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## MEASURES TO LIMIT THE DURATION OF REGULAR SESSIONS OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Financial implications of the memorandum by the Secretary-General (A/2206)

### Eighteenth report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions to the seventh session of the General Assembly

1. The Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions has considered a statement by the Secretary-General (A/C.5/514) on the financial implications of paragraph 47 of his memorandum (A/2206) concerning measures to limit the duration of regular sessions of the General Assembly.
2. The paragraph in question contains two proposals:
  - (a) To make arrangements for the simultaneous meeting of five Main Committees of the General Assembly; and
  - (b) To authorize an increase from five to seven in the number of representatives or alternate representatives of each Member State in respect of whom the United Nations reimburses travel expenses in accordance with General Assembly resolution 14 D (I) of 13 February 1946.
3. The additional direct costs of the above proposals over and above the provision recommended by the Advisory Committee<sup>1/</sup> for the eighth (1953) session of ten weeks are estimated by the Secretary-General as follows:

		\$
(a)	Additional temporary staff .....	1,400 per week
(b)	Additional travel (two representatives or alternates) ..	74,400 per session
(c)	Miscellaneous contractual services:	
	(first year, \$10,000) .....	2,000 per session

<sup>1/</sup> A/2157 (paragraphs 75-77), Official Records of the General Assembly, Seventh Session, Supplement No. 7.

This estimate takes no account of an offset of approximately \$700 per week against the above item for additional temporary staff which would result in the event of the adoption of Spanish as a working language of the Economic and Social Council and its functional commissions. On this question, the General Assembly has as yet taken no decision.

4. In paragraphs 5 and 6 of his statement the Secretary-General points out that, as against the increased costs under section 1, the situation in other parts of the budget would be improved; and, further, that savings would be achieved by Member States in respect of the cost of representation in the General Assembly. The Advisory Committee believes that, though a precise estimate cannot be made under these different heads, an over-all economy would on balance result from a session two weeks shorter, that is, of eight weeks' duration.

5. The Advisory Committee offers the following observations, both general and specific, which appear relevant to the financial aspect of this question:

(a) It is open to doubt whether any practical advantage will in fact result from the holding of ten meetings per day of Main Committees. The Advisory Committee notes, for example, that on a number of days during each Assembly session, existing facilities are used to less than full capacity; and while it is true that on other days the converse situation arises, this can readily be met by the scheduling of evening meetings, a system which, though inconvenient at Lake Success, would present little, if any, difficulty in New York City. In the opinion of the Committee, no expenditure for additional staff or for the conversion of existing accommodation should be contemplated unless and until the existing facilities have been used to full capacity and consideration has been given to the possibility of holding evening meetings;

(b) The Committee considers that any enlargement of the present facilities and services can usefully be undertaken only if linked to a definite objective in the form of a target date for the closing of the session at which the General Assembly would aim in each year. To this end, the possibility of convening certain Main Committees with heavy agendas in advance of other such Committees within the period of the session should not be overlooked, in the interests of the economic utilization of personnel and services;

(c) Should the General Assembly decide to increase the number of delegation members in respect of whose travel reimbursement is to be made, consideration might be given to a possible limiting of the increase to one additional member, with a consequent reduction of \$37,200 in the estimate. On the basis of a session of eight weeks, involving the provision of additional conference facilities, the necessary budget expenditure would remain virtually unchanged at approximately \$478,000, as compared with the figure recommended for a ten weeks' session in 1953 (\$474,000); expenses for representation would, however, probably show a significant reduction.

6. Subject to the reservations set forth in paragraphs 4 and 5 above, the Advisory Committee considers that the financial implications of paragraph 47 of his memorandum (A/2206) are reasonably estimated by the Secretary-General, as follows:

For comparison - Concurrent meetings of four Main Committees, five representatives	Additional costs, with concurrent meetings of five Main Committees, seven representatives or alternate representatives		
<u>Duration of session (1953) <u>ten weeks</u></u>	<u>Duration</u>	<u>of</u>	<u>session</u>
\$474,000	<u>nine weeks</u>		<u>eight weeks</u>
	+ \$69,700		+ \$41,000
	Six representatives or alternate representatives - see paragraph 5 (c) above		
	+ \$32,500		+ \$3,800

7. In the foregoing paragraphs, the Advisory Committee submits a statement of the financial implications of a specific item that has been referred to it. But it desires at the same time to call attention to the fact that the decision of the General Assembly regarding the reimbursement of the travel of representatives was no doubt linked to Article 9, paragraph 2, of the Charter, which provides that each Member shall have not more than five representatives in the General Assembly; and while the Assembly has itself provided for the reimbursement of travel expenses of alternate representatives, this has only been done hitherto within the maximum number of five persons per delegation.