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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 28th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. AMNEUS (Sweden)

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

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The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

TRIBUTE TO THE MEMORY OF HIS EXCELLENCY BRIGADIER GENERAL SEYNI KOUNTCHE, PRESIDENT OF THE SUPREME MILITARY COUNCIL AND HEAD OF STATE OF THE REPUBLIC OF THE NIGER

1. The CHAIRMAN, on behalf of Committee members, expressed condolences to the delegation of the Niger upon the death of His Excellency Brigadier General Seyni Kountche, President of the Supreme Military Council and Head of State of the Republic of the Niger.
2. Mr. OUSSEINI (Niger) voiced his thanks for the Chairman's words of condolence.

AGENDA ITEMS 115 and 116: PROPOSED PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 1988-1989 AND PROGRAMME PLANNING (continued) (A/42/3, 6 and Corr.1, 7 and Add.2, 16 (Part I) and Add.1 and 16 (Part II), 512, 532 and 640; A/C.5/42/2/Rev.1)

First reading (continued)

Section 1 - Overall policy-making, direction and co-ordination (continued)

3. Mr. BAUDOT (Director, Programme Planning and Budgeting Division), replying to a question from Mr. MURRAY (United Kingdom), explained that the estimates for travel by representatives to the sessions of the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Board would be amended to take account of the fact that the Board would in future meet every two years. The amendments would be reflected in the first performance report, which the Secretary-General would submit to the General Assembly at its forty-third session.
4. Mr. MICHALSKI (United States of America) said he opposed the appropriations for the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and the Division for Palestinian Rights, because the activities of the Committee and the Division were not conducive to a peaceful and just solution to the conflict in the Middle East. The sums requested by the Secretary-General, for the Division in particular, were excessive. Accordingly, his delegation requested a recorded vote on the appropriations for sections 1A.7 and 1B.4 of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1988-1989 (A/42/6).
5. Mr. HARAN (Israel) expressed his opposition to the appropriations for the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People. That Committee's activities did not help to resolve conflicts and its debates were biased, ignoring the opinions of one of the parties. He also expressed disagreement with the report of the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination (CPC) in that regard. His delegation likewise opposed the appropriations requested for the Division for Palestinian Rights, because the Division's activities did not help to improve the situation in the region.

6. Mr. CABRIC (Yugoslavia) said he was deeply disappointed at the manner in which the programme budget was being discussed and the consensus reached in resolution 41/213 was being set aside. Any country was entitled to express reservations on some conclusions or recommendations. Some, however, seemed to accept the consensus only in so far as it affected activities of benefit to them, and refused to change their attitudes to some very important political questions, such as that dealt with in section 1, paragraph 1.49, of the proposed programme budget.

7. Mr. OTHMAN (Jordan), Mr. LADJOUZI (Algeria), Mr. JEMAIL (Tunisia) and Mr. NGAIZA (United Republic of Tanzania) expressed their support for the views of the Yugoslav delegation relating to the consensus.

8. Mr. HARAN (Israel) said that when, at an earlier meeting, the Committee had been presented with a request for additional resources in connection with the situation in Afghanistan, Yugoslavia had not questioned the interpretation of the consensus. The request for funds in connection with the situation in Afghanistan should have been included in the budget proposals from the outset, and no additional resources should have had to be requested. In that instance a "perennial" activity had been left out, contrary to the requirements of the annex to resolution 41/213. Consequently, any delegation was entitled to question the inclusion of activities relating to Palestine.

9. Mr. MICHALSKI (United States of America) said that the Yugoslav representative had spoken of consensus not just as a critical ingredient of resolution 41/213 but as a prime consideration in all budget questions; his own delegation, however, believed that the agreement to take decisions on the budget by consensus did not hold for each individual programme, and it reaffirmed its right to oppose certain United Nations programmes, firmly convinced that its attitude was in keeping with the spirit and letter of the resolution. He also pointed out that, when the programme budget implications of draft resolution A/42/L.1, on Kampuchea, had been discussed, no delegation had objected to taking a vote.

10. Mr. VISLYKH (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that, in adopting resolution 41/213, the General Assembly had also endorsed recommendation 29 of the Group of High-level Intergovernmental Experts to Review the Efficiency of the Administrative and Financial Functioning of the United Nations (Group of 18), namely that the Office of Secretariat Services for Economic and Social Matters should be abolished, reassigning its functions to the Department of Conference Services and the Department of International Economic and Social Affairs. The proposed programme budget assigned all the functions of that Office to the Department of Political and General Assembly Affairs (section 1). Thus adopting section 1 in the form proposed would mean making an exception to resolution 41/213. If the Fifth Committee wished to take a conscientious decision on the subject, it must ask for information on the reasons for the proposal, which was at odds with resolution 41/213. The information was not provided either in the budget proposals or in the reports of CPC or the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions. Otherwise, his delegation would be unable to take part in the decision on section 1.

11. Mr. MONTHE (Cameroon) said that in considering the implementation of resolution 41/213, the Committee would have to decide why, in certain cases where the General Assembly had made exceptions to the recommendations of the Group of 18, as in the case of construction projects, the Secretariat had followed the recommendations while in other cases, where the General Assembly had made no exception, the Secretariat had failed to put them into practice.

12. Paragraph 13 of the report of CPC (A/42/16 (Part II)) pointed out that some delegations, his own among them, had expressed concern that the Office for Research and the Collection of Information was not yet fully operational although the staffing table had been agreed upon and vacancy announcements issued. Since, at the previous meeting, the Secretariat had said that the vacancy rate within section 1 was substantial, he hoped that steps would soon be taken to put the new Office into full operation.

13. Mr. FONTAINE-ORTIZ (Cuba) said that his delegation had expressed concern at a previous meeting at the trend towards the partial or selective implementation of some of the recommendations of the Group of High-level Intergovernmental Experts, and he renewed his appeal to the intergovernmental bodies and the Secretariat to take care to see that the recommendations were carried out fully and in a balanced manner. The case to which the representative of the Soviet Union had drawn attention was an example of such an incorrect or selective interpretation. Subparagraph (c) of paragraph 1.74 of the proposed programme budget listed certain activities of the Office of the Under-Secretary-General for Political and General Assembly Affairs. His delegation would like to know whether the activities in question, in particular those detailed in subparagraphs (c) (i) and (c) (ii), had always been assigned to that Office or whether some of them were new.

14. Mr. LADJOUZI (Algeria) said that his delegation had already brought to the Committee's attention the decision of the eleventh Ministerial Meeting of the Group of 77 concerning the need for balance in implementing General Assembly resolution 41/213. The case referred to by the delegation of the Soviet Union made it clear that the resolution was not being implemented in a sufficiently balanced and satisfactory manner. His delegation requested the Secretary-General to take the necessary steps as soon as possible to bring into operation the information office established as part of the reform of the Organization.

15. Mr. BAUDOT (Director, Programme Planning and Budgeting Division), referring to the implementation of recommendation 29 of the Group of High-level Intergovernmental Experts, said that during the debate on the reform process the Committee would have an opportunity to examine the latitude which the Secretary-General had under Assembly resolution 41/213 and by virtue of his general authority to implement the recommendations relating to the internal organization of the Secretariat in any particular way. The Secretary-General had considered that transferring the functions of the Office of Secretariat Services for Economic and Social Matters from section 8 of the budget to section 1 was the most sensible course for the time being. In the final analysis, the matter the Committee was considering was a proposal that it could accept or reject.

(Mr. Baudot)

16. The text of paragraph 1.74 of the proposed programme budget had been drafted like the budget as a whole, before the reorganization of the Secretariat and before the Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva had been given supervisory responsibility for the Centre for Human Rights. That transfer of functions had been indicated subsequently in the Secretary-General's report on the implementation of Assembly resolution 41/213 (A/42/234, para. 30 (f)). The final position, in particular with regard to the functions listed in subparagraphs (c) (i) and (c) (ii) of paragraph 1.74 of the proposed programme budget (A/42/6), would be reflected in the revised estimates to be submitted in 1988.

17. Mr. FONTAINE-ORTIZ (Cuba) expressed surprise at the Secretariat's explanation of the way in which the recommendations of the Group of High-level Intergovernmental Experts were being implemented, which appeared to confirm the fears that the Secretary-General felt himself entitled to interpret the Group's recommendations and to decide for himself how to implement them. Recommendation 29 was clear and, like the other recommendations of the Group of High-level Intergovernmental Experts, must be implemented as adopted. It was regrettable that during the examination of the report of the Group of High-level Intergovernmental Experts the Secretariat had not given its advice on the best way of proceeding, which would have been very useful. His delegation could not agree to the transfer of functions by the Secretariat from section 8 of the proposed programme budget to section 1 because it contradicted and disregarded a General Assembly decision and could set a bad precedent. He would like further explanations regarding the functions listed in subparagraph (c) (ii) of paragraph 1.74 of the proposed programme budget when the Committee reverted to the consideration of section 1.

18. Mr. MAKTARI (Yemen) asked the Secretariat to explain whether the amount of \$744,800 indicated in paragraph 1.35 of the proposed programme budget in connection with conference services for the World Food Council would be apportioned equitably among the six official languages of the United Nations.

19. Mr. MURRAY (United Kingdom) said that the interpretation of General Assembly resolution 41/213 would cause serious problems throughout the consideration of individual sections of the proposed programme budget. It seemed that at times a flexible interpretation of the resolution was advocated, while at others a very strict interpretation was defended, as it suited the country concerned. The Secretary-General should have flexibility to carry out the reforms and if he had decided not to comply strictly with recommendation 29 of the Group of High-level Intergovernmental Experts it was because he found some other solution to be preferable. The solution chosen must be analysed on its own merits and not from the point of view of whether or not it complied strictly with the recommendation of the Group of High-level Intergovernmental Experts.

20. Mr. FONTAINE-ORTIZ (Cuba) said that he agreed that the Secretary-General should have flexibility in carrying out the reforms, but in his view that flexibility was the Secretary-General's prerogative only when the legislative mandate was vague or was stated in very general terms. The Secretary-General could

(Mr. Fontaine-Ortiz, Cuba)

not decide not to comply with a clear and specific recommendation approved by the General Assembly. If necessary, a resolution could be adopted modifying or interpreting resolution 41/213, but until such action was taken it was unacceptable for the Secretary-General to take steps which violated the provisions of General Assembly resolution 41/213.

21. Mr. ABRASZEWSKI (Poland) said it was important for the problem of the possible interpretations of General Assembly resolution 41/213 to be settled. He was concerned about the transfer of the functions of the Office of Secretariat Services for Economic and Social Matters to the Department of Political and General Assembly Affairs and Secretariat Services because it involved a failure to comply with recommendation 29 of the Group of High-level Intergovernmental Experts. He understood that the Secretary-General ought to have flexibility in implementing the recommendations, which had been adopted by consensus, but in the matter before the Committee no explanation or justification had been provided for the step taken.

22. Mr. BAUDOT (Director, Programme Planning and Budgeting Division) said, in response to the question of the representative of Yemen, that the six official languages of the United Nations were used at the annual sessions of the World Food Council. However, not all the languages were used at the regional meetings because it was not necessary. For example, neither Arabic nor Chinese were used at regional meetings held in Latin America and the Caribbean.

23. Mr. MONTHE (Cameroon) said that differences of opinion on the implementation of resolution 41/213, though important, should not hold up the work of approving the proposed programme budget. Section 1 of the budget should be approved in first reading, with the proviso that the matter of the implementation of recommendation 29 of the Group of High-level Intergovernmental Experts would be settled at a later stage.

24. The CHAIRMAN suggested that a decision should be taken on section 1 of the proposed programme budget for 1988-1989, on the understanding that the relevant Advisory Committee proposals would still have to be reviewed and that it must still be decided whether the Committee wished to approve the Secretary-General's decision to transfer the technical secretariat servicing functions from the Office of Secretariat Services for Economic and Social Matters to the Department of Political and General Assembly Affairs and Secretariat Services.

25. Mr. FIGUEIRA (Brazil) said that it was his understanding that some of the recommendations of the Group of High-level Intergovernmental Experts adopted in General Assembly resolution 41/213 were included in the Advisory Committee's "across the board" recommendations. He believed that a draft resolution should be adopted on questions relating to the implementation of draft resolution 41/213, which, if need be, could later be included in the budget. With that understanding, he had no objections and supported the course suggested by the Chairman.

26. Mr. EL-MEKKI (Sudan) said that it was an inappropriate suggestion to have the Committee consider the recommendations contained in General Assembly resolution 41/213 later, after having reviewed the budget proposals. The logical thing would be to review the budget proposals while taking into account all resolutions with financial implications. On the other hand, he agreed that the Secretariat should provide explanations for any changes or transfers from one section of the budget to another.

27. Mr. SINGH (Fiji) observed that it was the budget and not General Assembly resolution 41/213 that was being considered. The approval or rejection of parts of the budget could not be conditional upon any aspect of resolution 41/213. That would be a significant departure from the Committee's accepted principles. He asked the Secretariat to clarify whether or not section 8 had actually been eliminated and its resources transferred to section 1.

28. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) said that, as he saw things, the situation was not in any way complicated. The budget which the Secretary-General had submitted to the Advisory Committee and CPC at their spring sessions was a traditional budget, which differed only in that it used a higher turnover rate.

29. In reviewing the budget proposals, the Advisory Committee and CPC had pointed out that reform was an ongoing process which was under way and would be continuing into the future. The Secretary-General had been required to report to the General Assembly on any additional measures that he might take between the spring sessions of the Advisory Committee and CPC and the forty-second session of the Assembly, and to indicate how those measures would affect the proposals he had submitted to the Advisory Committee and CPC.

30. As requested by the Advisory Committee and CPC, the Secretary-General had submitted an updated report in which he described the impact of the measures in question on the budget, the programme and the functioning of the Organization. One result was the deletion of section 8 of the budget, relating to the Office of Secretariat Services for Economic and Social Matters, and the transfer of most of that unit's functions to section 1 (Office of the Under-Secretary-General for Political and General Assembly Affairs). The Secretary-General also described in the report the budgetary and administrative implications of the change. Those implications were now before the Fifth Committee. Of course, what was involved was a proposal, and the Fifth Committee had to decide how it wished to proceed in considering it. In his opinion, that could mean accepting the Secretary-General's budget and programme proposals, as recommended by the Advisory Committee and CPC, on the understanding that the final structure of section 1 and the amount of resources and the level of programmes to be allocated to it would depend on any decisions which the Fifth Committee might subsequently take on the changes proposed by the Secretary-General in implementation of General Assembly resolution 41/213.

31. Mr. MONTHE (Cameroon) said that the question was an important one and that he agreed with the suggested solution, which would provide guidance for resolving similar questions that might arise during the review of the remaining sections of the proposed programme budget.

32. The CHAIRMAN said that, if he heard no objection, he would take it that the Committee wished to adopt the recommendations regarding section 1 of the proposed programme budget which were contained in paragraphs 46 to 51 of the CPC report (A/42/16 (Part I)).

33. It was so decided.

34. The CHAIRMAN said that a separate recorded vote had been requested on the estimates for section 1A.7, in the amount of \$87,700 for the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, and for section 1B.4, in the amount of \$2,827,500 for the Division for Palestinian Rights.

35. A recorded vote was taken on the estimates for the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and for the Division for Palestinian Rights.

In favour: Algeria, Argentina, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Burma, Burundi, Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chile, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Cuba, Cyprus, Czechoslovakia, Egypt, Ethiopia, Fiji, Finland, Gabon, German Democratic Republic, Ghana, Greece, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Hungary, India, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Japan, Jordan, Kenya, Kuwait, Lesotho, Liberia, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Mongolia, Morocco, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, Oman, Panama, Peru, Poland, Qatar, Romania, Rwanda, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Somalia, Spain, Sudan, Swaziland, Sweden, Thailand, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Uganda, Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, United Arab Emirates, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Venezuela, Viet Nam, Yugoslavia, Zaire, Zambia, Zimbabwe

Against: United States of America

Abstaining: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Federal Republic of, Ireland, Italy, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

36. Appropriations in the amount of \$87,700 under section 1A.7 and \$2,827,500 under section 1B.4 for the biennium 1988-1989 were approved in first reading by 87 votes to 1, with 14 abstentions.

37. The CHAIRMAN said that, if he heard no objection, he would take it that, on the basis of the recommendations of the Advisory Committee, the Committee wished to approve in first reading an appropriation of \$42,382,000 under section 1 of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1988-1989.

38. It was so decided.