



Fifteenth session
Agenda item 50

BUDGET ESTIMATES FOR THE FINANCIAL YEAR 1961

Financial implications of resolution adopted by the Second United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea regarding publication of verbatim records of the Conference

Twenty-fourth report of the Advisory Committee on
Administrative and Budgetary Questions to the
General Assembly at its fifteenth session

1. In the letter from the President of the General Assembly to the Chairman of the Fifth Committee on the allocation of agenda items at the fifteenth session (A/C.5/825), it was suggested that the Fifth Committee, in connexion with its consideration of the 1961 budget estimates, should also study the resolution adopted by the Second United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea on 26 April 1960 in which the Conference recommended that the Assembly approve at its fifteenth session the necessary budget appropriations for the publication of a complete verbatim record of the discussions at the Conference.
2. The Secretary-General has accordingly presented a statement of financial implications (A/C.5/839) on the assumption that the precise form of the record suggested by the Conference would be the complete text of all statements in the original in a trilingual form, produced from the sound recordings, with the use of texts of speeches where these have been furnished.
3. The representative submitting the draft resolution in question to the Conference explained at the time that the question of printing or mimeographing the records had been left open. The proposal was thereupon adopted as it stood, on the understanding that it would be left to the General Assembly to decide the appropriate form of publication, in the light of a statement of the related financial implications.

4. The statement of financial implications provided by the Secretary-General takes into account the possibility of two alternative reproduction methods. In the case of mimeographing, the estimate comprises \$1,300 for overtime payments to staff transcribing speeches from recordings and typing the complete proceedings, as well as \$1,500 for internal reproduction supplies and paper; if the records are to be printed, costs are estimated at \$1,300 for overtime and \$6,000 for printing.
5. Apart from examining the estimates, the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions has also considered the general principle underlying the recommendation of the Second Conference on the Law of the Sea. While it will be for the General Assembly to decide whether the publication of verbatim records is sufficiently justified in the present instance, the Advisory Committee wishes to draw attention to certain aspects which the Assembly might wish to take into account.
6. In the first instance, it has been general United Nations practice to sanction the provision of verbatim records only by way of exception to the general rule that summary records should normally suffice. It is significant, furthermore, that the First Conference on the Law of the Sea contented itself with summary records. While, from a legal point of view, it may be held that verbatim records serve the purpose of facilitating the interpretation of the Final Act of a conference, containing conclusions on a given subject, this consideration probably has less weight in the case of the Second Conference on the Law of the Sea which adjourned without reaching any final conclusions. The Advisory Committee would also point out that in another context, referring to the forthcoming United Nations Conference on Diplomatic Intercourse and Immunities, the Committee has underlined the necessity of keeping within justifiable limits the extent to which conference material should be published in printed form.^{1/} It may also be noted that even in respect of that Conference, the question related only to certain preparatory material and summary records and not to verbatim records.
7. Should it be decided to comply with the recommendation of the Second Conference on the Law of the Sea, the Advisory Committee considers that, by prudent allocation of staff time within the context of priorities of work to be

^{1/} Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifteenth Session, Supplement No. 7 (A/4408), paras. 101-102.

performed in the course of 1961, it should be possible to avoid the necessity of incurring overtime costs. This would, in the first instance, require deferment of the project until after the conclusion of the fifteenth regular session of the General Assembly, which is the basis on which the estimates have been prepared. Irrespective of whether publication takes the form of mimeographing or of printing, the Advisory Committee recommends that the comparatively modest amounts involved (\$1,500 for mimeographing supplies and \$6,000 for printing costs) be met within the appropriations already recommended for 1961.

8. The Advisory Committee understands, furthermore, that the estimate for printing is based on outside printing costs. Should it prove possible to use internal reproduction by photo-offset instead, costs would be lower. Accordingly, there would be advantage in every effort being made to include the project in the quota of work to be reproduced by the latter method.
