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OTHER PERSONNEL QUESTIONS

Revised proposal for the establishment of a
United Nations staff college

Report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary
Questions to the General Assembly at its Twenty-seventh Session

1. The Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions has considered the report by the Secretary-General submitting to the General Assembly a revised proposal by the Executive Director of the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) for the establishment of a United Nations staff college (A/8829 and Add.1 and Corr.1 and 2). The Executive Director's memorandum provides more comprehensive information on the project than was available to the General Assembly last year, when the Assembly limited itself to approval in principle of the idea of the establishment of such a college, and decided to consider at its twenty-seventh session the proposal to establish it. 1/

2. In his own report, the Secretary-General expresses his support for the project on the clear understanding that the function of the college would be designed "to complement and integrate the forms of training planned for 1973 onwards within the Organization and will in no way constitute a duplication of effort" (A/8829 and Corr.1 and 2, para. 4). The Executive Director of UNITAR indicates that his revised proposal has been drawn up in consultation with the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination (ACC) and in agreement with the organizations in the United Nations system. 2/

1/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Twenty-sixth Session, Supplement No. 6B (A/8406/Add.2), section A, document A/C.5/1404, paras. 15-18; and *ibid.*, Supplement No. 8A (A/8408/Add.1-30), document A/8408/Add.21.

2/ A/8829 and Corr.1 and 2, memorandum by the Executive Director, para. 14.

3. In his memorandum, the Executive Director has clarified many of the financial and administrative arrangements for the college, on which the Advisory Committee commented in its report to the Assembly at its twenty-sixth session. 3/ Thus many of the necessary basic data which the General Assembly requires in order to take an informed decision on the establishment of the college have now been assembled. However, the Advisory Committee considers that some aspects of the proposal as submitted by the Executive Director of UNITAR require further clarification; the Committee has dealt with them in the paragraphs which follow.

4. The Advisory Committee notes the principle enunciated in the Executive Director's proposal that the college would "extend its activity to all fields (but only to such fields) where the need and desirability of interagency training is recognized". 4/ This approach is reflected in article II, paragraph 1, of the draft terms of reference of the college (A/8829 and Corr.1 and 2, annex I). In the words of the proposal, the college "should integrate fully its own programmes with the individual training programmes of the United Nations and the agencies"; while it would be an autonomous unit within UNITAR, it must be considered "a joint venture by the organizations constituting the United Nations system, in terms of its establishment, its management, its financing and its programmes". 5/

5. It is proposed that the college cater to relatively high-level staff of the organizations. 6/ Here the Advisory Committee suggests a flexible approach. Less-senior staff who have shown an energetic and imaginative approach to their jobs should also be eligible. In any event, in the selection of candidates for courses organized by the college, the paramount consideration should be the likely benefits accruing to each of the organizations concerned and, through them, to the member States which they serve. Potential candidates should be selected with care to make sure that this criterion is satisfied.

6. The Executive Director of UNITAR indicates that "of necessity the staff college will initially be run on an experimental basis" and that it must be subjected to a careful evaluation at the end of an initial period. 7/ The Advisory Committee assumes that the General Assembly would undertake the evaluation and suggests that the appropriate initial period should be not less than two years and not more than four. The Committee understands that the broadening of the college's activities, which is proposed in the blueprint of a programme submitted by the Executive Director, would be conditional on that evaluation (A/8829/Add.1, para. 12).

3/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Twenty-sixth Session, Supplement No. 8A (A/8408/Add.1-30), document A/8408/Add.21, paras. 12-19.

4/ A/8829 and Corr.1 and 2, memorandum by the Executive Director, para. 13.

5/ Ibid.

6/ Ibid., para. 38.

7/ Ibid., para. 16.

7. As indicated in the Executive Director's memorandum (A/8829 and Corr.1 and 2, paras. 24-31) and discussed in paragraphs 11 and 13 to 18 below, most of the financing of the proposed college would come from New York-based organizations: the United Nations, UNDP, UNICEF and UNITAR itself. Those organizations would presumably also supply the majority of the students. However, it is intended to establish the college at Geneva. While the Geneva location has the advantage of being closer to the headquarters of most of the organizations, there is as yet no firm assurance that all of them will participate in and contribute to the college. 8/ In the circumstances, should the Geneva location be retained, it would appear to the Advisory Committee highly desirable that some courses be provided in New York, possibly in Vienna and at the headquarters of the regional economic commissions, if only for reasons of economy. The Executive Director of UNITAR informed the Advisory Committee that this would be possible. Care will need to be taken, however, to ensure that dispersal of the courses does not undermine the concept of a unified staff college.

8. The proposed programme of the college is discussed in fairly general terms in the memorandum by the Executive Director. 9/ More specific programme proposals for 1973 are presented in the addendum (A/8829/Add.1), on the basis of agreement reached at a meeting of officials of the organizations in charge of staff training activities. The Advisory Committee wonders whether paragraph 2 of that document, where the understanding is expressed that the college would provide courses "not available in existing institutions", is fully consistent with paragraph 9 of the Executive Director's memorandum, which refers to the economies of scale that would result from the assumption by the college of training functions otherwise spread among the organizations. If the intention is that the participating organizations should in future entrust to the college those aspects of staff training which can better be performed by a central institution, a reduction in their direct outlays for training could be expected. In the case of the United Nations, the Advisory Committee has recommended an appropriation of \$1,003,150 in 1973 for staff training programmes (section 4, chapter VI). 10/ The Secretary-General has since informed the Committee that, in his view, the establishment of the staff college would not lead to lower requirements under that chapter; that viewpoint does not seem wholly consistent with the understanding of the functions of the college expressed in paragraph 2 above.

9. The management of the proposed college is dealt with in paragraphs 19 to 23 of the memorandum of the Executive Director of UNITAR, and many of the draft "terms of reference" are devoted to management matters (A/8829 and Corr.1 and 2, annex I).

8/ Ibid., para. 28.

9/ Ibid., paras. 32-41.

10/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Twenty-seventh Session, Supplement No. 8 (A/8708 and Corr.1), ch. III, para. 4-9; the Committee expressed the hope that, should the Assembly agree to the proposal to establish a staff college, the Secretary-General would review his estimate of requirements for career development training.

The Advisory Committee has taken up some points of detail with the Executive Director and minor modifications may be necessary. The initial experimental period that has been proposed for the college would provide an opportunity to determine whether any more radical modifications were required.

10. In response to inquiries, the Executive Director of UNITAR informed the Advisory Committee that he envisaged that the Director of the college would be at the Director (D-2) level. The two Directors of studies would then be at the Principal Officer (D-1) level, the secretary of the college at the Senior Officer (P-5) level, and the course assistants in the middle Professional grades. The Advisory Committee considers such a grading pattern appropriate.

11. The Advisory Committee suggests that the Director of the college not appoint an advisory board 11/ until experience has indicated whether or not the Executive Committee can provide the expert advice which he may require.

12. In paragraphs 24 to 31 and annex II of his memorandum (A/8829 and Corr.1 and 2), the Executive Director provides information on the proposed annual budget of the college during its initial period. That budget amounts to \$425,000, or \$175,000 less than the figure submitted to the General Assembly a year ago when it considered the proposal to set up the staff college. The sources from which the budget would be financed are set out in detail in section II of annex II (estimates of income) to the Executive Director's memorandum.

13. The Executive Director does not yet have the assurance that contributions of \$425,000 will be available. 12/ The Advisory Committee understands that, while the Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme endorses the general concept of a United Nations staff college, he has not yet been able to satisfy himself that usage of the college facilities by UNDP would warrant expenditure of the magnitude proposed (that is, \$150,000). Having regard to potential staff usage, the grounds for a commitment of that size - as compared, for example, with the suggested contributions by the major specialized agencies - are not clear to the Administrator. He believes, therefore, that a definite financial commitment cannot and should not be proposed to the Governing Council until he has subjected the proposal to more careful analysis and scrutiny.

14. As regards the balance of \$125,000 (that is, the amount in excess of the contribution requested of the United Nations and UNDP), the executive heads of several agencies have undertaken to request appropriations which would almost cover that amount. The ultimate decision on what contributions those organizations will make will, of course, rest in the normal way with their legislative organs.

11/ A/8829 and Corr.1 and 2, memorandum by the Executive Director, para. 21; see also annex I, article V, paragraph 3, of the draft terms of reference.

12/ A/8829 and Corr.1 and 2, memorandum by the Executive Director, para. 28.

15. Article VII ("Financing") of the draft terms of reference (A/8829 and Corr.1 and 2, annex I) states that the resources of the college shall include, in addition to contributions made by the organizations, the following:

".....

- (b) Voluntary contributions made by Governments;
- (c) Grants received from foundations and other non-governmental sources;
- (d) Fees paid, when appropriate, by the organizations for the attendance of their staff members to courses or seminars conducted by the College;

....."

16. The proposed financing of the budget makes no specific reference to the sources identified in items (b) and (c) above, and the Advisory Committee accepts that it would be premature at this preliminary stage to build the budget on the assumption that receipts will be forthcoming from those sources.

17. Similarly, there is no estimate of likely income from tuition fees, nor an indication of the number of staff members who could be enrolled in courses by the sponsoring organizations without payment of fees. 13/ The Advisory Committee believes that more specific information on this point should be provided to the participating organizations. Without that information, it is not possible to estimate what amounts the contributing organizations would have to pay by way of fees, or what the total budget of the college might be.

18. The estimated annual budget of \$425,000 excludes certain costs which would be associated with the staff college, and which would have to be borne by some or all of the organizations. These indirect costs include the time of those staff members which the organizations would make available as teaching staff for given periods, at no cost to the staff college; 14/ and the time of staff members attending courses as students, as well as other costs of their participation, such as travel and subsistence costs. And while the Executive Director of UNITAR states that the provision of accommodation for the college will not entail any appreciable expense if the United Nations Office at Geneva allocates space within the complex of the Palais des Nations, 15/ the Advisory Committee understands that a final decision on the latter point will depend on the allocation of space in Geneva to units of the Secretariat. Furthermore, the fact remains that the provision of such space to the college would constitute an additional subsidy by the United Nations. In this connexion, it should be borne in mind that the Secretary-General reports that virtually all United Nations office space in Geneva is occupied or already committed (A/C.5/1458 and Corr.1 and 2, paras. 34-38). The Advisory Committee has been

13/ Ibid., para. 29; see also the note at the end of annex II.

14/ Ibid., para. 24.

15/ Ibid., para. 26.

informed that, including the value of services which the United Nations would provide, the annual rental value of the space which the staff college might occupy in Geneva would be of the order of \$30,000. While it may be held unnecessary to account meticulously for expenses of this nature, they should not be ignored in any evaluation of the work of the college in relation to its cost.

19. The contributions attributed to the participating organizations are expressed as fixed sums and it is not clear therefore how any increase in the college budget would be met. The Executive Director of UNITAR assured the Advisory Committee that, during the initial period - that is, the period preceding the evaluation (para. 6 above) - the level of activities of the college would remain at that provided for in the budget estimates (A/8829 and Corr.1 and 2, annex II). Thereafter, any expansion would depend upon the outcome of that evaluation. Meantime, however, price and salary increases and unforeseen requirements such as might arise because of currency fluctuations could invalidate the present estimates of expenditure. During the initial period, the Advisory Committee would expect that the college would take the necessary measures to accommodate any such extra costs without the need for supplementary contributions.

20. On the other hand, the Committee considers that, during the first year of the college, the annual costs would be significantly less than \$425,000, since that figure represents estimated costs for a full year of operation at the level foreseen for the initial experimental period; it does not take into account the delay which would inevitably occur at the beginning, when the college would be recruiting its staff, organizing its courses etc. In response to questions on this subject, the Executive Director of UNITAR agreed that expenses in the initial period would be less than those stated in the memorandum, although in his view reductions owing to delays in setting up the college would be partly offset by higher costs for travel and consultants. In the Advisory Committee's view, a realistic budget estimate for the first year would be about \$350,000; thus, should the General Assembly at its present session decide to establish the college and even were it to begin operations early in 1973, the additional appropriation required for that year (under section 20 (Special expenses) of the United Nations budget) could be reduced from \$150,000, the figure proposed by the Secretary-General (A/8829 and Corr.1 and 2, para. 6) to \$130,000.

21. If the United Nations were to decide to appropriate \$130,000 for 1973, that appropriation should, in the view of the Advisory Committee, be placed in a separate account and not released until such time as the Governing Council of UNDP has agreed to participate and has decided on the level of the UNDP contribution. Should the Governing Council decide to participate on an equal financial footing with the United Nations, but not take a decision until its sixteenth session (June 1973), the Secretary-General should withhold from the United Nations appropriation an amount proportionate to the delay which would be incurred in establishing the college. Should the Governing Council decide against equal financial participation with the United Nations, the project should, in the opinion of the Advisory Committee, be deferred pending consideration of an alternative financing plan by the General Assembly.