



SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 37th 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 10.05 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 112: FINANCIAL EMERGENCY OF THE UNITED NATIONS (A/C.5/41/24)

1. Mr. FORAN (Controller), introducing the report of the Secretary-General, pointed out that it did not contain proposed solutions but a simple statement of the Organization's financial standing. That standing, long critical, had turned into a real financial crisis, for the Organization was financially on the brink of bankruptcy. There had admittedly been a reduction, estimated at \$3.2 million, in the overall short-term deficit between 1985 and 1986 because two Member States had paid all, and four other Member States part, of the sums they had previously withheld from their assessed contributions, and because three Member States had made voluntary contributions to the Special Account. On the other hand, there had also been an increase in aggregate unpaid (withheld and overdue) contributions to the regular budget, which were expected to rise from \$242 million at the beginning of 1986 to \$284 million at the beginning of 1987, markedly more than the Organization's reserves.

2. By November 1986 only 68 Member States had paid their contributions in full. Of the 91 Member States that were behind in their contributions, 42 owed an amount greater than their assessed contribution for 1986, 8 owed an equal amount and 41 owed less. In such circumstances it was essential for all Member States to pay their contributions on time and make an effort to pay all or part of their arrears as quickly as possible. Member States also had a duty to make voluntary contributions to the Special Account in order to help the Organization to overcome its grave bankroll difficulties. Ultimately Member States must shoulder the responsibility, individually and collectively, of finding a solution to the Organization's financial emergency.

3. Mr. MAJOLI (Italy) suggested that agenda items 112 and 140, which, he believed, were based on the same data, should be taken up at the same time.

4. The CHAIRMAN said that at the resumed fortieth session delegations had expressly requested separate consideration of the two items. Furthermore, item 112 had been referred to the Fifth Committee, but item 140 was to be discussed in plenary meetings of the General Assembly and the Fifth Committee would discuss only certain technical aspects.

5. Mr. HADWEN (Canada) pointed out that during the discussion of the scale of assessments, the Committee's attention had been drawn to an idea adopted by other organizations for recovering arrears. That idea might be reflected in any decision the Committee might take on the item under discussion.

AGENDA ITEM 117: PERSONNEL QUESTIONS (continued)

6. Mr. NEGRE (Assistant Secretary-General for Personnel Services) said that at the current session the Fifth Committee was considering personnel questions in the broader context of the report of the Group of High-level Intergovernmental Experts. In any event, Member States had shown undiminished interest in personnel questions, among which geographical distribution took pride of place.

/...

(Mr. Nègre)

7. Regarding the adverse effects on the composition of the Secretariat of the conversion of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) into a specialized agency and the recruitment freeze, he said that the departure of the UNIDO staff was, by definition, a one-off event; it had, moreover, shown up the concentrations of certain nationalities at each duty station, which explained why the representatives of States in the European region had been the most concerned. The question of the recruitment freeze, on the other hand, was of concern to most delegations. Unfortunately, the Organization's financial circumstances made it necessary to continue the freeze even in the case of successful candidates from examinations who had not been appointed before the recruitment freeze in 1986. As soon as the financial position improved, the Secretary-General would make it a priority to remedy that unfortunate situation.

8. The Fifth Committee was proposing to defer consideration of a number of documents submitted to it, such as those on the establishment of an office of ombudsman, the system of desirable ranges for geographical distribution of staff, and the situation of General Service staff. Even so, it must take up the report on amendments to the Staff Rules at the current session so that the changes which were to come into force on 1 January 1987 could be seen to have the clear approval of the General Assembly.

9. On the subject of privileges and immunities, all delegations and the Secretary-General agreed on the importance of ensuring the security of international civil servants, and such unanimity should make it possible to ensure that the problem would not arise in future. As for improving the status of women in the Secretariat, he believed that, in that case, good will would not suffice: the practical efforts of staff, heads of offices and departments and Member States would be needed if real progress was to be made.

10. Mrs. PULIDO DE BRICENO (Co-ordinator for the Improvement of the Status of Women) welcomed the support expressed by a wide variety of delegations for the action programme, saying she felt the time was ripe for concrete action to improve the status of women in the Secretariat. The aim of the action programme was not, as the representative of the Ukrainian SSR feared, to create an additional, parallel structure: the co-ordinator was intended to be a temporary position whose purpose was to intervene in a non-hierarchical manner so as to solve a problem which could not be resolved along traditional lines. The task of the Co-ordinator was quite specific: to bring the structure of the Organization into line with the times, the political wishes of Member States and changes in society.

11. Some of the decisions taken by the Secretary-General on the basis of the Steering Committee's report had been questioned. The United States representative had asked whether the proposed exceptions to benefit women, however necessary, were compatible with the Charter, but the real question was whether the absence of women from the decision-making process in the United Nations was compatible with the Charter. Article 8 of the Charter must guide the Organization's actions, and the special measures to benefit women were no more discriminatory than those intended to secure more equitable geographical representation.

(Mrs. Pulido de Briceño)

12. On the question of promotions, raised by the representative of Australia, any promotion applied to improve the status of women in the Secretariat must, to begin with, be warranted by the abilities of the staff member concerned. In fact, the aim of the exercise was, using promotions warranted by personal ability, to restore a balance between the lengths of service required for male and female staff to obtain promotions.

13. Some delegations, such as those of the United Kingdom and Canada, had expressed concern at the gap between the conceptual progress made in terms of policies and the absence of tangible advances that could be measured statistically. Could one, specifically, expect to attain the goals set before 1990 in the light of the financial crisis and the recruitment freeze? By all accounts, women were such a minority that the only way to improve their status was to recruit more of them. There were already 298 women on P-4 posts, 87 on P-5 posts and 21 on D-1 posts. On that basis, greater political will would enable noteworthy results to be achieved.

14. On the subject of training, the Organization's resources were very limited, but its existing staff could perhaps supply the expertise which, for lack of means, the United Nations could not obtain outside. Training was not concerned only with transmitting theoretical concepts, but also with sharing know-how that could be put into daily use.

15. The most important part of the action programme was the identification, not of the problems which arose, but of the lessons that could be learned from them. By gathering detailed data, by department, on promotion patterns, mobility, seniority and career opportunities for women in the Secretariat, it would be possible to introduce the concept of accountability based on measurable yardsticks for progress. As the vacancy announcement system was expanded, and as career paths were clarified, women would be able to compete on merit in an open system. Success could nevertheless not be ensured without agreement between Member States, the Secretariat and the staff.

16. Mr. LADJOUI (Algeria) said he hoped that the difficulties encountered by the many delegations represented by a single member at the current session could be overcome in the future. It was extremely difficult for them to make a useful contribution to the work of the Committee in current circumstances. He therefore hoped that his remarks on personnel questions would be taken into consideration in the relevant informal consultations.

17. It was essential for concrete measures to be taken to strengthen the authority of the Office of Personnel Services. Such strengthening was necessary if the functioning of the Organization was to be improved.

18. The status of women in the Secretariat remained unacceptable. The United Nations was founded on principles, respect for which should lead to harmonious relations between States and between men and women. The action programme for the improvement of the status of women adopted in 1985 was beginning to bear fruit, and

(Mr. Ladjouzi, Algeria)

new measures should be adopted to correct the situation. With the full support of his delegation, the Third Committee had endorsed a programme to co-ordinate and monitor the implementation of the decisions of the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women, and the Fifth Committee might include that programme in the medium-term plan. It was to be regretted that the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination had linked that programme with another, controversial, programme.

19. The developing countries were also the victims of discrimination with regard to the composition of the Secretariat where the majority of States were not represented in a manner in keeping with their majority status.

20. With regard to the system of desirable ranges for the geographical distribution of staff in the Professional category and above (A/C.5/41/6), he recalled that, in its resolution 35/210, the General Assembly had endorsed the concept of parity between the membership and contribution factors. To give undue weight to the latter factor was undemocratic. On the other hand, his delegation was not opposed to greater weight being given to the population factor, one that the General Assembly, at its fortieth session had decided to take into account, together with all relevant factors, in reviewing the system of desirable ranges. It was nevertheless opposed to adopting an unsound solution in the course of that review. In its view, desirable ranges were a negation of the prerogatives of the Secretary-General in matters relating to staff and recruitment.

21. In general, his delegation supported the job classification of the General Service and related categories but would like the Chairman of ACABQ to give some indication of the technical reasons for the special treatment of jobs at the G-7 level.

22. It was to be regretted that the International Civil Service Commission and the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Board had made contradictory recommendations with regard to pensions when the General Assembly had requested them to co-ordinate their positions. It was most desirable that they should present a joint position at the next session.

23. Mr. HADWEN (Canada), referring to the last sentence of paragraph 4 of the report of the Secretary-General on the composition of the Secretariat (A/41/627), asked for a breakdown, by sex, by unrepresented and underrepresented countries and by level, of those candidates whose recruitment had been deferred. He would also like to know how many appointments to senior level posts there had been during the period from 1 July 1985 to 30 June 1986, both before and after the suspension of recruitment in March 1986.

24. The CHAIRMAN, speaking on behalf of the members of the Committee, paid tribute to the great modesty and dedication of Mr. Nègre, who would shortly be leaving the Organization, and thanked him for the support he had always provided the Committee.

25. Mr. BANOUM (Cameroon), speaking on behalf of the Group of African States, also paid tribute to Mr. Nègre. He was a credit to Africa and Africa had every right to be proud of him.

AGENDA ITEM 115: PATTERN OF CONFERENCES: REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON CONFERENCES (A/41/32 and Corr.1; A/C.5/41/L.9 and L.10)

26. The CHAIRMAN called attention to the four draft resolutions contained in the report of the Committee on Conferences (A/41/32, para. 1). Draft resolution A concerned the report of that Committee and the pattern of conferences for 1987; draft resolution B was entitled "Renewal of the mandate of the Committee on Conferences"; draft resolution C, entitled "Improved utilization of conference-servicing resources", included an annex containing guidelines for the dispatch of planning missions in respect of meetings and conferences held away from United Nations Headquarters locations; and draft resolution D dealt with the control and limitation of documentation. The Committee also had before it in document A/C.5/41/L.10, which had been presented by the Chairman following informal consultations, amendments to the draft resolutions recommended by the Committee on Conferences in paragraph 1 of its report. Those amendments included that submitted by the Soviet Union in document A/C.5/41/L.9, as further amended following informal consultations.

27. Mr. BARADANOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) announced that, since the amendment submitted by it in document A/C.5/41/L.9 had been incorporated into document A/C.5/41/L.10, his delegation would support the new text.

28. Miss RAIOLA (Argentina) said that her delegation found it impossible to participate in all informal meetings and was unable to give its approval to agreements reached at meetings which had not been announced in the Journal of the United Nations.

29. The CHAIRMAN said that the proposal before the Committee had been presented by him following consultations with delegations in accordance with normal procedures.

30. The amendments to the draft resolutions recommended by the Committee on Conferences in paragraph 1 of its report (A/41/32), as contained in document A/C.5/41/L.10, were adopted without objection.

31. Draft resolution A, draft resolutions B and C as amended by document A/C.5/41/L.10, and draft resolution D, contained in paragraph 1 of the report of the Committee on Conferences, were adopted without objection.

32. Mr. HARAN (Israel) said that he found it difficult to understand how the Committee could approve the calendar of conferences for 1987 when no decision had yet been taken with regard to the sessions of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development and the Economic and Social Council.

33. The CHAIRMAN said that, at its previous meeting, the Committee had decided to take a decision on the pattern of conferences, it being understood that the relevant agenda item would not be closed to further consideration. Furthermore, under the terms of paragraph 3 of draft resolution A, which had just been adopted, the General Assembly would authorize the Committee on Conferences to make adjustments in the calendar of conferences for 1987 that might become necessary as a result of action and decisions by the General Assembly at its forty-first session.

34. Mr. HERIJANTO (Indonesia) said that, as a member of the Committee on Conferences, Indonesia fully supported the draft resolutions just adopted. His delegation nevertheless reaffirmed the pressing need to strengthen and expand the mandate of the Committee on Conferences, as recommended by the Group of High-level Intergovernmental Experts to Review the Efficiency of the Administrative and Financial Functioning of the United Nations. That would help to rationalize the utilization of conference-servicing resources. The effectiveness of the Committee on Conferences would be enhanced if it was to become a subsidiary organ of the Economic and Social Council and could determine its calendar of conferences. The Committee on Conferences should consider that question at its 1987 sessions.

35. Mr. MUDHO (Kenya) said that his delegation would prefer the Committee's decision with regard to the pattern of conferences to be final unless, of course, the General Assembly should decide otherwise.

The meeting rose at 11.50 a.m.