

# GENERAL ASSEMBLY

## SEVENTH SESSION

Official Records



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**Chairman:** Brigadier-General Carlos P. ROMULO (Philippines).

**Budget estimates for the financial year 1953:**  
(a) Budget estimates prepared by the Secretary-General (A/2125 and Add.1, A/C.5/498 and Add.1, A/C.5/500); (b) Reports of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (A/2157, A/2245, A/C.5/499) (*continued*)

[Item 42]\*

**First reading (*continued*)**

SECTION 20. UNITED NATIONS OFFICE AT GENEVA

1. The CHAIRMAN drew the Committee's attention to paragraphs 263 to 300 of the first report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions to the seventh session of the General Assembly (A/2157), and pointed out that the Advisory Committee had recommended a total appropriation for section 20 of \$4,306,800 representing a reduction of \$72,900 in the Secretary-General's estimates (A/2125). Paragraph 13 of the Secretary-General's revised estimates for sections 3, 10, 11, 20 and 25 (A/C.5/498) showed that additional amounts totalling \$190,900 had been requested by the Secretary-General in connexion with the Economic and Social Council's decision to hold its own sixteenth session and the ninth session of the Commission on Human Rights at Geneva, and the decision to give full implementation to rule 40 of the rules of procedure of the Economic Commission for Europe. In its eighth report to the seventh session of the General Assembly (A/2245) the Advisory Committee recommended that the additional appropriation should be limited to \$126,800 but that discretion should be left to the Secretary-General to distribute the specific reductions recommended by the Advisory Committee between sections 3 and 20 of the budget.

\* Indicates the item number on the agenda of the General Assembly.

2. He suggested that the supplementary estimates should be considered later in conjunction with those referring to other sections of the budget for economic and social activities, including sessions of the Economic and Social Council and its Commissions. Any appropriation voted at the present stage would be supplemented to the extent called for by the Committee's later decisions.

3. Except for the reservation made by the Secretary-General in connexion with chapter III, Joint Secretariat of the Permanent Central Opium Board and Drugs Supervisory Body (A/C.5/500), the reductions recommended by the Advisory Committee were not contested. He suggested that chapter III should be considered provisionally on the basis of the Advisory Committee's recommendations and on the understanding that the Chairman of the Permanent Central Opium Board, who was at present attending a session of the Board in Geneva, would be given an opportunity to address the Committee before the second reading of the budget estimates.

*It was so decided.*

4. Mr. STRAUCH (Brazil) said that, although his delegation had often agreed that all meetings of Headquarters-based United Nations bodies should be held at Headquarters, it felt that that policy had been carried to the extreme. The large sums spent on the upkeep of the United Nations Office at Geneva should be borne in mind by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions when it examined the programme of conferences at Headquarters and Geneva (A/2243).

5. Mr. ZARUBIN (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics), referring to section 20, chapter I, general services, noted that the appropriations requested for 428 established posts had increased by \$91,000 and that

the estimates for section 20 as a whole showed an increase of \$72,000 as compared with 1952. The 1953 budget estimates of the United Nations Office at Geneva had been prepared on the assumption that there would be virtually no programme of visiting conferences in 1953. There was therefore no need to maintain the same number of staff in the General Service category. According to paragraph 252 of the Advisory Committee's second report of 1951 (A/1853), 2,046 meetings had been serviced in Geneva in 1950, including 479 meetings of United Nations Geneva-based bodies, 928 meetings of the International Labour Organisation and other agencies, and 639 meetings of non-Geneva-based bodies. In 1951, 812 meetings of non-Geneva-based bodies had been serviced, including a session of the Economic and Social Council. The income derived from servicing meetings of specialized agencies and other such bodies amounted only to 8.5 per cent of the appropriations requested for section 20, chapter I.

6. The Secretary-General had requested an appropriation of \$2,081,000 for section 20, chapter I, although far fewer meetings would be held in Geneva in 1953 than in previous years. The USSR delegation considered that the estimates submitted were too large, and therefore suggested that the reduction recommended by the Advisory Committee should be increased by \$100,000. It proposed that the Fifth Committee should:

(1) Instruct the Advisory Committee to make a comprehensive study of the work of the United Nations Office at Geneva with a view to submitting to the eighth session of the General Assembly practical recommendations for the efficient and economical use of that Office's staff and premises;

(2) Increase the reduction in the budget estimates for section 20, chapter I recommended by the Advisory Committee by \$100,000, composed of a reduction of \$70,000 in the appropriation for established posts (abolition of twenty General Service posts in the Language and Stenographic Division and the Documents, Registry and Distribution Division at the discretion of the Secretary-General) and a reduction of \$30,000 in the appropriation requested for temporary assistance.

7. Mr. PELT (Director of the United Nations Office at Geneva) could not express an opinion on the Brazilian representative's statement, as it related to a matter of policy to be determined by the General Assembly when the Secretary-General's memorandum on the programme of conferences at Headquarters and Geneva (A/2243) was considered.

8. Referring to the USSR representative's statement, he said that in addition to the bodies mentioned in section 20 of the budget estimates, the Geneva Office serviced the Economic Commission for Europe, which was administratively part of the European Office. It also provided general services for the World Health Organization, the Permanent Central Opium Board, the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees, the United Nations Korean Reconstruction Agency, the Technical Assistance Administration and Board, and the Contracting Parties of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade. The work of those bodies was steadily increasing and the present staff of the Geneva

Office was fully occupied. It had even been necessary to engage temporary assistance.

9. A reduction in the establishment and in temporary assistance such as that proposed by the USSR representative would undoubtedly impair the efficiency of the Geneva Office.

10. Mr. HAMBRO (Norway) suggested that the USSR proposal should be circulated in writing. He did not in principle support the idea that all Headquarters-based bodies should hold their sessions in New York. To do so would cause the outlook of members of delegations and the Secretariat to become increasingly provincial; and members of various organs had frequently told him that they could work better in Geneva than in New York. A great metropolis offered many distractions, and representatives from other parts of the world experienced difficulty in adjusting themselves to the tempo of a large city and concentrating upon their work there. He wondered whether the Director of the Geneva Office had had an opportunity to discuss that matter with the chairmen of the various bodies which had held meetings in Geneva.

11. Mr. PELT (Director of the United Nations Office at Geneva) said that various chairmen and representatives had expressed similar opinions and had referred to the more tranquil atmosphere of Geneva. The output of the staff of Headquarters and of the Geneva Office was about the same.

12. Mr. WILEY (United States of America) also asked that the USSR representative's proposal should be circulated.

13. Mr. THORSING (Sweden) concurred. Emphasizing that the cost of transportation was one of the heaviest expenses connected with sessions of Headquarters-based bodies in Geneva, he suggested that certain Headquarters-based bodies should for a period of one or two years hold all their sessions in Geneva and that Headquarters-based staff should be transferred there for that period. The expense of transporting staff to Geneva every year would thus be avoided.

14. Mr. ZARUBIN (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) pointed out that the Economic Commission for Europe had a staff of 154, the Permanent Central Opium Board 7 and the Information Centre 14 persons. The USSR delegation was therefore fully justified in suggesting an additional reduction in the proposed appropriations.

15. Mr. FENAUX (Belgium) also felt that the USSR proposal should be circulated, and supported the Swedish representative's proposal. The question of holding meetings of Headquarters-based bodies at Geneva would, he said, be discussed fully at the plenary meeting which considered the Secretary-General's memorandum (A/2243). The Belgian delegation attached much importance to the operation of the Geneva Office of the United Nations.

16. Mr. WILEY (United States of America) said that, although the decision to set up the Headquarters of the United Nations in New York had been reached after very careful consideration, he agreed that United Nations bodies should occasionally meet in other countries also in order that representatives might become acquainted with the thoughts of all races and really understand one another.

17. Mr. AGHNIDES (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) said that the Advisory Committee would be glad to make the thorough study of the Geneva Office proposed in the USSR draft. To do so would prove very useful. It might, however, be better to postpone a decision on the USSR proposal until the Fifth Committee had reviewed the Secretary-General's paper on the basic programme of conferences, for that might affect its decisions on the budget for the Geneva Office.
  18. Mr. FENAUX (Belgium) said that, although he was inclined to support paragraph 1 of the USSR proposal, it might be better to postpone a decision until the Fifth Committee had discussed the other matters relating to the Geneva Office.
  19. Mr. FRIIS (Denmark) supported the Belgian representative's views, particularly in the light of the comments made by the Chairman of the Advisory Committee. He also pointed out that decisions on the pattern of conferences could not come into effect until 1954. Perhaps, however, the Fifth Committee could decide at once on paragraph 2 of the USSR proposal, which related to the 1953 budget estimates.
  20. Mr. ZARUBIN (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that in submitting his proposal at that stage in the Fifth Committee's deliberations he had merely been adhering to the procedure proposed by the Chairman, for he felt there was some advantage in presenting concrete proposals in connexion with each separate chapter. He would have no objection, however, to voting first on paragraph 2 of his proposal.
  21. Mr. WILEY (United States of America) agreed that it might be wiser to postpone decision on paragraph 1 of the USSR proposal. If the discussion were to be pursued, however, he would like to know whether the USSR proposed that the Advisory Committee should study the whole question of the efficient and economical operation of the Geneva Office and, if not, whether it could appoint efficiency experts to do so.
  22. Mr. ZARUBIN (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) emphasized that his proposal called merely for a study of the efficient and economical use of staff and premises at the Geneva Office, not for a general inquiry into its operations.
  23. Lord CALDECOTE (United Kingdom) thought the Fifth Committee could rely on the Advisory Committee to decide how best to carry out the proposed study.
  24. Mr. HAMBRO (Norway) also felt it difficult to discuss the USSR proposal without studying the Secretary-General's report on the basic pattern of conferences (A/2243). Delegations favouring a reduction in allocations for temporary assistance at Geneva would have difficulty in voting on paragraph 2 of the USSR proposal without further information on the Office's work-load in 1953. The Fifth Committee should review the programme of conferences as soon as possible and then revert to the USSR proposal.
  25. The CHAIRMAN pointed out that a programme of conferences approved at the current session of the General Assembly would not go into effect until 1954.
  26. Miss WITTEVEEN (Netherlands) partly endorsed the Norwegian representative's remarks.
- Although her delegation had no objection to paragraph 1 of the USSR proposal, she thought a decision on it had better be postponed until the programme of conferences had been studied. There was no reason, however, why a decision on paragraph 2 of the USSR proposal should not be taken forthwith.
27. Mr. ZARUBIN (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) had no objection to the procedure proposed by the Netherlands representative.
  28. Mr. HAMBRO (Norway) requested that a separate vote should be taken on each of the reductions proposed in paragraph 2 of the USSR proposal. His delegation would support the proposed reduction of \$30,000 in respect of temporary assistance, but not that of \$70,000 in respect of established posts, in the budget of the Geneva Office.
  29. Mr. BRENNAN (Australia) pointed out that the Secretary-General had originally requested \$60,000 for temporary assistance at the Geneva Office and the Advisory Committee had recommended a reduction of \$7,000 (A/2157, para. 271). The drastic USSR proposal for a further reduction of \$30,000 left little scope for adjustment to variations in the work-load. He wondered whether the Soviet Union representative intended that the Secretary-General should carry out his proposal in exactly the form in which it had been submitted, or whether the Secretary-General would be allowed latitude in carrying out the proposed reductions.
  30. Mr. THORSING (Sweden) saw a certain contradiction between paragraph 1 of the USSR proposal, which called for a study of the Geneva Office, and paragraph 2, which recommended an immediate reduction in that Office's budget. His delegation could not vote for the proposed reduction before hearing an authoritative statement on its effect on the operation of the Geneva Office.
  31. Mr. ZARUBIN (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) had no objection to voting on paragraph 2 in two parts. His proposal was meant, he said, as a guide to the Secretary-General, who would have some discretion in effecting the proposed reductions. His delegation felt that the budget estimates for the Geneva Office were inflated and that further reductions in the budget for 1953 could be made without impairing the efficiency of the Office. As paragraph 1 referred to 1954, he saw no conflict between the two paragraphs.
  32. Mr. PELT (Director of the United Nations Office at Geneva) welcomed the USSR proposal that the Advisory Committee should study the Geneva Office, and said that his staff would co-operate with the Advisory Committee in every way.
  33. The principal item in the cost of holding conferences at Geneva was not travel for staff, but remuneration and expenses of temporary assistance recruited in Europe.
  34. Mr. FENAUX (Belgium) saw no incompatibility between paragraphs 1 and 2 of the USSR proposal but felt that the Fifth Committee's decision on paragraph 2 would depend to some extent on the action it took on paragraph 1. As he thought that no further cuts in the budget of the Geneva Office should be made until the proposed study had been completed, he would vote against paragraph 2.

35. The CHAIRMAN put to the vote the first part of paragraph 2 of the USSR proposal, ending with the words "at the discretion of the Secretary-General and".

*The first part of paragraph 2 was rejected by 22 votes to 5, with 16 abstentions.*

36. The CHAIRMAN put to the vote the second part of paragraph 2 of the USSR proposal.

*The second part of paragraph 2 was rejected by 11 votes to 7, with 25 abstentions.*

37. The CHAIRMAN put to the vote the Advisory Committee's recommendation of an appropriation of \$2,056,810 for section 20, chapter I, representing a reduction of \$24,700 in the Secretary-General's estimate.

*The Advisory Committee's recommendation was approved by 38 votes to 5, with 1 abstention.*

38. Lord CALDECOTE (United Kingdom) suggested that the Committee should proceed forthwith to vote on paragraph 1 of the USSR proposal, as considerable support for it had been expressed.

39. Mr. FENAUX (Belgium) thought that to postpone decision on that paragraph until other matters relating to the Geneva Office had been discussed would prevent a double debate. Moreover, the Advisory Committee could not begin its study until it had heard the Committee's views on the general pattern of conferences.

40. Lord CALDECOTE (United Kingdom) thought it unlikely that the Committee's views on paragraph 1 would be materially affected by its debate on the programme of conferences.

41. Mr. AGHNIDES (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) saw no great difficulty in deciding on paragraph 1 of the USSR proposal at once. He proposed, however, to add at the end of the paragraph the phrase "in the light of any decision which the General Assembly may take on the basic pattern of conferences at Headquarters and Geneva".

42. The CHAIRMAN further suggested that paragraph 1 should be amended to begin "Request the Advisory Committee...".

43. Mr. ZARUBIN (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) accepted those amendments.

44. The CHAIRMAN put to the vote paragraph 1 of the USSR proposal as amended.

*Paragraph 1 of the USSR proposal was adopted by 45 votes to none, with 1 abstention.*

45. Mr. BRENNAN (Australia) said he had abstained from voting on paragraph 1, not because he opposed its fundamental idea but because he felt the terms of reference it laid down for the Advisory Committee might have to be amended in the light of the General Assembly's consideration of the programme of conferences.

46. The CHAIRMAN referred to paragraphs 274 to 277 of the Advisory Committee's report (A/2157), concerning the Geneva Information Centre. He said that the requested budgetary provision for United Nations

information services as a whole, including the estimates for the Geneva Centre, had already been discussed generally, and the Advisory Committee had in consequence been asked to reconsider its recommendation as a whole. The Geneva Centre, however, was perhaps in a somewhat special position: first, the amount to be appropriated was not contested by the Secretary-General, and secondly, the Centre was an integral part of the Geneva Office. In those circumstances nothing would be gained by a deviation from orderly procedure; he accordingly suggested that the Committee should proceed to a first reading of the estimates for section 20, chapter II.

47. Mr. LIVERAN (Israel) asked whether the proposed reduction of \$5,100 in the estimates of the Secretary-General would lead to any cut in the services rendered by the Geneva Information Centre to his country. Israel should in fact come within the sphere of operations of another information centre but, for the reasons outlined by the delegation of Israel at the previous General Assembly session, it was not receiving services from that source.

48. Mr. COHEN (Assistant Secretary-General in charge of the Department of Public Information) answered that it was hoped that the reduction would not affect the services to Israel, although the Centre might find difficulty in meeting all demands. In the past few months requests from all sources in Israel had grown considerably.

49. The CHAIRMAN put to the vote the Advisory Committee's recommendation for an appropriation of \$93,090 for section 20, chapter II, which was \$5,100 below the Secretary-General's estimate.

*The Advisory Committee's recommendation was approved unanimously.*

50. The CHAIRMAN stated that the Advisory Committee recommended an appropriation of \$47,100 for section 20, chapter III, Joint Secretariat of the Permanent Central Opium Board and Drug Supervisory Body, representing a reduction of \$9,000 in the Secretary-General's estimate. The reduction applied to the provision for temporary assistance, in which the Secretary-General had included an amount of \$9,000 to protect the Board's position in case the work-load called for the appointment of a deputy secretary. The Advisory Committee considered, however, that specific provision for that purpose might be omitted on the understanding that, if the necessity for the post should be proved, funds would be made available by transfer (A/2157, para. 281).

*The Advisory Committee's recommendation was approved unanimously, subject to that understanding and to the provision that the Chairman of the Board should be heard later should he so desire.*

51. The CHAIRMAN invited the Committee to consider the estimates for chapter IV, Economic Commission for Europe. The appropriation of \$997,500 recommended by the Advisory Committee (A/2157, para. 292) represented a global reduction of \$16,600 in the original estimates, which was not contested by the Secretary-General. The Advisory Committee suggested that the economies might be made in the items for consultants, temporary assistance and official travel.

52. The estimates for the Economic Commission for Europe were in a different category from those for the other regional commissions, since common staff costs and common services were included in the totals for the Geneva Office. It was accordingly more logical to treat chapter IV as an integral part of the appropriation to be approved for the Geneva Office.

53. In answer to a point raised by Mr. STRAUCH (Brazil), Mr. AGHNIDES (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) said that the absence of comment on proposed upgradings of posts certainly implied the agreement of the Advisory Committee. In the case mentioned in paragraph 289 of its report, however, the Committee had felt unable to concur.

54. Mr. PELT (Director of the United Nations Office at Geneva) stated that the Secretary-General had accepted the reduction proposed by the Advisory Committee in respect of that item, but felt that he should be at liberty to distribute the amount over the chapter as a whole and not be bound to specific reductions on particular items.

55. Mr. AGHNIDES (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) felt sure that the Advisory Committee would have no objection to such an arrangement.

*The Advisory Committee's recommendation of an appropriation of \$997,500 for section 20, chapter IV was approved unanimously.*

56. The CHAIRMAN invited the Committee to consider chapter V, common staff costs; the appropriation of \$613,800 recommended by the Advisory Committee (A/2157, para. 294) represented a reduction of \$5,000 in the Secretary-General's estimate.

57. Mr. ZARUBIN (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) proposed that the amount of \$71,000 requested under chapters V and VI for the office at Geneva of the High Commissioner for Refugees should be deleted. The activities of the illegally-constituted Office of the High Commissioner were incompatible with the purposes of the United Nations Charter and contradicted General Assembly decisions of 1946 and 1947 on early repatriation of displaced persons.

58. Miss WITTEVEEN (Netherlands) pointed out that the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees had been established by General Assembly decision. She asked for comparative figures on the turnover of staff at Headquarters and at Geneva.

59. Mr. PRICE (Assistant Secretary-General in charge of the Department of Administrative and Financial Services) regretted that he had not the exact information at hand, but said he would be glad to furnish it later. The rate of turnover was somewhat higher in New York.

*The USSR proposal was rejected by 28 votes to 6, with 7 abstentions.*

60. The CHAIRMAN put to the vote the Advisory Committee's recommendation of an appropriation of \$613,800 for section 20, chapter V.

*The Advisory Committee's recommendation was approved by 39 votes to 5.*

61. The CHAIRMAN invited the Committee to consider chapter VI, common services. The Advisory Committee recommended an appropriation of \$395,500 (A/2157, para. 297), representing a reduction of \$12,500 in the Secretary-General's estimate.

*The Advisory Committee's recommendation was approved by 41 votes to 5.*

62. The CHAIRMAN observed in regard to chapter VII, permanent equipment, that the Advisory Committee recommended for approval the Secretary-General's estimate of \$103,000 (A/2157, para. 299).

*The Advisory Committee's recommendation was approved by 43 votes to none, with 1 abstention.*

63. The CHAIRMAN then put to the vote the Advisory Committee's recommendation for an appropriation of \$4,306,800 for section 20 as a whole, subject to later adjustment in the light of decisions reached on various supplementary estimates.

*Subject to that provision, the Advisory Committee's recommendation was approved by 41 votes to 5, with 1 abstention.*

The meeting rose at 12.45 p.m.