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FIFTH COMMITTEE

78th meeting

held on

Wednesday, 24 January 1979

at 3.30 p.m.

New York

UN/SA COLLECTION

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 78th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. KOBINA SEKYI (Ghana)

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

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The meeting was called to order at 3.35 p.m.

ORGANIZATION OF WORK

1. The CHAIRMAN said that, owing to a job action by some members of the Secretariat, it had not been possible to issue the draft report in document A/C.5/33/L.48 in any language other than English. The Secretariat hoped to be able to provide the document in all the official languages when item 100 was considered in the plenary Assembly. In the interest of enabling the Fifth Committee to complete its work as soon as possible, he appealed to delegations whose native language was not English to show a spirit of co-operation by agreeing to adopt the revised budget estimates in second reading on the basis of the English text.
2. Mr. BACHROUCH (Tunisia) asked for a further explanation as to why the report had been issued only in English.
3. Mr. ANVAR (Secretary of the Committee) said that the Department of Conference Services had succeeded in making arrangements for the document to be typed, but not for it to be translated.
4. Mrs. DERRÉ (France) said that it was preposterous to expect her delegation to approve the expenditure of large amounts of money on the basis of a document which was not in her own language. She requested that the meeting should be adjourned.
5. Mr. PALAMARCHUK (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that his delegation greatly regretted the abnormal situation which had made it necessary for the Fifth Committee to meet late into January. The prolonging of the session was costly in terms of human and financial resources. He very much hoped that, through better organization and by being more exacting, the Fifth Committee would in the future avoid a recurrence of the present situation.
6. His delegation, by way of an exception, was prepared to heed the Chairman's appeal and to work on the basis of the English version of the draft report in order to enable the Fifth Committee to complete its business.
7. Mr. LAHLOU (Morocco) said that the Secretariat should have made a greater effort to issue the draft report in all the official languages of the General Assembly. Delegations could hardly be expected to take final decisions on the revised budget estimates without a complete picture of what was involved. However, on the understanding that the necessary documentation would be available in all the languages when the report was considered in the plenary Assembly, his delegation would be prepared to go along with the Chairman's suggestion.
8. The CHAIRMAN said that his appeal concerned only the work of the Fifth Committee; he was unable to make any commitments on behalf of the plenary Assembly.

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9. Mr. BACHROUCH (Tunisia) said that his delegation would have difficulty in agreeing to work on the basis of the English version of the draft report, particularly as there was no assurance that the document would have been translated into all the working languages by the time it was considered in the plenary Assembly. Problems of a similar kind had been experienced several times during the session, and he trusted that the Secretariat would take steps to correct the situation, which was intolerable for non-English-speaking delegations.

10. Mr. PICO DE COAÑA (Spain) said that, in the interests of the Fifth Committee's completing its work as soon as possible, his delegation was prepared to consider the report on the basis of the English text. He hoped that the Under-Secretary-General for Administration and Management would explain why the document had appeared in English only, since he had announced that the job action affected two of the language services.

11. Mr. PIRSON (Belgium) said that his delegation would have difficulty in agreeing to appropriations that would bring the current budget to a level 40 per cent higher than the 1976-1977 budget.

12. The CHAIRMAN said that, since some representatives had not responded favourably to his appeal, the Committee would have to postpone its second reading of the budget.

13. Mr. DAVIDSON (Under-Secretary-General for Administration and Management), replying to the question raised by the representative of Spain, said that at the time when he had made his statement on Tuesday evening, services were being withheld by the English and French translators and typists. After the close of the 77th meeting, he had been informed that the Spanish translators and typists and the Arabic typists had joined their colleagues in the work stoppage.

AGENDA ITEM 100: PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 1978-1979 (continued)

Revised estimates under section 5C, Department of International Economic and Social Affairs (continued) (A/33/7/Add.38; A/C.5/33/94)

14. Mr. MARVILLE (Barbados) requested the Under-Secretary-General for Administration and Management to arrange for the preparation and issue of a new organizational chart reflecting the intent of the recommendations on restructuring in draft resolution A/C.2/33/L.104. He hoped that the chart would be circulated before the beginning of the thirty-fourth session of the General Assembly.

15. He asked, first, whether the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs would function as a semi-independent unit in Vienna or whether it would remain integrated in the Department of International Economic and Social Affairs; secondly, what measures for restructuring the social sector of the United Nations had been taken or were envisaged; thirdly, whether the organizational entities in the economic and social sectors would be streamlined in such a way as to advance the international community towards the establishment of the new international economic order; and, fourthly, what would be the relationship between the Budget Division and the Programme Planning and Co-ordination unit of the Department of International Economic and Social Affairs under the new arrangements.

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16. Mr. DADZIE (Director-General for Development and International Economic Co-operation) said that the Secretary-General viewed the restructuring process initiated in General Assembly resolution 32/197 as a welcome opportunity to strengthen institutional relationships and co-operative arrangements throughout the system so as to bring about greater coherence of action and thereby increase the impact of the system's response to the policy objectives set by the international community. The Secretary-General had said that the multiplicity of problems likely to hinder the early establishment of the new international economic order could be overcome only by wide-ranging measures - most of them multidisciplinary - drawing on the assistance and experience of all the elements of the system. In the Secretary-General's view, therefore, it was essential to mobilize and integrate the inputs of all the organizations at the planning and programming stages and also to combine the efforts and resources of the system in order to give effect to the policy directives, priorities and guidelines set by the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council. In short, it could be said that the totality of the restructuring exercise was directed at the establishment of the new international economic order.

17. The Barbadian representative had requested that a chart should be prepared indicating in graphic form the intent of draft resolution A/C.2/33/L.10⁴. He drew attention to section IV, paragraph 6, of that resolution, which requested the Secretary-General to make appropriate adjustments "in the functioning and the administrative arrangements ... of the relative organizational entities". The Secretary-General would give full and prompt consideration to the request in that paragraph and would report to the General Assembly at its thirty-fourth session on such action as it had been possible to take.

18. Regarding the fourth question put by the Barbadian representative, he said that it would be an over-simplification to speak of a separation of functions between the Office of the Director-General and other units of the Secretariat. The Director-General's involvement would be aimed at promoting the full and effective exercise by various organizational units of their respective competences. The process could best be described as a "continuum" between the broad policy elements and the analytical and technical elements. Both types of elements coexisted in differing degrees and interacted at most stages of the work of the Secretariat. The Director-General's involvement would be more pronounced at the broad policy end of the "continuum" and would progressively diminish as the analytical and technical elements became more significant. As far as programme planning was concerned, the Director-General's responsibilities would include the actual preparation of introductions to medium-term plans, as foreseen by the Secretary-General and as indicated in the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly. That responsibility would cover the elaboration of the over-all objectives to be included in the medium-term plan. The part of the plan concerning economic and social activities would be prepared by the relevant units of the Department of International Economic and Social Affairs. The role of his Office would be restricted to general guidance and would be mainly concerned with the resolution of policy issues or of differences that might arise within the Secretariat in the process of plan formulation and plan implementation, including the harmonization, as necessary, of the processes of planning and programming, on the one hand, and of budgeting, on the other.

19. The Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs would remain part of the Department of International Economic and Social Affairs. Every effort would be made to maintain effective links in communication between the Centre in Vienna and the Headquarters units of the Department.

20. Mr. RIPERT (Under-Secretary-General for International Economic and Social Affairs) said that he and his Department would do whatever was necessary to facilitate the task of the Director-General and enable him to carry out his extremely important functions.

21. Notwithstanding its new location, the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs (CSDHA) remained an integral part of his Department. In preparing the medium-term plan, his Department had endeavoured to determine as accurately as possible the tasks to be carried out by the units engaged in research and analysis and the activities of the Centre. The need for an integrated approach to development had led to the strengthening in the work programme of the former Centre for Development Planning, Projections and Policies of a number of relevant elements. At the same time, it had clearly emerged, especially after the deliberations of the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination, that it was desirable for the system as a whole not to lose sight of the benefits of a Centre which dealt with the totality of the social aspects of development problems. Following the constructive conclusions reached by CPC, the part of the medium-term plan relating to CSDHA had been revised to reflect that view.

22. Another concern was to develop more adequate relationships between work in the economic sector and work in the social sector. He was heartened by the results already achieved, particularly with respect to the support extended to the Commission for Social Development.

23. The move of CSDHA to Vienna might cause some initial problems. Nevertheless, provided that travel funds were available to enable staff to maintain the necessary work contacts, it should be perfectly possible to overcome such problems.

24. In conclusion, he stated he was satisfied that the work of his Department in the areas of research and analysis and programme planning and co-ordination took into account development problems as a whole and did not emphasize economic matters to the detriment of social matters.

25. Mr. OKEYO (Kenya) said that his delegation looked forward to receiving the organizational chart and to a resumption of the discussion at the thirty-fourth session, when it should be possible to evaluate whether the restructuring exercise had been carried out in the manner expected by the Assembly. He trusted that draft resolution A/C.2/33/L.104 would be implemented promptly and fully by the Secretariat. In that regard, he wondered why it should be necessary for the Secretary-General to consider the provisions of section IV, paragraph 6, before they could be implemented.

(Mr. Okeyo, Kenya)

26. He asked why the Under-Secretary-General for International Economic and Social Affairs had referred to problems relating to travel between Vienna and New York. His delegation was anxious to ensure that the transfer of CSDHA would not cause any dislocation and would like an assurance on that point.

27. Mr. WILLIAMS (Panama) said that his delegation was carefully following the restructuring exercise and its implications for the establishment of the new international economic order. It looked forward to the progress report to be submitted at the thirty-fourth session.

28. Mr. RIPERT (Under-Secretary-General for International Economic and Social Affairs) said that he had raised the question of travel in order to alert the members of the Committee to problems that would arise if sufficient travel funds were not forthcoming. For example, it would clearly be necessary to provide for some staff members of the Centre to travel to Headquarters in order to attend meetings of the Third Committee.

29. Mr. DADZIE (Director-General for Development and International Economic Co-operation) said he wished to make it clear that, since the recommendations concerning Secretariat support services in section IV of the restructuring resolution were couched in general terms, it would be necessary in the first instance for the Secretary-General to devise detailed measures and modalities that would best reflect the content of the resolution. He assured the representative of Kenya that the Secretary-General and the heads of all the organizational entities concerned would give their fullest co-operation to the General Assembly in achieving in full measure the objectives of the restructuring resolution.

The meeting rose at 4.55 p.m.