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PROGRAMME PLANNING

Further experience gained in the provision of statements of
programme budget implications to the General Assembly at its
fortieth session

Report of the Secretary-General

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* A/41/50/Rev.1.

I. INTRODUCTION

1. At its thirty-eighth session, the General Assembly adopted resolution 38/227 of 20 December 1983 on programme planning and co-ordination within the United Nations system. In section II, paragraph 7, of resolution 38/227 A, the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to provide it with statements of programme budget implications of draft resolutions being considered by the Assembly. A report of the Secretary-General on the experience gained in the provision of statements of programme budget implications to the General Assembly at its thirty-ninth session (A/40/262) was submitted to the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination at its twenty-fifth session. ^{1/} The Committee recommended that the Assembly should request the Secretary-General to submit to the Assembly at its forty-first session, through the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination at its twenty-sixth session, a report on the further experience gained in the implementation of paragraph 7, section II, of Assembly resolution 38/227 A. This recommendation was adopted by the Assembly in paragraph 6 of its resolution 40/240 of 18 December 1985 on programme planning.

2. The above-mentioned report on the experience gained at the thirty-ninth session of the General Assembly contained a summary of the established policies and procedures that govern the provision of statements of programme budget implications to the Assembly. In the absence of any changes in them since then, and in view of their general acceptance and smooth functioning, they are not further elaborated here. Instead, section II of the present report provides updated information regarding the volume and timing of statements of programme budget implications. In addition, the present report focuses on a brief discussion of the usefulness of statements of programme budget implications and of the possible extension of their provision to other bodies of the United Nations. Section IV puts forth the Secretary-General's recommendations for the consideration of the General Assembly.

II. VOLUME AND TIMING OF STATEMENTS OF PROGRAMME BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

3. As mentioned in the introduction, the process of providing the General Assembly with statements of programme budget implications overall worked smoothly during its fortieth session. This general statement needs to be qualified only with regard to the adequacy of the minimum time period of 48 hours, stipulated in paragraph 13 (d) of General Assembly decision 34/401, which is allowed between the submission of, and the voting on, a proposal involving expenditure in order to allow the Secretary-General to prepare and present the related statement of administrative and financial implications.

4. There were numerous instances during the last two sessions of the General Assembly when it was not possible to produce the required statement within 48 hours. In the previous report on this topic (A/40/262), the Secretary-General had recommended the extension of the minimum time period to 72 hours as a result of the experience during the thirty-ninth session of the Assembly. However, the Assembly did not take action on this recommendation during its fortieth session.

5. It may, therefore, be useful to provide another brief description of some of the factors which may impede the timely provision of statements of programme budget implications. They include the need for consultations, and frequently multiple consultations, for information and clearance purposes among a wide variety of individuals and parts of the Organization, including those between the sponsors of the resolution and the Secretariat. In cases where the implementation of the request to the Secretary-General contained in a draft resolution involves more than one substantive office in the social and economic sector, for instance, at least five offices participate in the consultations, namely, the two substantive offices, the Director-General's Office, the Office of Financial Services and the Office for Programme Planning and Co-ordination. The time constraints are felt particularly acutely when dealing with a politically or substantively complex draft resolution, when geographically distant parts of the Organization are involved, or when the unit to which the Secretary-General would assign responsibility for the implementation of the draft resolution cannot immediately be determined. For the time being, the unavailability of information at Headquarters on the exact status of implementation of outputs in the programme of work at the different duty stations represents another frequently felt impediment. The impact of these factors is particularly pronounced during the last third of a General Assembly session when the majority of the draft resolutions are introduced.

6. For purposes of reference and comparison as well as illustration of the above points, updated versions of the four tables contained in the previous report are provided below. Table 1 shows the number of resolutions and decisions of the last four sessions of the General Assembly which requested action by the Secretariat.

Table 1. General Assembly resolutions and decisions with programme budget implications for the programme of work of the Secretariat

Session of the General Assembly	Total number of resolutions and decisions a/	Number with operative paragraphs requesting action by the Secretariat	Column 2 as a percentage of column 1
Thirty-seventh	308	188	61
Thirty-eighth	295	181	61
Thirty-ninth	303	195	64
Fortieth	329	203	62

a/ Excluding decisions on elections and appointments.

7. In spite of the slight numerical increases in table 1, the number of statements of programme budget implications prepared decreased, as shown in table 2 below. This finding indicates that, to a larger degree than in previous sessions, draft resolutions and decisions introduced during the fortieth session requested action which had already been anticipated in the proposed programme of work, involved minimal additional effort beyond that anticipated in the programme of work, or could be accommodated through reformulation of already programmed output. In these cases, only oral statements of implications were made. It remains to be seen whether this trend will continue in an off-budget year.

Table 2. Implications statements by Committee of the General Assembly in which draft resolution originated

Committee in which draft resolution originated	Session of the General Assembly			
	Thirty-seventh	Thirty-eighth	Thirty-ninth	Fortieth
Without reference to a Main Committee <u>a/</u>	10	10	9	13
First Committee	7	9	9	7
Special Political Committee	7	6	5	4
Second Committee	10	12	12	8
Third Committee	9	5	10	5
Fourth Committee	1	-	-	-
Fifth Committee	-	-	-	-
Sixth Committee	<u>5</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>3</u>
Total	<u>49</u>	<u>46</u>	<u>48</u>	<u>40</u>

a/ Implications statements are given to the Plenary as Fifth Committee documents.

8. Notwithstanding the slightly lower number of written implications statements prepared during the fortieth session of the General Assembly, the majority of the resolutions requiring such statements were introduced in a cluster between the eighth and eleventh week of the session, as shown in table 3 below.

Table 3. Number of resolutions introduced which required implications statements, by date of introduction into Main Committee

Work of session	Session of the General Assembly			
	Thirty-seventh	Thirty-eighth	Thirty-ninth	Fortieth
1	2	2	1	2
2	1	1	-	-
3	-	-	1	-
4	-	-	-	1
5	1	-	4	1
6	4	-	-	1
7	4	2	7	4
8	5	8	9	7
9	5	7	1	8
10	11	11	7	4
11	6	9	8	7
12	3	5	9	2
13	3	1	1	3
14	-	-	-	-
Total	<u>49</u>	<u>46</u>	<u>48</u>	<u>40</u>
<u>Week in which median occurs</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>9</u>

9. Following the three-stage procedure described in paragraph 21 of the previous report (A/40/262), the timing of the issuance of written statements to the Main Committee and, after adoption of a draft resolution by these Committees, to the Fifth Committee did not change appreciably during the fortieth session of the General Assembly, as shown in table 4 below. The difference between the two totals for the fortieth session results from the fact that the five statements issued to the Main Committees were not later also issued to the Fifth Committee.

Table 4. Timing of implications statements

Week of session	(a) Number of implications statements issued to Main Committee, or plenary acting as Main Committee, by date of issue				(b) Number of implications statements issued to the Fifth Committee, by date of issue			
	Session of the General Assembly				Session of the General Assembly			
	Thirty-seventh	Thirty-eighth	Thirty-ninth	Fortieth	Thirty-seventh	Thirty-eighth	Thirty-ninth	Fortieth
1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
4	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
5	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	1
6	1	-	2	1	1	-	2	1
7	3	3	3	2	3	1	1	1
8	5	3	5	5	2	-	2	3
9	5	4	6	8	6	4	5	2
10	12	13	4	4	3	-	1	7
11	15	13	12	8	16	20	12	2
12	2	7	14	7	12	17	15	9
13	2	1	1	4	5	2	10	9
14	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	49	46	48	40	49	46	48	35
<u>Week in which median occurs</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>11</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>11</u>	<u>11</u>	<u>12</u>	<u>11</u>

III. USEFULNESS AND IMPACT OF STATEMENTS
OF PROGRAMME BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

10. Experience during the last two sessions of the General Assembly has shown that the provision of statements of the programme budget implications of draft resolutions may have an impact on the shaping of the final versions of such resolutions. On occasion, the text of a draft resolution introduced in one of the Main Committees has been modified subsequently on the basis of such statements or on the basis of consultations required during their preparation. The resultant modifications typically have served to sharpen the focus or clarify the objective of the request(s) to the Secretary-General contained in the draft resolution. On some occasions, subsequent modifications in the text of a draft resolution generated the need for a revised written statement, while on others an oral statement was sufficient. During the fortieth session, a greater effort was made to include in such statements information about possible reformulation or substitution of already programmed outputs in response to new requests, with satisfactory results. It is expected that this practice will continue.

11. From the managerial perspective, the provision of statements of programme budget implications has been useful as an additional tool for the systematic periodic updating of the programme budget. The improved information base of the programme commitments of the different units for 1985, the entire 1986-1987 biennium and subsequent biennia will facilitate the process of performance reporting.

12. Thus, in the course of the two-year period during which statements of programme budget implications have been provided to the General Assembly, it has become evident that their usefulness and impact extends to the legislative process at the United Nations as well as to the managerial end of the programme planning and budgeting cycle.

13. If the General Assembly agrees with the earlier statement about the satisfactory functioning of the existing policies and procedures and with the above assessment of the general usefulness of the statements of programme budget implications, it may wish to consider the next step that might be taken with regard to the provision of these statements, namely, the extension of the process to other bodies of the United Nations.

14. While the General Assembly limits to itself only the provision of programme implications of draft resolutions in the format prescribed by the guidelines contained in paragraph 7 of its resolution 38/227 A, it should be pointed out that regulation 4.9 of the Regulations Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation calls for the provision of statements of programme budget implications to all bodies of the United Nations. 2/

15. The extension of the process to all bodies of the United Nations at once would not be practical. The number of Secretariat staff involved in the preparation of statements to date has been quite limited. Additional staff members would have to acquire the necessary skills and experience over time. The current status of the

on-line budget information and the telecommunications do not permit sufficiently rapid access to the essential information to deal with an increased volume of statements.

16. At the appropriate time, the Economic and Social Council would be the logical choice for initial extension because of its important status as the principal organ to co-ordinate the economic and social work of the United Nations and the specialized agencies, and because rule 31 of its rules of procedure in fact already calls for preparation by the Secretary-General and provision to the Council of estimates of the programme budget implications for proposals involving the expenditure of the United Nations funds. To date, this rule has been met through the provision of statements of the financial implications of proposals before the Council. These statements address programme implications in a descriptive manner. Given this established practice it would, therefore, be possible to modify the format and emphasis of the financial statements in such a manner as to provide more analysis of the programme implications and thus conform to the format of the statements provided to the General Assembly.

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

17. The General Assembly should continue to receive statements of programme budget implications for draft resolutions in the formats used during its fortieth session.

18. Paragraph 13 (d) of General Assembly decision 34/401 on the rationalization of the procedures and organization of the General Assembly should be modified to read:

"A minimum period of 72 hours should be allowed between the submission and the voting of a proposal involving expenditure in order to allow the Secretary-General to prepare and present the relevant statement of programme budget implications."

Notes

1/ See Official Records of the General Assembly, Fortieth Session, Supplement No. 38 (A/40/38), paras. 411-415 and 697.

2/ ST/SGB/204.
