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

Reform and renewal in the United Nations: second progress report
of the Secretary-General on the implementation of General Assembly
resolution 41/213

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* A/43/50.

I. INTRODUCTION

1. On 19 December 1986, the General Assembly, on the basis of the report of the Group of High-level Intergovernmental Experts to Review the Efficiency of the Administrative and Financial Functioning of the United Nations, 1/ adopted by consensus resolution 41/213 entitled "Review of the efficiency of the administrative and financial functioning of the United Nations". The resolution sets for the Secretariat a difficult but vital task: the implementation of a process of reform and renewal. In it, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General and the relevant organs and bodies of the United Nations to implement the recommendations contained in the report of the Group over a three-year period ending in 1989, and provided specific guidance on some of the recommendations. It also requested that a report be submitted to the General Assembly at its forty-second session.

2. In his first progress report (A/42/214 and Corr.1), the Secretary-General indicated what action had already been taken and his plans for implementing section I of resolution 41/213 dealing with the recommendations of the Group of High-level Intergovernmental Experts. Separate reports were submitted in response to section II of that resolution (A/42/214, A/42/225 and Add.1 and A/42/532), which deals with the planning, programming and budgeting process. Given the time-schedule for the preparation of the programme budget for the biennium 1988-1989, some of the reforms announced in the first progress report could not be reflected in the proposed budget. Therefore, updated information, including programmatic and budgetary aspects, was later presented to the Fifth Committee of the General Assembly through the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination and the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (A/C.5/42/2/Rev.1).

3. At its forty-second session, the General Assembly examined the two reports pertaining to section I of the resolution (A/42/234 and A/C.5/42/2/Rev.1) in conjunction with the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1988-1989. Following its consideration of the matter, the General Assembly adopted resolution 42/211 of 21 December 1987 on the implementation of resolution 41/213, which, inter alia, requested the Secretary-General to take into account the reviews, studies and decisions entrusted to the intergovernmental bodies and to co-operate with these bodies; to seek the approval of the General Assembly for a departure from the approved recommendations; and to reflect in the revised estimates the state of implementation of resolution 41/213. The General Assembly provided further guidance with respect to specific recommendations and requested another progress report on the state of implementation of that resolution to be submitted through the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination and the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions.

4. In response to that request, the present report provides detailed information on action taken with respect to each recommendation of the Group of High-level Intergovernmental Experts up to the first quarter of 1988 and plans for the remaining period (April 1988-December 1989). Specific data concerning most of the recommendations mentioned in paragraph 10 of resolution 42/211 will be provided in the revised estimates for the programme budget for the biennium 1988-1989 (A/C.5/43/1).

5. Of the 71 recommendations contained in the report of the Group of High-level Intergovernmental Experts, a number were addressed either to Member States (recommendations 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 64, 65 and 70) or to advisory bodies to the General Assembly such as the International Civil Service Commission (recommendations 53 and 61), the Joint Inspection Unit (recommendations 63 and 67) or the External Auditors (recommendation 67). The present report does not deal with these recommendations except to indicate actions taken by the Secretariat to facilitate their implementation upon the request of the competent bodies.

6. The present second progress report, which covers slightly more than one third of the three-year period foreseen in General Assembly resolution 41/213, outlines the considerable progress that has been made in a number of areas. As indicated previously (A/42/234, para. 9), some of the recommendations approved by the General Assembly at its forty-first session are of a broad nature and are to be implemented over a much longer term than the first three years. It should also be mentioned that major studies and reviews on related items are being conducted concurrently by intergovernmental bodies and the Secretariat. The outcome of such studies is likely to have its full impact on the Organization after 1989.

7. The Secretary-General has taken vigorous measures to reform the Secretariat with a view to making it more effective and efficient. Important as these measures are, they cannot by themselves fulfil the objective of resolution 41/213, which is to strengthen the effectiveness of the United Nations in dealing with political, economic and social issues. For the process of reform to reach fruition, Member States must, no less, provide their full support, politically and financially, to the Organization.

II. PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTING THE REFORMS

8. At the beginning of the first progress report, the Secretary-General indicated that a number of common points of reference were needed as foundations for the future. One year later, he firmly believes that the nine points then presented remain valid. While not wishing to repeat them in this report, it is worth re-emphasizing that the reform process, in order to proceed in an orderly and planned way, needs to be undertaken in a climate free of financial uncertainties. The General Assembly agreed with the Secretary-General on this point and emphasized the importance of financial stability in its resolution 42/211. However, the Organization continues to face a financial crisis that is a source of grave concern, as reported at the end of the forty-second session of the General Assembly (A/42/841). It is unfortunately in this environment that the reform process is being carried out.

9. In planning the reform programme, the Secretary-General has taken account not only of the findings of the Fifth Committee, as referred to in resolutions 41/213 and 42/211, with respect to the recommendations of the Group of High-level Intergovernmental Experts, but also of other relevant resolutions adopted during the last two sessions on activities or organizational units mentioned in the report of the Group. For instance, the General Assembly adopted resolution 42/162 A of 8 December 1987 on questions relating to information, which complements

recommendation 37 on the same subject; likewise, resolution 42/170 of 11 December 1987 (referred to in resolution 42/211) provides guidance with regard to the economic and social fields and conference services.

10. For ease of reference, action taken on each recommendation is presented by major sector of activity as in the first progress report: political affairs, economic and social matters as well as co-ordination in the United Nations system, information, conference services, administration and finance, and personnel.

III. THE STRUCTURE AND FUNCTIONING OF THE SECRETARIAT

A. The political sector

11. The changes in this sector that the Secretary-General had first announced in March 1987 and developed in the first progress report are now in place and the reorganization is virtually completed (see recommendations 16, 18 and 22). There is now a clear delineation of responsibilities for each of the political offices. Through timely information and sound analysis, it will be possible to increase the Organization's preparedness to deal with emerging problems and, as the Secretary-General has stated before (A/42/234, paras. 14-19), to strengthen the institutional basis of preventive diplomacy to facilitate the work of the Security Council.

Recommendation 17

12. As reported previously (A/42/234 and Corr.1, para. 20), all of the work of the former Office for Field Operations and External Support Activities connected with the administrative support services for peace-keeping missions has been integrated into the Office of General Services, Department of Administration and Management, as the Field Operations Division. Its work relating to the dissemination of political information has been assigned to the new Office for Research and the Collection of Information, as also requested in recommendation 18.

13. Regarding the second sentence of recommendation 17, which proposed that most of the staff in the field missions be recruited locally and that the number of internationally recruited Field Service Officers be substantially reduced, the following points should be noted. A number of functions are already being performed by locally recruited staff whenever feasible. A field survey was undertaken in 1987 to determine the modalities for implementing this recommendation and for increasing further the proportion of locally recruited staff. The results of this survey and a careful analysis of political, technical and mobility factors confirmed that the possibilities for replacing internationally recruited Field Service Officers by local staff are limited. The reduction in the number of posts - both in the Field Service and at the local level - is being reported on separately, in the context of the implementation of recommendation 15 (A/C.5/43/1).

Recommendation 19

14. Proposals were made in the first progress report for the consolidation and strengthening of support services for activities relating to Namibia (A/42/234 and Corr.1, para. 20, and A/C.5/42/2/Rev.1, para. 25). These proposals were discussed in the Fifth Committee. The General Assembly, in its resolution 42/211, paragraph 10 (c), referred specifically to activities relating to Namibia, inviting the Secretary-General to consult with the United Nations Council for Namibia on the implementation of the recommendation. A number of meetings with the Bureau of the Council were held and clarifications concerning the reporting and administrative arrangements for the Commissioner for Namibia and his Office in the context of the consolidation of certain functions of that Office with the Department for Special Political Questions, Regional Co-operation, Decolonization and Trusteeship were provided and reflected in the records of the United Nations Council for Namibia (A/AC.131/SR.512 and 513). The organizational bulletin will outline the decisions taken in this respect. The pertinent budgetary aspects will be covered in the revised estimates for the programme budget for the biennium 1988-1989 (A/C.5/43/1). Activities flowing from the Council for Namibia will be undertaken by the Commissioner, who will report directly to the Council and will keep the Under-Secretary-General for Special Political Questions, Regional Co-operation, Decolonization and Trusteeship informed of developments in this area; the Commissioner will also have direct access to the Secretary-General and will have administrative responsibility for the Council's programme budget.

Recommendation 20

15. The review of the structure of the Department for Disarmament Affairs requested in this recommendation is under way. Once the results of the review have been fully assessed and decisions taken on implementation, it is expected that the outcome will be a reorganized department with streamlined activities and with due emphasis on activities referred to in recommendation 20.

Recommendation 21

16. In the course of implementation of this recommendation, the mandate of the Department of Political Affairs, Trusteeship and Decolonization has been substantially revised, as described in the first progress report (A/42/234 and Corr.1, para. 20 (b)) and in the update to that report (A/C.5/42/2/Rev.1, paras. 25 and 26). Functions in the area of research and information not directly related to the mandate of the Department have been transferred to the new Office for Research and the Collection of Information while the responsibilities of the former Office for Special Political Questions and the secretariat support for the Commissioner for Namibia have been integrated into this new department renamed the Department for Special Political Questions, Regional Co-operation, Decolonization and Trusteeship. Moreover, the Department has been assigned additional responsibilities in the area of regional co-operation, on matters dealing with African emergency-related questions of a complex nature and certain special economic assistance programmes of political sensitivity, as well as with responsibilities for monitoring the follow-up of the recommendations of the Second International Conference on Assistance to Refugees in Africa as described in the

Secretary-General's report on implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development 1986-1990 (A/42/674, paras. 60-64). The new structure and staffing of the Department has been developed on the basis of a review of the status of continuing as well as new responsibilities assigned to it.

Recommendation 29

17. The General Assembly, in paragraph 10 (e) of resolution 42/211, invited the Secretary-General to review his decisions regarding implementation of this recommendation concerning the Office of Secretariat Services for Economic and Social Matters in the light of the debate of the Fifth Committee, and to reflect the results of his review in the revised estimates. As requested, the revised estimates for the programme budget for the biennium 1988-1989 provide detailed information regarding the implementation of this recommendation (A/C.5/43/1).

B. Co-ordination in the United Nations system and economic and social matters

Recommendation 9

18. The Administrative Committee on Co-ordination undertook a review of the functioning of its subsidiary machinery and adopted, in October 1986, a set of recommendations relating to its main subsidiary machinery, namely, the Organizational Committee and the four consultative committees (decision 1986/21). The outcome of this review was referred to in the Secretary-General's report on co-ordination in the United Nations and the United Nations system, submitted through the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination to the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly in 1987 (A/42/232-E/1987/68). In considering that report, the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination emphasized the need for more effective co-ordination at the inter-secretariat level and stressed the important role of the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination in this regard. The Committee noted that the machinery of the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination remained complex and recommended that the Administrative Committee should intensify the review of its functioning with a view to improving the form and substance of its considerations, streamlining its subsidiary machinery and reducing its costs substantially.

19. The General Assembly, in resolution 42/196 of 11 December 1987, invited the Secretary-General, as Chairman of the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination, to report to the General Assembly, through the Economic and Social Council, on the implementation by the Committee of its own recommendations adopted in October 1986.

20. The Organizational Committee, on behalf of the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination, has continued the review of the functioning of its machinery. A number of practical measures were adopted to strengthen the managerial role of the Organizational Committee and to rationalize meetings convened within the framework of the Administrative Committee. The number of meetings held under the auspices of the latter was reduced from 34 in 1986 to 29 in 1987; steps were taken to focus the

discussion of the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination on a few selected and major issues on the basis of background papers prepared by relevant organizations in co-operation with others and/or inputs from the Committee's subsidiary machinery.

21. Efforts will continue to be made to streamline the machinery for inter-agency co-ordination while fully recognizing the increasing emphasis placed by Member States, particularly in the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council, on the need to enhance co-ordination among organizations of the system as a means of improving their collective output, ensuring complementarity of activities and avoiding duplication of effort. The Organizational Committee, at its organizational session of 1988, identified a number of areas relating to the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination machinery and the corresponding secretariat support and the nature and format of inputs to the intergovernmental bodies, on which the review could focus and to which further consideration should be given in the light of the outcome of the work of the Special Commission of the Economic and Social Council on the In-depth Study of the United Nations Intergovernmental Structure and Functions in the Economic and Social Fields. It is expected that the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination will finalize the review of the functioning of its subsidiary machinery in October 1988 and will inform the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination and the Economic and Social Council of the outcome in its overview report for 1988.

Recommendation 10

22. The Administrative Committee on Co-ordination welcomed the emphasis on the need for discussion by the executive heads of major policy questions in the economic and social fields and for subsequent reporting to their respective intergovernmental bodies. The Committee has already undertaken such discussion in its regular biannual sessions and was of the view that the objective of this recommendation could be achieved by convening subject-oriented Committee sessions and/or by recourse to functional groups.

23. The Secretary-General believes that the objective of recommendation 10 could best be achieved through informal consultations among relevant executive heads on major policy questions. For that purpose, he has convened a number of informal meetings with relevant executive heads to consider issues relating to Africa, debt and development, and the functioning of the Economic and Social Council. In his report on the work of the Organization in 1987, 2/ he also made a number of suggestions concerning the strengthening of the Council and, at the inter-secretariat level, arrangements to encourage an integrated approach to problems while taking advantage of the human resources of the system as a whole.

Recommendations 11 and 12

24. In his first progress report, the Secretary-General indicated that he had initiated efforts to achieve a pattern of United Nations field representation that is both effective and efficient (A/42/234, para. 30 (h)). The situation is now as follows:

(a) Various United Nations funds, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the World Food Programme (WFP), in their Joint Consultative Group on Policy, have, during the past year, undertaken a systematic assessment of their field offices on a country-by-country basis. They have identified steps that should be taken to enhance co-operation and efficiency through the sharing of office premises and services in the field whenever this is feasible and cost-effective. The organizations in the Joint Consultative Group on Policy hope that the other organizations and agencies of the United Nations system will join in this development. The executive heads will report progress to the governing bodies of their respective organizations, which will in turn report to the Economic and Social Council. The Director-General will also report on progress to the General Assembly through the Council.

(b) An in-depth study has been undertaken by UNDP and the Department of Public Information of the Secretariat of the most cost-effective and efficient working relationships of United Nations information centres and the offices of the resident co-ordinators/resident representatives. A final agreement is expected to be reached shortly that will embody practical guidelines for co-operation in the field between these entities of the United Nations in countries where there are at present separate field offices, in countries where the Department of Public Information is represented by the resident co-ordinator/resident representative, and in countries where there is an information centre but no UNDP presence.

Recommendations 23 and 24

25. These recommendations deal with emergency assistance programmes and the Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator (UNDRO). The General Assembly, at its forty-first session, adopted resolution 41/201 of 8 December 1986 on UNDRO, which, inter alia, reaffirmed the mandate of that Office and requested the Secretary-General to submit a report on the implementation of the resolution, including a comprehensive review and assessment of the existing mechanisms and arrangements within the system for disaster and emergency assistance and co-ordination.

26. In that report (A/42/657), the Secretary-General, inter alia, proposed the establishment of a central focal point in the Office of the Director-General for Development and International Economic Co-operation to ensure effective response by the United Nations system in the case of disasters and other emergency situations. The Secretary-General also recommended that UNDRO should focus its activities on sudden natural disasters and on preparation and prevention measures related thereto, and indicated that a study would be undertaken by the Management Advisory Service with a view to adjusting UNDRO's work programme and organization to reflect this basic orientation. With respect to complex emergency situations, the Secretary-General, in appropriate consultation with his colleagues, will make such arrangements as may be necessary. Further, the Secretary-General recommended that a joint UNDP/UNDRO task force be established to work out improved modalities for co-operation.

27. In its decision 42/433, the General Assembly welcomed the initiative of the Secretary-General to establish a central focal point in the Office of the Director-General. It also requested the Secretary-General to proceed with the implementation of the conclusions and recommendations contained in his report and to present a progress report to the General Assembly at its forty-third session.

28. The purpose of the Management Advisory Service study on UNDRO is to identify the organizational and other arrangements needed to permit UNDRO to focus its activities on sudden natural disasters and on preparation and prevention measures related thereto. Furthermore, a task force was established to review the modalities of co-operation between UNDP and UNDRO in the field. Other organizations of the system have been invited to participate in the work of the task force as appropriate. This exercise will lead to revised guidelines for co-operation and a memorandum of understanding between the two organizations. As requested, the results of these activities will be reported upon to the General Assembly at its forty-third session in a progress report of the Secretary-General.

Recommendations 25 to 27

29. The reforms in the economic and social sectors are closely related to the work of the Special Commission established by Economic and Social Council decision 1987/112, in order to carry out the in-depth study of the United Nations intergovernmental structure and functions in the economic and social fields in implementation of recommendation 8. The Special Commission will submit its report to the Council at its regular session of 1988.

30. The in-depth programmatic review called for in recommendation 25 (1), which was initiated at the end of 1986, as indicated in the first progress report (A/42/234, para. 29), has been largely completed. The Office of the Director-General has assembled comprehensive information from programme managers - with particular emphasis on the broad areas identified in the first progress report (para. 31), i.e. global analysis and reporting, energy and natural resources, science and technology, economic and technical co-operation among developing countries, national development strategies and the relationship between operational and substantive activities.

31. The review of these areas has reached a stage where possibilities can be envisaged for changing the secretariat structure. None the less, it is necessary to have a clearer view of the changes that Governments intend to introduce in the intergovernmental machinery before reaching definitive conclusions on these changes. Accordingly, the specific decisions and/or proposals on the secretariat structure will be developed in the light of the outcome of the Special Commission of the Economic and Social Council on the In-depth Study of the United Nations Intergovernmental Structure and Functions in the Economic and Social Fields.

32. Without awaiting the results of the intergovernmental review, a number of conclusions may be reached based on the secretariat review. Firstly, a close examination of the analytical work being done on the world economy aspects indicated that there is less overlapping than was suggested, although there is room for streamlining certain activities such as the short- to medium-term analysis of

the economic situation and prospects. More emphasis will be given to regular monitoring and the integrated study of major economic, social and environmental trends. Secondly, the review suggested the importance of integrating substantive and operational activities within the secretariat in some fields.

33. As far as the complementarity between subprogrammes is concerned, detailed consultations are taking place among the individual entities concerned with a view to streamlining their activities and strengthening co-operation between them. For example, the Department of International Economic and Social Affairs and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) have identified concrete possibilities for strengthening their co-operation in analytical work on the world economy and the development of data bases for this purpose. At the same time, the Department and UNCTAD are working on changes to their internal structure designed to give greater focus and coherence to their work in responding to intergovernmental mandates. The Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs of the United Nations Office at Vienna and the Department are fortifying their links with the Department of Technical Co-operation and Development with a view to undertaking joint activities. The Department of International Economic and Social Affairs has recently worked out new co-operative arrangements with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

34. In relation to recommendation 27, on the regional commissions, a study was carried out on their future role and activities. Based upon the findings of the study, consultations with the Executive Secretaries of the regional commissions and the heads of other entities concerned will shortly be completed and appropriate decisions and/or proposals finalized. Member States will be kept informed of developments.

35. Recommendation 25 (3) refers to enhancing the authority of the Director-General for Development and International Economic Co-operation so that he may fully exercise the functions envisaged in General Assembly resolution 32/197 of 20 December 1977. As the review has progressed, the importance of this recommendation with regard to both substantive and operational activities has become clear. There is a very close relationship between specific initiatives to strengthen the role of the Office of the Director-General, and the recommendations that will emerge from the work of the Special Commission of the Economic and Social Council concerning the strengthening of the Council's central role in policy-making and co-ordination.

C. Public information activities

Recommendation 37

36. In paragraphs 34-38 of his first progress report (A/42/234), the Secretary-General indicated his conceptual framework for the specific reforms and improvements of the Department of Public Information of the Secretariat, in response to the request contained in recommendation 37 of the Group of High-level Intergovernmental Experts. In essence, he pointed out that the previous information practice of the Organization, which concentrated on communications

mainly with Member States, "ignored the tapping of the second-tier global constituency, the world's peoples". The report further indicated that "if the United Nations is to develop the capacity to undertake a tight, realistic and acceptable agenda for the 1990s, it must seek to enlarge the circle of active public opinion in support of the United Nations and develop a new awareness of its value and potential, especially among the younger generations, by helping people to discover and visualize tangible benefits that touch their lives directly".

37. To that end, the Secretary-General indicated an approach for a three-phase review of the Department that he had initiated. These phases would be, firstly, a review of the Department's major fields of activities and the management system, including access to technology and funding policies; secondly, the examination of the distribution of human, technical and financial resources, and of ways and means of rendering policies and programmes more effective in reaching opinion-builders; and, thirdly, the implementation of a new structure.

38. The timetable envisaged for the implementation of the third phase had proved to be overly optimistic. It was hoped that the new structure would be in place by the end of 1987, but in fact it is at the present time only partially in place. The deliberate and meticulous exercise undertaken in connection with the implementation of recommendation 15 of the Group of High-level Intergovernmental Experts, that is, the post-reduction exercise, which affects the Secretariat as a whole, required a review that extended beyond the time originally planned, delaying a decision on the precise number of posts that would be requested for the Department. This having been established, the implementation will now proceed and should be completed prior to the opening of the forty-third session of the General Assembly.

39. Detailed information (programmatic, budgetary and structural) concerning the restructured DPI, will, of course, be included in the revised programme budget estimates that will be submitted to the General Assembly at its forty-third session, through the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination and the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (A/C.5/43/1).

D. Conference services and related issues

Recommendation 1

40. At its session in 1987, the Committee on Conferences discussed ways of strengthening its role and considered establishing the Committee as a permanent intergovernmental body. To assist the Committee in those deliberations, the Secretariat had prepared a detailed document containing both background information and suggestions on how the Committee might wish to approach the task of changing its mandate to reflect the role envisioned for it by the General Assembly in resolution 41/213 (A/AC.1/72/118). The Committee reviewed every aspect of the question of its status and future terms of reference and achieved a consensus on many important points. It will continue those deliberations during 1988 and is expected to submit its final recommendations on the matter to the General Assembly at its forty-third session.

Recommendations 2 and 3

41. Some success has been achieved in addressing recommendation 1 (e) on the planning and co-ordination of conferences and meetings, in particular, by staggering them throughout the year so as to utilize conference facilities and resources better. However, with regard to recommendation 2, on the reduction in the number and duration of meetings and conferences, and pending the completion of the work of the Special Commission of the Economic and Social Council on the In-depth Study of the United Nations Intergovernmental Structure and Functions in the Economic and Social Fields, the calendar of conferences for the biennium 1988-1989 does not reflect a diminished level of meeting activity.

42. On the other hand, in an effort to adapt the concept introduced in recommendation 1 (d), the Secretary-General, in formulating the programme budget submissions for the biennium 1988-1989, has for the first time incorporated into the resource base for temporary assistance the funding for servicing meetings other than the sessions of the General Assembly, which heretofore had been provided annually as non-recurrent funding through the consolidated statement of budgetary implications for conference servicing activities. Thus, at its forty-second session, the General Assembly approved as a part of the regular programme budget an overall level of resources for servicing the biennial calendar of conferences. The co-operation of all offices serving as substantive secretariats to intergovernmental bodies has been sought and they have been asked to exercise restraint and prudence in requesting and in their manner of using meeting and documentation services. In order to deploy the limited resources available as effectively and efficiently as possible, the importance of careful planning and the sharing of information has also been emphasized. As mandated by the General Assembly in its resolution 42/207 C of 11 December 1987 on the pattern of conferences, necessary measures will have to be taken to ensure the provision of conference services to the United Nations with adequate personnel, with due respect for the equal treatment of all official languages of the United Nations.

Recommendation 7

43. The impact of applying restraint in the utilization of conference resources and of measures aimed at controlling documentation has been monitored by the Committee on Conferences, which, during its 1987 sessions, had before it statistics provided by the Secretariat that reveal a trend towards a closer adherence to the 32-page limit for reports of subsidiary organs set by the General Assembly in its resolution 37/14 C of 16 November 1982. The Committee has also included in the agenda of its 1988 session the consideration of a report to be submitted by the Secretariat on communications from Member States circulated as documents of the United Nations. Furthermore, in an attempt to control and limit documentation, the Department of Conference Services, in co-operation with other offices at Headquarters, is implementing measures aimed at reducing the overall quantity of documents that need to be distributed and printed.

Recommendation 34

44. The Department continues to identify those areas of document- and publication-processing activities where the introduction of new technologies or procedures has made it possible to increase efficiency and productivity further in order to update output indicators. A pilot project using optical disc technology as a partial solution for solving the problems of storage and retrieval of documentation will be launched in 1988 at the United Nations Office at Geneva, as recommended by the Joint Inspection Unit. This project is being supported by extrabudgetary funding. Small projects will also be implemented during the 1988-1989 period in order to test this new technology and to enable the Secretariat to make a close study of its possibilities and effectiveness as well as to evaluate its costs. To that effect, it is planned to examine further other technological innovations in conference services that could result in continued improvements in productivity.

45. The Department is also currently engaged in harmonizing terminology and statistical methodologies and presentations used in formulating the proposed programme budget for conference and library services.

46. Through the collaborative efforts of the author departments and the Department of Conference Services and under the auspices of the Publications Board, progress has been made in implementing the Organization's publications programme in a more cost-efficient manner. Believing that the quality of United Nations publications is measured more by the readership on the basis of content and timeliness of issuance than on expensive, glossy presentation, greater emphasis has been placed on printing as many publications as possible using the in-house printing and binding facilities. As a result, the external printing appropriations for the biennium 1988-1989 reflect a negative growth rate of 17.3 per cent over the total appropriations originally approved for the same purpose for the biennium 1986-1987. To enhance the quality of the Organization's publications, separate studies have been carried out by the Publications Board, resulting in a series of recommendations aimed at improving the timeliness of the publications and these have been passed on to author departments and processing services.

47. Pursuant to a recommendation of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions and as part of its efforts to rationalize the publications programme, the Publications Board, in consultation with the Office of Programme Planning, Budget and Finance, has recently developed a methodology for estimating the cost of producing recurrent publications. This methodology will be used in the preparation of the Secretary-General's proposed programme budget for the biennium 1990-1991 and in the planning and review of the consolidated publications programme for that period. Moreover, as requested by the Committee on Programme and Co-ordination and with the assistance of the secretariats of the intergovernmental bodies that authorize the production of recurrent publications, the Publications Board is monitoring the reviews of the intergovernmental bodies concerned and will ensure the implementation of their decisions to discontinue or to reduce in volume or periodicity any publications that do not meet the criteria set forth in resolution 38/32 E of 25 November 1983. Guidelines are also being developed to help distinguish clearly between recurrent and non-recurrent publications.

Moreover, efforts are being made for better co-ordination of the statistical publications programmes of the regional commissions and the Statistical Office at Headquarters.

48. To maximize the sale of successful publications, a marketing survey was conducted of North American acquisition librarians, who represent approximately 30 per cent of the overall sales market for United Nations publications. Specific recommendations to reach that targeted public more effectively were formulated and will be implemented. The reference publications most requested by libraries are the World Economic Survey, the Yearbook of the United Nations and the Yearbook of the International Law Commission. Some of the publications in greater demand in recent years are manuals and publications on standards such as the Guidelines for Project Evaluation, the Manual for the Preparation of Industrial Feasibility Studies, System of National Accounts and the Standard International Trade Classification (Rev.2). Based on a study, the list of magazines in which advertisements are placed has been revised. Currently, United Nations publications are advertised not only in the media but also at trade shows and exhibits and at book fairs. In 1987, a new video "On Common Ground", which provides a tour of the United Nations, has met with success, particularly in schools.

E. Administration and finance

49. Apart from those cases where the implementation of the recommendations is dependent upon the completion of reviews or studies in other areas (e.g. the reviews in the economic and social fields), most of the recommendations of the Group of High-level Intergovernmental Experts with regard to administration and finance have been implemented, as the information provided below indicates.

50. In addition, initiatives have been taken in the administrative area, particularly with respect to the information systems for budget, payroll, accounting and human resources. A major study is under way, as announced at the forty-second session (A/C.5/42/18), with a view to establishing an integrated management information system that will encompass not only the administrative area at Headquarters but also the administration of the other major offices. This integrated system will provide managers with up-to-date and comprehensive information that will facilitate decision-making.

51. During the rest of the reform period, it is intended to pay particular attention to the question of delegation of authority in administrative matters. Greater delegation of authority under clear rules and guidelines and with appropriate control mechanisms will result in increased efficiency. Such measures can only become possible with the introduction of a truly integrated information system covering not only Headquarters offices but also the other main duty stations.

Recommendation 5

52. At its forty-second session, the General Assembly adopted resolution 42/211, paragraph 10 (a) of which stated as follows:

"Regarding recommendation 5, the General Assembly takes note of the report of the Secretary-General (A/C.5/42/4) and invites him to proceed as necessary on both already approved projects in accordance with the provision of section I, paragraph 1 (a), of resolution 41/213, on the understanding that no additional appropriation will be required in that regard for the biennium 1988-1989".

Measures have already been taken on the implementation of the resolution and will be reported upon to the General Assembly at its forty-third session in the Secretary-General's annual report on the construction projects at Addis Ababa and Bangkok. The Committee for Programme and Co-ordination and the General Assembly will be advised through the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions of the further financial requirements in this regard, in the context of the budget outline for the biennium 1990-1991.

Recommendation 6

53. The proposed programme budget for the biennium 1988-1989 (A/42/6, sect. 1, para. 1.5) reflected a negative growth of \$2,748,400 of the resources requested for the travel of representatives of Member States attending the General Assembly. The General Assembly, at its forty-second session, adopted resolution 42/226 of 21 December 1987 approving the budgetary provisions for the reimbursement of travel costs for 5 representatives each of the 40 least developed countries.

Recommendation 13

54. The harmonization of budgets in the United Nations system requested in this recommendation has been included by the Joint Inspection Unit in its programme of work for 1988. Detailed information on the views of the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination and comments made by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions on the subject were already provided in the first progress report (A/42/234, annex, paras. 12-15).

Recommendation 28

55. In order to harmonize the presentation of resources pertaining to regional commissions, a concern expressed in this recommendation, the practice has been adopted, beginning with the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1988-1989, of identifying in the budget of the United Nations Office at Geneva those costs pertaining to the Economic Commission for Europe, as well as in the introduction to section 10 of the programme budget relating to ECE (A/42/234, annex, paras. 16-18).

Recommendations 30 and 32

56. Following detailed reviews conducted in each office and division in conjunction with the implementation of recommendation 15, measures were taken to streamline the Department of Administration and Management. The consolidation of programme planning and budget under one structure has also been completed as previously announced (A/42/234, annex, para. 3, and A/C.5/42/2/Rev.1, paras. 42-45). These changes resulted in a leaner department, particularly at the senior levels, with clearer lines of responsibility and with shorter reporting lines in several divisions.

Recommendation 31

57. The functions of the Management Advisory Service have been examined in the context of the reorganization of the department. During this past year, the staff formerly assigned to the Service have been conducting detailed management and administrative studies supporting the reviews being carried out in connection with the implementation of resolution 41/213. These functions are essential in that they provide the necessary framework for managerial decisions.

58. Recent experience has reconfirmed the assessment offered in the first progress report, where the continuing need for a small internal management consultancy service to assist in the task of streamlining the Secretariat and enhancing its efficiency was noted. This activity has now been placed with the Office for Programme Planning, Budgeting and Finance in order to permit it to be more closely supportive of the programme budget function and to ensure congruence with the programme evaluation function.

Recommendation 33

59. A review of the support activities for the liaison offices in New York of various secretariat entities will be carried out in the context of the implementation of recommendation 15. Further details on this matter are being provided in the revised estimates for the programme budget for the biennium 1988-1989 (A/C.5/43/1).

Recommendation 35

60. As requested, the appropriations for the programme budget for the biennium 1988-1989 included resources for consultants that reflect a negative growth of \$1.6 million, representing a reduction of 19.1 per cent in real growth terms against the biennium 1986-1987.

Recommendation 36

61. This recommendation stated that "concurrent with the reduction in the overall size of the Secretariat, there should be a reduction in the requirements for rented premises". The Secretary-General has already reported on the administrative difficulties in reducing space concurrent with indicated staff reductions. While this recommendation refers to reductions in regular budget funded staff, space utilization in the organization includes meeting the requirements arising from activities funded from extrabudgetary resources.

62. A review of all outside bodies occupying space in the United Nations premises at Headquarters has been completed. A rent structure has been established for the various categories of tenants and the new rent structure, which is based on full commercial rates, is being implemented in a phased manner with full implementation scheduled for 1 January 1990.

Recommendation 38

63. Appropriations for official travel have been reduced by \$4.3 million in the programme budget for the biennium 1988-1989, representing a reduction of 21 per cent in real growth terms against the biennium 1986-1987. A special procedure for the review of all requests for travel to meetings and conferences by the Office of the Secretary-General has been established and recently reinforced through the issue of a revised Bulletin. This procedure is believed to have contributed to a significant reduction in the number of officials attending meetings and conferences away from their duty stations, as indicated in the first progress report (A/42/234, annex, para. 9).

64. With regard to first class travel, which is also mentioned in this recommendation, the General Assembly has taken action at its last session by adopting resolution 42/214 of 21 December 1987 on standards of accommodation for air travel. The General Assembly decided that all individuals, with the exception of the Secretary-General and the heads of delegations of the least developed countries to the General Assembly who were previously entitled to first-class accommodations, would be required to travel at the class immediately below first class; it also authorized the Secretary-General to exercise his discretion in making exceptions on a case-by-case basis and requested him to report annually to the General Assembly on the implementation of the resolution.

Recommendation 39

65. This recommendation on the audit function has already been implemented, as explained in the first progress report (A/42/234, annex, para. 7).

Recommendation 40

66. The three former executive offices in the Department of Administration and Management have now been consolidated into one executive office for the whole department, as requested. This measure was taken also to implement recommendation 30 on the streamlining of the Department.

F. Personnel matters

67. The recommendations of the Group of High-level Intergovernmental Experts concerning personnel matters cover a wide range of issues that require careful consideration. The Secretariat has embarked on an extensive programme of reforms in the area of human resources management. Given the work-load involved, priorities have been established and the implementation of these recommendations has been planned over the whole reform period. The need to plan staff retrenchment as a result of recommendation 15 has required that attention be given on a priority basis to policies and procedures to be introduced for facilitating the redeployment of staff, while strictly controlling appointments and with due regard being given to the principle of equitable geographical distribution and the situation of women in the Secretariat. Such policies and procedures must be established after consultation with staff representatives, in accordance with

chapter VIII of the Staff Regulations and Rules. Furthermore, the need to curtail the number of appointments during the retrenchment period has had an impact on the implementation of a number of recommendations, particularly those concerned with recruitment and permanent appointments.

68. Two recommendations were referred to the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC) for its consideration, as requested by the General Assembly, since they had system-wide implications and fall under the authority of the Commission. These were recommendations 53, on monitoring the implementation of standards set by ICSC, and 61, on the level of total entitlements of staff. The Commission has provided its views on these recommendations in its report to the General Assembly at its forty-second session. 3/

Recommendation 41

69. The question of strengthening the role and emphasizing the authority of the Office of Personnel Services in recruitment and other personnel matters throughout the Secretariat was discussed during the debates of the Fifth Committee at the forty-second session and information was provided at the time by the Under-Secretary-General for Administration and Management. This can be summarized as follows: the Office has been renamed Office of Human Resources Management to reflect the fact that its role is not merely to service departments and offices, a vital function indeed, but also to provide policy guidelines that will help managers manage their staff and to ensure forward planning for the management of the most precious asset of the Organization, its staff; the responsibility for the security of staff world-wide has also been entrusted to the Assistant Secretary-General in charge of Human Resources Management; the central role of the Office has been further strengthened through its recent reorganization and the redeployment to that Office of responsibilities for salaries and allowances.

Recommendation 42

70. The Personnel Administrative Handbook referred to in paragraph 30 of the annex to the first progress report is being issued as a Personnel Manual to officers dealing with administrative and personnel matters in a revised format that will facilitate updating. It is foreseen that the development of the complete manual will take approximately 18 months, when sufficient resources become available. The manual will then contain an annotation of the Staff Regulations, Staff Rules and related issuances, including relevant policy decisions, and will thus promote their uniform understanding, interpretation and application.

Recommendation 43

71. The realignment of internal and external competitive examinations is being discussed and the matter will be reported to the General Assembly at its forty-third session.

72. The use of examinations for recruitment at the P-3 level and the implementation of drafting tests for recruitment at the P-4 and P-5 levels will have to await the end of the current financial difficulties. Meanwhile, despite

the financial crisis, a recruitment examination for a small number of posts at the P-1/P-2 levels was held in 1987 and recruitment examinations at these levels will be held in 1988 in keeping with the spirit of recommendation 15.3 (d).

Recommendation 44

73. During the period 1 July 1985-30 June 1986, recruitments at the P-1, P-2 and P-3 levels accounted for 55.3 per cent of the 188 recruitments in the Professional and higher categories. The recruitment freeze was introduced in March 1986 as part of the economy measures necessitated by the financial crisis. During the following period, 1 July 1986-30 June 1987, when only 49 staff members were appointed, the percentage of recruitments at these levels was 51 per cent. During the last six months of 1987, 23 out of 30 staff members appointed were at these levels (76.7 per cent). Some progress was thus achieved in the implementation of this recommendation.

Recommendation 45

74. As stated in the first progress report (A/42/234, annex, para. 37), the proposal to consider staff for permanent appointments after three years of service must await the completion of the retrenchment exercise.

Recommendation 46

75. Although, as explained above, appointments over the last two years have been very limited, efforts were made during that period to ensure that a higher percentage of women were appointed whenever exceptions to the recruitment freeze were granted. During the period 1 July 1985-30 June 1986, 34 women were appointed to posts subject to geographical distribution, representing 18.1 per cent of appointments; during the following period (1 July 1986-30 June 1987) 14 women were appointed, representing 28.6 per cent of appointments, and finally, during the last six months of 1987, 10 women were appointed, that is, 33.3 per cent of appointments. Likewise, a number of women have been appointed to senior-level posts; since the beginning of 1987, three women have been appointed to the Under-Secretary-General level and four women staff members promoted to the director level.

Recommendation 47

76. The nomination of nationals of developing countries to senior-level posts is being carefully monitored to ensure that this recommendation, as well as several directives given by the General Assembly over the years, are implemented as indicated in the progress report (A/42/234, annex, para. 43).

Recommendation 48

77. Competitive recruitment examinations at the P-1/P-2 levels are already organized along occupational lines. A pilot-project for recruitment at higher levels by occupational groups is being reviewed but implementation will have to await the end of the retrenchment period. Career paths are being developed but

priority is now being given to staff redeployment and retrenchment plans as explained earlier. Work on the design of some of the components of a system of career development for all categories of staff, which was announced by the Secretary-General in his report of 16 October 1984 (A/C.5/39/11), was suspended owing to the more urgent need to devote the available resources to the redeployment of staff and the formulation and implementation of retrenchment plans. Consequently, the work described in the first progress report (A/42/234, annex, paras. 45-50) will be resumed when resources become available for this activity.

Recommendation 49

78. The staff redeployment programme is being refined and should form the basis for a future rotation system. By advertising secretariat-wide vacancies open to internal candidates only, the programme enables qualified staff members from all duty stations to be considered for posts in their area of expertise. They are then reviewed by a joint staff-administration advisory body, which guarantees an objective and fair review. Thus, a number of staff members have been reassigned to a different duty station. The experience of other agencies in the common system with rotation schemes is being studied with a view to developing an approach corresponding to the specific needs of the United Nations Secretariat.

Recommendation 50

79. Information on the promotions of staff, reported for women only in the last report on the composition of the Secretariat (A/42/636, table F), will be given for men as well as women in the next report. The performance evaluation system is still under review.

Recommendation 51

80. Specific criteria have been developed for the redeployment of staff to higher-level posts and for their promotion and have been communicated to the appointment and promotion bodies. Special criteria for the promotion of women have recently been extended to the vacancy management and staff redeployment programme. These criteria should together form the basis of a new promotion system based on open competition and clear requirements for each posted vacancy. The role and structure of the appointment and promotion bodies themselves are also under review.

Recommendation 52

81. Retirement age has been consistently adhered to except for cases falling under the terms of section VI of resolution 35/210 of 17 December 1980 and where it was imperative to retain the services of some staff members beyond the age of 60 in order to ensure the completion of essential or urgent work.

Recommendation 54

82. The Secretary-General is mindful of this recommendation concerning the renewal of the leadership of departments and offices and the length of service of Under-Secretaries-General and Assistant Secretaries-General. In contemplating new

appointments or extensions of appointments at these levels, the Secretary-General is taking these concerns into account. He must also take into consideration other factors in the best interest of the Organization such as competence and the principle of equitable geographical distribution.

Recommendations 55 and 57

83. Recommendation 55 recalls resolution 35/210 and the principle that no post should be considered the exclusive preserve of any Member State. Recommendation 57 concerns the ratio between permanent staff members and staff on fixed-term appointments. The comments made in paragraphs 37 and 38 of the annex to A/42/234 are still valid. These issues will be reviewed further after the retrenchment period.

Recommendation 56

84. A stringent procedure, including a review by the Post Review Group and the Programme Planning and Budgeting Board, has been established. Authorization is given to proceed with redeployment or, in very exceptional cases, recruitment only when a post is deemed essential. Following the detailed review carried out to implement recommendation 15, such measures will no longer be needed. However, there will still be an ongoing need to examine the work-load of posts whenever they become vacant in order to implement this recommendation.

Recommendation 58

85. A number of changes were introduced in the 1987 training programme in order to ensure that United Nations training programmes are strictly geared to the needs of the Organization as outlined in the first progress report (A/42/234, annex, para. 51).

86. The implementation of recommendation 15 has prompted an increased emphasis on training since, in the context of the retrenchment exercise, training will support staff facing occupational adjustments stemming from organizational restructuring and staff redeployment. Training programmes in management development and supervision are being reoriented, providing managers and supervisors, secretariat-wide, with an opportunity to enhance their ability to manage effectively in the face of the ongoing process of retrenchment and post reduction. Furthermore, to maintain the necessary level of efficiency and effectiveness with a smaller number of staff requires, inter alia, greater reliance on office technology. This, in turn, creates a rapidly increasing demand in terms of the number of staff to be trained, number of areas requiring advanced skills and a more effective management training programme. In order to meet these needs, a training plan has been prepared that will guide the course and direction of programme activities in 1988 and 1989.

Recommendation 59

87. The Staff Regulations require the Secretary-General to establish and maintain continuous contact and communication with the staff in order to ensure their effective participation in identifying, examining and resolving issues relating to their welfare, including conditions of work, general conditions of life and other personnel policies. They provide that related staff representative bodies shall be established. The Secretary-General is also required to create joint staff-management machinery at local and secretariat-wide levels to advise him on these matters. The consultation process enables staff views to be sought and considered before management decisions are taken on matters affecting staff interests and concerns, in accordance also with modern management practice. It has been of particular importance during the present difficult period characterized by acute financial constraints, rapid change, inevitable dislocation and increased work pressures for almost all staff members. Its breakdown at such a time could have serious consequences for the whole Organization, whose principal asset, as the Secretary-General has reiterated, consists of its staff. At almost all duty stations, the machinery is in place and the process is working reasonably well. However, the secretariat-wide Staff Management Co-ordination Committee meetings, held since the adoption of resolution 41/213, have paid particular attention to the need to improve the work effectiveness of that Committee, and to clarify certain questions of conflict of interest or role on the part of staff and management representatives.

Recommendation 60

88. The Secretary-General's first progress report indicated that steps had already been taken for the establishment of a revised and simplified machinery for the administration of justice in the Secretariat by early 1988. Further information was provided to the General Assembly during its forty-second session (A/C.5/42/28).

89. The Under-Secretary-General for Administration and Management assumed direct responsibility for the functioning of the appellate process on 1 February 1988 and, since that time, the Joint Appeals Boards have reported directly to him. There is already evidence that this streamlining may eradicate delays at the post-appellate stage. The composition, structure, functioning and procedures of the Boards are now being revised, and the process of consultation has begun regarding the continued existence of Boards away from Headquarters. The functioning of other specialized appeal bodies is also being examined. A timetable will in future be established for each appeal as it is registered to ensure its procedural progress and determination in a timely manner.

90. As regards disciplinary processes, a full-time secretary of the Headquarters Joint Disciplinary Committee was designated on 1 February 1988 to clear the backlog of cases. A study is being undertaken to examine the disciplinary process and to draw up, as appropriate, a system of rules, procedures and sanctions for misconduct; to propose, as necessary, revision of the Staff Regulations and/or Staff Rules, and to report thereon as soon as possible, with a view to having a new system in place by the end of 1988.

91. As regards the Discrimination and Grievance Panels, the review of their functioning indicated in the Secretary-General's report (A/C.5/42/28) has already begun. A number of other measures have also been instituted to facilitate a smoothly functioning system of administrative justice.

IV. CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

92. The Secretary-General has provided, in the present report as well as in the revised estimates for the programme budget for the biennium 1988-1989, detailed information concerning each recommendation that he was called upon to implement. These reports reflect action taken during the first 15 months of the 3-year period envisaged by the General Assembly. Extensive restructuring is now complete in the political and administrative areas, and is well under way in the Department of Public Information. Final restructuring in the economic and social fields must await the results of reviews undertaken by the intergovernmental bodies. Many recommendations aiming at streamlining the Secretariat and ensuring greater efficiency in its activities, whether in substantive or servicing functions, have already been fully implemented or will be put into effect during the remainder of the reform period. The co-operation of the staff during this most difficult period has been outstanding and should be fully acknowledged.

93. When the Secretary-General began the process of reform and renewal early in 1987, he indicated that improving the administrative and financial functioning of the United Nations without addressing the fundamental issue of "efficiency to do what?" would not achieve the desired results (A/42/234, para. 4). Delivering mandated programmes in the most efficient and cost-effective manner remains the most important task of the Secretariat and the Secretary-General will continue to take the necessary measures to ensure that this goal is met. By the same token, it is essential that Member States contribute their indispensable support to this joint endeavour towards strengthening the Organization and the services it renders to the international community in accordance with clearly stated priorities.

94. A final report will be submitted to the General Assembly at its forty-fourth session, as mandated by resolution 41/213, on the implementation of that resolution. In the mean time, the Secretary-General recommends that the General Assembly take note of the second progress report.

Notes

1/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-first Session, Supplement No. 49 (A/41/49).

2/ Ibid., Forty-second Session, Supplement No. 1 (A/42/1).

3/ Ibid., Supplement No. 30 (A/42/30, chap. II, paras. 13-44).

ANNEX

Index of recommendations by the Group of High-level Intergovernmental Experts
 to Review the Efficiency of the Administrative and Financial Functioning of
 the United Nations

For ease of reference, an index of the recommendations contained in the report of the Group of High-level Intergovernmental Experts relating to the work of the United Nations is provided below with an indication of the paragraphs of the present report where they are mentioned.

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