



SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 43rd MEETING

Chairman: Mr. FONTAINE-ORTIZ (Cuba)

later: Mr. NTAKIBIRORA (Burundi)

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

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SECRETARY-GENERAL (continued)

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The meeting was called to order at 4 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 140: CURRENT FINANCIAL CRISIS OF THE UNITED NATIONS: REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (continued) (A/41/850 and 901; A/C.5/41/61; A/C.5/41/CRP.3)

1. Mr. KAMAL (Pakistan) noted that, according to the Controller, discontinuing the supply of drinking water to conference rooms would save \$40,000 to \$50,000 in 1986 rather than \$100,000. His delegation wished to know what had happened to the staff members who had been employed in supplying water, and whether the water supply to senior officials in their offices had been discontinued. The Fifth Committee should inform the General Assembly of the financial implications of the draft decision adopted by the Second Committee.
2. Mr. VAN DEN HOUT (Netherlands) said that his delegation strongly favoured the early involvement of CPC and ACABQ in the consideration of the economy measures proposed by the Secretary-General. His delegation could accept the mechanism for consultations proposed by the Secretary-General, on condition that any programme modifications made by programme managers were in accordance with the programme objectives set out in the medium-term plan, as provided for under the programme planning regulations.
3. Reference was made in document A/C.5/41/CRP.3 to measures taken by the Secretariat to achieve a more even spread of meetings throughout the year so as to optimize the use of regular staff and minimize the need for temporary assistance. In that connection, he wished to know whether such an approach was envisaged for the intergovernmental and expert bodies referred to in paragraph 1 (m). Further, it would be of interest to know whether the Office for Programme Planning and Co-ordination recognized the importance of the meetings of the Commission on Human Rights and of records coverage of those meetings to the human rights programme, and whether adoption of the provisions of paragraph 1 (m) would represent a change of strategy. If that proved to be the case, the Secretary-General would require the approval of an intergovernmental organ for the implementation of the measures.
4. Mr. NGAIZA (United Republic of Tanzania) said that he wished to know how the Secretary-General intended to consult the Preparatory Commission for the International Sea-Bed Authority over the change of venue from Kingston to New York for the meetings referred to in paragraph 1 (g) of document A/C.5/41/CRP.3. If the Secretary-General intended to contact the Preparatory Commission there would inevitably be financial implications, since it would have to meet expressly for that purpose. His delegation endorsed the remarks made by the representative of China concerning the construction of conference facilities at ESCAP. Similar considerations applied to ECA.
5. Mr. KHALEVINSKIY (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that his delegation objected to the recruitment freeze since it would lead to changes in geographical distribution. If it continued, some Member States would no longer be represented in the Secretariat, a situation which should be avoided.

(Mr. Khalevinskiy, USSR)

6. His delegation wished to propose consideration of various alternative economy measures. In particular, it would be of interest to know how much would be saved if promotions were frozen, if plans to update computer equipment were shelved, if procurement of furniture was reduced to a minimum, if efforts were made to reduce expenditure on telephone calls, if the number of consultants was reduced, if all business class travel was replaced by economy class and if external training programmes were reduced to a minimum. While such measures would, individually, bring only modest savings, taken together they would lead to substantial economies.

7. In a similar vein, no exceptions to the staff rules that would have financial implications should be authorized. His delegation supported the Secretariat proposal to reduce representation and hospitality allowances by a half, and wished to know what savings would accrue if they were eliminated. With regard to the comments on language services made by the Under-Secretary-General for Administration and Management, it should be noted that the use of permanent staff rather than temporary assistance could result in savings. In particular, the recruitment of temporary staff in Geneva had led to excessive expenditure. Over time a number of posts had been transferred from extrabudgetary funding to the regular budget. Savings would clearly result if the posts in question were once again funded from extrabudgetary resources. Lastly, in connection with the supply of drinking water, while the saving might be small, all economies were welcome in view of the difficult situation faced by the Organization.

8. Mr. TROUVEROY (Belgium) said that his delegation would have difficulty in accepting the proposals contained in paragraph 1 (m) of document A/C.5/41/CRP.3. It was not clear what the 30 per cent reduction actually referred to, while clarification was needed of the implications for the Commission on Human Rights and its subsidiary organs. Further, acceptance of the proposals on summary records contained in the conference room paper would amount to silencing the United Nations system in the area of human rights, since none of the four principal organs dealing with human rights would be provided with summary records. Although there was a need for economy, it was futile to hold meetings of which there was no official record. For example, there would be no point in continuing the system whereby special rapporteurs drafted reports on various human rights issues, if there was no record of the debate on their findings. A global, rather than a piecemeal approach should be taken to economy measures.

9. Mr. KHAN (Saudi Arabia) said that there was a serious inconsistency between the provisions of draft resolution D contained in document A/41/933 and document A/C.5/41/CRP.3 in respect of the list of bodies entitled to receive summary records. The Ad Hoc Committee on the Indian Ocean, the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, the Special Committee against Apartheid and the United Nations Council for Namibia had been omitted from the list contained in paragraph 4 of document A/C.5/41/CRP.3, despite the great importance of their work. His delegation proposed that the four bodies should be included in the list, and requested an explanation of why they had been omitted in the first place.

10. Mr. HADWEN (Canada) noted that it would be wrong to eliminate summary records from meetings of human rights bodies across the board. Without records, those meetings would cease to be of value. The Fifth Committee should seek to avoid damage to programmes which had been accorded high priority by the Third and other Committees. Human rights programmes, after all, accounted for a very small fraction of the budget.

11. Mr. BARNETT (Jamaica), referring to paragraph 1 (g) of document A/C.5/41/CRP.3, said that the Preparatory Commission for the International Sea-Bed Authority and for the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea normally held its regular session in Kingston. The dates for the 1987 session had already been fixed by the appropriate intergovernmental bodies. The General Assembly had not been requested to solve the financial crisis by rewriting the Convention on the Law of the Sea. Ten years of negotiations had led to the establishment of the seat of the International Sea-bed Authority in Jamaica, not New York. Jamaica, in accordance with its obligations toward the United Nations, had undertaken specific commitments in connection with the meeting of the Preparatory Commission. It therefore did not hold the view that the Preparatory Commission should perform its work in New York. Earlier in the day, Jamaica had suggested that paragraph 1 (g) should be deleted or rephrased.

12. The United Republic of Tanzania and Jamaica had also requested clarification on the Secretariat's authority to take decisions which fell within the purview of intergovernmental bodies. Moreover, the status of document A/C.5/41/CRP.3 should be defined. It was still unclear whether that document was to be submitted to the General Assembly for approval, or whether it was merely a conference room paper for the use of the Fifth Committee. Finally, a resolution on the pattern of conferences, adopted by the General Assembly that very day, already contained a decision on the venue of the Preparatory Commission's session.

13. Mr. NTAKIBIRORA (Burundi) expressed his delegation's concern over the recruitment freeze, a point the Soviet representative had already raised. Burundi was equally concerned over the proposed limitation of documentation. Elimination of summary records would seriously hamper the work of the United Nations Council for Namibia and the Special Committee against Apartheid - and all for the sake of realizing totally insignificant savings. As Colombia had mentioned, it might be possible to continue to provide summary record coverage for those two bodies by taking economy measures in other areas. Burundi was a member of the Council for Namibia and feared that a reduction in funds could actually render it politically ineffective. Along with Jamaica, Burundi hoped that document A/C.5/41/CRP.3 was intended only for the Fifth Committee, and not for the entire General Assembly.

14. Mr. MURRAY (United Kingdom) suggested that if the Disarmament Commission met for three weeks, instead of four, it might be possible to provide it with full conference services (document A/C.5/41/CRP.3, para. 1 (h)). Referring to paragraph 1 (m), he expressed the hope that the 30 per cent cut would be applied selectively, rather than across the board. In particular, bodies which had been disproportionately affected by economy measures in 1986 should be spared in 1987. The human rights bodies were a case in point.

(Mr. Murray, United Kingdom)

15. It was not clear that there were any historical, or practical grounds for the continued provision of verbatim records to the First Committee (para. 3 (a)). Like other delegations, the United Kingdom believed that summary records were indispensable for the meetings of human rights bodies. Indeed, it would not be fitting for delegations to be willing to spend more on their drinking water and other creature comforts when \$85 million might be slashed from vital United Nations programmes.

16. Mr. GITSOV (Bulgaria) said verbatim records had been provided to the Disarmament Commission since its inception. Verbatim records, so important to the processes of compromise and consensus within the Commission, should be restored for its plenary meetings. The cost would not be significant, as the number of plenary meetings would be limited in number.

17. Mr. MICHALSKI (United States of America) said his delegation was also concerned that human rights activities might be adversely affected by reductions in conference services. It was out of place for the United Nations to propose economy measures for the Preparatory Commission, for it had no authority in the matter. Very few savings measures had been suggested to offset the provision of drinking water in the conference rooms. It was certainly to be hoped that water would not be restored at the expense of more worthwhile United Nations activities.

18. Mr. INZKO (Austria) said that like the delegations of the Netherlands, Belgium, Australia and Denmark, Austria had serious reservations about curtailment of services to human rights bodies. Austria also hoped that limitations would not be placed on travel by Special Rapporteurs on human rights issues.

19. Mr. HOLBORN (Federal Republic of Germany) said his delegation shared the concern of others over proposed cuts in services to human rights bodies. The problem of drinking water in conference rooms could hardly be considered a serious subject of debate in the Fifth Committee. Economy measures in that area could easily be approved, and delegates could still drink water without being served.

20. Mr. TELLE (France) cautioned against across-the-board cuts in all United Nations services. The important work of the Organization's human rights bodies could be paralysed by a 30 per cent cut in conference services. Paragraph 5 of document A/C.5/41/CRP.3 should be reconsidered in that light.

21. Mr. MAJOLI (Italy) urged against strict application of economy measures to human rights bodies. Italy hoped that the Human Rights Committee, in particular, would not be deprived of summary records.

22. Mr. AL-MASRI (Syrian Arab Republic) said the resolution on the pattern of conferences, adopted by the General Assembly that afternoon, provided for continued summary record coverage for the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, the Special Committee against Apartheid and the United Nations Council for Namibia. Those three bodies, however, were not mentioned in document A/C.5/41/CRP.3. He would appreciate clarification on whether they would, in fact, receive summary records under the General Assembly resolution.

23. The CHAIRMAN, replying to a number of questions on the status of document A/C.5/41/CRP.3, said it was a conference room paper which explained paragraph 8 of document A/41/901, and was to be read in that context.

24. Mr. FORAN (Controller), replying to the representatives of Pakistan and the Soviet Union, said that draft decision A/C.5/41/61 on drinking water in conference rooms had no financial implications per se. The economy measures being discussed had already been included in the budget. However, if water were reinstated, the Organization would forgo a savings of \$100,000. In reply to Pakistan's question, the three staff members who had been responsible for providing water had been redeployed in other areas. No staff member had been terminated under economy measures. Instead, two additional temporary staff members had not been recruited, as planned, for the General Assembly. The provision of drinking water to senior Secretariat officials had been discontinued even before it was discontinued in the conference rooms.

25. He would provide detailed answers to the Soviet representative's questions at a later stage, but wished to point out that of the \$85 million-worth of economy measures which the Secretary-General expected to apply in 1987, the largest single element by far was the recruitment freeze which, if continued, would result in an estimated saving of \$32 million. Continued deferment of the two major construction projects would save a further \$9 million. The remaining \$41 million which the Secretary-General planned to save would come from a variety of steps, many of which the Soviet representative, too, was now suggesting. Total planned savings for 1987 amounted to \$82 million, but the Administration was hoping to repeat the experience of 1986, when the economy measures had in fact yielded a little more than expected.

26. Mr. SCHLAFF (Office for Programme Planning and Co-ordination), replying to a question from the representative of the Netherlands at the previous meeting, said that the first consideration in revising the calendar of conferences had been to provide an even spread of work for the permanent staff in the Department of Conference Services so that they would be fully employed throughout the year. That way supplementary staff could be kept to a minimum. Thus, the Intergovernmental Committee on Science and Technology for Development normally met in June when, because of other meeting commitments, it had to be serviced largely with temporary assistance paid for out of the corresponding funds. By moving the meeting to a different period of the year, the Administration hoped to be able to service it with permanent staff. Similarly, if the UNCITRAL Working Group on International Negotiable Instruments had met in Vienna, most of the conference staff would have had to be temporary; in New York, at a period of low meeting activity, permanent staff could be used and temporary assistance funds saved. At other duty stations the situation was different because for much of the year they relied on temporary assistance funds anyway, and the savings from rescheduling meetings would therefore be less. Reducing the number of freelance staff recruited would still bring savings, however, because when large numbers were recruited the local markets were exhausted and a greater number of temporary staff had to be paid travel costs and subsistence allowances.

(Mr. Schlaff)

27. According to the Rules and Regulations governing Programme Planning, the substantive servicing of intergovernmental bodies and the reports of those bodies were regarded as programme outputs, as were publications, grants and fellowships; meetings records were not. Summary and verbatim records were considered part of the servicing of an intergovernmental body, and reducing record coverage would not, therefore, be considered a reduction in a substantive programme. The Secretariat would of course comply to the greatest extent possible with all decisions and recommendations of the General Assembly. Any reformulation of programmes would be inconsistent with the Rules and Regulations governing Programme Planning and the objectives of the medium-term plan and the programme budget.

28. The representatives of Saudi Arabia and the Syrian Arab Republic had asked why four of the bodies which, according to a resolution just adopted by the General Assembly, were supposed to have summary record coverage had been omitted from the list of such bodies given in document A/C.5/41/CRP.3. He pointed out that the list presented in that document was to all intents and purposes identical with that submitted to the General Assembly at its resumed fortieth session, when the Secretary-General had proposed economy measures to contain the financial crisis. As at that time, the reason that three other subsidiary bodies were still to be provided with summary records was that they were all treaty-making bodies, and the records of their meetings were a necessary feature of the legislative process.

29. The Bulgarian representative had asked whether it would be possible to restore verbatim record coverage for the Disarmament Commission. The answer was that it would, of course, be possible, but the Secretariat would then have to find savings in some other area. The scheduled session of the Disarmament Commission overlapped with that of the Trusteeship Council, which was entitled to verbatim records; to provide coverage for the Disarmament Commission as well, therefore, the Secretariat would have to recruit temporary staff.

30. Concluding, he assured the Committee that, on the basis of the recommendations of CPC, the Secretariat had been asked to report on the impact of the economy measures through CPC to the General Assembly.

31. Mr. NGAIZA (United Republic of Tanzania), returning to the question of drinking water, pointed out that the Chairman and officers of the Committee were provided with water in the conference room. He asked what financial implications were associated with the decision to give the officers of the Committee a service denied to delegations.

32. The CHAIRMAN, remarking that the Committee had a great many other weighty matters to deal with, said that water was provided on the podium because the officials there were not able to leave their seats and collect water from the back of the room.

33. Mr. NGAIZA (United Republic of Tanzania) said it had been agreed the previous day that the Second Committee's proposal to restore drinking water to the conference rooms should be discussed by the Fifth Committee. Accordingly, any observation made in the Fifth Committee on that matter was important.

34. Mr. FIGUEIRA (Brazil) asked whether the expression "I shall proceed on this basis unless the General Assembly should direct otherwise", in paragraph 5 of document A/41/901 could be interpreted to mean that the Secretary-General would go ahead with his proposed measures even if the General Assembly did not give him the authority to do so.
35. Mr. AL-MASRI (Syrian Arab Republic), on the subject of summary record coverage, said that his delegation was aware of the measures taken by the General Assembly at its resumed fortieth session. The Assembly was now, however, in its forty-first session and, in accordance with a resolution on the pattern of conferences just adopted, the Secretary-General was supposed to provide summary record coverage for seven subsidiary bodies. The resolution should be regarded as a specific direction to the Secretary-General within the meaning of paragraph 5 of document A/41/901. His delegation hoped that summary record coverage would be resumed for the bodies concerned, in view of their extreme importance.
36. Mr. MURRAY (Trinidad and Tobago) asked for clarification: if a resolution of the General Assembly authorizing meetings of the Preparatory Commission for the International Sea-Bed Authority in Jamaica did not constitute a direction to the Secretary-General to proceed otherwise than he proposed, what did?
37. Mr. KHAN (Saudi Arabia) endorsed the point just made by the Syrian representative, and called on the Secretariat to make a clear statement of its intentions.
38. Mr. BARNETT (Jamaica), noting the reply given to the Tanzanian representative, reminded the Administration that his delegation had that morning called for the deletion of paragraph 1 (g) from document A/C.5/41/CRP.3. He hoped that that point would be borne in mind when the Administration approached the Secretary-General about the best way of consulting the competent intergovernmental bodies on his proposals.
39. Mr. GITSOV (Bulgaria) said that the sessions of the Trusteeship Council and the Disarmament Commission overlapped by only one week. He could hardly believe there would be any problem in arranging verbatim coverage of the Commission for that one week, or that the cost would be significant.
40. Mr. MILLS-LUTTERODT (Ghana) asked whether the Secretariat had considered curtailing the television coverage of plenary meetings of the General Assembly as a means of saving money.
41. Mr. MUDHO said that his point in raising the question of drinking water in the conference rooms had been that the Fifth Committee could not simply relay to the General Assembly a proposal referred to it from the Second Committee without indicating what the financial implications of the proposal might be. The Secretariat had now indicated the administrative and financial implications of the proposal: he hoped that the matter could finally be laid to rest.



42. Mr. KAMAL (Pakistan) drew attention once again to the discrepancies between the resolution on the pattern of conferences just adopted by the General Assembly and paragraph 4 of document A/C.5/41/CRP.3. Those discrepancies must be rectified and summary records provided for the additional subsidiary bodies concerned.
43. Mr. LADJOUZI (Nigeria) asked for clarification of the statement in paragraph 2 of document A/C.5/41/CRP.43, that "the Secretary-General is of the view that economy measures adopted ... for 1986 should continue to apply in 1987 with the minimum adjustment." He wondered whether that meant that the Secretary-General was reluctant to carry out the resolution just adopted by the General Assembly.
44. Mr. FORAN (Controller), replying to the Ghanaian representative's question, said that the idea of suspending television coverage of the General Assembly had been considered but rejected. The television cameras in the plenary meetings served several purposes. First, they provided closed-circuit coverage throughout the building, in particular to the press corps in New York to cover the General Assembly. Turning them off would reduce the amount of information available on what the General Assembly did. In addition, the United Nations did generate a little income from the service, for local television stations on occasion bought footage of the debates. Most important, the General Assembly was the supreme body of the United Nations and television coverage afforded another kind of historical record to supplement the verbatim records.
45. Mr. SCHLAFF (Office for Programme Planning and Co-ordination) said, in response to the point made by the Bulgarian representative, that providing verbatim record coverage of the Disarmament Commission for one week out of temporary assistance would cost a minimum of \$150,000 before typing services were taken into account.
46. Mr. RUEDAS (Under-Secretary-General for Administration and Management) remarked that a number of delegations had pointed to inconsistencies between the proposals made by the Secretary-General in document A/C.5/41/CRP.3 and decisions just taken by the General Assembly, asking how paragraph 5 of that conference room paper was to be interpreted. In his view, the important thing was the interpretation which the General Assembly would put upon that paragraph when it considered the document in connection with the related report of the Fifth Committee.
47. As earlier in the year, the Secretary-General found that he was not able to carry out everything the General Assembly had requested for want of funds. In that sense, the present situation was no different from that of April 1986. In April, however, the General Assembly had not been in session and the Secretary-General had been proposing cuts in measures approved some months previously. Now, when the Assembly's decisions were so recent, the conflict seemed more dramatic. In the light of the financial crisis, the Assembly had to decide whether its entire programme of work should be maintained as originally stipulated, or cut. The decisions it was passing did not always take the Organization's current financial circumstances into account.

(Mr. Ruedas)

48. As he understood it, the Committee would transmit a report to the General Assembly containing the clarifications on item 140 which it was required to provide. One of the clarifications to be included in that report would be the fact that the proposal to restrict the number of bodies receiving summary records conflicted with a decision which the General Assembly had already taken. It would then be up to the Assembly itself to take a final decision.

49. Mr. KAMAL (Pakistan) said that the Committee had been asked to examine the draft decision on drinking water in conference rooms contained in document A/C.5/41/61 and to submit its findings to the General Assembly. He therefore requested a detailed breakdown of the \$100,000 which represented the annual cost of supplying drinking water in conference rooms. The provision of drinking water should not call for three full-time employees, and he wished to know the total man-hours involved in the operation. In addition, he inquired who was serving water on the podium, and at what cost. What had been the cost of providing drinking water prior to April or May 1986, when that service had been discontinued in all conference rooms?

50. Mr. MAJOLI (Italy) said that the Organization should consider new ways to increase its income, and he suggested that a series of open-air concerts should be held in summer in the United Nations garden. The General Assembly could consider that suggestion at its forty-second session.

51. Mr. Ntakibirora (Burundi) took the Chair.

52. Mr. KHAN (Saudi Arabia) said that the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, the United Nations Council for Namibia, the Special Committee against Apartheid and the Ad Hoc Committee on the Indian Ocean - which all dealt with important substantive issues - should not continue to be singled out to lose their entitlement to summary record coverage. There were other bodies for which summary records might also be suspended, and perhaps it would only be fair to alternate the suspension of summary records between those bodies for which summary records had been provided during the last session and those bodies which had not. The technical inconsistency between the decision which the General Assembly had taken that afternoon and paragraph 4 of document A/C.5/41/CRP.3 should be clearly reflected in the Fifth Committee's report to the Assembly. In addition, the Committee should request the Assembly to implement the decision which it had taken that afternoon by recommending that the four bodies in question should be included among those entitled to summary records.

53. Mr. LADJOUZI (Algeria) said that the report of the Fifth Committee should clearly indicate that what the Secretariat had proposed in paragraph 1(a) of document A/C.5/41/CRP.3 was not feasible, and that the Committee was not prepared to accept any limitations on the duration of the forty-second session. Nor should the Committee accept what had been proposed in paragraph 1(k) of that document, since such matters were exclusively within the competence of the Council for Namibia and the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People. His delegation requested a more convincing explanation of

(Mr. Ladjouzi, Algeria)

paragraph 2 of A/C.5/41/CRP.3, since the Secretary-General was not entitled to take actions which ran counter to General Assembly decisions.

54. Mr. AL-NASRI (Syria) said that the decision which the General Assembly had taken that afternoon was completely in accordance with paragraph 5 of document A/41/901. The Secretary-General would proceed on a certain basis unless the Assembly directed otherwise, and that was exactly what had happened. The Secretary-General was therefore obliged to implement the Assembly's decision.

55. Mr. MAKTARI (Yemen) said that, while the Secretariat had decided that some bodies should not be provided with summary records, the General Assembly had in its decisions clearly approved the provision of summary records for those bodies. A legal opinion should be sought on the relevant Assembly decisions.

56. Mr. MUDHO (Kenya) said that his delegation was struck by what appeared to be a singular lack of appreciation for the very good work being conducted by the Secretary-General in difficult conditions. The Secretary-General had not proposed any cancellations of conferences or meetings, or any extension of the economy measures beyond 1987. With regard to the change of venues of conferences and meetings, in particular those held at Headquarters, he had tried to avoid a high concentration of such activities during certain periods, since that would necessitate the hiring of temporary assistance. In short, the Secretary-General had proposed a way in which all scheduled meetings could be held at the lowest possible cost.

57. Kenya understood the concern expressed over the suspension of summary records for certain bodies. However, the fact remained that the provision of summary records would have to be reduced until resources became available, and Member States should suggest measures which the Secretary-General might take. It would be very helpful if the Secretariat could inform the Committee as soon as possible what savings would be made by implementing the reductions in the 12 or so areas indicated by the representative of the USSR. The Secretariat should also consider the reductions suggested by other members of the Committee at the 42nd and the current meeting.

58. Mr. ODUYEMI (Nigeria) asked what had been the Secretariat's criteria in deciding to continue the provision of summary records for the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space and its Legal Sub-Committee while suspending summary records for the Special Committee against Apartheid and the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People. He considered that committees dealing with controversial topics should not be denied summary records.

59. Mrs. EMERSON (Portugal) supported the statement of the representative of Kenya. The Committee had taken action with regard to the pattern of conferences with the awareness that some of the programmes would be affected by the financial crisis, and the General Assembly had taken a final decision. Given the current situation, there did not seem to be any other way for the Secretary-General to proceed.

(Mrs. Emerson, Portugal)

60. As a gesture of solidarity with the Secretary-General, her delegation proposed that the Fifth Committee should decide to take no action on the draft decision entitled "Drinking water in conference rooms" contained in document A/C.5/41/61.

61. Mr. RUEDAS (Under-Secretary-General for Administration and Management) said that the representative of Yemen had indicated that document A/C.5/41/CRP.3 had ignored certain General Assembly decisions. It was his understanding that the Fifth Committee would make it clear in its report to the Assembly that some of the Secretary-General's proposals were in direct contradiction with decisions which the Assembly had taken at its current session.

62. Replying to the representative of Nigeria, he said that summary records had been retained for the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space and its Legal Sub-Committee because the Secretariat had decided to continue to provide summary records for bodies involved in the preparation of texts of international treaties which would later be presented to the international community for approval. In the final analysis, the General Assembly would have to decide which bodies would continue to be provided with summary records.

63. Mr. FORAN (Controller), in reply to specific questions asked by the representative of the Soviet Union, recalled his earlier statement that the continuation of the recruitment freeze in 1987 was expected to yield savings of approximately \$32 million. If promotions were frozen or deferred for the entire year of 1987, there would be savings of \$1.2 million, or double the estimated savings of \$600,000 which would be achieved, by deferring promotions for six months in 1987 as had been done in 1986. During the past 10 years, 54 professional and 27 General Service posts had been transferred from extrabudgetary financing to the regular budget. If it was possible to transfer those posts back to extrabudgetary financing, savings of about \$3.5 million would be achieved. All figures quoted were for the year and not for the biennium.

64. A total freeze on the replacement and upgrading of computers and on the purchase of furniture would save an additional \$4.3 million. It was expected to save \$4.4 million by halving such replacements. The elimination of long-distance telephone calls at Headquarters would result in a saving of \$144,900. Expenditure by Headquarters represented about 43 per cent of the total so that the total elimination of long-distance calls by the Organization as a whole would lead to savings of roughly \$300,000. The provision for long-distance calls had already been considerably reduced in the current programme budget due to the planned introduction of leased lines to the regional commissions.

65. The appropriation for consultants in 1987 was \$4.4 million. It was already planned to save \$2 million by the extension of the current economy measures. A total freeze on the use of consultants would save an additional \$4.4 million. If travel was reduced by a further 30 to 40 per cent, savings of between \$4 and 5 million would occur. It was planned to save \$4 million on travel in 1987. The use of economy class instead of business class for air travel exceeding 9 hours would save \$250,000. The provision in the programme budget for external training

(Mr. Foran)

was \$104,000. It was already planned to save \$80,000 and the total elimination of the programme would therefore save an additional \$24,000. The provision for representation allowances for officials at the D-2 and higher levels in 1987 was \$306,000 of which it was intended to save one half. If representation allowances were eliminated entirely, an additional saving of \$153,000 would be effected. It was planned to save one half of the projected hospitality expenditure of \$389,000. If the item was totally eliminated, the savings would be \$195,000.

66. The use of permanent language staff and typists instead of temporary staff for meetings was germane to points made by the Under-Secretary-General for Administration and Management and by Mr. Schlaff in connection with document A/C.5/41/CRP.3 in which, in paragraph 1, the Secretary-General had drawn attention to a review of the calendar of meetings for 1987 with a view to achieving a better and more even spread of meetings throughout the year. A more even spread would permit greater use of permanent staff and less temporary assistance. There was very little scope for additional savings beyond those outlined in document A/C.5/41/CRP.3.

67. The representative of Pakistan had requested additional information on the cost of supplying drinking water to conference rooms. The total cost involved was \$100,000 per annum involving three full-time staff members plus an additional two temporary staff for a 10 week period. The representative of Pakistan appeared to have greatly underestimated the amount of work involved; six large conference rooms, six smaller conference rooms in the basement and five small conference rooms lacking interpretation facilities had to be serviced. The work involved not only the distribution of water containers but also their filling and assembly and sterilization of glasses. The work of supplying drinking water to podiums and to interpreters was continuing and was performed by two part-time messengers.

68. The representative of Italy had made an interesting suggestion for an additional revenue producing activity. The Secretariat was continually reviewing the possibility of acquiring additional revenue and would look into the proposal of the representative of Italy. The potential for additional revenue was not however commensurate with the \$85 million shortfall. Attention could equally be concentrated on persuading Member States to pay their contributions to the United Nations on time.

69. Mr. MAKTARI (Yemen) said that the Secretariat had not replied to his question regarding the juridical problems involved in a possible proposal by the Fifth Committee to cancel a decision of the General Assembly.

70. Mr. DANUS (Chile) agreed with the Controller that the best course would be to persuade Member States to pay what they owed.

71. Mr. RUEDAS (Under-Secretary-General for Administration and Finance) regretted that he had misunderstood the question of the representative of Yemen. He had heard no suggestion that the Fifth Committee was to take a decision that would run counter to a decision of the General Assembly. If in fact the representative of

(Mr. Ruedas)

Yemen required a legal opinion on that point, he would refer the matter to the Legal Counsel.

72. Mr. Fontaine Ortiz (Cuba) resumed the Chair.

73. The CHAIRMAN proposed that the letter addressed to him by the Chairman of the Second Committee (A/C.5/41/61), on the issue of drinking water in conference rooms, should be submitted to the plenary together with a statement of the findings of the Fifth Committee to the effect that the savings resulting from the elimination of that service would be \$100,000 per annum. The decision on the issue should, in his view, be taken by the plenary.

74. Mr. DE CLERCK (Belgium) and Mr. MURRAY (United Kingdom) supported the proposal of the representative of Portugal that no action should be taken on the matter.

75. Mr. KAMAL (Pakistan) said that the proposal to eliminate drinking water in conference rooms was part of the package submitted by the Secretary-General under agenda item 140.

76. Mr. ROY (India) supported the views expressed by the representative of Pakistan. The Fifth Committee should submit its findings to the plenary. The best solution would clearly be to adopt the Chairman's proposal. But if the financial implications of that proposal were too great, he would suggest that no action should be taken. It should be remembered that any document which the Fifth Committee might submit to the plenary would have to be translated into six languages.

77. Mr. LOZA (Egypt) suggested that the issue of drinking water in conference rooms should be discussed informally.

78. Mr. MICHALSKI (United States of America) considered that the issue fell within the prerogatives of the Secretary-General. He had reservations regarding the propriety of the General Assembly taking a decision on an item which had not been specifically placed on its agenda. He supported the Portuguese proposal.

79. Mr. ORTEGA NALDA (Mexico) said that the letter from the Chairman of the Second Committee had been referred to the Fifth Committee under agenda item 140. He supported the Chairman's proposal.

80. Mr. MUDHO (Kenya) likewise supported the Chairman's proposal.

81. The CHAIRMAN said that the Second Committee had the same structure as the Fifth Committee; all Member States were represented on it. In his letter, the Chairman of the Second Committee had stated that that Committee had decided to transmit the text of a draft decision to the Fifth Committee and clearly expected that the text would be accepted by the Fifth Committee. In his own view, the decision should be taken by the plenary under item 140. The letter should be transmitted to the plenary, not as a suggestion but with a statement that the Fifth Committee had received it and indicating the financial implications.

82. Mr. TOMMO MONTHE (Cameroon) considered that the Fifth Committee was under no obligation to give an immediate response to the letter.
83. Mr. ODUYEMI (Nigeria) inquired whether it might be possible for the Secretariat to supply water outside the conference rooms and to provide plastic cups. The appropriate action to take was no action.
84. The CHAIRMAN said that the representative of Portugal had made a proposal that the Fifth Committee should take no action on the issue of drinking water in conference rooms and that the Committee must therefore take a decision on that proposal. On the question raised by the representative of Nigeria, the Office of General Services would have to be consulted.
85. Mr. NGAIZA (United Republic of Tanzania) considered that the matter had been submitted to the Fifth Committee for its technical findings. The Committee's findings should therefore be reported to the plenary, which had allocated agenda item 140 to the Fifth Committee.
86. Mr. KAMAL (Pakistan) said that the Committee had taken action on the question by seeking information; he proposed that it should now formulate its findings and transmit them to the plenary for a decision.
87. The CHAIRMAN said that the Committee had two proposals before it, and he would have to put them to the vote in the order in which they had been formulated; first, the Portuguese proposal and second the Pakistani proposal.
88. Mr. ORTEGA NALDA (Mexico) said that the representative of Portugal had said that the purpose of her proposal was to end the debate on the question. His delegation believed that, under the mandate which the Fifth Committee had received from the General Assembly, it could decide not to take action on the letter from the Second Committee and to refer it to the plenary. The Pakistani proposal would bring the Committee's debate to an end and would enable the Committee to fulfil its mandate. He called on the representative of Portugal to withdraw her proposal.
89. Mrs. EMERSON (Portugal) said that the purpose of her proposal was to enable the Committee to end its discussion of a matter which was not a question of priority. If the proper procedure was for the Committee to submit its findings to the plenary session, she would have no objection. She would therefore withdraw her proposal.
90. Mr. MICHALSKI (United States of America) asked under what authority the Second Committee had issued the document before the Committee, and under what agenda item. He believed that the Second Committee had acted out of order in transmitting the letter to the Committee.
91. Mr. MUDHO (Kenya), speaking on a point of order, said that the question raised by the United States representative should have been raised at the outset.

92. The CHAIRMAN said that, if he heard no objection, he would take it that the Committee wished to adopt the Pakistani proposal and transmit to the General Assembly the draft decision in document A/C.5/41/61.

93. It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 8.25 p.m.