



SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 15th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. FONTAINE-ORTIZ (Cuba)

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

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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 38: REVIEW OF THE EFFICIENCY OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE AND FINANCIAL FUNCTIONING OF THE UNITED NATIONS; REPORT OF THE GROUP OF HIGH-LEVEL INTERGOVERNMENTAL EXPERTS TO REVIEW THE EFFICIENCY OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE AND FINANCIAL FUNCTIONING OF THE UNITED NATIONS (continued) (A/41/49 and A/41/663)

1. Mr. RUEDAS (Under-Secretary-General for Administration and Management), responding to questions raised in connection with chapters I, II and III of the report, said that the 24 per cent reduction in pre-session documentation for the forty-first session of the General Assembly referred to by the Under-Secretary-General for Conference Services and Special Assignments in his introduction of the item on the pattern of conferences, was largely attributable to stricter implementation of the 24-page rule for Secretariat reports - which represented only 25 per cent of the total volume of documentation for the Assembly. It could also be linked to the reduction in the number of meetings and meeting-generated documentation. If the number of meetings was restored to the pre-1986 level, conference-related documentation could be expected to return to previous levels. Moreover, if Member States did not respond to requests to limit the circulation of communications as official documents and requests for studies, the volume of documentation could not be expected to decrease. There had not been time to determine the volume of documentation generated by each agenda item. In any event that varied from one item to another. The capacity of the Secretariat to process the documentation depended on a number of interrelated factors that included demand at the time of submission, deadlines and number of languages involved. The documents were always issued but sometimes not as quickly as the Secretariat would wish.

2. There were a total of 11,423 posts approved under the regular budget of which 4,288 were Professional and above and 7,135 were General Service. He would provide more information on the link between qualifications and recruitment at a later meeting. The Secretary-General did not agree with the judgement that the qualifications of staff, particularly in the higher categories, were inadequate. While the Secretary-General did not feel that the quality of work in the Secretariat had worsened, he did, however, recognize that there was room for improvement in the structural and other arrangements required to manage the vast array of activities of the Secretariat and was giving particular attention to the possibilities for streamlining, consolidation and better co-ordination.

3. Referring to the question regarding the breakdown of resources by programme, he said that the percentages given in paragraph 6 of the report of the Group of High-level Intergovernmental Experts had not been furnished by the Secretariat and that there were other ways of showing the allocation of resources. In that respect he drew attention to paragraphs 35 and 36 of the Advisory Committee's first report on the programme budget for the biennium 1986-1987 (A/40/7).

4. Turning to recommendation 1, and the request for information concerning the relationship between the Committee on Conferences and various legislative organs,

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and whether that Committee should be the final determining body, he said that it might be helpful to clarify the existing situation with respect to how the draft calendar of conferences was drawn up and the existing relationship between the Committee on Conferences and other organs.

5. In drawing up the draft calendar for the approval of the Committee on Conferences, the Secretariat was guided by three principal elements, namely, specifications of the legislative mandates of individual organs, practical considerations, such as reporting obligations and the need to avoid clashes in the timetable, and legislation governing the pattern of conferences and the drawing up of the draft calendar, the most recent one being resolution 40/243. The Secretariat assumed that the Assembly would retain final authority to approve the calendar of conferences. On that basis it would be possible for the Committee on Conferences, while taking into account the factors he had just mentioned, to investigate the technical aspects of submitting a draft calendar of conferences with a view to making better use of conference facilities and established resources as recommended by the Group of Experts. The legal relationships between the Assembly and the Committee on Conferences or other United Nations organs and between the Committee and those other organs would therefore not change. The Committee would simply be assuming a stronger co-ordinating role but the draft calendar would continue to be prepared by the Secretary-General.

6. The Committee was also mandated to act on behalf of the Assembly in dealing with requests for departures from the approved calendar when the Assembly was not in session and it also advised the Assembly on other matters connected to the optimum apportionment of conference resources. That advisory and consultative role would not be expected to change. He interpreted paragraph (c) of recommendation 1 as a request to the Committee on Conferences to monitor the manner in which the Secretary-General ensured the harmonization of working procedures of conference services rather than to ensure such harmonization to itself.

7. Referring to recommendation 2, and to the request that the Secretariat provide information on the relationship between conferences and meetings on the one hand, and programmes on the other, including percentages of resources allocated to each, he said that out of a net budgetary appropriation of approximately \$1,388 million for 1986-1987, some \$316 million (23 per cent of the net budget) were direct conference-servicing activities such as language services, reproduction of documentation and related services. It did not include such services as sound engineering, security, electricity or the cost of services provided by substantive departments to the meetings. About 15 per cent of the output of those departments enumerated in the 1986-1987 budget related to substantive servicing of the preparation of reports to meetings and conferences. If the number, duration and frequency of meetings and conferences were reduced, there would be a substantial reduction of directly related expenditure.

8. As to whether that reduction could be accomplished without negative programme impact, he said that three major areas warranted careful study. The first concerned the mandates of existing intergovernmental bodies - currently there were

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over 150 standing and semi-permanent bodies on the calendar of conferences. The second concerned the process whereby a subject was reviewed and discussed in more than one intergovernmental body and the third concerned the frequency of meetings. In that connection he pointed out that the Second Committee had established a biennial cycle for bodies reporting to it.

9. Responding to the question relating to recommendation 3 (e) how the Secretariat would scrap a subsidiary body before establishing a new one, he said that the creation or discontinuance of subsidiary organs was a prerogative of the General Assembly. Generally, new subsidiary bodies were created when new activities were envisaged. Normally that should mean that the mandate of the new body would differ substantially from those of existing bodies, although that was not always the case.

10. Numerous questions had been raised in connection with recommendation 5 concerning construction. Whenever there was a need for construction, the Secretary-General submitted to the Advisory Committee a statement of requirements in the manner recommended by the Joint Inspection Unit and the Advisory Committee. If the Advisory Committee's review was positive, a description of the project and an estimate for an architectural and engineering study was submitted through that Committee to the General Assembly. Following the architectural and engineering study, the Secretary-General provided an estimate for the total cost of the project. The General Assembly reviewed that and approved, in principle, a total project cost. At that time the Assembly usually appropriated a first installment to cover the cost during an initial one- or two-year period, the resources thus appropriated being placed in a construction account and the balance being carried forward at the end of each year.

11. With respect to the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, the approved project cost was \$44,177,700; the final design phase had been completed and 41 submissions had been received from construction contractors. Following the resumed fortieth session of the General Assembly, the project had been held in abeyance. If the project was resumed in 1987 the main construction contract, committing the United Nations to the project cost in full would be awarded in July 1987. To date \$22,698,000 had been appropriated, of which \$2,268,000 had been committed. In accordance with the proposal contained in document A/40/1102, \$9 million of the appropriation had been deferred to 1987.

12. Concerning the Economic Commission for Africa, detailed evaluations of the entries for the design competition were under way. If the project was resumed in 1987, a detailed architectural design would be drawn up after a firm was selected and the construction contract could be awarded in 1988. Of an approved total cost of \$73.5 million, \$3,120,000 had been appropriated, of which \$520,000 had been committed to date.

13. Concerning recommendation 6, which related to the reimbursement of travel costs of representatives of Member States attending the General Assembly, he said that if such reimbursements were limited to the 37 least developed countries, the

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average annual cost would be \$425,500 per annum or \$851,000 each biennium. Currently the biennial appropriation for that purpose came to \$3,787,300 although in the past two years the actual cost had been \$2,066,300 as only 134 Member States had exercised their entitlements.

14. Referring to the request made by two delegations for the views of the intergovernmental bodies regarding the recommendation in paragraph 3 (d) of recommendation 8, that the establishment of a single governing body be considered, he said that a decision in almost identical language had been taken by the Assembly in resolution 32/197, annex, paragraph 35. A series of reports had been issued on the implementation of that resolution. According to the latest such report the Assembly had not yet addressed the matter.

15. Concerning recommendations 9 and 10 on co-ordination among agencies of the system and recommendation 61 on staff entitlements, the statement of the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination would be available shortly in document A/41/763.

16. A great many questions had been asked in connection with chapter III. In general terms, the Secretary-General would interpret recommendation 15 as requiring him to undertake a reduction of 15 per cent over three years in the number of regular budget posts, and a reduction of 25 per cent, also over the next three years in the number of posts at the USG and ASG level, and a number of reviews, covering political departments and offices (recommendation 16), departments and programmes in the economic and social area (recommendations 25 and 26), public information (recommendation 37), administration and management (recommendations 30-32), and conference services (recommendation 34). Only after those reviews were completed would the Secretary-General be able to submit clear proposals for change in those areas. The process of reviewing and reducing posts could, however, begin as soon as the Assembly approved the report of the Group of Experts. Reductions could take place but until such time as the Assembly approved any structural changes in the Secretariat, the Secretary-General would need authority to implement reductions with flexibility, within the total level of posts for the Secretariat as a whole. The Secretary-General would also intend to recruit staff at the P-1, P-2 and P-3 levels in the course of 1987 and would not wish to be held to an exact figure or to those three levels alone.

17. The Secretariat was in the process of preparing the programme budget proposals for the biennium 1988-1989 for submission to the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination and the Advisory Committee. Thus the budget was being finalized prior to any decisions which might be taken on the recommendations of the Group of Experts. Given those circumstances and the financial situation of the Organization, the Secretary-General would approach implementation of recommendation 15, if approved, in the following manner: post reductions would be done on a pragmatic basis designed to cause the least possible disruption to programmes and to the lives and rights of the people involved. A final determination of the reductions in 1988 and 1989 could be made only after the full impact of retrenchments in 1987 had been assessed. Reductions would be achieved as

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far as possible through the attrition mechanism. However, that might not be compatible with minimizing disruptions to programmes. If that were to be the case, additional financial costs might be required to achieve the targeted post reductions; mechanisms such as redeployment of staff between programmes and duty stations might also need to be applied. The Secretary-General would need to proceed with flexibility under the provisions of the Charter and the Staff and Financial Regulations and Rules. Some flexibility would be needed to defer or modify approved programmes or to terminate approved activities considered to be of low priority.

18. Referring to a request for a comparison between the 9 political and 11 economic and social departments, centres and offices that currently existed and the situation in 1980, he replied that only one new department - the Department for Disarmament Affairs replacing the Centre for Disarmament - had been created since 1980. In addition the Office for Field Operations and External Support Activities had been established in 1982. The major organizational changes had occurred in the 1970s.

19. Concerning the effect of any reduction in posts on geographical distribution, he said that any reduction in the overall number of posts would certainly imply a reduction in the number of staff in posts subject to geographical distribution which, in turn, would entail a revision of the desirable ranges and the base figures used to calculate them.

20. With regard to the implications of staff reductions for Member States which were unrepresented or underrepresented, and on the principles of equitable geographical distribution and the increased representation of women, an analysis would have to be conducted year by year in co-ordination with the reviews which the Secretary-General would have to undertake if the Assembly approved the report of the Group; the Secretary-General would be guided by the principles mentioned.

21. Recommendation 15 referred not to the number of staff members but to the number of posts; 15 per cent of the current 11,423 posts was 1,713 posts. The average rate of recruitment at levels P-1 to P-3 for the years 1982, 1983 and 1984 had been 176 posts per annum. Attrition over the past six years had been quite uniform, averaging 3 per cent in the Professional category and 3.1 per cent in the General Service category. If the retirement factor was added in, the figures were just over 4 per cent in each case. Between 1983 and 1985 overall vacancy rates for established posts in the regular budget had been on the order of 7.3 to 7.4 per cent. In 1986, because of measures taken by the Secretary-General including a recruitment freeze, the average rate up to the end of August had been 9.4 per cent.

22. A 15 per cent reduction in the number of posts would result, at current costs, in direct savings of approximately \$141 million per biennium; the indirect savings had not been calculated. A 25 per cent reduction in the higher echelons would result in savings of approximately \$3.3 million per biennium on salaries and common staff costs. As to the Joint Staff Pension Fund, if a 15 per cent reduction were

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achieved by attrition, the number of active participants would decline by 1 per cent a year over three years, and the actuarial imbalance would be up to 0.17 per cent of pensionable remuneration, so that the Fund would need additional contributions of up to \$3 million a year.

23. A preliminary review of existing vacancies and projected attrition indicated that it might be possible, at least initially, to maintain recruitment at P-1 to P-3 levels at a rate comparable to the rates occurring in the period 1982-1984, but that would depend in part on the overall reduction of posts and its effects on the reduced career progression of junior and middle-level staff. It might not be possible to maintain the same level of appointments after the first year.

24. In connection with recommendation 17, there were 247 locally recruited and 271 internationally recruited Field Service established posts in UNTSO, UNMOGIP and the Supply Depot in Pisa in the 1986-1987 biennium; that percentage had remained unchanged over the past five years.

25. The responsibility for the dissemination of news and for political analysis within the Secretariat, referred to in recommendation 18, was shared by various departments: the Executive Office of the Secretary-General prepared for him on a weekly basis an extensive compendium of international press and wire service coverage, on a wide range of matters including situations that might threaten the maintenance of international peace and security; the Political Reports Unit of the Office for Field Operational and External Support Activities prepared briefing material regarding developments in the United Nations in the political field for the United Nations information centres; the Department of Public Information sent press cables to the information centres regarding meetings of the General Assembly and the Security Council; the News Service of the Department of Political and Security Council Affairs based its information on news agencies and the daily press and issued daily news bulletins, a daily press review and selected wire service printouts for the use of senior officials and staff in the political departments of the Organization; and the Department of Political Affairs, Trusteeship and Decolonization prepared analyses on developments relevant to its mandate.

26. Expenditure related to Namibia, referred to in recommendation 16, had totalled \$15.6 million in 1984-1985, not including conference-servicing costs; expenditure on Namibia in 1985 had included \$3,046,000 for the Council for Namibia, \$1,055,000 for the Department of Political Affairs, Trusteeship and Decolonization, \$3,056,800 for the Office of the Commissioner for Namibia, \$880,800 for the Department of Public Information and \$102,400 for the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Namibia.

27. Regarding recommendation 21, although the number of Non-Self-Governing Territories had decreased from 33 to 18 in the past 10 years, the mandates and activities of the Council for Namibia, for which the Department of Political Affairs, Trusteeship and Decolonization provided substantive servicing, had gradually expanded over the same period, and the number of meetings, missions, conferences and seminars had increased considerably. The Department had also been

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assigned responsibility for co-operation between the United Nations and the Organization of the Islamic Conference; servicing of the Ad Hoc Committee of the International Conference on Kampuchea; and, especially since 1983, fact-finding and good offices on certain political issues.

28. The questions that had been raised regarding recommendation 24 had to be viewed in the light of other recommendations, including recommendation 23. It was clear that a careful review was needed. The possibility of UNDP taking over responsibility for disaster relief would depend on the outcome of the study proposed in the recommendation.

29. The Secretary-General did not agree with the assessment in paragraph 39 regarding the lack of responsiveness of the offices concerned with research, analysis and operational activities. As to the extent of duplication between the Department of International Economic and Social Affairs and UNCTAD, the activities of those bodies corresponded to the tasks entrusted to them by their respective governing bodies. It should be one of the central purposes of the review of intergovernmental machinery, especially in the economic and social sectors, to undertake a careful analysis of the mandates and activities of those two bodies.

30. On the question of the cost and advantages of further enhancing the authority of the Director-General for Development and International Economic Co-operation, the latter's role and responsibilities as set forth in General Assembly resolution 32/197 and subsequent resolutions, most recently Economic and Social Council resolution 1986/74, were clear, and the Secretary-General believed that no further legislative authority was required. Significant progress had been made in promoting system-wide co-operation in many areas, for example operational activities in general, global programmes and country-level operations. The effective exercise of the Director-General's responsibility for system-wide co-ordination required the support of Member States. Economic and Social Council resolution 1986/74 was a significant step in that direction; thus, no additional costs were envisaged.

31. In connection with recommendation 27, it should be noted that many of the regional projects funded by UNDP were in fact executed by regional commissions; in selecting an executing agency, UNDP applied criteria approved by its Governing Council based mainly on the spheres of competence of the technical agencies of the United Nations system.

32. The budget of ECE, referred to in recommendation 28, did not include any provision for conference services or common services because the United Nations Office at Geneva had an integrated common services support structure which was at the disposal of each of the substantive organizational units located in Geneva, including ECE. That arrangement provided for greater administrative cohesion and achieved economies of scale. In the 1984-1985 programme budget, a very approximate estimate of costs for conference and common services of \$35 million had been made, about two thirds of which had been for conference and library services, but because of its lack of precision, that method had been abandoned when preparing the

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1986-1987 programme budget. However, it would be possible, for information purposes, to apportion the conference-servicing budget of the United Nations Office at Geneva among the different users, including ECF.

33. The Secretary-General interpreted the recommendations of the Group, if approved by the General Assembly, to require him to review and report on a number of issues, including administration and management. The objective of recommendation 30 was a search for greater effectiveness and efficiency, with a view also to a possible reduction in the proportion of administrative costs.

34. In connection with recommendation 32, the difficulties encountered in the past in respect of co-ordination and planning, programming and budgeting had not been insuperable and had been dealt with at the Programme Planning and Budgeting Board (PPBB). The heads of the Office of Financial Services and the Office of Programme Planning and Co-ordination, and also of the respective departments to which they belonged, were members of the PPBB, which was thus constituted so as to permit the coherent resolution of any difficulties of co-ordination in those areas. Future action on merging the budgeting and programme planning functions, if approved by the General Assembly, must be dealt with in the light of the intergovernmental review in those areas.

35. The definition of support activities for liaison functions in recommendation 33 was not entirely clear.

36. In connection with recommendation 34, the cost per page was determined by dividing total costs of internal printing by the total number of pages printed. In 1985 a total of 825 million page impressions had been produced internally in all official languages at an average cost of less than 1 cent per page impression. That output represented 44 million individual documents which had been distributed at an average cost of 8.6 cents per document. Three quarters of all printing costs were for internal printing. External printing was resorted to mainly when the technical requirements of a job exceeded internal capacity, and the average cost was approximately \$21 per typeset page. Occasionally work was performed externally when internal capacity was overloaded, sometimes at a lower cost per page impression, but lead times were usually much longer.

37. The absolute prohibition against the hiring of retired staff members advocated in recommendation 35 might not be in the interest of Member States, since retired staff members often provided specific expertise on temporary assistance in a more effective and less costly manner than could otherwise be obtained, notably in the language services.

38. In connection with recommendation 36, two permanent members of the Security Council occupied a total of 972 square feet in the Secretariat building, free of charge. The Group of 77 occupied a total of 2,160 square feet in the Secretariat building, at a cost of \$10,886 per annum, plus \$1,696 for rental of furniture. Five specialized agencies occupied space in the UNDC I and UNDC II buildings. FAO, IAEA, IMF and WHO paid \$24 per square foot (an amount representing the average

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rental rate paid by the Organization for occupancy in those two buildings). Annual rental income to the Organization amounted to \$243,744. UNESCO was not charged rent for the space it occupied in United Nations buildings by virtue of reciprocal arrangements regarding United Nations space at UNESCO headquarters.

39. Regarding recommendation 38, the total level of expenditure in 1984-1985 for official travel of staff had been \$28.8 million, compared to the budgetary provision of \$27.5 million for the biennium 1986-1987. Economy measures in 1986 had reduced that amount by \$4.5 million.

40. In connection with recommendation 39, while it was theoretically possible for the Internal Audit Division to report directly to the Secretary-General, the advisability of that move would have to be seen in relation to other factors, such as whether the already heavy schedule of the Secretary-General should be burdened by further direct supervisory responsibilities.

41. Mr. FAREED (Pakistan) said that a number of questions that had been raised had not been directly answered. For example, specific comments had been made about the role of the Management Advisory Service in relation to recommendation 31. In connection with the establishment of new units and offices, he wondered whether the Committee on the Development and Utilization of New and Renewable Sources of Energy which had been established after 1982, was a new committee. On the question of the use of space, the Group of 77 occupied office space which was not even serviced by an elevator, so that it could not be assessed at commercial rates. He asked whether in cases where Member States withheld their assessed contributions or changed the level of contributions unilaterally, there was any effect on their desirable ranges. It had been made clear how the overall system of costing worked for the production of documents, but there had been no reference to the relationship between United Nations costing and outside costing regarding the cost per man-hour.

42. Mr. KHALEVINSKI (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) asked how the Secretariat envisaged the problem of the recommended staff reduction in terms of its influence on geographical distribution and the overrepresentation or underrepresentation of Member States.

43. Mr. ODUYEMI (Nigeria) said that the reply to the questions about recommendation 32 had referred to the merger of the budgeting and programme planning functions, whereas the note by the Secretary-General (A/41/663) spoke of co-ordination. He would like an explanation of the distinction. He would also like further comments on recommendation 25, in particular paragraph 3. It seemed to him that if the functions of the Office of the Director-General for Development and International Economic Co-operation were to be reviewed, the outcome should not be prejudged by enhancing the Director-General's authority. Regarding recommendation 19 on the consolidation of activities relating to Namibia, he asked how the Secretary-General intended to approach the problem given the number of areas of competence involved. Lastly, he took it that the replies being given by the Under-Secretary-General for Administration and Management were apart from the detailed proposals referred to by the Secretary-General in paragraph 2 of his note.

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44. Mr. EDON (Benin) asked whether the Secretariat had been consulted when the Group of High-level Intergovernmental Experts had been considering the construction of United Nations conference facilities referred to in recommendation 5.

45. Mr. SEGUIS (Philippines) asked for further details of the way in which the Secretariat intended to approach recommendation 38 on reducing official travel.

46. Mr. IADJOUZI (Algeria) thought that recommendation 5, whereby the construction of United Nations facilities would await the availability of resources, was not consistent with current United Nations budgeting practice. He would like further views on that point both from the Secretariat and from the Group of High-level Intergovernmental Experts. He also wondered whether recommendation 32 was not premature before agreement was reached on the recommendations in chapter VI. In connection with the recommendation that the functions of the Office of the Director-General for Development and International Economic Co-operation (recommendation 25 (3)) should be reviewed, he would like some information on the Director-General's record in fulfilling the terms of his mandate. He would also like to hear the Secretariat's view of the feasibility of recommendation 10.

47. Mr. MUDHO (Kenya) asked whether it would be possible to adjust the representation of Member States in the Secretariat in such a way that each would have "a fair share of the cake" without adversely affecting the efficient functioning of the Organization, or whether the current imbalance was a necessary consequence of the need to employ the best candidate for the job in terms of the requirements of Article 101, paragraph 3, of the Charter.

48. Mrs. LAOHAPHAN (Thailand) asked, in connection with the response to questions about recommendation 5, why the main construction contract for the planned ESCAP facilities could not be awarded before July 1987. She also asked whether the \$9 million of the appropriation that had been deferred could be used immediately or whether it must be approved by ACABQ.

49. Mr. RUEDAS (Under-Secretary-General for Administration and Management) said that he was aware that he had not answered in due detail all the questions that had been asked, in particular those referring to chapter III on the structure of the Secretariat. The main reason for that, as he had stated in general terms in describing how the Secretary-General would approach the implementation of recommendation 15 if approved, was that a clear and convincing basis for action would be needed in the form of the studies that the Group itself recommended that the Secretary-General should undertake. For example, he had not answered the question about the Management Advisory Service, although his view was that the function in that difficult field would have to continue somehow, especially in view of the studies that had been called for. He could not say, as matters now stood, whether the Service should exist as a separate unit and whether it should be part of the Department of Administration and Management. The decision would have to follow the general study of the Department currently in progress.

50. In responding to the question about the creation of new units and departments since 1980, he had assumed that it referred only to major offices. The New and

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Renewable Energy Sources Unit was very small, having less than 10 staff members. Regarding the reference to the space rented to the Group of 77, he confirmed that it had not previously been used for offices.

51. In reply to the question whether the practice of withholding contributions in any way affected the geographical representation of States, he noted that only a reduction in a State's assessment agreed upon by the General Assembly would have such an effect. For the moment, the only sanction against the withholding of contributions was that set out in Article 19 of the Charter. He would provide information at a later stage on the costing of internal as compared with external printing.

52. In answer to the question whether a reduction in staff would have an impact on the number of posts subject to geographical distribution and how the Secretariat intended to take into account the overrepresentation or underrepresentation of specific States, he said that a reduction in staff would not have an immediate effect on the number of such posts. The last significant change in the total of posts subject to geographical distribution had been when a number of posts had been eliminated from the United Nations Secretariat as a result of the conversion of UNIDO into a specialized agency. The overrepresentation or underrepresentation of States was certainly one element that would have to be taken into account in the study required by recommendation 15, but other factors, such as the percentage of women appointed and the way in which individual departments and locations would be affected would also have to be taken into account and a balance found.

53. Recommendation 5 was not sufficiently explicit for him to be able to analyse it technically. The availability of resources in general was a highly political issue and the meaning of "available" in the recommendation would have to be settled by Member States. In his earlier reply he had given an indication of the current practice.

54. He had used the word "merger" in his reply about the co-ordination of the Secretariat units responsible for programme planning and budgeting because the question had been raised in those terms. All his remarks in response to the questions relating to chapter III should be taken as being in the conditional, relative to what might happen if the recommendation were approved, and should not be interpreted as actual proposals. Future action on the budgeting and programme planning functions would have to take account of any change in intergovernmental bodies that resulted from the intergovernmental review of those areas. He would reply in detail to the questions about the Office of the Director-General for Development and International Economic Co-operation for the Committee's next meeting.

55. Regarding the question about recommendation 19 and the consolidation of activities relating to Namibia, he noted that recommendation 16 called for the Secretary-General to carry out a review of all the political departments and offices. He could not say, therefore, how recommendation 19 would be carried out until that study had been completed.

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56. There had been a reference to proposals by the Secretary-General. In paragraph 2 of his note (A/41/663), however, the Secretary-General said that while he expected to submit comments on individual proposals as the Assembly pursued the necessary detailed consideration of the report, he thought it might be useful, at that stage, to make some initial observations of a broader nature. The General Assembly had decided that the recommendations of the Group of High-level Intergovernmental Experts should be discussed initially in plenary meetings, to be followed by a more detailed study in the Fifth Committee. The Fifth Committee had held informal discussions in which a great many questions had been asked. In his own replies, he had commented on the way in which the Secretary-General viewed many of those recommendations, in particular those that affected his prerogatives, such as recommendation 15. The sentence in paragraph 2 should not be interpreted as meaning that definite proposals would be made on a recommendation-by-recommendation basis. Thus, the Secretary-General would make general comments through him (Mr. Ruedas) and, if more details were required, they would be provided as the consideration of the report progressed.

57. In answer to the question whether the Secretariat had been consulted by the Group when recommendation 5 was drafted, he replied that the Secretariat had not been consulted on that recommendation or on any other. The recommendations were the work of the Group of High-level Intergovernmental Experts alone. In his view, the formulation of recommendation 5 did not give the Secretariat enough details to allow it to comment on whether or not it was feasible.

58. Travel was essential to the Organization, with its seven main duty stations and smaller offices throughout the world. The Secretary-General had always sought to limit travel costs as far as possible. The measures already taken had reduced expenditure on travel by some \$4.5 million in 1986, and would produce a total saving of \$23 million for the biennium 1986-1987. While that did not represent a reduction of 20 per cent, as proposed in recommendation 38, it was significant. If the number of meetings was reduced it would clearly be possible to reduce expenditure on travel still further.

59. With regard to the relationship between decentralization and construction, in general any decentralization led to an increased flow of resources to the regional offices. It was not, however, possible to determine an exact correlation. With respect to programme planning and budgeting, any structural changes in the Secretariat would necessarily have to await a decision by the General Assembly.

60. Turning to the question of how the representation of Member States could be adjusted so that all had a "fair share of the cake", the United Nations Charter stressed the importance of efficiency, competence, and integrity, with due regard to geographical distribution, in the recruitment of staff. The fact that some States were underrepresented did not mean that the two considerations were contradictory, but was, rather, a legacy of the way in which the Organization had been constituted in an earlier period. Overrepresentation was partly due to geographical location, in that a majority of the General Service staff were nationals of the host country in question, which tended to affect geographical distribution when movement to the Professional category occurred.

61. Mr. FORAN (Controller) said, with respect to the construction of conference facilities in Bangkok, that following the completion of the design there had been a period in which contractors' bids had been assessed. In the event, the contract had been sought by 41 contractors, of which 6 had been invited to submit detailed bids. On the assumption that the project was resumed in January 1987, it would take until July 1987 for the award of the contract to take place. Only some \$2.3 million of the \$22.7 million appropriated by the General Assembly for the ESCAP construction account had so far been utilized, so that a sufficient amount remained for any work that could be done in 1987.
62. Mr. ROY (India), referring to recommendation 15, asked how much time would be needed by the Secretary-General to prepare the plans in question, and whether they would be submitted to the General Assembly for information or for action. In the latter case, would the Secretary-General consider that his authority had been encroached upon?
63. Mr. LOZA (Egypt) asked, with reference to recommendation 5, whether the use of such resources would be governed by the Financial Regulations, and, if so, whether the Regulations would take priority over a decision by the Assembly to adopt the recommendation.
64. Mr. ODUYEMI (Nigeria) said that it was not clear to his delegation whether the Secretary-General would prepare written comments on individual proposals, irrespective of any observations that might be made in the Committee.
65. Mr. LADJOUZI (Algeria) said that he would welcome confirmation by the Under-Secretary-General for Administration and Management that the Secretariat had been consulted on the recommendation for a reduction in the overall number of regular budget posts of 15 per cent within a period of three years. Concern had been expressed in the Group of Experts at the possibility of arbitrary reductions without any analysis of the needs of Departments. His delegation trusted that the reduction would not adversely affect the Organization's activities, and that reduced staffing would not subsequently be used as a pretext for future difficulties. It would be of interest to know what number of posts became vacant by attrition each year.
66. Mr. TAIHITU (Indonesia) said that there had so far been no response to the proposal made by his delegation that the mandate of the Committee on Conferences should be expanded to cover the Economic and Social Council and its subsidiary organs in addition to General Assembly organs. The view of the Secretariat on that proposal would be welcome.
67. Mr. RUEDAS (Under-Secretary-General for Administration and Management) said, with respect to the timing of any action taken to implement recommendation 15, that the Secretary-General would be able to take some initial steps in 1987 provided that he was allowed adequate flexibility. Proposals for the biennium 1988-1989 would be formulated only after the completion of detailed studies, as recommended by the Group of Experts itself. The exact nature of the Secretary-General's plans for implementation of the recommendation would depend upon the specific conditions

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in each case, so that, for example, if there was a need to restructure the Secretariat, General Assembly approval would be required. There was no reason to suppose that the Secretary-General's authority was being encroached upon in that, as a matter of course, he took those decisions that fell within his competence and requested General Assembly approval of any others. In practice, any plans for implementation in 1987 would have to go before the Assembly at the current session. The Secretary-General would, in any event, comment further on the recommendations, as necessary, as the debate proceeded.

68. As the Secretary-General had informed the staff, any reduction would be achieved, as far as possible, by attrition. In fact, the vacancy rate for 1986 was 9.4 per cent anyway. The question of an expanded mandate for the Committee on Conferences was not within the competence of the Secretariat, but rather of that Committee and the Group of Experts.

69. Mr. FORAN (Controller) said that the wording of recommendation 5, to the effect that construction of conference facilities should only be undertaken when sufficient resources were available, hinted at some confusion between General Assembly appropriations and the actual cash situation of the Organization at any given moment, i.e., between funds appropriated and actual amounts received. The use of such resources would, of course, be subject to the Financial Regulations and Rules. The question of whether a General Assembly decision on recommendation 15 would take precedence over the Regulations could only be answered once the wording of any such decision was known.

70. Miss DURRANT (Jamaica) said that it was essential for the Secretary-General, as the chief administrative officer, to comment on the proposals of the Group of Experts and to provide guidance on the implications of adopting the recommendations.

71. Mr. MUDHO (Kenya) endorsed the comment made by the representative of Jamaica. In particular, his delegation would welcome detailed remarks on recommendation 54.

72. Mr. LADJOUZI (Algeria) said that his delegation wished the Secretary-General to comment on each recommendation, in particular those relating to the staff.

The meeting rose at 6.10 p.m.