement 482, the Administrative Tribunal had made important observations regarding secondment procedures, finding that an exchange of correspondence or the notation of a secondment on a letter of appointment was not enough to create a valid secondment. The Administration proposed, however, to amend the Staff Regulations to provide that secondment would be confirmed by such a notation on a letter of appointment. That proposal was not at all in keeping with the Tribunal's Judgement. To acknowledge, as the Administration did, that some "seconded" staff members should be entitled to consideration for career appointment after five years of satisfactory service did not solve the problem of staff with fewer years of service or of staff who might enter on duty under the new procedure envisaged in the Staff Regulations. By the same token, if the system of fixed-term appointment and secondment was not changed, most "seconded" staff would remain in an unfavourable position vis-à-vis the staff as a whole. Given the clear judgement handed down by the Administrative Tribunal and current political trends, the staff representatives hoped that the Administration would take more radical steps to guarantee that staff members of all nationalities were recruited under the same system and given the same career opportunities within the Organization.

7. It was regrettable that the host country continued to restrict the travel of some United Nations staff members. Thus, staff members of Iraqi nationality had recently been added to the list (on which some 15 nationalities were represented) of those whose freedom of travel was restricted. Nothing could justify such measures, which were in the nature of political sanction, and, as such, might seriously compromise the role and functioning of the United Nations.

8. The Staff Council was gratified at the importance attached in resolution 44/185 to the formulation of a comprehensive career development plan for all staff, which would ensure the application of adequate, equitable and transparent promotion procedures in which merit would be recognized. The design of such a plan would be a long-term undertaking, and the Staff Council dared to hope that the Administration would enter into detailed discussions with staff representatives at all duty stations in order to identify its key components. In the mean time, the Council called for the preservation and full implementation of Staff Rule 104.14, which provided for an annual review for all staff qualified for promotion and the establishment of promotion registers for all categories of staff but had not been applied during the period of the retrenchment exercise.

9. The new attitude of openness and dialogue reflected in the intervention of the Assistant Secretary-General for human resources management was encouraging as were

/...

(Mr. Flanders)

several of the proposals he had made concerning career development and promotion. Conversely, other suggestions, such as those relating to promotion on merit, which could easily be misunderstood and more easily misapplied, called for further discussion.

10. It was obvious that more resources should be devoted to staff training. So far, priority had been given to the financing of language training. The time had come to organize training and retraining programmes, which were indispensable even for fully qualified staff because of the very rapid progress being made in professional knowledge.

11. The staff at large had year after year returned to the idea of a unified personnel structure that would eliminate the current division into two categories, which was a source of permanent friction and dissatisfaction. Such a measure had been adopted by the World Bank a few years previously and had had a very positive effect on personnel management and staff morale. The introduction of a single international civil service category with the same emoluments and benefits was not only feasible but would contribute significantly to increasing the dynamism and effectiveness of the staff. The staff representatives therefore urged the Secretary-General and ICSC to study that option seriously.

12. There was no reason to applaud the progress achieved in the improvement of the status of women in the Secretariat. Except at the entry level, the number of women, particularly at the higher levels, was actually lower than in previous years. Even extending some women beyond the age of retirement had not measurably improved the situation, but it had kept the total closer to the 30 per cent target. A systematic campaign to recruit women must be conducted, if 50 per cent of posts at all levels were eventually to be occupied by women. It could not be left to Member States to propose women candidates. There was a tendency to forget that women accounted for nearly 70 per cent of the General Service category at Headquarters and at other duty stations. They represented an important source of recruits for the Professional category, provided, of course, that opportunities for advancement, training and upgrading of skills were available. It would be useful for the Administration to discuss with the staff how that potential could be utilized in a way that would be fair to all staff while advancing the interests of women.

13. The administration of justice was one of the cornerstones of personnel administration. Effective and relatively speedy appeals procedures offered an indispensable counterweight to administrative decisions. Informal dispute settlement procedures should be strengthened wherever possible. The Administration had proposed in document A/C.5/45/11 to set up departmental conciliation panels to replace the Panel on Discrimination and Other Grievances. For the time being, however, the latter body should be strengthened in order to give it the means to perform its tasks more efficiently while waiting to see how departmental panels operated. In any case, the Panel on Discrimination and Other Grievances had been established by a decision of the General Assembly and could be abolished only with its agreement.

/...

(Mr. Flanders)

14. Lastly, in the matter of staff-management relations, it should be recalled that they were governed by chapter VIII of the Staff Rules and Regulations, which stipulated that the bodies representing the staff were entitled to make proposals to the Secretary-General. The Secretary-General was, or course, free to accept or reject such proposals and there was no question of interfering with his authority. Such a process of consultation, however, was somewhat unwieldy and the establishment of a system of negotiation as proposed by the staff representatives in their report, would undoubtedly help to make it more effective.

15. Mr. WILENSKI (Australia), speaking also on behalf of the delegations of Canada and New Zealand, said it was time to take a fresh look at personnel issues. It was time to ensure that the United Nations Secretariat must be made a leader, rather than a laggard on issues relating to personnel management in order to ensure that it would be able to rise to the challenges that lay ahead. For many years, the same factors that had limited the role of the United Nations had also reduced the effectiveness of the Secretariat. No Secretary-General could pursue a personnel policy worthy of the name if he could not be certain of the loyalty of all staff members and if he had to contend with the interference of Member States. The Secretariat must now restructure itself and reform those personnel management methods in order to make maximum use of its potential and play an appropriate role in a revitalized United Nations. That role would be, firstly, to carry out with a high degree of competence the broad range of activities, both in the peace and security areas and in other areas, that the United Nations was, or would be, called upon to perform. Beyond that, however, the Secretariat must also start to provide the necessary intellectual leadership to carry the United Nations forward into the new era. That meant replacing the flood of often indigestible and repetitive United Nations prose with genuinely incisive and stimulating thinking that would guide the work of delegations in the various Committees while supporting the work of the Secretary-General. There should be no reluctance to stray from the beaten path in order to tackle all the new problems facing the world, which required a multidisciplinary approach and the building of a new multilateralism.

16. For the Secretariat to meet that challenge it must recruit outstanding personnel and make the best use of the personnel's abilities. But Member States must also be ready to subordinate their narrow national interests to the interests of the Organization as a whole and to its long-term effectiveness. There now appeared to be a willingness to agree that there should be no national monopoly on any post at any level. Such an attitude, to the extent that it gave the Secretariat a free hand, would enable the Secretariat to concentrate on choosing the most competent team for the job while ensuring respect for the principle of equitable geographical distribution.

17. It might be thought, for example, that the United Nations would be much better managed if the Secretariat were divided into a small number of functional divisions with clear areas of responsibility and led by deputies to whom the Secretary-General could delegate much of his authority but who, in turn, would be accountable for the implementation of policies. The choice of such deputies might be confirmed by the General Assembly but it should in any case not be subject to

/...

(Mr. Wilenski, Australia)

pressure from Member States. The system could be headed by a senior management team which, within the framework of decisions made by the Member States, would decide the purposes and priorities of the Secretariat. The formulation of policies and the execution of programmes could then be carried out in accordance with the management principles currently applied elsewhere once the bureaucratic compartmentalization and dysfunctional working practices that were still all too prevalent had been eliminated.

18. In respect of appointments, it was necessary to begin by reviewing the way in which the posts of Under-Secretary-General and Assistant Secretary-General were filled. Of course those appointments must remain the prerogative of the Secretary-General, but they should no longer be made on the basis of consideration behind closed doors of a very limited group of candidates known only to those who participated in the selection process. It was essential that vacancies at those levels should be made publicly known. Individuals, including Secretariat staff members, should be able to apply. Governments should be able to propose candidates but not to lobby on their behalf. The Secretary-General might set up a panel to assist him in the task, but in the last analysis he himself would have to decide, with due regard for the way he intended to run the Organization and for the geographical balance of the senior management team.

19. With regard to staff recruitment and promotion procedures in general, considerable progress had been made, as was evidenced by the introduction of a competitive examination for junior professional officers. However, the principle of selection should be extended to the recruitment of all officials. It was essential for the sound working of the Secretariat that officials should be recruited on the widest possible geographical basis, a goal that the Secretary-General had striven to attain, as could be seen from his report (A/45/541), which showed that only 11 Member States were unrepresented and 19 under-represented. But it was also necessary to ensure that the field of candidates for any job was sufficiently wide and that the person finally selected was the most able candidate.

20. With regard to promotion, the only criteria must be those set forth in the familiar words of Article 101 of the Charter. Decisions must, of course, be taken without outside political interference. For the system of advancement to be efficient and credible, a process of staff evaluation based strictly on work performance must be introduced. All vacancies must be publicized, selection criteria must be made known to applicants, and the selection process itself must be clearly understood by all staff. Selection committees, too, must receive appropriate training, and selection techniques must be standardized, which was not yet the case.

21. But if the promotion system was to be effective, officials must also be offered real opportunities for career planning, mobility, diversification of work and career development. That should be the responsibility of each department, not just of the Office of Human Resources Management. In that connection, his delegation was extremely pleased to see the reference, in the statement by the

/...

(Mr. Wilenski, Australia)

Assistant Secretary-General for Human Resources Management, to the need for a qualitatively different occupational training programme. Management training should be an essential part of that programme. However, since good intentions in the training area were often not translated into deeds, future reports on personnel questions must include a detailed account of the specific measures taken in that field.

22. Reductions in staff had of course limited promotion opportunities in the Secretariat. Accordingly, it hardly seemed desirable to expand the system for promotion on grounds of merit, which should be applied only to the lowest grades. On the other hand, it might be possible to consider the solution that had been adopted in certain other organizations, of offering financial incentives to staff who were no longer performing fully in accordance with the Organization's needs, in order to encourage them to leave. A special fund might be set up for that purpose.

23. In conclusion, he announced that, in view of the importance of the issue, his delegation intended to speak on the question of the status of women in the Secretariat on a later occasion.

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

24. Mr. PANDAY (Nepal), commenting on the analytical report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of General Assembly resolution 41/213 (A/45/226), said that the Economic and Social Council had not yet taken a decision on the question of holding a single session each year, and that the number of subsidiary bodies of the Council which had decided to biennialize their sessions had scarcely increased. Furthermore, the Conference-Servicing utilization factor, which had reached the level of 70 per cent, remained well below the standard which had been set. His delegation hoped that the Department of Conference Services would propose practical ways of improving the effectiveness and cost-efficiency of those services, and that the Committee on Conferences would come up with a refined methodology, to take account of information on the holding of informal meetings, and of time lost, in calculating the utilization factor. On the other hand, his delegation was encouraged by the results obtained with regard to implementation of the recommendations that United Nations bodies should meet at their respective headquarters, that construction work should be undertaken only when sufficient resources were available to complete them, and that the number of claims for delegation travel should be reduced. Also encouraging were the measures adopted by a number of bodies, such as UNCTAD, ECE and ECLAC, to streamline their structures; other bodies should follow their example.

25. With regard to co-ordination, ACC should substantially modify the format and content of its annual overview report, in accordance with the recommendations of CPC, in order to rationalize the meetings of its subsidiary bodies and substantially reduce their cost. Co-ordination of operational activities for development, both within the United Nations system and at the national level, could

/...

(Mr. Panday, Nepal)

not fail to be strengthened by the reaffirmation of the central funding and co-ordinating role of UNDP. His delegation noted with satisfaction that a number of organizations with country and subregional offices had endorsed the principle of common premises and shared facilities, subject to the practical constraints referred to by the Director-General for Development and International Economic Co-operation. Greater efforts should also be made to harmonize budgeting practices among the bodies of the United Nations system.

26. In view of the delay in restructuring the economic and social sectors, it was important that decisions should be taken rapidly at the intergovernmental level so as to enable the Secretary-General fully to implement recommendation 14 of the Group of 18. As for staff reductions (recommendation 15), the Secretariat had managed to reduce the number of posts without any resultant negative impact on programmes. In that regard, his delegation agreed with the Secretary-General that a proper balance must be maintained between the number of staff funded from the regular budget and the number funded from other contributions and that any further structural reforms should be aimed at increasing the capacity of the Organization to accomplish its role, not at reducing its staff. Given the importance of peace-keeping operations, special care must be taken to provide the Field Operations Division with the means to carry on normal activities. Member States must support the measures aimed at ensuring the availability of a cadre of core personnel for its operations and at establishing a reserve stock of commonly used equipment and stores items.

27. His delegation noted with satisfaction that significant changes had occurred, both in terms of organizational structure and in procedures and methods of work, which had resulted in clearer lines of responsibility and better co-ordination. It also welcomed the reduction in staff travel expenses affected by reducing the number of staff sent on mission and by strictly controlling first class travel. The independence of the internal audit function, reaffirmed by a self-evaluation exercise performed by the Division, presupposed that the Division should have the staffing and resources necessary to carry out the auditing work required, particularly in connection with activities away from Headquarters.

28. With regard to the planning and budget procedure, the Organization would benefit greatly from fuller involvement of intergovernmental bodies in the preparation of both the medium-term plan and the programme budget, despite the difficulty, for Member States and the Secretariat, of developing a common language on matters of programming and budgeting. Problems relating to priority setting should also be resolved as early as possible. His delegation hoped that, as in the case of the contingency fund, guidelines for the use and operation of which had been approved, a solution would be found to the comprehensive problem of additional expenditures, including those deriving from inflation and currency fluctuations, and that the solution would be submitted to the General Assembly at its 1991 session. In any case, improvement of the format and methodology of the programme budget and of the outline budget must be viewed as an ongoing and flexible exercise, in order to consolidate the reforms achieved thus far and to be in a position to meet the challenges of the 1990s.

(Mr. Panday, Nepal)

29. The results of the process of enhancing the administrative and financial functioning of the United Nations, while not entirely in line with the objectives set forth in resolution 41/213, were none the less very encouraging. Furthermore, one could not but welcome the renewed confidence shown in the United Nations by Member States and the close co-operation and mutual support between Member States and the Secretary-General, which had enabled the Fifth Committee to adopt all its resolutions unanimously at the forty-fourth session. The public perception of the United Nations had also improved noticeably. The Secretariat had done its part, and programmes had suffered few adverse effects in consequence; it was now up to Member States to do theirs, by fulfilling their financial obligations in full and on time, to enable the Secretary-General to complete the implementation of Assembly resolution 41/213.

30. Mr. STEIN (United States of America), said that the reduction in international tensions had created a political climate favorable to the revitalization of the United Nations, but that the reform effort also had made a significant contribution to restoring its prominence and credibility in peace-keeping. Member States must ensure that the limited resources available were directed to priority programmes in respect of which the United Nations had a special ability to act. The areas highlighted by the Secretary-General in his analytical report on the reform process (A/45/226) and by the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination at its thirtieth session were a framework within which the General Assembly should take measures at its current session to strengthen further the Organization's ability to deal constructively with such critical global problems as drug trafficking and pollution.

31. In the economic and social sectors, insufficient reform had taken place, at both the intergovernmental and the Secretariat levels. The comprehensive approach adopted by the Special Commission in 1988 had failed to produce the expected results. The rationalization of the agendas and working methods of the many economic and social bodies of the United Nations must be addressed with a view to developing a decision-making process more oriented towards practical solutions. The structures and methods established over the past forty-five years must be swept away. The restructuring of the Secretariat in the economic and social sectors should not depend on progress made at the intergovernmental level. His delegation hoped that, in the report to be submitted to the General Assembly on that topic, the Secretary-General would propose the significant changes required, because the existing Secretariat offices and departments, and many of the programmes they were implementing, were clearly ill-suited to the future tasks of the Organization.

32. The resolutions of the General Assembly and the actions taken by the Secretary-General in implementation of the recommendations of the Group of 18 concerning co-ordination, while significant, were only the initial steps of a multi-year effort towards the goal of achieving system-wide co-operation in planning, budgeting and implementation. His delegation was ready to work with other delegations in order to build on the accomplishments of the forty-fourth session and to develop the practical measures needed to strengthen co-ordination functions. Regarding evaluation, the existing mechanisms were ineffective because the necessary follow-up measures were seldom taken. Shortcomings in that area,

(Mr. Stein, United States)

which had to do with the maintenance of programmes of marginal interest and the lack of concerted action to simplify administrative procedures, had been amply documented by the auditors, the Joint Inspection Unit, internal evaluation units and ACABQ. It was now up to the Secretariat to exercise leadership and act on the recommendations of those bodies.

33. The Organization must adapt its structures and working methods to the changing needs of the world community, and the General Assembly must continue to give priority to reform efforts. In the area of staff retrenchment and reduction of high-level posts, in particular, the mandated reductions should be implemented fully. While care must, of course, be taken to avoid negative impact on programmes, a further effort must be made to achieve the objectives in recommendation 15 of the Group of 18, as recommended by CPC at its thirtieth session. His delegation had accepted two extensions of the deadline beyond 1989 in meeting the agreed staff reduction goals, and understood the arguments put forward by the Secretary-General in requesting a further extension, but regretted that no further proposals had been made at the current session. It therefore urged the Secretary-General to renew his commitment to identify and abolish unneeded posts, particularly high-level posts. Elimination of one Assistant Secretary-General post had been proposed; that left three more posts to be eliminated in order to meet the agreed goal, which in his delegation's opinion, was not impossible to achieve. At its forty-fifth session the General Assembly should approve the elimination of those additional high-level posts while providing the Secretary-General with the necessary flexibility regarding the modalities for implementing the decision.

34. The reform process begun in 1986 must be consolidated and preserved. His delegation therefore proposed that the Secretary-General should submit an annual report, in the context of the programme budget, providing an in-depth analysis of the measures taken by the Secretariat to improve staff efficiency, achieve economies and reorient programmes to meet the needs of Member States. Such a report would provide a clear and concise picture of the steps taken by the Secretary-General to implement the recommendations of the auditors, the Joint Inspection Unit and ACABQ, as well as a detailed description of proposals to complete the implementation of the recommendations of the Group of 18. That report would also include a section directed to Member States proposing the legislative action required for the further rationalization of programmes and operations.

35. Despite serious financial difficulties, the United Nations had been able to improve its image and capabilities greatly, but heightened public interest brought with it more intense scrutiny of the way in which it conducted its business. Like its Member States, the United Nations was faced with difficult choices, since its resources were limited while needs were growing. It must, however, be able to respond effectively to the many expectations of the international community. Continuing the reform process was one of the best ways to achieve that goal.

36. Mr. Koulyk (Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

37. Mr. PANOV (Bulgaria) noted that considerable results had been achieved in the four years since the adoption of General Assembly resolution 41/213, but that it would take time for the problem of improving the efficiency of the Organization's administrative and financial functioning to be solved fully. The Secretariat had made commendable efforts to implement most of the recommendations of the Group of 18. The achievements of the Special Commission of the Economic and Social Council were also considerable, making possible a significant improvement in the work of the Organization in those fields.

38. As it had been issued in April, the analytical report of the Secretary-General (A/45/226) did not reflect all that had been done in that regard. In the opinion of his delegation, reforms did not consist only in reducing unnecessary expenditure, but were also a means of strengthening the role of the United Nations. Tasks must be better distributed among the various bodies of the system, and priorities must be more clearly defined. The role of CPC should be enhanced so that it could guide and monitor the improvement of efficiency in all spheres of the work of the Organization. His delegation attached particular importance to joint meetings of CPC and ACC and believed that full implementation of recommendations 9 to 13 of the Group of 18 and of General Assembly resolution 44/194 would guarantee greater efficiency in the activities of the United Nations and its specialized agencies and would help to avoid duplication.

39. Care should be taken to ensure that financial restrictions had no negative impact on programmes already approved. The prevailing climate of mutual understanding should facilitate the elimination of many practices which resulted in waste (multitudes of nearly identical resolutions, numerous and lengthy communications from Governments issued as official United Nations documents, lengthy conferences and sessions of various bodies, specialized agencies and committees, meetings held at night and at the weekend, etc.).

40. His delegation placed great importance on the full implementation of recommendation 15 of the Group of 18. It welcomed the commendable efforts of the Secretariat, which had resulted in an 11.95 per cent reduction of staff. It believed, however, that the principle of equitable geographical distribution should be even more firmly applied in the appointment of staff, provided that, the Organization was not prevented from recruiting the highly qualified specialists it needed.

41. Mrs. MOSS (Bahamas) said that concerted action was needed to accelerate change in those sectors in which progress had been inadequate, particularly the economic and social sector, which was of considerable importance since it accounted for over 80 per cent of the resources of the Organization. In the view of her delegation, the difficulties encountered in restructuring the United Nations could be attributed to the failure fully to implement resolution 32/197. She also recommended for consideration and appropriate action the recommendations of CPC on the report of the Joint Inspection Unit on the subject, particularly in order to ensure the full implementation of paragraph 2 of that resolution. What was required was the full utilization of existing machinery. Nevertheless, it was also necessary to re-examine any firmly entrenched positions which might be impeding necessary reforms.

(Mrs. Moss, Bahamas)

42. Reform was an ongoing process which should be based on results already achieved. Those results should be consolidated. However, the major reduction in the staff of the Secretariat should not have a negative impact on programme delivery.

43. The new procedures instituted in the administrative and financial sectors appeared to be working well, since during the forty-fourth session the Fifth Committee had adopted all its resolutions without a vote. Similar progress should occur in the payment of contributions, so that the Organization's programme delivery would not be jeopardized by a weak financial position. In view of the tensions triggered by recent events and the de facto solidarity uniting all States, they, as well as the Secretariat, had the obligation to provide the United Nations with the means to function effectively.

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, A/45/218/Add.1 and Add.1/Corr.1, A/45/279 and A/45/617; A/C.5/45/CRP.1)

44. Mr. TANG Guanting (China) commended the Secretary-General for simplifying the structure of the medium-term plan and improving the introduction. The Secretary-General rightly accorded the highest priority to the peace-keeping activities of the Organization. Nevertheless, in view of the widening gap between the North and the South and the impoverishment of an ever-increasing number of people in the developing countries, economic issues also were one of the highest priorities. In view of the importance of the International Development Strategy for the Fourth United Nations Development Decade, it would have been useful if the Secretariat had been more explicit in the introduction on how the United Nations would implement the Strategy and what roles the specialized agencies would play. With respect to Africa, his delegation noted with satisfaction that CPC, at its thirtieth session, had requested the Secretary-General to prepare a system-wide plan of action for African economic recovery and development.

45. The role of the United Nations in the peaceful settlement of regional conflicts, and long-standing issues such as apartheid, racial discrimination, Palestine, etc., deserved more attention in the introduction to the medium-term plan.

46. With regard to human rights, the text submitted was a improvement over the one which had been before the Committee in 1988. However, his delegation believed that, contrary to what was stated in paragraph 31, the activities of the Organization in that field should be guided not by "recent developments in the political arena", but by the relevant articles of the Charter.

47. While his delegation could go along with paragraph 36 of the introduction, on the fight against drugs, it felt that reference should have been made to the Political Declaration adopted by consensus during the seventeenth special session of the General Assembly.

/...

(Mr. Tang Guanting, China)

48. In view of the great importance of science and technology for the developing countries, the next medium-term plan should attach greater importance to the need for effective multilateral technical co-operation in that field and should call for the strengthening of the United Nations bodies concerned. Paragraphs 25 and 29 of the introduction should have been more detailed.

49. His delegation supported the Secretary-General's efforts to streamline the structure of the plan. It fully shared the view of the Advisory Committee in paragraph 11 of document A/45/617 and had noted with satisfaction that, as indicated by the Under-Secretary-General for Administration and Management, the simplification did not imply a projected reduction in the volume of activities. With respect to the composition of major programmes, he recalled that his delegation had expressed its views at the twenty-eighth session of CPC and at the forty-third session of the General Assembly, and it reaffirmed that major programme VII, "Human Rights, Fundamental Freedoms and Humanitarian Affairs", should be incorporated into major programme V, "International Co-operation for Social Progress".

50. Mrs. MOSS (Bahamas) welcomed the fact that the medium-term plan had been simplified. She regretted, however, that the problem of priority-setting had not yet been resolved, and welcomed with interest the proposals put forward by the Secretary-General in that regard (reviewing the priority designations of subprogrammes when the plan was revised every second year, and the involvement of intergovernmental bodies in the process).

51. Another aspect of the programme planning process whose importance could not be overemphasized was that of evaluation. While all the organizations in the system recognized its value, evaluation still was not practised systematically and the necessary mechanisms did not exist throughout the system. It was important for evaluation indicators to be built into programmes at the time of their formulation. Her delegation supported the views of CPC on that issue. Only through evaluation was it possible judiciously to eliminate those activities which were obsolete and reallocate resources effectively. The distinction must continue to be drawn between self-evaluation and in-depth evaluation, while recognizing that both were critical. Her delegation believed that inter-agency co-ordinating mechanisms should be strengthened and therefore welcomed the improvement in the ACC/CPC Joint Meetings. It urged Member States to facilitate the process by displaying consistency in their positions taken in various intergovernmental bodies.

52. It was also essential to maintain complete consistency between the medium-term plan and the programme budgets and to simplify the decision-making process even further. The Main Committees also should be given the opportunity to contribute to the consideration of the plan. When deciding on new activities, Member States should endeavour to agree on activities which might be eliminated. Noting that new activities always should fall within the ongoing plan and programme budget, her delegation welcomed the efforts being made to modify the format and content of the statements of programme budget implications.

/...

(Mrs. Moss, Bahamas)

53. The increasing importance of extrabudgetary funds only complicated the planning process. Since they were designated for specific purposes, they could not be reallocated to meet shifting priorities. Moreover, the activities they supported were governed by rules which were somewhat less strict than those applicable to activities carried out under the regular budget. Nevertheless, the activities carried out by the Organization in a given field should be revealed in their totality, regardless of their funding sources. Moreover, priority programmes, such as the effort to combat drug abuse, deserved adequate funding from the regular budget despite any extrabudgetary funding they might command. Her delegation therefore welcomed the efforts of the Advisory Committee to resolve the question of the impact of extrabudgetary resources on the financing of the United Nations and on the programme planning process.

54. While her delegation regretted that the plan was not more concise, it noted with satisfaction that activities were presented more appropriately, the number of programmes and subprogrammes had been substantially reduced and programme objectives were more focused. More intergovernmental sectoral bodies had made a contribution than in the past. The Secretariat had devoted considerable effort in the introduction to defining the new directions in which the United Nations should move during the 1990s. Those were all factors which strengthened the programme planning process.

55. Because there was no reliable methodology, programme performance assessment still was inadequate. While the Secretary-General's sixth report on programme performance provided a quantitative assessment of outputs produced in relation to outputs planned, such information was limited and should be supplemented by a qualitative assessment. It was necessary to devise a method of classifying outputs which would facilitate agreement on how they were to be funded. In that connection, it undoubtedly would be useful to review the relevance of outputs which had been postponed more than twice. However, efficiency in planning did not necessarily require radical reforms. With the requisite political will, it was sufficient to refine existing machinery.

56. Mr. SANELL (Sweden), speaking on behalf of the Nordic countries presented the views of their delegations on priority-setting in the medium-term plan. The establishment of that order of priority was currently based on the following three criteria: (a) the importance of the objective to Member States; (b) the capacity of the Organization to achieve it; and (c) the real effectiveness and usefulness of the results. The Secretary-General proposed the addition of a fourth criterion, namely that the objective sought should be of such a nature that multilateral action was demonstrably important to its achievement. The Nordic delegations supported that proposal. With regard to the capacity of the Organization to achieve an objective, different interpretations seemed possible. If "capacity" meant the availability of competent personnel and other resources, the relevance of the criterion depended on the time-frame. If Member States considered an objective important and multilateral action was demonstrably important to its achievement, the Organization should acquire the needed capacity. The Nordic delegations, therefore, tended to give less weight to that criterion in the medium-term context than in the short-term perspective.

/...

(Mr. Sanell, Sweden)

57. The Nordic countries agreed with the Secretary-General that priority-setting in the medium-term plan should primarily focus on the subprogrammes, which were the principal link between the medium-term plan and the programme budget. That was also what CPC had recommended at its resumed session in September 1990. Planning meant not only deciding what to do during the plan period, but also creating a state of preparedness for taking rational decisions, if plans did not turn out as expected. By setting clear priorities, it was possible to indicate what activities should be halted if necessary. It was, therefore, essential not only to designate high priorities, but also to define relatively low-priority activities. The mere fact that a subprogramme was included in the medium-term plan was indicative of high priority. Nevertheless, it was essential to set priorities within that group also.

58. The fact that a number of subprogrammes had been assigned high priority and others low priority in the documents submitted by the Secretariat to CPC in May 1990 constituted considerable progress. Further steps could be taken in that direction by classifying all subprogrammes according to one of three groups: high, medium and low priority. The implementation rate in the high-priority group should, in principle, be 100 per cent. For the Secretary-General, peace-making and peace-keeping activities were of the highest priority. The Nordic delegations, for their part, had also expected to see the environment, human rights and drug control accorded the same level of priority.

59. The Nordic countries agreed with the Secretary-General and CPC that there was a need for continued improvement in the methodology for reporting on programme performance. The Organization could not, however, be expected to solve all the problems that few international or national organizations had been able to tackle completely. The main purpose of programme monitoring was to analyse past performance in order to make future improvements in management. Therefore, it was important to report not only what had happened, but also why it had happened. The Secretariat should have provided a better analysis of the reasons for the outcome of different programmes. Two examples were illustrative. One concerned the correlation between performance rates and vacancy rates. Document A/45/218 provided information on those rates by programme budget section. No explanation was given as to how it had been possible to achieve a performance rate of 90 per cent or more in spite of vacancy rates of 20 to 25 per cent.

60. The other example concerned the performance rate in the highest and lowest priority group. The performance rate in the highest priority group was 83 per cent as compared with 60 per cent in the lowest. One would have expected a higher performance rate in the first group. Nevertheless, in spite of those shortcomings, the Nordic countries thought that the report on programme performance contained useful indicators of performance.

61. Lastly, the Nordic delegations noted with satisfaction the great importance that the Secretary-General attached to self-evaluation, particularly in the report on the application of evaluation findings in programme design, delivery and policy directives (A/45/204). They were somewhat disappointed, however, that

/...

(Mr. Sanell, Sweden)

self-evaluation had not been completely accepted as a management tool. In the period 1986-1991, less than half of all subprogrammes would be self-evaluated. On the other hand, it was encouraging to note that programme managers who had attempted to conduct self-evaluation studies had recognized the importance of systematically gathering evidence on the relevance and effectiveness of their programmes. The Nordic countries fully agreed with the conclusions and recommendations of CPC on that question.

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

Work-load standards for various categories of conference-servicing staff, including clerical and typing staff, and work-load statistics for the various conference services in the 1986-1987 and 1988-1989 bienniums (A/C.5/45/1 and A/45/7/Add.1; A/C.5/45/L.3)

62. Mr. MICHALSKY (United States of America) introduced draft decision A/C.5/45/L.3 paragraph by paragraph. In submitting the draft decision his delegation did not in any way wish to give the impression that the Department of Conference Services was poorly managed. On the contrary, it was one of the most efficient departments in the Secretariat. The draft decision requested the continuation of the re-evaluation of work-load standards, particularly in view of the introduction in the Department of new techniques which might make it possible to improve services while reducing expenses. The efforts made in that regard by the Under-Secretary-General for Conference Services and Special Assignments were commendable and the draft decision was designed only to encourage him to continue them.

63. The CHAIRMAN said that, if he heard no objection, he would take it that the members of the Committee wished to adopt draft decision A/C.5/45/L.3 without a vote.

64. It was so decided.

65. Mr. KARBUCZKY (Hungary), explaining his delegation's position, said that it welcomed the adoption of the draft decision, which constituted a further step in harmonizing the work of the Organization.

66. Mr. ETUKET (Uganda) pointed out that the establishment of work-load standards was in keeping with an extremely important objective. In addition to the fact that they might facilitate the dialogue between the Department of Conference Services and the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, work-load standards represented a way of enhancing the effectiveness of the conference services of the regional commissions, to which particular importance should be attached. His delegation hoped that, in the report requested of him in paragraph 6 of the draft decision, the Secretary-General would suggest measures to that end. In that connection, technological innovations should also be introduced in the regional commissions; otherwise, the decision that had just been adopted might be invoked to support further post reductions in conference services, which would be most regrettable.

The meeting rose at 12.45 p.m.