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REVIEW OF THE EFFICIENCY OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE AND  
FINANCIAL FUNCTIONING OF THE UNITED NATIONS

PROPOSED PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 1988-1989

Section 27: Department of Public Information

Note by the Secretariat

1. During the first reading of section 27 of the proposed programme budget for 1988-1989, 1/ the Fifth Committee requested further information with regard to several questions raised by delegations. The present paper is presented in response to that request. It is presented in the form of responses to the major issues raised by delegations in the Fifth Committee.
2. Several of the responses provided herein reflect information provided orally to the Fifth Committee by the Director of the Programme Planning and Budget Division and by the Controller as well as by the Under-Secretary-General for Public Information to the Special Political Committee during its consideration of agenda item 78.
3. Questions have been posed as to what the basis is for the reform of the administrative structure of the Department; whether it is directly linked to General Assembly resolution 41/213 of 19 December 1986; whether it is a programmatic reform or only a reform of administrative structures; and what the status is of implementation of the reform. In addition, questions have been raised regarding equitable geographical distribution in the Department in relation to implementation of the reforms and the impact of the reforms on certain programme activities.
4. The effective functioning of the Department has been a matter of continuing interest to Member States. It should be recalled that the Department was the subject of an in-depth evaluation in 1983 (E/AC.51/1983/7), the results of which

were considered by the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination (CPC) at its twenty-third session. The CPC recommendations thereon were again considered by CPC, as part of its normal cycle of triennial reviews of evaluations, at its twenty-sixth session, in 1986. On that occasion, CPC formulated 15 additional recommendations, which, together with the Committee's comments and decisions, appear in paragraphs 80 to 95 of the report of CPC on the work of its twenty-sixth session. 2/ These recommendations dealt with both programmatic and managerial issues. The main thrust of the CPC views can be summarized as follows:

- (a) The importance of clear definition and identification of end-users and target audiences was re-emphasized in order to facilitate the delivery and timeliness of programmed products as well as the assessment of their quality, relevance and impact;
- (b) The Department should carry out well-designed market surveys for identifying demands for particular products and adapt its products to fit the needs and profile of its target audiences;
- (c) Feedback mechanisms must involve a two-way process that would provide better linkages between Headquarters and the United Nations information centres;
- (d) The systematic data-collection and monitoring system of the United Nations established by the Department of Public Information should be further improved and refined.

5. The Committee concluded that:

"In view of the generally unsatisfactory level of implementation of the recommendations made at its twenty-third session on the work of the Department of Public Information, the Committee requested that a brief follow-up report on the implementation of the Committee's recommendations at its present session should be submitted to it for consideration at its twenty-eighth session, in 1988." 3/

6. During its forty-first session, the General Assembly considered and adopted the recommendations of the Group of High-level Intergovernmental Experts to Review the Efficiency of the Administrative and Financial Functioning of the United Nations, 4/ one of which (recommendation 37 (1)), referring to the functioning of the Department of Public Information, proposed, inter alia, that:

"A thorough review of the functions and working methods as well as of the policies of the Department of Public Information should be conducted, with a view to bringing its role and policies up to date in order to improve the capacity and ability of the Department to provide information on United Nations activities as approved by the intergovernmental bodies. To this end, the working methods of the Department should be rationalized, in order that the funds allocated to that Department should, to a larger extent than hitherto, be used for programme activities."

7. In March 1987, a new Under-Secretary-General was appointed by the Secretary-General and entrusted with the responsibility for the Department of Public Information. Her mandate was, in brief, to act as speedily as possible so as to achieve the maximum possible degree of efficiency in the functioning of the Department and effectiveness in the fulfilment of the mandate entrusted to it. In order to achieve these ends, the Under-Secretary-General proposed, and the Secretary-General approved, a new administrative structure, the main characteristics of which are: in planning, a more focused and co-ordinated approach to the United Nations priority issues; in production, higher quality and timeliness; in providing services, flexibility and responsiveness; in dissemination of material, speed and accurate targetting; and in evaluation, the clear identification of audiences and the more accurate assessment of the impact of activities. The new structure consolidates functions and expertise and should help to eliminate the duplication of efforts and the dispersion of responsibilities.

8. The new administrative structure is being phased in such a way as to minimize disruption to the ongoing activities of the Department. It is the Secretary-General's intention that the implementation should be effected with flexibility and, considering the extent of the reorganization, it is expected that adjustments will be required to take into account administrative, programmatic and political concerns. Such adjustments will fully respect the mandated programme of work of the Department, as contained in document A/42/6 (Sect. 27). Any changes proposed to implement this programme of work will be submitted for approval to the General Assembly, through CPC and the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ), in the context of the revised estimates in 1988.

9. The proposed revisions to the programme budget and to the medium-term plan will be submitted to the General Assembly at its forty-third session through CPC and ACABQ. CPC will also consider, at its next session, a follow-up report to the triennial review of the work of the Department. These documents will be formulated so as to reflect the views expressed by Member States during the pertinent discussions in CPC and the Special Political Committee and the Fifth Committee during the current session of the General Assembly.

10. A number of delegations expressed concern over certain priority subject areas, <sup>5/</sup> such as the struggle against apartheid, Namibia, Palestine and decolonization. In these and other priority areas as determined by the General Assembly, the objective of the reorganization of the Department is precisely to ensure a more cohesive, co-ordinated, multi-media approach so as to achieve the maximum possible impact of the Department's activities. A primary goal of the reform is not only to maintain and nourish existing support for these issues of importance to the world community but also to reach out beyond so as to expand and multiply support bases. The major difference will lie in an increase in the scope, commitment and the greater impact of information programmes on these topics. The concerns expressed by Member States during this debate will be taken into account when putting in final form the administrative structure and work programme that will be reflected in the revised estimates to be submitted to the General Assembly at its forty-third session.

11. A related area of concern to some delegations has been that the "centralization" of certain programmes may not promote sufficiently the regional perspective and regional concerns in the Department's output. The regional units will continue to produce their own regular programming, as in the past. However, it is also envisaged that this programming will be augmented by the adaptation of relevant centrally produced materials or programmes. With regard to the introduction of additional languages, the objective of the Department is to reach as wide an audience in the world as possible, and this has to be done by using as wide a variety of means to communicate with them, including local adaptations of United Nations programmes whenever possible. Here again, the concerns expressed by Member States during this debate will be taken into account when putting into final form the administrative structure and work programme that will be reflected in the revised estimates to be submitted to the General Assembly at its forty-third session.

12. With regard to the question of the geographical distribution of the staff of the Department, tables 1 and 2 show the distribution of staff by region as at 1 January 1986 and 1 January 1987. These tables were presented to the Committee on Information at its 1987 session. In addition, more detailed information was requested concerning Professional staff of the Department from the African and Caribbean regions. This information is contained in table 3.

Table 1. Staff of the Department of Public Information  
in posts subject to geographical distribution

(Percentage)

Region	Regional mid-point	Actual staff	
		1 January 1986	1 January 1987
Africa .....	13.6	17.6	17.8
Asia and the Pacific .....	18.4	16.8	17.0
Europe (Eastern) .....	11.9	7.6	8.3
Europe (Western) .....	23.1	19.8	19.1
Latin America .....	7.8	8.0	8.3
Middle East .....	5.8	4.6	4.2
North America and the Caribbean .	<u>19.4</u>	<u>25.6</u>	<u>25.3</u>
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

Table 2. Staff of the Department of Public Information  
at the Senior Officer (P-5) level and above  
distributed by region

(Percentage)

Region	1 January 1986	1 January 1987
Africa .....	16.1	15.9
Asia and the Pacific .....	20.9	23.8
Europe (Eastern) .....	9.8	7.9
Europe (Western) .....	19.3	22.2
Latin America .....	4.8	4.8
Middle East .....	9.8	7.9
North America and the Caribbean .....	<u>19.3</u>	<u>17.5</u>
Total	100.0	100.0

Table 3. Professional staff members from the African and Caribbean regions in DPI

Regional mid-point	Department of Public Information a/									
	Secretariat-wide				Actual staff					
	Number	Percentage	Actual staff (30 June 1987)	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Actual staff (30 November 1987)	Percentage	Location of staff (30 November 1987)	
									Headquarters	UNICs
<b>Africa</b>										
Total	366.8	13.6	428	16.5	42 (236)	17.8	42 (228)	18.4	30	12
D-2					- (6)	-	- (6)	-	-	-
D-1					2 (16)	12.5	2 (13)	15.4	1	1
P-5					8 (45)	17.8	8 (42)	19.0	2	6
P-1 to P-4					32 (168)	19.0	32 (166)	19.3	27	5
<b>Caribbean b/</b>										
Total	79.4	2.9	70	2.6	5 (236)	2.1	4 (228)	1.8	2	2
D-2					1 (6)	16.7	- (6)	-	-	-
D-1					- (16)	-	- (13)	-	-	-
P-5					- (45)	-	- (42)	-	-	-
P-1 to P-4					4 (168)	2.4	4 (166)	2.4	3	1

a/ Figures in parentheses are DPI totals. The totals of 236 and 228 for 30 June 1987 and 30 November 1987, respectively, include the post of the Under-Secretary-General.

b/ The grouping of the Caribbean region follows that used in "Composition of the Secretariat" (A/42/636). In addition, in DPI there are one staff member (P-3) from Cuba and two staff members (P-5 and P-3) from Haiti.

13. The Under-Secretary-General for Public Information has indicated in categorical terms to the Special Political Committee her commitment to achieving the widest possible geographical distribution in the staffing of the Department. The following excerpt from her statement of 19 November 1987 is relevant in this regard:

"The need for the Department of Public Information to reach out to and communicate with all the peoples of the world requires the Department to have talent based on the full range of cultural and linguistic backgrounds, which only a wide geographical representation can guarantee. While the situation of the Department of Public Information is not substantially different from that of the Secretariat as a whole, it is not one which fully satisfies me. I wish to assure the Committee, therefore, that I will spare no effort to seek a constant improvement in this regard. In particular, I would wish members to know that I am taking urgent measures to redress the present imbalance at the senior levels."

Although the question of equitable geographical distribution must be considered on a Secretariat-wide basis, the objectives outlined above will guide Secretariat units concerned in the implementation of the reform process which is now under way and which will be reflected in the revised estimates to be considered by the General Assembly at its forty-third session.

14. On the issue of the use of consultants by the Department, a number of comments were made related to the geographical imbalance existing in a list which circulated informally in the corridors. The Department relies on a variety of resources in order to implement its programme of work. The regular staff resources are supplemented, as necessary, by short-term temporary assistance and by individual contractors and consultants, depending on the particular requirements. During 1987, such services have been contracted for on more than 700 occasions, for the services of individuals of such varied specialized or technical skills as contractual translators, panellists on television programmes, radio or video narrators, art designers, etc. In the case of organizational management, the study to restructure the Department, the cost of which is reflected in the report of the Secretary-General on programme budget performance for the biennium 1986-1987 (A/C.5/42/40/Add.27), was entrusted to the newly appointed Under-Secretary-General and she was required to act expeditiously in contracting individuals whose expertise was personally known to her. The Under-Secretary-General indicated to the Special Political Committee that "naturally, this will not be the general practice since, in this respect as well, I am fully convinced of the necessity to ensure wide geographical representation".

Notes

1/ A/42/6 (Sect. 27).

2/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-first Session, Supplement No. 38 (A/41/38).

3/ Ibid., para. 93.

4/ Ibid., Supplement No. 49 (A/41/49).

5/ Detailed responses were provided in writing in some instances. These are contained in the annex.



AnnexRESPONSES TO QUESTIONS RAISED BY CERTAIN DELEGATIONS IN  
THE FIFTH COMMITTEE

## I

The representative of Kenya asked among other things, how many anti-apartheid programmes were currently produced per year, and how many would be produced under the new structure of the Department of Public Information (DPI).

It should be emphasized that anti-apartheid and related programmes are produced not only by the Anti-Apartheid Programme Section of the Radio Service, but also by other sections and units of the Service in six official languages and 11 non-official languages here in New York, including Sesotho, Setswana, Xhosa and Zulu.

Table A.1 contains details of DPI products (Headquarters only) for 1986-1987 and estimated output for 1988 on the question of apartheid.

Under the new structure, the current output would be maintained and increased if necessary depending on developments concerning apartheid in the United Nations and in southern Africa, as well as the capacity of radio stations to use in a consistent manner the programmes produced by the United Nations Radio Service. This is important, since DPI has no direct access to radio and television audiences and depends entirely on national broadcasting organizations for usage of its products.

In 1988, for example, the Department intends to make available to some of the front-line States a weekly telephone "news feed" on developments relating to apartheid and the problems of southern Africa. It will also resume production in Afrikaans if radio organizations are willing to accept programmes in that language.

The Department is designing a new promotion and distribution strategy for its anti-apartheid information products in other target areas.

In addition to radio and press coverage of the various activities, including regional seminars scheduled for 1988 in major cities such as Lima, Accra, The Hague and Nice, as well as other activities, the Department will produce at least 40 special radio documentaries on specific aspects of apartheid. The television programmes "World Chronicle" and "UN in Action" will also devote some segments to the question of apartheid.

A significant element of the 1988 work programmes of the Department on the question of apartheid will be the designation of a full-time focal point for anti-apartheid activities, within the Communications and Programme Management Services, with emphasis on an integrated multi-media approach to planning, production, dissemination and evaluation.

Table A.1. Information products of DPI at Headquarters on the question of apartheid excluding NGO-related activities

Programmes	1986 (actual)	1987 (actual) <u>a/</u>	1988 (planned) <u>b/</u>
<b>1. <u>Radio</u></b>			
a. Documentaries and features (14-minute duration)	882 (Af, E, A, C, Bq, Ses, S, Tsw, Xho, Zulu, Po) <u>c/</u>	697 (Af, A, Bq, C, R, Ses, S, Tsw, Xho, Zulu)	900
b. Items in magazines	197 (A, E, C, F, S, R, Bq, Hi, In, Po)	235 (A, E, C, F, S, R, Bq, Hi, In, Po)	225
c. News items, including telephone feeds	40 (E, S)	112 (E, F, S, Po)	150
<b>2. <u>Television/photos</u></b>			
a. Film documentary (30-minute duration)	1 (E, F, S)	1 (A, F, S)	1 (A, E, F, S)
b. Spots			2 (A, E, F, S)
c. Feature (30-minute duration)	1 (E)		4 (E)
d. Regional Magazines	4 (F)	2 (F)	10 (E, F)
e. News packages	38 (E)	17	
f. Photo slides, slide sets/sheets	13	5	15
<b>3. <u>Press/publications</u></b>			
a. Pamphlets (reprint) (copies)	1 000 (A), 6 600 (E) 5 000 (F), 5 000 (S) 2 000 (G), 2 000 (Po)	1 000 (A)	7 000

Programmes	1986 (actual)	1987 (actual) <u>a/</u>	1988 (planned) <u>b/</u>
b. Pamphlets (now) (copies)	10 000 (E), 5 000 (F) 5 000 (S)		
c. Press releases (items)	77 (E), 59 (F)	15 (E), 11 (F)	100 (E) 5 (F)

a/ 1987 figures are for first quarter only except for radio programmes up to November 1987.

b/ Planned or estimated 1988/1989 proposed budget.

c/ Languages: A - Arabic; E - English; F - French; Af - Afrikaans;  
C - Chinese; Bq - Bengali; Ses - Sesotho; S - Spanish; Tsw - Tswana; Xho - Xhosa;  
Zulu; Po - Portuguese; R - Russian; Hi - Hindi; In - Indonesian.

II

The representative of the Congo wanted to know whether there were in fact three French language posts in the Radio Service and whether all or some of them were occupied. Yes, there are three posts for French language production, two of which are connected with the African Unit. In the African Unit, one post is occupied while the other is temporarily frozen and against which an SSA is working until the current freeze is lifted for this high-priority post.

He also wanted to know how many posts were envisaged in the new structure for programming in English, French, Portuguese and Kiswahili. It is too early to go into detail about distribution of posts in the new restructuring. The assumption is that in the news and feature programming there will be radio programmes in both English and French. In the regional units, the six official languages will be spread according to the many demands of the relevant areas. For the rest nothing has been finalized yet, in particular as regards Swahili and Portuguese. Production in these languages will of course continue.

The representative of the Congo questioned what he described as the move to centralize programming in DPI while there were moves outside the UN towards decentralization in other media. His query is related to a comment by the representative of Kenya (at the 43rd meeting, on 24 November) that programmes should not be centrally planned and merely translated into local languages.

DPI does not have the resources to provide full planning, research and production facilities for each and every language, official as well as non-official. Some degree of resource-sharing has been and will of necessity have to be maintained and even increased. Currently, a substantial number of radio programmes are being centrally produced (for example, anti-apartheid, news and special thematic programmes) and adapted into other languages. Many programmes are adapted, not merely translated, to suit regional needs. This is standard practice in national and international broadcasting organizations.

The Congolese representative also wanted to know why the television regional magazines had been abolished. They were not abolished; in fact, they have been expanded.

With regard to the television programme "United Nations in Action", which is disseminated around the world, the Congolese representative queried its effectiveness and the relevance of its content in countries such as his own. It is produced to have the most meaningful message on United Nations matters with the widest possible audience everywhere. Occasionally some items may not always appeal to certain audiences. Through the use of local news bulletins, its format specifically adapts to the requirements of a three-minute format. For other markets, where the duration can be longer, we have weekly programmes like World Chronicle. In preparing the television magazines on development, for example, this is being done in tandem with our publications African Recovery and Development Forum as well as with radio programmes dealing with the same issues.

The Congolese delegate asked whether there were not African broadcasters in DPI who could produce television programmes. We do have African journalists in DPI some of whom are producers of radio and television broadcasts. They do function as such.

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