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QUESTIONS RELATING TO INFORMATION

PROPOSED PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 1992-1993

Programme budget implications of the draft resolution contained in document A/SPC/46/L.6

Statement submitted by the Secretary-General in accordance with rule 153 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly

1. At its 29th meeting, on 27 November 1991, the Special Political Committee adopted draft resolution A/SPC/46/L.6 without a vote. A statement of programme budget implications was before the Committee in document A/SPC/46/L.7. The Acting Chairman of the Committee on Information introduced the draft resolutions contained in documents A/SPC/46/L.5 and L.6 and in the course of his statement made a proposal, on behalf of the Bureau of the Committee on Information and spokespersons of the regional groups and China, with regard to the reallocation of certain elements of the Department of Public Information (DPI) budget to meet the expenses under the programme budget implications contained in document A/SPC/46/L.7, and further proposed that his statement be fully reflected in the Committee's report to the General Assembly. The statement by the Acting Chairman of the Committee on Information is reproduced in the annex to the present statement.

A. Request contained in the draft resolution

2. Under the terms of operative paragraph 1 of the draft resolution contained in document A/SPC/46/L.6, the General Assembly would call upon the Secretary-General, in respect of United Nations public information activities, to implement recommendations adopted by the Committee on Information at its thirteenth session. Operative paragraphs 1 (1) and 1 (m) of the draft resolution, which would give rise to additional requirements, read as follows:

"(1) Taking note of the request for the enhancing of United Nations information centres in Tehran, Dar es Salaam, Dhaka and Bujumbura, the Committee on Information recommends that the Department of Public Information provide the necessary professionals and equipment where necessary;

"(m) The Committee on Information recommends that, pending final discussions with the Secretariat, the General Assembly consider approval of the establishment of a new United Nations information centre in Sana'a, Yemen ...".

B. Relationship of the request to the approved programme of work

3. The activities proposed in the draft resolution are related to major programme VIII, programme 38, Public information, subprogrammes 1 and 2 (Promotional services and Information services, respectively) of the medium-term plan for the period 1992-1997, 1/ and to section 31, Public information, of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1992-1993. 2/

C. Activities by which the request would be implemented

4. With regard to the enhancement of the United Nations information centres referred to in operative paragraph 1 (1) of the draft resolution, it is still the view of the Secretary-General that, as indicated to the Committee on Information, there appears to be no need for additional staff resources at the Centre at Bujumbura. Similarly, concerning the Centre at Dhaka, current arrangements for its administration appear adequate. On the other hand, with respect to the Centre at Dar es Salaam, the volume and nature of information activities undertaken by the Centre would warrant the establishment of a post of full-time Director. Provisions for equipment at these three centres would be reviewed with a view to supplementing them, as necessary, through redeployments.

5. As to the Information Centre at Tehran, its activities have been limited for the past years to the distribution of United Nations materials by United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) staff working part time on information activities under the supervision of the UNDP Resident Representative. Should the General Assembly adopt the draft resolution, the Centre would be re-established on a fully operational basis.

6. Lastly, consultations have already taken place with regard to the possible opening of an information centre at Sana'a, Yemen. Subject to the approval by the General Assembly, an agreement on the subject would be concluded with the host country.

D. Additional requirements at full cost

7. On a full-cost basis, the additional requirements arising from operative paragraph 1 (l) of the draft resolution in question are estimated at \$520,200 as follows:

(a) Bujumbura, Dar es Salaam and Dhaka

United States dollars

Establishment of a post at the P-4 level for a full-time Director at Dar es Salaam	103 400
Acquisition of equipment and furniture for the information centres at Bujumbura, Dar es Salaam and Dhaka	<u>90 000</u>
Total	<u>193 400</u>

(b) Tehran

In order to bring the Information Centre at Tehran to a fully operational status, the total additional costs are projected at \$326,800, as follows:

United States dollars

Establishment of a post at the P-4 level for a full-time Director	103 400
Establishment of three local-level support posts	85 200
Recurrent operating costs: rental and maintenance of premises, utilities, communications, maintenance of equipment, supplies and services, overtime, travel of staff, library books, external translation	98 200
Non-recurrent initial expenses (acquisition of furniture and equipment)	<u>40 000</u>
Total	<u>326 800</u>

Actual costs may be reduced depending on the terms of the host country agreement to be renegotiated between the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the United Nations.

8. In respect of the request contained in operative paragraph 1 (m) regarding the opening of an information centre in Yemen, based on negotiations which have already taken place, the host Government has offered the provision of rent-free premises at Sana'a. On that basis, the additional cost of opening an information centre at that location is estimated at \$371,900, as follows:

United States dollars

(a) Establishment of a post at the P-4 level for a full-time Director	103 400
(b) Establishment of five local-level support posts	142 000
(c) Recurrent operating costs: maintenance of premises, utilities, communications, maintenance of equipment, supplies and services, overtime, travel of staff, library books, external translation	86 500
(d) Non-recurrent initial expenses (acquisition of furniture and equipment)	<u>40 000</u>
Total	<u>371 900</u>

E. Potential for absorption

9. The total additional requirements at full cost arising from the draft resolution contained in document A/SPC/46/L.6 are thus estimated at \$892,100. It is estimated that requirements for the acquisition of equipment at the information centres at Bujumbura, Dar es Salaam and Dhaka, estimated at \$90,000 could be accommodated from within the overall resources under equipment and furniture included under section 31 of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1992-1993.

F. Indication of additional requirements

10. On the above basis, the additional requirements arising from the draft resolution in question are estimated at \$802,100.

G. Contingency Fund

11. It will be recalled that, under the procedure established by the General Assembly in its resolution 41/213 of 19 December 1986, a contingency fund is established for each biennium to accommodate additional expenditures derived from legislative mandates not provided for in the proposed programme budget. Under the same procedure, if additional expenditures are proposed that exceed resources available from the Contingency Fund, these activities can be implemented only through redeployment of resources from low-priority areas or modifications of existing activities. Otherwise, such additional activities will have to be deferred until a later biennium. A consolidated statement of all programme budget implications and revised estimates will be submitted to the General Assembly towards the end of the current session.

12. No activity has been identified for termination, deferral, curtailment or modification under section 31 of the programme budget for the biennium 1992-1993. Should it not prove possible to meet the costs required from the Contingency Fund, the implementation of the draft resolution may have to be postponed, as provided for in the guidelines for the use of the Contingency Fund adopted by the Assembly in resolution 42/211 of 21 December 1987.

H. Summary

13. Should the General Assembly adopt draft resolution A/SPC/46/L.6, it is estimated that an additional appropriation of \$802,100 would be required under section 31 of the programme budget for the biennium 1992-1993. In addition, an amount of \$72,400 would be required under section 36 (Staff assessment), to be offset by an increase in the same amount under income section 1 (Income from staff assessment).

Notes

1/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-fifth Session, Supplement No. 6 (A/45/6/Rev.1), vol. II.

2/ Ibid., Forty-sixth Session, Supplement No. 6 (A/46/6/Rev.1), vol. II.

Annex

STATEMENT MADE ON BEHALF OF THE COMMITTEE ON INFORMATION BY
MR. MANSOOR SUHAIL (PAKISTAN), VICE-CHAIRMAN, COMMITTEE ON
INFORMATION, AT THE 29TH MEETING OF THE SPECIAL POLITICAL
COMMITTEE ON 27 NOVEMBER 1991*

I have the honour to submit to the Special Political Committee, on behalf of the Committee on Information, two draft resolutions contained in documents A/SPC/46/L.5 and A/SPC/46/L.6, with the request and the earnest hope that these would be adopted without a vote. These two draft resolutions are contained in the report of the Committee on Information, a/ which was adopted by that Committee by consensus during its thirteenth substantive session in April 1991. The first resolution reflects our aspirations for a new world information and communication order along with an expression of our regard for the principle of freedom of information and expression. The second resolution encompasses the mandate provided by the Committee for public information policies and activities.

The adoption of these resolutions by consensus in the Committee on Information preceded detailed consultations and negotiations between the members of the Bureau, the spokespersons of the regional groups and China. Subsequently when the programme budget implications contained in document A/SPC/46/L.7 were submitted to the Special Political Committee, the Chairman of the Committee on Information made a statement on 25 October 1991, informing the Special Political Committee that the programme budget implications in respect of subparagraphs 1 (l) and (m) of draft resolution A/SPC/46/L.6 do not correspond to the understanding reached in the Committee on Information between the members of the Bureau and the spokespersons representing regional groups and China. They had believed and expected that that understanding would be reflected in the programme budget implications and that that was so understood by the Department of Public Information. Regretfully, this did not prove to be the case.

Please permit me to underline the importance of these understandings, which are reached after extensive negotiations and necessary compromises. It is, indeed, possible that misunderstandings and confusions might arise from time to time. Having been unconscious of such a possibility and with a view to improving and maintaining better communications and understanding, the Committee on Information recommended that the "Bureau of the Committee on Information, together with representatives of each regional group and China, in close contact with members of the Committee on Information, should meet, as required and consult at periodic intervals with the Department of Public Information". In this regard, since the Committee made this recommendation, the Bureau of the Committee and the spokespersons of the regional groups and

* See A/SPC/46/SR.29.

China have held a number of valuable meetings with officials of the Department of Public Information.

However, despite the availability of such a mechanism, the programme budget implications contained in document A/SPC/46/L.7 do not accord with our understanding, as pointed out by the Chairman of the Committee on Information in his statement. In spite of his request, it has not been possible for the Controller to issue a revised statement of programme budget implications in view of the reasons cited in his letter of 19 November. b/

The Bureau of the Committee on Information, the spokespersons of the regional groups and China have given considerable thought to this matter. They reaffirmed the commitment of the Committee to the substance of the draft resolutions contained in documents A/SPC/46/L.5 and L.6 and their determination to preserve the consensus which had been achieved following arduous efforts.

There seems to be no alternative before the Bureau of the Committee on Information and spokespersons of the regional groups and China but to propose that this Committee determine, and so request the Fifth Committee, to reallocate elements of section 31, Public information, of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1992-1993. c/ In making this recommendation, we have sought reallocations only in areas that do not in any way affect policies or decisions reached by the members of the Committee on Information and that are entirely compatible with the mandate, contained in draft resolution A/SPC/46/L.6 on United Nations public information policies and activities. These proposed reallocations, to cover the cost of implementing operative paragraphs (l) and (m) of the draft resolution, relate to items that in our judgement would not affect the proper functioning of the Department. The recommended reallocations are as follows and involve a transfer of the stated amounts from the designated section 31 budget items to meet the costs of implementing operative paragraphs 1 (l) and (m). In addition to not involving any policy areas, practically all the recommended reallocations are sought from budget areas where the increases requested by the Department of Public Information were greater than the amounts being proposed for reallocations.

(a) Paragraphs 31.35, 31.37 and 31.39 in relation to United Nations public opinion polls and surveys:

Reallocate \$145,000 from the total of \$161,400 with the remainder to meet contractual requirements

(b) Paragraph 31.48 in relation to personal services for research in relation to external expertise for the research and design of certain information materials:

Reallocate \$50,000 from the estimated total requirement of \$222,400

(c) Paragraph 31.53 in relation to public information production covering production of videos for video kits, etc.:

Reallocate \$50,000 from the estimated total of \$410,500

(d) Paragraph 31.66 in relation to the cost of supplies such as raw stock, etc.:

Reallocate \$40,000 from the estimated requirement of \$941,600

(e) Paragraph 31.67 in relation to new public information equipment:

Reallocate 250,000 from the estimated cost of \$1,634,900

(f) Paragraph 31.72 in relation to public information production of additional film and video prints:

Reallocate \$50,000 from the estimated total of \$297,100

(g) Paragraph 31.73 in relation to pouch and special courier services to disseminate information:

Reallocate \$100,000 from the estimated total of \$872,900

(h) Paragraph 31.112 in relation to overtime for drivers:

Reallocate \$35,000 from the estimated total of \$109,800

(i) Paragraph 31.116 in relation to information centre vehicles and other equipment:

Reallocate \$30,000 from the total of \$727,400

(j) Paragraph 31.118 in relation to hospitality:

Reallocate \$20,000 from the total of \$171,600

Total \$770,000

The Bureau of the Committee on Information and the spokespersons of the regional groups and China recognize and accept that this recommendation sets no precedent whatsoever for the future. This step, however, allows this Committee to act on draft resolutions A/SPC/46/L.5 and L.6 and adopt them by consensus. It asserts firmly and clearly a principle of importance: that recommendations and decisions, and the understandings on which they rest, of a Committee established by the General Assembly must be respected. It cannot be otherwise.

The Bureau of the Committee on Information and spokespersons of the regional groups and China request that the Special Political Committee endorse the proposals for financial reallocations outlined in this statement and include them together with the draft resolutions in its report to the General Assembly to be taken up by the Fifth Committee. In this decision, it is understood that the Controller is free to propose, where this is judged to be of particular importance, alternative reallocations provided that no implications are involved regarding any policy decisions and recommendations as contained in draft resolution A/SPC/46/L.6. I would like to request that the above statement made on behalf of the Bureau of the Committee on Information and spokespersons of the regional groups and China be fully reflected in the report of the Special Political Committee on this item.

Let me state, in conclusion, the determination of the Bureau of the Committee on Information and spokespersons of the regional groups and China to work in close harmony with the Department of Public Information in serving the interests of the Department, the United Nations and all Member States. We have made significant progress in our work of advancing knowledge of the United Nations and its activities. This task remains, for all of us, a continuing challenge for the future.

May I call upon the Special Political Committee to adopt the draft resolutions contained in documents A/SPC/46/L.5 and A/SPC/46/L.6 now without a vote.

Notes

a/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-sixth Session, Supplement No. 21 (A/46/21).

b/ A/SPC/46/4.

c/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-sixth Session, Supplement No. 6 (A/46/6/Rev.1), vol. II.
