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PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 1986-1987

Revised estimates under section 2A: News Service of the Department of Political and Security Council Affairs

Report of the Secretary-General

1. Under the terms of General Assembly resolution 40/252 XI, it was decided to maintain for 1986 the current staffing resources of the News Service of the Department of Political and Security Council Affairs pending consideration by the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination (CPC) and the General Assembly of the report by the Secretary-General on the evaluation of the News Service. Consequently, the 1986-1987 appropriations cover the salary and common staff costs of the core staff of that Service for 1986 only. The report of the Secretary-General on the evaluation of the News Service 1/ was issued on 9 May 1986 and reviewed by CPC at its twenty-sixth session. In its report, CPC noted, inter alia, that the Secretary-General was to provide a document on the staffing of the News Service to the General Assembly at its forty-first session and requested the Secretary-General to take into account the conclusions and recommendations of the Committee in formulating his report.

2. In the light of the conclusions and recommendations of CPC, the outputs of the News Service have been modified as follows:

- (a) The number of daily press bulletins has been reduced from four to three;
- (b) The circulation of news clippings and the weekly news summary by the News Service have been discontinued;
- (c) The distribution of United Nations information centres' reports by the News Service has been discontinued.

3. With regard to the circulation of raw wire-service printouts, while due consideration was given to the CPC recommendation that the circulation be limited to twice a day plus ad hoc circulation, it has been decided to increase it as recommended by the evaluation team of the Administrative Management Service (AMS), which had concluded that it was the most valuable output of the News Service. It has been felt that the need for timely and detailed news reports by the substantive political departments precludes such a limitation as that recommended by CPC.
4. In order to widen the scope of the daily press review, four major daily newspapers have been added to the list of papers being reviewed, without any resulting increase in staff allocation, thus making the review more widely based and timely. In light of these changes, the daily press review has been found useful and relevant.
5. With these modifications, it is proposed that the News Service function be continued in the Department of Political and Security Council Affairs as recommended in the evaluation report. 2/ The activities of the News Service of the Department would, of course, be kept under review and would be included in any review resulting from the consideration by the General Assembly of the recommendations of the Group of High-level Intergovernmental Experts.
6. Given the work-load estimates contained in paragraphs 46, 47 and 48 of the evaluation report prepared by AMS, the proposed outputs can be delivered by the original core of seven staff members working in the Section for Co-ordination and Political Information in the Office of the Under-Secretary-General for Political and Security Council Affairs (1 P-4, 1 P-3, 1 P-2 and 4 General Service posts, one of which at the principal level) under the general supervision and guidance of the Office of the Under-Secretary-General for the Department.
7. On that basis, the staff who had previously been on temporary loan to the Section for Co-ordination and Political Information in connection with the functions performed by the News Service (1 D-1, 1 P-4, 2 P-2 and 2 General Service) have been redeployed to their offices of origin.
8. Should the General Assembly decide to maintain in 1987 the activities of the News Service as recommended in paragraph 5 above, an additional appropriation of \$288,600 would be required under section 2A, Political and Security Council Affairs, of the programme budget for 1986-1987 to cover salaries and common staff costs of seven staff of the Section for Co-ordination and Political Information assigned to the News Service (1 P-4, 1 P-3, 1 P-2, 1 G-5 and 3 G-4). An amount of \$71,000 would also be required under section 31, Staff assessment. It would be offset by income in the same amount under income section 1.

Notes

1/ A/41/328.

2/ Ibid., part IV, recommendation 1.