



SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 16th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. FONTAINE-ORTIZ (Cuba)

later: Mr. HADWFN (Canada)

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

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.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, 663 and 763; A/C.5/41/25)

1. The CHAIRMAN invited the Under-Secretary-General for Administration and Management to resume his presentation of the Secretariat's observations on the report of the Group of Intergovernmental Experts.

2. Mr. Hadwen (Canada) took the Chair.

3. Mr. RUEDAS (Under-Secretary-General for Administration and Management) said he wished to refer to chapters IV to VIII of the report of the Group of Intergovernmental Experts (A/41/49). With regard to chapter IV, he pointed out that, since the United Nations played the leading role in the United Nations system, even those recommendations which were applicable directly to the United Nations alone would have an impact on the other organizations. Consequently, it was the opinion not only of the Secretary-General but also of the executive heads of the specialized agencies that all the recommendations contained in chapter IV should first be transmitted for review to the one body which the Assembly had established for the regulation and co-ordination of conditions of service, namely the International Civil Service Commission, whose role was accepted by all and which performed its tasks on the basis of the decisions of the governing bodies and also with the participation of those who were governed.

4. The Secretary-General concurred with the views expressed in paragraphs 45 to 49 of the report. As far as the recommendations proper were concerned, he considered that recommendation 41 set objectives which could be supported by all, but which at the same time implied criticism of the management of the Secretariat which was not substantiated by any factual evidence. As far as recruitment was concerned, both the Office of Personnel Services and the advisory appointment bodies were always guided by the provisions of the Charter, but in a political organization, political pressure was perhaps inevitable and it was legitimate for Member States to present candidates for appointment or to seek to ensure that they were adequately represented in the Secretariat. The Secretary-General had always resisted pressure aimed at securing the appointment of individuals who were not the best qualified.

5. The Secretary-General intended to review all the delegations of authority he had made in personnel matters, but the view that all other senior officials should "refrain from influencing the selection of staff" (recommendation 41) disregarded the necessity of co-operation between heads of departments which would employ the candidates recruited and the officials in charge of personnel services, who were responsible for maintaining the standards and guidelines established by the General Assembly.

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6. On the subject of recommendation 42, he said that the fact that a personnel manual had not yet been drawn up and issued was due to the lack of financial resources. The recommendation did not seek to change the substance of the Staff Regulations and Staff Rules but to make them more clear and usable. Therefore, it was best to leave the last sentence of the recommendation for the consideration of the specialized agencies themselves.

7. The Secretary-General was in complete agreement with recommendation 43, which was in no way incompatible with the General Assembly resolution authorizing the introduction, on an experimental basis, of competitive examinations for recruitment to the P-3 level. The impact of such examinations on geographical distribution should be positive. The Secretariat intended to introduce such examinations gradually in 1937 and to report on the matter to the General Assembly. Such examinations would not be limited to unrepresented and underrepresented States alone, but would be conducted as part of a broad rotation plan covering all States.

8. Turning to recommendation 44, he said that, while normal career service entailed entrance at a junior level and progressive promotion, there was always a need in the Organization for fresh expertise at all levels. In addition, there were some Member States which relied almost exclusively on secondment of their nationals to the Secretariat from their national services. The ratio of staff members promoted to the P-4 to D-2 levels to those appointed to those same levels was 1,583 to 431; the figures varied according to whether geographical or language posts were involved. In the case of the former, there had been 377 appointments out of 1,530 posts (or 24.6 per cent); in the case of the latter, there had been 54 appointments out of 484 posts (11.1 per cent). As to the impact of recommendation 44 on the skills level of the staff, he said that the greatest proportion of appointments were already to the P-1 to P-3 levels. Even if the number of appointments to the higher levels was reduced, appointments to the P-1 to P-3 levels would continue on the basis of available vacant posts at those levels, and without reclassification the young Professional staff members thus recruited would naturally aspire to advancement on the basis of the established criteria.

9. In connection with recommendation 45, he pointed out that staff members were currently eligible for a permanent appointment after three years of service, and in some cases even less. But length of service was not the only relevant factor; the nature of the expertise required, the foreseen duration of the functions, the source and expected duration of funding and the wishes of the staff member himself also had to be taken into account. Therefore, no hard and fast rule should be established since the General Assembly had, in resolution 37/126, part IV, paragraph 5, laid down criteria which the Secretariat was, of course, complying with.

10. He drew attention to staff regulation 4.5 (f) and staff rule 104.13 and said that the current practice was to recruit initially on a fixed term appointment; after two or three years of satisfactory service a staff member could be offered a probationary appointment, with the exception of those from overrepresented countries, in respect of whom five years' service was required.

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11. The Secretary-General fully endorsed recommendation 46 concerning improvement in the representation of women in the Secretariat. A number of impediments had been identified, one of which was the fact that, in the past, women had tended to be recruited in service-oriented functions which had a limited number of senior-level posts. The Secretary-General had submitted a report on the subject (A/C.5/40/30), which contained an extensive work programme to be implemented throughout the Organization. He had also appointed a Co-ordinator for the Improvement of the Status of Women in the Secretariat and a high-level Steering Committee for the same purpose. He had accepted the Steering Committee's first set of recommendations.

12. With respect to recommendation 47, the proportion of nationals of developing countries at the higher level had increased steadily over the years. The Secretary-General agreed that that progression should continue.

13. With reference to recommendations 48 and 49, the process of identifying occupational groups had already begun but the need to reconcile various requirements (such as geographical distribution, representation of women, distribution of senior posts and recruitment at the junior level) posed intricate problems of management, particularly at a time of declining resources.

14. With respect to recommendation 50, the present system of performance evaluation emphasized individual competence and qualities of staff members in relation to the functions assigned to them, the only comparative element being the concluding overall rating of the report. On the whole, that system could be improved. Performance evaluation reports were prepared at least once every three years and 95 per cent of staff members were rated "excellent" or "very good". The performance evaluation report was only one of a number of elements considered for the purposes of promotion; it was not easy to identify the specific effect of performance evaluation except when a step increment was withheld because performance was deemed to have been unsatisfactory.

15. With regard to recommendation 51, the Secretary-General was of the view that the existing appointment and promotion process was fair, objective and transparent. He agreed, however, that the system should be restructured on the basis of occupational groups; those groups were currently being constituted. While agreeing with the objective of recommendation 52, the Secretary-General believed that he must retain some flexibility in respect of appointments at the level of Under-Secretary-General and Assistant Secretary-General. With regard to recommendation 53, he had nothing to add to what the Chairman of ICSC had said on 23 October.

16. The Secretary-General noted that recommendation 54 took account of the current situation in the Secretariat. Because of the nature of the posts in question, their occupants were older and therefore did not stay very long. Having said that, the Secretary-General was of the firm opinion that he should have complete authority in regard to the length of service of his senior staff.

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17. With regard to recommendation 55, the provisions of paragraph 3 of resolution 35/210 were strictly observed: no post was considered the exclusive preserve of any State or group of States. The main factors considered in the selection of staff were those set forth in the Charter and the targets set forth by the General Assembly in respect of equitable geographical representation. It might, nevertheless, be necessary to replace one staff member by another who was a national of the same State or group of States. Resolution 35/210 did not prohibit that in the case of Member States whose nationals served primarily on fixed-term contracts. For such Member States there had been a total of 240 appointments and 232 separations between 1981 and 1985. The number of replacements in the same post at the same grade had been 104, which accounted for 43 per cent of appointments and 45 per cent of separations.

18. The Secretary-General was in agreement with recommendation 56. Replying to the question whether it would be practical to implement recommendation 57, Mr. Ruedas recalled that the General Assembly, in its resolution 37/126, had recommended that organizations of the common system "should establish their needs for permanent and fixed-term staff on a continuing basis in conjunction with the human resources planning process, taking into account the criteria considered by the Commission" for that purpose. There had been no determination of any proportion in the United Nations; instead a pragmatic exercise had taken place with the result that, as of 30 June 1986, 63.9 per cent of staff had permanent appointments and 36.1 per cent had fixed-term appointments. It should be noted that a number of States from all regions preferred to release their nationals for service with the Secretariat only on secondment. There were currently approximately 400 staff members on secondment. The Secretary-General did not consider that the type of appointment in any way affected the principle of equitable geographical distribution.

19. The Secretary-General endorsed recommendation 58. Training was an essential part of human resources management; training activities in the Secretariat had been limited by the scarcity of resources. With regard to recommendation 59, the Secretariat had provided the Group with a document giving the overall activities relating to staff-management relations and an estimate of their direct and indirect costs, which amounted to \$1 million per year. The bulk of that estimate related to the cost of time spent by staff members on those activities, which were related not only to Staff Union matters but also to the work of joint bodies established in accordance with the Staff Regulations adopted by the General Assembly. To insist that staff unions or associations should finance all their activities from their own funds would be a step backwards in staff-management relations; moreover, as the Secretary-General was of the view that staff representational activities did not derogate from his managerial prerogatives.

20. With regard to recommendation 60, the Assembly would soon have before it a report setting forth improvements in the appeals procedure. Currently, upon initial appointment each staff member was given a copy of the Staff Regulations and Staff Rules, and all amendments, bulletins, administrative instructions and information circulars, including one on the internal recourse procedure, were

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circulated to all staff members. In addition, a handbook on personnel administration containing all relevant personnel-related issuances and the interpretation and application of staff rules was maintained up to date and was available to all personnel.

21. The Secretary-General had already expressed his views on recommendation 61 in his note to the General Assembly on the report of the Group of Experts (A/41/663). Specifically, he did not believe that the level of the total entitlements of staff should be reduced. The remuneration of Professional staff had been frozen for the past two years. If the Assembly believed that the matter needed further study, it should put the issues, and the reasons for its concern, to ICSC for review and advice.

22. One delegation had asked what savings might accrue if entitlement to annual leave were reduced to four weeks. It could not be assumed that the savings would be equivalent to the full two weeks by which annual leave would thus be reduced. A staff member could carry over unused annual leave from one year to another up to a maximum of 12 weeks. As a result many staff members lost some annual leave at the end of the year. Moreover, on separation from service, staff were paid in lieu of their unused annual leave entitlement, but the rate at which they were paid did not include post adjustment or dependency allowances. The impact of the measure in respect of greater output was also difficult to quantify. In any event the appropriate forum for review of that and of the issue concerning withdrawal of the education grant was ICSC.

23. As recommendation 62 requested, the Secretary-General had always made serious efforts to reduce to a minimum the transfer of extrabudgetary posts to the regular budget. He would continue that policy.

24. In response to a question by one delegation, he said that as of 30 June 1986 the weight of the three factors used to determine each country's desirable range for the geographical distribution of posts had been as follows: contribution factor: 56 per cent; membership factor: 36.8 per cent; population factor: 7.2 per cent. That information was given in the Secretary-General's report on the question (A/C.5/41/6).

25. Turning to chapter V of the report under consideration, the Secretary-General was appreciative of the contribution made by the Joint Inspection Unit to laying the theoretical and methodological foundation for evaluation systems and activities throughout the United Nations system and within the Secretariat. While the Group of 18 had emphasized the need for external evaluation, it had not emphasized the importance of self-evaluation. The need for an internal evaluation system had been stressed by the General Assembly in a number of resolutions, however, in particular, resolutions 32/197, 36/228, 37/234, 38/227, 39/238 and 40/240. Those resolutions had also called for strengthening of the evaluation systems within the Organization. In response to concerns expressed by other intergovernmental bodies, evaluation units had been established in various parts of the Secretariat since the late 1970s. Since then, internal evaluation had gathered momentum, as reflected in

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the number of evaluations at programme level, and their follow-up, undertaken by the Secretariat for review by the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination (CPC) and other intergovernmental bodies concerned. At the same time, evaluation methodologies had been refined under the guidance of CPC.

26. As the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) had itself emphasized, evaluation needed to be an integral part of the decision-making and management process and must therefore be internal. Under the framework of the regulations and rules governing programme planning, the programme aspects of the budget, the monitoring of implementation and the methods of evaluation (General Assembly resolution 37/234), the Secretary-General had developed a system of self-evaluation. The Central Evaluation Unit established in March 1985 had provided guidelines which would continue to be strengthened.

27. With regard to recommendation 67, it had been asked whether expanding the functions of JIU would lead to requests for additional funding. Article 20 of the JIU statute, as adopted by the General Assembly in its resolution 31/192, provided that its budget estimates were to be established by the Secretary-General after consultation with the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination on the basis of proposals made by the Unit. It was therefore for the latter to consider whether the recommendations relating to it would require additional resources. That did not, however, seem to be the case.

28. It must not be forgotten that any change in the statute, procedures or budget of JIU was of interest not only to the United Nations but also to the entire United Nations system. Article 1, paragraph 2, of the statute provided that JIU was responsible to the General Assembly and to the legislative organs of the specialized agencies and other organizations which had accepted its statute. Article 21 provided that any amendments approved by the General Assembly were subject to acceptance by participant organizations and article 22 established a procedure for withdrawal of acceptance.

29. Concerning chapter VI of the report, he recalled that two delegations and the Chairman of the Fifth Committee had asked what the Group of Experts had meant when it had said that the Organization's budget was high. For purposes of comparison, they had asked what the 1946 budget, calculated in current dollars and taking inflation into account, had been and what percentage had been devoted in 1946, by comparison with the present budget, to staff costs. In 1946, the Organization's annual budget had been approximately \$20 million. The programme budget for the biennium 1986-1987 was almost \$700 million. At 1986 rates, the 1946 budget would be approximately \$100 million. In 1946, 55 per cent of expenditures had been devoted to salaries and common staff costs. In 1986, those items represented approximately 75 per cent of the budget.

30. More specific details had been requested concerning the formulation of the budget in terms of programmes, the preparation of budget programme performance reports and the calculation of costs. The bulk of the programme budget was presented in the form of programmes. In political activities, administration and

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conference servicing, however, the programmatic approach was new and required refinement. Concerning budget performance evaluation, the final report for the biennium contained data calculated on the basis of actual performance for the first 18 months of the biennium and estimates for the last 6 months. Cost calculations included provisions for inflation and currency fluctuations.

31. One delegation had asked for a brief summary of the programme planning and programme budget processes in other organizations of the system, with an indication of their advantages and disadvantages by comparison with the procedures applied in the United Nations. In 1983, in his report to the General Assembly on the administrative and budgetary co-ordination of the United Nations with the specialized agencies and the International Atomic Energy Agency (A/38/515), the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions had addressed that issue. Its conclusions had been the following: (a) in some agencies, programming and budgeting were carried out by different offices, while in others they were carried out by one unit. In addition, the level at which responsibility for those functions was placed varied from one organization to another; (b) the manner in which agencies performed those functions varied greatly, demonstrating that organizational mechanisms should be tailored to the needs of the specific organization. It could therefore be said, as the Advisory Committee had pointed out, that the structure of an organization was a function of its programmes, rather than the reverse; (c) while the Advisory Committee had not weighed the advantages and disadvantages of each method, it had concluded that the harmonization of programming and budgeting arrangement was not necessarily a desirable or even a feasible goal.

32. One delegation had asked whether it was true, as stated in the report of the Group of 18, that the medium-term plan was not taken seriously into consideration when the programme budget was being prepared, whether the plan was in fact presented almost as a final document which Member States could not modify and whether the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination played only a minor role in its examination. The formulation of the medium-term plan and the programme budget was governed by two sets of regulations adopted by the General Assembly, namely the Financial Regulations and the Regulations governing programme planning annexed to resolution 37/234. It should be noted that the current medium-term plan did not conform entirely to the latter Regulations, which had been adopted by the General Assembly in the same year as the plan itself. Those Regulations would of course be applied when the next medium-term plan was formulated. The structure of the budget was derived from that of the plan. As required by programme planning regulation 3.2, the objectives and strategies of the plan were derived from the policy orientations and goals set by intergovernmental organs and reflected Member States' priorities as set out in legislation adopted by functional and regional intergovernmental bodies and by the General Assembly. The plan was presented in draft form to sectoral, functional and regional organs prior to its presentation in final form, through CPC, to the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly as required by programme planning regulations 3.4 and 3.13. As a result, Member States did have an input into its formulation, a process which took the better part of two years.

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33. The Committee for Programme and Co-ordination was actively involved in the review of both the medium-term plan and the proposed programme budget. It advised the Assembly on the programmes which should be accepted, curtailed, reformulated or rejected in accordance with regulation 3.14. In conformity with regulations 3.16 and 3.17, it made proposals to the Assembly on priorities for both the medium-term plan and the programme budget. It was responsible, under regulation 4.2, for checking that programme proposals in the proposed programme budget were in conformity with the strategy laid down in the medium-term plan.

34. Two delegations had asked about involving Member States earlier in the budget process. He wished to point out that participation by Member States began with the consideration and adoption of the medium-term plan. Member States were represented in a number of governing bodies, commissions, councils and related intergovernmental machinery whose deliberations had a direct bearing on the shape and size of the Organization's budget. Member States could, of course, become involved earlier in the budget process, perhaps in the year preceding the issuance of the budget instructions, by giving their views on the desirable extent of budgetary growth and the assignment of relative priorities. Such an arrangement would not in any way increase the burden on the Secretariat.

35. One delegation had asked how, specifically, the Secretariat expected Member States to oversee the planning and budget process as mentioned in paragraph 68 of the Group's report, which said it was important to ensure that Member States took part throughout the process. Their involvement would be threefold: overseeing the preparation of the proposed programme budget; indicating the resources likely to be available; and establishing priorities.

36. Clearly the consultation process described above (intergovernmental bodies, CPC, ACABQ) gave Member States plenty of opportunity to oversee the compilation of the proposed programme budget. If one added that the plans and programmes presented in the budget derived from resolutions and decisions adopted by Member States, it was undeniable that States determined the programmatic content of the Organization's plans and budgets.

37. On the question of the funds available, it was clear that Member States had the option of indicating to the Secretary-General, through a decision or resolution, or by any other means, the volume of resources on which he should base his assumptions.

38. Regarding, finally, priority setting, the rules and regulations recently introduced provided for Member States to exercise their legislative authority at the subprogramme level during consideration of the next draft medium-term plan. The priorities thus established would govern the formulation of the following three proposed programme budgets. CPC, for its part, would continue to review priorities at the programme element level. The Fifth Committee might perhaps wish to take into consideration, in that context, the recommendations formulated by CPC at its twenty-sixth session.

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39. One delegation had asked if the Secretariat knew of programmes which should have been terminated as obsolete or of marginal usefulness. Another had asked if the Secretary-General's budgetary guidelines required programme managers in the Secretariat to indicate obsolete and marginal activities. That was, indeed, the case, as required by programme planning regulation 4.6. The Secretariat was no more interested than Member States in devoting its scarce resources to unproductive programmes or activities.

40. Four delegations had asked about total annual or biennial supplementary expenditure over the past 5 or 10 years. Another had asked to what extent "unexpected events" in recent years had resulted in budgetary "add-ons", which intergovernmental bodies had produced the requests for additional resources, and what kind of activities the resources had been devoted to. The replies to those questions would be supplied in a long informal document containing information on that subject and other information on budgetary add-ons.

41. He had been asked how other United Nations bodies went about revising their budgets to take account of supplementary requirements; whether they had contingency funds, and, if so, how those funds were used and what percentage of the budget they represented. Information on that subject had been compiled from a dozen specialized agencies. It could be made available to interested delegations but, most of it had already been presented to the Committee by the Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions.

42. One delegation had asked the Secretariat to indicate the types of activities covered by the 24.9 per cent of the budget devoted to administrative costs, in particular, the proportion of that amount which related to staff salaries, and the number of staff employed, by country, throughout the common system as of 30 June 1986.

43. As he did not know how the proportions indicated in paragraph 6 of the Group's report had been calculated, it was difficult to comment on that matter. Section 28 of the budget (Administration and management) accounted for 19.3 per cent of the gross proposed programme budget for the biennium 1986-1987, or 23 per cent if staff assessment was excluded. Expenditure under that section also included general operating costs for the United Nations offices in New York, Geneva, Vienna and Nairobi. For the biennium 1984-1985, staff salaries and other costs had amounted to 54 per cent of actual expenditure, and operating costs to 38 per cent. The remaining 8 per cent had gone on supplies and materials, furniture, equipment and other expenses (including 0.6 per cent for travel). Data on staff throughout the common system would be provided in a separate paper.

44. It had been asked whether the Fifth Committee could, instead of adopting a decision on the financial implications of each individual resolution, adopt a decision in the context of the programme budget as a whole, keeping in mind programme priorities as defined in the medium-term plan. It was true that a consolidated statement was being prepared in the case of conference-servicing costs, and that was a method that could be used as a model in other areas, such as

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public information. However, the advantages of doing so were not immediately clear. Several years earlier, the Secretariat had considered presenting to the Assembly at each session a "mini-budget", in which the financial implications of all decisions or resolutions would be presented as a whole at the end of the session. It had been felt at the time, however, that that would delay the Assembly's work considerably, since no decision could be taken until the review of the "mini-budget" had been completed. That was because, under the Assembly's rules of procedure, no resolution with financial implications could be put to a vote without a report from the Fifth Committee. The process would therefore considerably lengthen the negotiations that took place in the case of each draft resolution. The "mini-budget" procedure did offer the advantage of improving the information given to the Assembly. However, at the past two sessions such more detailed information on the programme implications of draft resolutions had meant that the Assembly had received considerably more detailed information. Obviously, there was no reason not to look into the procedure's advantages and disadvantages further.

45. One delegation had asked what the Secretary-General planned to do in connection with recommendation 69. If recommendation 69 and the recommendations to which it referred were adopted, the Secretary-General would submit the required progress report to the General Assembly in May 1987. He would submit to the Assembly his plan of action for the recommendations that were yet to be implemented, together with an indication of what had already been achieved.

46. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) endorsed the comments made by the Under-Secretary-General for Administration and Management and confirmed that, contrary to the impression created by paragraph 66 of the report of the Group of High-level Intergovernmental Experts, Member States participated closely in planning and drawing up the Organization's programme of work.

47. The Advisory Committee was itself closely involved in that process. Rule 103.5 of the Rules Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, the monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation stipulated that the medium-term plan proposals for substantive departments were to be submitted to the General Assembly through the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination (CPC) and the Advisory Committee, that the medium-term plan proposals for common services were to be submitted to the General Assembly through the Advisory Committee and that the medium-term plan proposals for conference services were to be submitted to the General Assembly through the Committee on Conferences and the Advisory Committee.

48. Mr. RAHMAN (Bangladesh), referring to recommendation 56, said that, according to the Under-Secretary-General, the average number of vacant posts had been 9.4 per cent in 1985. He wondered whether an endeavour would be made to fill the posts in question merely because they had become vacant or whether the work-load in the organizational unit in which the posts were located would be examined first of all. He would like to know whether, if the Secretariat decided that such-and-such a post should be filled without delay, it considered the position of the underrepresented countries as a matter of priority in all cases.

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49. Mr. ODUYEMI (Nigeria) said that he wished to know to what extent the Secretariat endorsed recommendation 63 and what the Secretariat's views were on recommendations 66 to 68.

50. On the subject of recommendation 46, which - to be exact - dealt with the position of women at the higher levels of the Secretariat, his delegation would appreciate a reply to the question it had asked earlier and would like to know what additional measures the Secretary-General intended to adopt in order to deal with the problem in question.

51. With regard to recommendation 47 - the purpose of which was to ensure that the developing countries were duly represented at senior levels - to judge by what the Under-Secretary-General had said, considerable progress had been made in recent years. The progress in question was normal, so to speak, and there were a number of doubts about the quantitative progress made. He wondered, for example, how many new staff members were appointed to posts with responsibility or authority. It would be interesting to have an analysis of the breakdown, by category, of the nationals of developing countries, particularly African countries. Various indicators suggested that the level of representation of the countries in question had not improved.

52. His delegation noted, moreover, that some posts appeared to be set aside for certain countries - for example, the posts of the Controller and the Under-Secretary-General for Administration and Management. It was in order to deal with that problem that the intergovernmental experts had made recommendation 55. In that connection, it would be interesting to have an analysis by country of retirements and separations.

53. On the question of the calculation of the desirable number of posts per country, his delegation wished to know what had become of the study on the integration of the population factor into the desirable-ranges equation.

54. Mr. KHALEVINSKIY (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that his country had always voiced reservations about the competitive recruitment system, which was precisely what recommendation 43 dealt with. The Under-Secretary-General had indicated that an endeavour was thus being made to remedy the problem of the underrepresentation of some countries at the Secretariat. It might be asked whether the method to which he was referring had the disadvantage of exacerbating the situation where the overrepresented countries were concerned. That was an important question, since a considerable number of new staff members were recruited by competitive examination.

55. The competitive examinations were currently held only in English and French, which unquestionably gave the nationals of some countries an advantage. Candidates from other countries seldom had an opportunity to sit a competitive examination in their mother tongue, which was an obvious handicap.

56. His delegation would like to know what the financial implications of the competitive examinations held by the United Nations were. For example, it might be

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asked how much it cost to hold a competitive examination for a dozen or 15 or so candidates. Moreover, it might be concluded that, if no candidates were ultimately selected, the whole exercise was actually a waste of resources.

57. Mr. MELTKE (German Democratic Republic), also referring to recommendation 43, said that he would like to know the ratio of candidates who were actually appointed to P-1/P-2 posts to candidates admitted to the competitive examination - for example, over the past four years.

58. Ms. MUSTONEN (Finland) said that the Under-Secretary-General had not replied to her questions on section VII of the report under consideration.

59. Mr. TOMMO MONTHE (Cameroon) said that he was satisfied by the Under-Secretary-General's clarifications concerning the participation of Member States in the programme planning and budgeting process. It was clear that Member States had a decisive role to play in the process. It was tempting to conclude that the comments of the Group of Experts on the point were without foundation.

60. In that connection, the Under-Secretary-General had stressed the firm view of the Secretariat that Member States should participate in planning and budgeting, should establish the priorities to guide the Secretariat and should provide an indication of the available resources. Further, regulation 3.3 of the Regulations Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation (ST/SGB/204) specified that after adoption by the General Assembly, the medium-term plan gave "an indicative estimate of the necessary resources". Programme planning rule 103.3 went much further, since, in paragraphs (i), (j) and (k), it provided that the objectives and strategy should encompass all activities proposed within a subprogramme, that the medium-term plan should include estimates by stating alternative growth assumptions and that subprogrammes to be financed from extrabudgetary resources should be so indicated. In terms of regulations, the Secretariat should thus have an indication of the required resources and, subsequently, be in a position to make various projections, indicating which seemed the most realistic.

61. The Group of High-level Intergovernmental Experts proposed that certain organs should adopt a biennial cycle of meetings, while, on the other hand, insisting that Member States should participate to a greater extent in planning and budgeting. Therein lay a contradiction, which could be solved only by establishing ad hoc organs, a solution which would necessarily have major financial implications.

62. In response to questions by the delegation of Nigeria, the Under-Secretary-General had explained the measures that the Secretariat intended to take to implement certain recommendations. With regard to the other recommendations, were members to understand that it was for the Committee to adopt them forthwith and leave it to the Secretary-General to see to their implementation, or was the Committee itself to be provided with the necessary technical information, which it would then transmit to the Secretary-General?

63. Mr. MUDHO (Kenya) asked for clarification of recommendation 41. The General Assembly had already adopted three resolutions relating specifically to the question of the selection of staff, and it seemed that the Secretary-General had not taken any follow-up action since the Group of Experts had deemed it useful to raise the matter once again.

64. With regard to efforts to improve geographical balance in the Secretariat, his delegation wished to know whether, in its recruitment activities, the Secretariat had previously come across qualified candidates who had been unable to accept an appointment as a result of a decision by their own Government. If that had indeed occurred, it would be inappropriate for the Member States in question to complain that they were underrepresented. Conversely, had the Secretariat offered posts to underrepresented countries but been unable to appoint nationals of such countries because there were no qualified candidates?

65. Finally, referring to the informal paper circulated by the Secretariat in response to questions raised by the delegation of Burundi on 21 October 1986, he wished to be informed of the progress made over the past 10 years, for example, in ensuring equitable representation of developing countries in senior posts. The paper made no distinction between the various levels of Professional staff, whereas it would be of great interest to have the breakdown by country of posts at the D-2 level and above.

66. Mr. TAKASU (Japan) said that it was his understanding that the Secretary-General would welcome greater involvement on the part of Member States in the process of budgeting and planning. Member States could intervene at the stage of determining the programme aspects of budget elements, a procedure which required no further development; at the stage of additional resources or "add-ons" requested during the biennium; and finally, at the stage of determining priorities for major programmes. In connection with the latter point, the current Regulations provided that budget priorities should be established in the medium-term plan. It should, however, be noted that the Regulations and Rules issued by the Secretary-General postdated the adoption of the current medium-term plan. That was why the plan contained no estimate of resources but merely gave indicative estimates. The plan covered six years, and the question arose whether the estimates in it should not be revised every two years.

67. Under the Regulations the Secretary-General was to provide an idea of the budget for major programmes, which he did in an annex to the introduction to the proposed programme budget. Member States could thus intervene, once the proposed programme budget had been drawn up, either through the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, or through the Fifth Committee, or in plenary meeting.

68. The Secretary-General was of the view that it would not be possible to submit, in the form of a "mini-budget", a consolidated statement of the administrative and financial implications of the resolutions adopted by the General Assembly during a session. According to the Secretary-General, the Assembly could not adopt any decision without having previously approved the potential financial implications.

(Mr. Takasu, Japan)

The argument seemed ill-founded in that the General Assembly already proceeded in that manner for conference-servicing costs: it did not seem that that had ever prevented the timely adoption by the Assembly of the resolutions it deemed appropriate.

69. Mr. SEGUIE (Philippines) asked what savings the Secretariat would achieve if recommendation 61 was implemented. Referring to recommendation 67, he requested clarification as to the nature of the co-operation between the Joint Inspection Unit and the External Auditors which was to be increased.

70. Mr. ABOLY (Côte d'Ivoire) said that he awaited with great interest the Secretariat's replies to the questions put by Nigeria, particularly with regard to recommendation 47. His delegation wished to know whether any progress had been made in improving the position of the underrepresented countries.

71. Mr. LADJOUZI (Algeria) said that his delegation, which had many questions to raise and wished to do so meaningfully, would await the distribution of the written text of the very detailed statement just made by the Under-Secretary-General.

72. Mr. RUEDAS (Under-Secretary-General for Administration and Management) said that some of the questions that had been asked were related to various items on the Committee's agenda and would therefore receive a detailed reply when those items were considered. In addition, some of the information requested would be found in documents that had already been or were about to be distributed (reports on the composition of the Secretariat, improving the status of women, etc.).

73. In reply to the question of Bangladesh, he explained that, in principle, when a post was vacant, a part of the work programme could not be carried out; nevertheless, the post would be filled only if it was regarded as essential and the Secretariat would then try to find a candidate from an unrepresented, or, failing that, an underrepresented country. In response to the justified anxiety expressed by Nigeria, which was reflected in recommendation 47, he gave some examples of high-level posts which had been held successively by representatives of developing and developed countries.

74. On recommendation 55, he said that the Secretariat would provide the additional statistics requested by Nigeria and the Committee would have occasion in the course of its work to examine a report on that topic. Regarding recommendations 41 and 54 referred to by the representative of Kenya, he said that it was the intention of the Secretary-General, who had delegated authority for some matters, to review the existing situation in that regard in order to eliminate any conflict or confusion which might exist; in addition, he thought it essential that he should have a free hand in appointing Under-Secretaries-General and Assistant Secretaries-General. Regarding the question put by the representative of the German Democratic Republic, he said that the relevant statistics would be provided at a later date, as would the figures requested by the Philippines in connection with recommendation 61. In connection with the informal paper circulated in reply to a question from Burundi, he explained that a breakdown of the data by

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(Mr. Ruedas)

administrative grade had not been possible because they covered all the organizations in the common system, but that as far as the United Nations was concerned, additional information would be found in the report on the composition of the Secretariat.

75. In reply to the question of Nigeria on recommendations 63, 66 and 67, he said that he had tried to avoid making any value judgement on the report of the Group, while at the same time making the Secretariat's position clear. On the subject of planning, he noted that the most recent medium-term plan had been drawn up before the entry into force of the relevant regulations and rules. At its twenty-sixth session, the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination had also formulated recommendations in that respect. States Members now possessed a mechanism which would enable them to play a role in the planning process, a mechanism that was still being improved.

76. In reply to the representative of Japan, he recalled that the possibility of drawing up a consolidated statement of requests for budgetary add-ons, similar to the consolidated statement of conference-servicing costs, had already been considered a few years ago, but had appeared to be very difficult. The establishment by Member States of an order of priority among the elements of the "mini-budget" would take a great deal of time, given that the operation would no longer be confined to a single section of the budget but would involve several sections.

77. Turning to the comment of the Philippines on recommendation 67, he explained that the Joint Inspection Unit and the Board of Auditors met every year and that it was for those two organs, which were directly responsible to the General Assembly, to consider what action to take on the recommendation.

78. He believed that he had already replied to the questions of the Finnish delegation, but recalled, in connection with chapter VII of the report, that the Secretary-General would submit the progress report requested by 1 May 1987. The Secretary-General had already appointed a Co-ordinator who was responsible for studying the possibilities of applying the Group's recommendations.

79. In view of the importance of the points raised by the Cameroonian delegation, he asked for time to reflect so as to be able to reply adequately to the questions that had been asked.

80. Mr. NEGRE (Assistant Secretary-General for Personnel Services), replying to the representative of the Soviet Union, said that, as in the case of posts at the P-1 and P-2 levels, competitive examinations for recruitment to the P-3 level would be held in rotation and in accordance with the provisions of resolution 35/210. The examination papers themselves would consist of questions in the two working languages (French and English), but candidates could answer the three written papers in any of the six official languages. However, the Secretariat would encourage them to use one of the two working languages for the paper testing drafting ability, because knowledge of one of those two languages was essential. The figures for the cost of the examinations, which had already been provided to the Group of Experts, would be communicated to Member States at a later stage.

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81. Mr. GOMEZ (Assistant Secretary-General for Programme Planning and Co-ordination), referring to the comments of the representatives of Cameroon and Japan, said that replying to the Japanese delegation would involve a personal judgement. He would confine himself, therefore, to recalling that there was necessarily a gap between theory and practice, particularly since the current medium-term plan had been approved by the General Assembly in the same year as the regulations governing programme planning. That explained why neither the plan nor the revisions to the plan gave any estimate of expenditure at major programme level. For the same reason, there was no indication of the order of priorities, either at the major programme or programme element levels. However, priorities had been defined in the two budgets adopted subsequently. The report of CPC provided some useful information in that connection. Lastly, the annex to the programme budget included estimates for major programmes.

82. The procedures adopted were based on two premises: first, that the States Members were one unit; and, second, that the Secretariat was a single body. The real state of affairs was quite different. The Secretariat was composed of subsidiary bodies which, for historic, geographical and other reasons, had relatively rigid calendars of activities that were sometimes incompatible with strict application of the rules in force. A case in point was ECLAC, whose programme of activities did not necessarily take into account the Secretary-General's latest budget instructions, since the biennial meeting of the Commission took place three months before those instructions were issued. He emphasized that the existing procedure gave Member States an opportunity to state their points of view and recalled that the estimates in the medium-term plan could be reviewed every two years when the programme budget proposals were drawn up.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.