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FIFTH COMMITTEE
8th meeting
held on
Thursday, 2 October 1980
at 10.30 a.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 8th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. BUJ-FLORES (Mexico)

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

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The meeting was called to order at 10.30 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 92: MEDIUM-TERM PLAN FOR THE PERIOD 1980-1983 (continued) (A/35/6 and Corr.1 and Add.1 and 2, A/35/7, A/35/38; A/C.5/35/1 and Corr.1 and Add.1 and Add.1/Corr.1 and 2, A/C.5/35/2, A/C.5/35/3 and Corr.1, A/C.5/35/4 and Corr.1)

AGENDA ITEM 12: REPORT OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL (continued) (Chapter XVIII, A/35/3/Add.28)

1. Mr. ABRASZEWSKI (Poland) stressed the importance of the biennial budget and the medium-term plan as tools in planning the activities of the United Nations system, and said that his delegation shared the view that the plan should be less detailed and voluminous. The link between the medium-term plan and other important United Nations instruments, such as the international development strategy, the programmes of action adopted in various areas, and resolutions adopted since the plan had come into effect, should be made clear. In addition to the medium-term plan and the programme budget, the programmes of action adopted by various world conferences must be seen as an extremely important third level of planning which, to some extent, had an impact on the preparation and execution of the medium-term plan.

2. Referring to paragraph 308 of the CPC report (A/35/38), in which it was pointed out that in part two of the programme performance report the Secretary-General had omitted to identify for review by the Committee those activities in current and future work programmes which could be considered obsolete, of marginal usefulness or ineffective, he said that that information, which the General Assembly had requested in resolution 34/225, was of the utmost importance, since activities could not be terminated until the Committee had reviewed proposals on the matter and made recommendations thereon. The absence of that information also meant that the Committee was unable to review programme proposals in a comprehensive manner. His delegation requested an explanation of the omission from the Secretariat, and asked whether it was intended to submit a separate report on the subject. It was understood that the Secretary-General would be considering the question of the identification of activities that were completed, obsolete, of marginal usefulness or ineffective in the context of the preparation of the next programme budget, but his delegation believed that the medium-term plan also provided an opportunity to implement the provisions of resolution 34/225 on the subject. He noted that CPC had accepted the provisional criteria that would be used to identify activities that were of marginal usefulness or ineffective, and he requested a progress report on the point reached in the three-stage implementation of those criteria to which the Secretary-General had referred in his report to the General Assembly at its thirty-fourth session.

3. Mr. BUNC (Yugoslavia) expressed satisfaction at the real progress that had been made at the 1979 and 1980 sessions of CPC on the complex system of programme planning, budgeting, monitoring and evaluation.

4. Although the formulation and review of the medium-term plan required the

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(Mr. Bunc, Yugoslavia)

involvement of all the parties concerned, that involvement should not produce extensive rescheduling of the calendar of meetings, since that might disrupt substantive activities. His delegation supported the CPC proposals to change the priorities among six of the major programmes, namely, political and Security Council affairs, food and agriculture, human settlements, industrial development, international trade, and science and technology. The determination of priorities should be accomplished in time and within the context of programme planning, but the use of relative growth rates in setting priorities was no longer appropriate. The setting of average growth rates without the necessary financial data and on the basis of a zero growth rate of the budget was meaningless. At the same time, his delegation believed that the relevant parts of the medium-term plan should be reviewed by the relevant sectoral, functional and regional bodies prior to their review by CPC, the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly.

5. Stress should be laid on the importance of co-ordination among all organs and organizations of the United Nations system in the planning process. Cross-organizational programme analysis should be used to identify suitable areas for joint planning.

6. In considering the choice between a rolling and fixed plan, given that stability and flexibility were necessary features of the plan, his delegation believed that harmonization of programme planning structures with the budget cycles should always be preserved.

7. The time-limited objective based structure to programme plans should be used in the future and, in those exceptional cases where it was necessary to use an administrative structure, the decision to do so should be made jointly by the units concerned and be approved by the relevant intergovernmental body. The setting of time-limited objectives was especially important at the level of the plan, which defined the Secretariat's proposed programmes of activity and was the basis on which the progress and quality of work could be measured. Those responsible for the formulation of programmes should identify all programme elements in time, as well as circumstances which might dictate their reprogramming.

8. The link between the medium-term plan and the budget should always be preserved, and each level of the plan should have an appropriate link to the programme budget. Programme elements should relate to the activities of the various administrative units, and the subprogrammes and programmes to the subdivisions and divisions. The major programmes of the plan should be based on sectors of activity rather than on organizational units, and should also indicate the relationship of the plan to the international development strategy. The regular in-depth evaluation of selected programmes, subprogrammes and programme elements, had proved to be both cost-effective and objective. Nevertheless, in future consideration should be given in the evaluation process to the functioning of the evaluation system in the organizations and organs concerned; the need to take measures to ensure an effective distribution of programme outputs to end-users

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(Mr. Bunc, Yugoslavia)

and the provision of information on the identification of activities that were considered to be obsolete, of marginal usefulness or ineffective; the views and needs of end-users; the consolidation in the main evaluation report of information received from various sources in the United Nations system; and the inclusion in the main evaluation report of the activities of the regional commissions which should be given the same kind of analytical view as those of the central bodies. His delegation also believed that the Joint Inspection Unit should be more active in that field.

9. Mr. PAL (India) said that his delegation supported most of the conclusions and recommendations in the report of CPC; he would therefore concentrate on those aspects in respect of which further clarification and precision of objectives were still needed.

10. His delegation fully supported the principle of planning by objectives, but discussions in CPC had shown that it had not been thought through well enough to be applied within the United Nations. As the medium-term plan formed the framework for the programme budget, there had to be a direct linkage between the two which could be made only at the programme level, corresponding, in the budget, to a line of appropriation for a department. Planning at the programme level had therefore to be based on structure. On the same basis, individual subprogrammes within each department's programme could and should be designed by objectives. The existence of that unavoidable limitation should be recognized since, otherwise, the design and performance of the plan would be judged on the basis of theoretical constructs that could not be put into practice.

11. Despite talk of altering departmental structure, his delegation recognized that as long as the plan remained the framework for the programme budget, it would be very difficult to restructure departments radically so as to suit the exigencies of programmes. Planning on the basis of objectives had, therefore, to be undertaken at the subprogramme level. There was considerable confusion between intergovernmental objectives and those of the Secretariat, which should be cleared up as quickly as possible. Although it was possible for intergovernmental objectives to have no time-limit, as in the case of the multilateral trade negotiations, the related preparatory work which the Secretariat was called upon to do could be made clear and time-limited.

12. While largely agreeing with the assessment of CPC of the Secretary-General's report on programme performance, his delegation believed that closer consideration should be given to some of the problems presented in the report, particularly the postponement, termination or alteration of programmes for lack of funds, which should be studied from three viewpoints: where a programme had had to be postponed or delayed because the funds made available by the General Assembly had been inadequate, the Secretariat should provide detailed justification for the postponement or delay; if the case was valid, the effect on intergovernmental objectives must be determined; and where a shortage of funds forced a choice between programmes or the alteration of a programme, the relevant intergovernmental bodies must be consulted rather than being presented with the shortage of funds and

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the Secretariat's decision as faits accomplis. The disappointing programme outputs were probably attributable to those causes. The problem must be investigated more closely to determine whether the Secretariat's claims that funds were inadequate were valid. The issue could not be resolved by asserting that a choice was made on the basis of established priorities since, in his delegation's view, the real growth rates determined by CPC were unrealistic.

13. On the question of growth rates, CPC ought to be able to establish priorities among programmes and subprogrammes and even, perhaps, to venture to assign priorities among major programmes, imprecise though they might be. But what CPC in fact did was to project budgetary growth rates at the major programme level. It could not do so with any precision because it was not provided with financial data, and it did not take major programmes as the basic unit of discussion. It had therefore simply indicated budgetary growth rates without knowing what the average growth rate would be, or what weight, in monetary terms, each major programme would have, or whether there was a direct or necessary correlation between programme priority and budgetary growth.

14. Some of the conclusions arising out of the recommendations of CPC merited particular comment. First, since the previous budget had been based on a zero rate of growth in real terms, the recommendations of CPC were a mandate for stagnation in programmes with an "average" growth rate and a cut in those "below average". Among the major programmes with a "below average" growth rate were "international protection of and assistance to refugees", "disaster relief" and "population", while "public information" had a "well below average" growth rate at a time when the United Nations was engaged in setting up a new world information order. His delegation considered cutbacks in those programmes to be quite unacceptable. On the other hand, while not all major programmes had had their priorities changed, changes had been proposed without considering what the repercussions would be in real terms. For example, no indication was given of the value of an above average growth rate because CPC had neither been told nor considered what the true average rate of growth was likely to be. Similarly, it had not indicated what the increase would be in monetary terms. CPC had not considered the financial implications of its recommendations, but the Fifth Committee could not recommend growth rates without knowing whether they could be attained and without ascertaining the consequences for the programmes that would be cut so that others might grow. The General Assembly had spelt out the responsibilities of CPC in paragraph 40 of the annex to resolution 32/197. It could be inferred from that paragraph that the mandate of CPC was clearly to indicate programme priorities, not growth rates, and that in determining programme priorities it was expected to use information received from competent expert and intergovernmental bodies.

15. It was clear that the budget would be based on programme priorities and that the over-all growth rate could be determined only after all programmes, subprogrammes and major programmes had been given financial allocations in keeping with the priorities assigned to them. Only then could the plan truly form the framework for the programme budget. At the moment all that mattered were the growth rates recommended by CPC, as could be seen from many examples.

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(Mr. Pal, India)

16. The Committee should urge CPC to confine itself to listing programme priorities. If the Committee wished CPC to go beyond its current competence and offer recommendations on budgetary growth rates, it should instruct it to study all the financial implications before making its report.

17. As far as the question of whether the forthcoming plan should be a fixed-term or a rolling one was concerned, his delegation agreed with the recommendation of CPC that a final decision should be deferred.

18. The revisions to the current medium-term plan seemed adequate, although they suffered from one worrisome deficiency: only those programmes on which intergovernmental mandates had been received after the formulation of the plan had been revised. One problem, however, was that such mandates generally did not clearly spell out the form that each subprogramme should take, and the Secretariat had to formulate objectives on the basis of the resolutions adopted. At times that led to discrepancies between mandate and objectives, and thence to discrepancies between mandate and associated programmes. All programmes should therefore be reviewed from time to time, even if the corresponding mandate had not been revised.

19. A matter of importance was that errors and omissions had been discovered in documents submitted for the consideration of CPC, and it had been suggested that they should be corrected in the final document provided by the Secretariat to the General Assembly. His delegation believed that a clear distinction needed to be made between errata, for which corrigenda should be published, and amendments, which should be proposed by CPC but come into effect only when endorsed by the General Assembly.

20. His delegation shared the concern of other delegations at the fact that CPC had had to discuss the report of the Director-General for Development and International Economic Co-operation on operational activities in draft form since, given the substantial changes introduced in the final version, the effort spent by CPC might have been wasted.

21. It could not agree with the comments on that report made in paragraph 159 of the report of CPC, and deplored the failure of CPC to make full use of the first opportunity to consider the operational activities of the system in their entirety, thereby ignoring the letter and the spirit of General Assembly resolution 32/197. Paragraph 28 of section V in the annex to that resolution had forged a clear link between decentralization, efficiency and financing and had made it plain that efficiency should not be seen in purely monetary terms, but also in terms of quality of output. The report of CPC had ignored that aspect as well as the fact that a real increase in the level of financing had been considered an essential part of resolution 32/197. What had happened was that inflation and fresh mandates had forced up staff support costs and, since income had not increased at the same rate, the proportion that those costs represented had also risen continuously.

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22. His delegation believed that CPC was not being given the importance it deserved. That could be seen, for example, from the fact that the Budget Division had been unable to give an assurance that it would present the budget in time for CPC to consider it thoroughly, and from the poor attendance of the CPC/ACC Joint Meeting by the heads of the specialized agencies. The Fifth Committee and the General Assembly should state clearly whether they were prepared to accept such a state of affairs and emphatically reiterate their wish that it should be rectified. CPC should, moreover, refrain from taking on tasks which it had neither the time nor the facilities to perform, such as formulating recommendations on budgetary growth rates and personnel matters. The work of CPC was of vital importance and its functions should be kept under continuous review, as stipulated in paragraph 41 of section IV of the annex to resolution 32/197.

23. It was regrettable that the two cross-organizational programme analyses presented to CPC at its last session had not been made available to the Fifth Committee, since they represented a first step in the direction envisaged in paragraph 61 (b) (ii) of annex VIII to resolution 32/197, which included among the functions of the Secretariat the development of "co-operative and whenever possible, joint planning of programme activities decided upon at the intergovernmental level, with a view to system-wide medium-term planning at the earliest possible time".

24. Mr. BRODODININGRAT (Indonesia) said that the lack of adequate synchronization between central over-all planning and its components, namely sectoral and regional programmes, had been one of the main difficulties faced in past planning exercises. It was logical, therefore, that CPC had reinforced the concept of full involvement of sectoral and regional intergovernmental bodies in the preparation of the plan. That, however, entailed practical difficulties, such as the rescheduling of meetings. The solution proposed by CPC in paragraphs 319 and 320 of its report might not eliminate all the difficulties, and the Secretariat should, accordingly, keep the problem under review during preparations for the next plan and make appropriate recommendations on the matter.

25. Another problem stemmed from the conflict between the clear preference of CPC for an objective-based structure to the programme plans, as distinct from the use of the existing administrative structure (A/35/38, para. 33), and for an administrative structure adapted to objectives (para. 34), on the one hand, and, on the other hand, its strong feeling in favour of preserving the link between the plan and the budget so that, as a consequence, all plans at the programme level would continue to be based on administrative units, usually divisions (para. 35). Since the objective-based structure was to be at the subprogramme level, the plan structure proposed by CPC was a combination of an objective-based structure and an administrative-based structure. While recognizing that only a mixed structure could maintain both an administrative-based and an objective-based approach, his delegation believed that, given the existence of objectives that could be achieved only through the collective effort of several divisions, the implementation of a mixed structured plan must be complemented by the strengthening of the machinery for interdivision co-operation so that the objective orientation of the plan would be preserved.

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(Mr. Brotodiningrat, Indonesia)

26. As to whether the mixed plan should have a fixed or rolling basis, his delegation was prepared to go along with the recommendation of CPC, which implied a postponement of a decision on the matter merely to allow the preparatory process for the next plan to be initiated soon. His delegation preferred, however, that the plan, which had a six-year horizon, would roll at the end of the fourth year.

27. CPC had successfully completed the task set for it by the General Assembly of conducting an in-depth study of the planning process. The recommendations arising out of that study, together with those already adopted by the General Assembly in resolution 34/224, should substantially improve the United Nations planning system and the efficiency of its work.

28. His delegation wished to stress the exceptional character of the decision to revise the plan for 1980-1983 rather than establish a new plan for 1982-1985. That decision should not be viewed as authorizing an experiment aimed at proving that it was more efficient to revise a plan than to draw up a new one. As far as the choice of a rolling or fixed horizon system of planning was concerned, the revision of the current plan proved nothing and should not prejudge the decision to be taken when the time came to decide whether the next medium-term plan should have a rolling or fixed basis.

29. Having stressed those points, his delegation was prepared to endorse the relevant recommendation of CPC and to agree that the revised plan for 1980-1983 should be taken as the framework for the programme budget for the biennium 1982-1983. Nevertheless, his delegation wished to place on record its strong opposition to the inclusion of activities relating to East Timor in the proposed revisions to the medium-term plan for 1980-1983 (A/35/6, paras. 7.18 and 7.21). Such activities constituted interference in the domestic affairs of a Member State and hence a violation of the Charter. From the planning standpoint, the inclusion of an activity that could not be implemented would certainly weaken the credibility of the plan and run counter to resolution 34/225 on activities that were obsolete, ineffective or of marginal usefulness.

30. CPC had indicated in its report that it had once again encountered difficulties in setting priorities through the establishment of relative real growth rates. It was complicated and difficult to make a clear distinction between programme priorities and budgetary growth rates. In that connexion, his delegation welcomed the intention of CPC to study and establish criteria and methods to be employed in setting priorities for the next medium-term plan. For the time being, although his delegation was not fully satisfied, it would not stand in the way of a decision by the Assembly to allow the Secretary-General, in preparing the programme budget for 1982-1983, to use the proposed relative real growth rates recommended by CPC in paragraph 325 of its report.

31. With regard to the cross-organizational programme analysis, and more specifically the analysis of energy programmes, his delegation reaffirmed its understanding that the recommendations of CPC set out in paragraph 357 of its report would not in any way prejudge the outcome of the United Nations Conference on New and Renewable Sources of Energy and the round of global negotiations which were scheduled to be held the following year.

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32. Mr. LÖSCHNER (Federal Republic of Germany) expressed his delegation's appreciation for the work carried out by CPC. With regard to the important task of setting priorities, CPC had indicated in its report (para. 323) that the Secretariat should make proposals on programme priorities to it at its twenty-first session. The proposals should contain an indication of the priority, whether high, average or low, which should be assigned to the programmes, according to the urgency of the issues involved. In that connexion, it should be recalled that the medium-term plan was a forecast of planned activities of a non-binding nature, which made it possible to terminate activities that were ineffective or of marginal usefulness.

33. It was the Secretary-General's duty to establish priorities within the proposed regular budget of the United Nations. Except in the case of the Office for Programme Planning and Co-ordination, virtually no programme manager had made use of that valuable tool in preparing the budget proposals for the biennium 1980-1981. His delegation hoped that in preparing the budget for 1982-1983, programme managers would indicate at least whether programmes were of high or low priority.

34. His delegation endorsed the recommendations of CPC concerning priorities (A/34/38, paras. 324 and 325). Higher priority should, however, be given to the programmes on "human rights" and "international protection of and assistance to refugees", in view of the importance of promoting universal respect for, and observance of, human rights and fundamental freedoms for all. There was no need to rehearse the details of the mass exodus of refugees from Indo-China, Afghanistan, Ethiopia, and, in particular, Cambodia. As the Minister for Foreign Affairs of his country had stated to the General Assembly on 24 September, the international community must face up to the political task of counteracting the causes of flight and expulsion of refugees, and of increasing humanitarian assistance to refugees and making it more effective. His delegation therefore urged that above average priority should be given to the programme on the international protection and assistance for refugees.

35. The upgrading of programme priorities in the budget should not be regarded as an attempt to depart from the target of zero growth. On the contrary, the setting of budgetary priorities must lead to the redeployment of resources, which should be used to finance the supplementary estimates for the period 1980-1981. Identification of activities that were completed, obsolete, of marginal usefulness or ineffective should also be conducive to the redeployment of resources.

36. Part two of the programme performance report for the biennium 1978-1979 (A/C.5/35/1) was a step in the right direction and implemented, at least partially, General Assembly resolution 32/201. Nevertheless, his delegation awaited with keen interest the report on such activities announced by the Assistant Secretary-General for Financial Services in connexion with the recommendation contained in paragraph 378 of the CPC report; his delegation supported that recommendation.

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(Mr. Löschner, Federal Republic
of Germany)

37. His delegation welcomed the possibility of a cross-organizational analysis on marine activities (A/35/38, para. 380, foot-note 49) and hoped that the relevant document would contain proposals for solving co-ordination problems arising from the fact that, at Headquarters alone, three departments dealt with marine activities. The termination of the Third United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea in 1981 should make it possible to release and deploy resources.

38. His delegation emphasized the importance of implementing the recommendation contained in paragraph 339 of the CPC report, to the effect that the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1982-1983 should be finalized and distributed by the end of April 1981 in order to avoid the many problems which delayed publication would cause.

39. Mr. GEBRU (Ethiopia), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that there were no Ethiopian refugees; he therefore requested that the delegation of the Federal Republic of Germany should withdraw the reference to his country in connexion with the refugee question.

40. Mr. GOLOVKO (Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic) said that the discussion on the medium-term plan for the period 1980-1983 had demonstrated that, in the view of a number of delegations, heavy expenditure did not always produce the results expected. His delegation therefore attached great importance to improved efficiency in the planning process.

41. On the question of priorities, his delegation could not fully accept the priorities proposed by CPC in its report (para. 325) and considered that the programme "Political and Security Council affairs activities" should be given the highest priority.

42. In connexion with the proposed revisions to the medium-term plan for the period 1980-1983, his delegation considered that there was a need for a strict legislative basis fully consistent with the decisions of the United Nations legislative organs. In that connexion, the Secretariat's decision to replace two social subprogrammes by an integrated rural development subprogramme (A/35/6, chap. 13, programme 2, subprogramme 4) was questionable. It would seem that the legislative organs had not taken decisions on the matter and it was therefore difficult to accept the change.

43. His delegation hoped that, once the medium-term plan had been revised during the current session, it would be harmonized with General Assembly resolutions 31/93 and 34/224 and become the basic document for the preparation of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1982-1983. The Secretary-General should not incorporate in the new budget proposals any programmes which had not been included in the revised medium-term plan.

44. In connexion with the model medium-term plans for the period 1984-1989, his delegation supported the recommendations made by the Joint Inspection Unit in its report on medium-term planning (A/34/84), which had been supported by CPC at its

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(Mr. Golovko, Ukrainian SSR)

nineteenth session as well as by the General Assembly in its resolution 34/224. The Secretariat should devote full attention to the implementation of that resolution and should comply strictly with the time-limits for the submission of documents. Such limits should be established in the planning calendar and Secretariat officials should allow adequate time for their examination by interested agencies and for interagency consultations.

45. The scope of the plan's activities should be determined in the light of available or obtainable resources. In order to provide a basis for budget preparation, the plan should incorporate time-limited objectives and should include financial indicators agreed by Member States for the evaluation of results.

46. The United Nations planning process was far from perfect. For its improvement, it was necessary, in particular, to draw the attention of the agencies of the United Nations system to the fact that they must use the planning process for programme co-ordination so as to eliminate duplication and avoid improper use of budget resources. The programmes of United Nations agencies in a number of fields should be grouped together.

47. On the question of determining activities which had been completed or were obsolete, of marginal usefulness or ineffective, his delegation fully supported the comments of the Polish delegation.

48. Finally, his delegation wished once again to express its view that the evaluation of activities was essential to the improvement of the planning process and should be based upon adequate performance indicators.

49. Mr. MAJOLI (Italy), referring to activities that had been completed or were obsolete, of marginal usefulness or ineffective, said that his delegation agreed with CPC that the submission of the programme performance report for the biennium 1978-1979 was being inappropriately used by the Secretariat to respond to the mandate laid down in General Assembly resolution 34/225. He had nevertheless read document A/C.5/35/1 with interest, as he had hoped to find relevant information on the subject in part two, as suggested by the headings to the various sections. The annex listing programme elements and related output terminated as obsolete, of marginal usefulness or ineffective had also been of interest. He had however found nothing in those sections which would demonstrate that the Administration had been simplified, that bureaucracy was not proliferating anew and that resources to meet new requirements and new tasks might be expected to be released without an enlarged bureaucracy. He had noted the statement at the end of the annex that the resources released were only equivalent to 138 work-months, which was much less than might have been expected.

50. The Assistant Secretary-General for Financial Services had stated that a further report on those activities would be issued in the near future and the information contained in part two of document A/C.5/35/1 would certainly be used in that connexion. It was to be hoped, however, that additional information would be provided, bearing in mind the relevant comments of CPC, the Economic and Social Council and the Fifth Committee, and that it would then be possible to establish more reliable criteria for the evaluation of new programmes in relation to available resources.

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(Mr. Majoli, Italy)

51. He reminded the Committee that, in response to questions raised by his delegation regarding the inclusion of financial indicators in the medium-term plan, the Assistant Secretary-General for Financial Services had said that arrangements had been made for the inclusion in the plan of relative figures rather than dollar amounts. In view of his delegation's interest in planning, he wished to be informed where such relative figures could be found and how they would be presented.

52. Miss LOECKX (Belgium) observed that in 1979 CPC had held an extensive discussion of the programme planning process in United Nations agencies and that, in its resolution 34/224, the General Assembly had approved the conclusions and recommendations of CPC and had laid down certain principles and guidelines for medium-term planning. During its recent session, CPC had continued its work on the planning process and had made a number of recommendations, which were contained in paragraphs 319 to 340 of its report (A/35/38).

53. The next medium-term plan would cover a period of six years, from 1984 to 1989. In order to guarantee the quality of that plan, on which three biennial budgets would be based, it was essential that intergovernmental, sectoral, functional and regional agencies should participate in the formulation and appraisal process. A calendar had been drawn up which would make such participation possible without interrupting regular activities.

54. During its next session, CPC would study the criteria and methodology to be used in determining priorities for the principal programmes of the next medium-term plan. That important responsibility had fallen to CPC by virtue of its mandate and General Assembly resolution 32/197 on restructuring. After much discussion, CPC had decided how the Secretary-General should set programme priorities for the preparation of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1982-1983. The system which had been used for a number of years past must be improved; it had been the subject of reservations and objections, as was clear from foot-note 35 of the CPC report (A/35/38, chap. X).

55. The harmonization of the forthcoming plans of the organizations of the system, especially those of the specialized agencies, for the period 1984-1989 would allow the planning process to function as a process of internal co-ordination within the system. The periodic analysis of programmes throughout the system for the purpose of identifying those areas in which joint planning could be undertaken, which was one of the objectives of the resolution on restructuring, was another element equally crucial to co-ordination. CPC was greatly concerned that in the future the biennial programme budgets should be submitted on time to the competent intergovernmental bodies, which must examine them in connexion with their own programmes. In other words, before the budgets and programmes were presented for strictly budgetary consideration, the programmes based on those budgets should be studied thoroughly by the relevant intergovernmental bodies, especially CPC and the Economic and Social Council, since only intergovernmental bodies were authorized to adopt or amend United Nations programmes. CPC had requested those responsible for preparing the budget to abide strictly by the calendar so that the work of CPC could be co-ordinated with the work of the Advisory Committee.

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(Miss Loeckx, Belgium)

56. With respect to the proposed revisions to the medium-term plan for the period 1980-1983, she recalled that the General Assembly had decided that the next plan would cover the period 1984-1989. Meanwhile, the revisions proposed by the Secretariat and examined by CPC were designed to introduce into the current plan the changes based on the decisions and recommendations of the intergovernmental bodies adopted after the formulation of the plan. In that regard, her delegation supported the observations and recommendations of CPC in chapter VIII and paragraphs 368 to 381 of its report (A/35/38).

57. Mr. DENIS (France) said that it should be kept in mind that a plan consisted of objectives, priorities, co-ordination with a budget and evaluation. With regard to objectives, he stressed that there should be a link between the legislative mandate given by the intergovernmental bodies and the relevant programme, and that it was basically the responsibility of CPC to monitor that link. Unfortunately, it did not seem that CPC had been able to ensure that the link existed to the extent required.

58. His delegation supported a fixed-horizon plan with time-limited objectives extending over six years, provided that the system of plan revision every two years would introduce a margin of flexibility. It also supported the idea that planning should be carried out throughout the entire United Nations system, since one could not insist on the need to avoid duplication or speak of co-ordination throughout the entire system if planning was limited to the United Nations alone. The specialized agencies and the regional economic commissions must participate if the planning was to be system-wide.

59. His delegation shared the opinions expressed by the delegations of the United Kingdom and India with respect to the determination of priorities. Indeed, it was not possible to establish relative growth rates in view of the lack of the necessary elements to do that; rather, it was necessary to determine priorities among the major programmes. If that was done in a satisfactory manner, it would not be possible to say in the future that certain programmes could not be carried out because of a lack of funds, as was currently the case.

60. The Organization should do less but do it better. In that regard, the elimination of activities that had been completed or were obsolete, of marginal usefulness or ineffective was a very important question. Delegations were fully aware that that was a difficult task, but it was a task which affected the interests not only of developed countries, but also of developing countries, since their contribution was also substantial and represented a sizable expenditure on their part. Furthermore, in an integrated budget all savings achieved by reducing administrative expenditures could be used for development. It should also be recalled that bureaucratic growth did not necessarily result in greater efficiency for the Organization.

61. With regard to the co-ordination of the plan with the budget, in spite of the different points of view expressed, all delegations seemed to agree that a high degree of such co-ordination was called for. Therefore, his delegation requested the Secretariat to spare no effort to ensure that the budget was submitted to CPC on time.

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(Mr. Denis, France)

62. His delegation felt that greater external scrutiny was required in the process of evaluation. A closer working relationship should be established with the Joint Inspection Unit and the Member States, which also had something to say about the effectiveness of the measures envisaged in the plan.

63. Although much had been done in the field of planning, thanks to the dynamic leadership of Mr. Hansen, the Assistant Secretary-General for Programme Planning and Co-ordination, and his staff, all Member States should be fully aware that much remained to be done before the Secretariat units and all delegations could have full confidence in the plan.

64. Mr. SUEDI (United Republic of Tanzania), after referring to the recommendations on regional co-operation and development made by CPC at its twentieth session and the recommendations formulated subsequently by the Economic and Social Council at its second regular session of 1980, held in Geneva, pointed out that paragraph 364 of the report of CPC mentioned the possibility of an improved distribution of tasks and responsibilities between the regional commissions and other United Nations units, programmes and organs. He had participated in the discussion on that subject and expressed surprise that the Economic and Social Council had amended the decision of CPC and had even recommended in its decision 1980/179 that the recommendation of CPC should be ignored. He requested that the Chairman of CPC should explain how and why the Economic and Social Council had taken the decision to ignore that recommendation.

65. Mr. HILLEL (Israel) said that his delegation felt that the main objective of the proposed revisions to the medium-term plan was to introduce the necessary changes in the relevant parts of the budget for the biennium 1980-1981 and provide a framework of reference for the programme budget for 1982-1983.

66. He noted with satisfaction the constructive observations made by CPC in its report (A/35/38), to the effect that the plan required clear decisions on the determination of priorities. Those priorities should be formulated in accordance with established goals, since they would directly affect the budget estimates for the period 1982-1983, a point which should be kept in mind when the budget was considered at the thirty-sixth session.

67. The Committee for Programme and Co-ordination recommended that the present relative real growth rates should be retained, except in the case of such programmes as food and agriculture, human settlements, industrial development, and science and technology. CPC had stated that the principal changes which had taken place in 1980 had in general been incorporated in the revision. Therefore, only a few modifications would be needed for the budget for 1982-1983.

68. CPC had also stated that the plan should not be restrictive and should be sufficiently flexible, with a six-year horizon and two adjustments at the end of the second and fourth years.

69. His delegation could accept the general outline of the plan submitted by CPC. With regard to the question of priorities, it was necessary to ensure the possibility

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(Mr. Hillel, Israel)

of making changes in the areas where funds would be exhausted in the future. It should be kept in mind that the General Assembly at its eleventh special session had not been able to initiate a North-South dialogue; in fact, it had referred that task to the Assembly at its thirty-fifth session. If the global negotiations commenced at the beginning of 1981, as was planned, changes in the frame of reference might be required. For that reason, some flexibility should be maintained.

70. Since emphasis was placed on activities to stimulate food production in food priority countries, the competent bodies should make concerted efforts to formulate and carry out national food strategies and implement food security and food distribution programmes. Accordingly, the active participation of those bodies was needed in the medium-term planning exercise.

71. In the sector of international trade there would have to be some adjustments in view of the agreement on the Common Fund recently concluded within the framework of UNCTAD. The functioning of the Fund would undoubtedly require changes in the Commodities Division and the Integrated Programme for Commodities. Certain budget expenditures in that sector should perhaps be eliminated.

72. Changes would also occur in UNIDO as a result of its new status as a specialized agency, and that would perhaps require a revision of the chapter on industrial development. His delegation felt that the interested agencies had not adequately participated in the consultations and discussions which had led to the recommendations of CPC and, since it was a question of the medium-term planning of United Nations activities, effective participation by those agencies was essential.

73. Mr. BRODODININGRAT (Indonesia) pointed out that in paragraph 365 (b) (iii) of its report CPC had suggested to the General Assembly that the Joint Inspection Unit should be invited to co-operate in the appraisal of the implementation of General Assembly resolution 32/197. He recalled that the Chairman of JIU had mentioned the difficulties which JIU might have in complying with that request since it was formulated in general and vague terms. He brought that question to the attention of the Chairman of CPC and added that the Economic and Social Council had not considered the question raised by the Chairman of JIU.

74. Mr. LAHLOU (Morocco) said that his delegation supported the statement made by the representative of France with regard to the increase in administrative staff and its relationship to the quantity and quality of the product obtained as a result of their work. It should be determined whether the increase in staff really contributed to the effectiveness of the activities of the Organization, since that was a question which particularly affected developing countries.

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AGENDA ITEM 91: PROPOSED PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 1980-1981

Depositary functions of the Secretary-General (A/35/7/Add.1; A/C.5/34/40 and Corr.1 and 2)

Revised estimates under sections 26 and 29A, Legal activities and Department of Conference Services, Headquarters

75. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) said that it had been decided at the thirty-fourth session, on the recommendation of the Advisory Committee, to postpone until the thirty-fifth session the consideration of the Secretary-General's report in document A/C.5/34/40 and Corr.1 and 2, in which the Secretary-General was requesting an appropriation of \$197,800 in the programme budget for the biennium 1980-1981 in order to publish 40 volumes of the Treaty Series per year, in accordance with the scheduled programme of work. In view of the decision to defer consideration of the report in question, the Advisory Committee had recommended to the General Assembly that it should appropriate an amount of \$47,000 to enable the Secretary-General to begin the work scheduled for 1980 with respect to the Treaty Series. Accordingly, a decision had now to be made concerning the remaining \$150,800.

76. In addition, the Secretary-General had proposed a plan to eliminate the backlog in the publication of treaties, which at the beginning of 1980 had stood at 260 volumes. In paragraphs 7 and 8 of document A/35/7/Add.1, information was given about the gradual elimination of the backlog under the Secretary-General's plan, the additional resources required for that purpose, and the time-phasing of the additional staff needed on a temporary basis to implement the proposed plan. On that basis, the Secretary-General estimated the resources required in 1980-1981 to implement the plan for the elimination of the backlog at \$195,200.

77. The Advisory Committee had considered the estimates submitted by the Secretary-General and, in view of the importance which Member States attached to the depositary functions of the Secretary-General and the registration and publication of treaties, had decided to recommend to the Fifth Committee that it approve the appropriation of the \$150,800 still outstanding from the amount of \$197,800 requested for the publication of 40 volumes per year and that it also approve the estimate in the amount of \$195,200 for the biennium 1980-1981 to enable the Secretary-General to implement the plan to eliminate the backlog in the publication of the Treaty Series.

78. The Advisory Committee was further recommending that the General Assembly take note of the plan proposed by the Secretary-General on the understanding that such action did not imply acceptance of the total estimate of resources required over the next four biennia. It should be stressed that the financial information given in paragraph 7 of the Advisory Committee's report regarding the period subsequent to 1981 was of the same nature as the financial information contained in the medium-term plan. The approval by the General Assembly of the medium-term plan entailed no commitment whatever on the part of Member States as far as the financial resources indicated in the plan were concerned. In the present case, if

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(Mr. Mselle)

the Fifth Committee recommended to the General Assembly that it take note of the financial information in paragraph 7 of document A/35/7/Add.1, that did not mean that Member States were committed to appropriating the amounts concerned.

79. In paragraph 11 of its report, the Advisory Committee noted the conditions on which it accepted the Secretary-General's proposal in its entirety. The Advisory Committee expected the Secretary-General, in the report which he would submit in accordance with paragraph 12, to include information on the progress made towards fulfilling the conditions set forth in paragraph 11,

80. Accordingly, the Advisory Committee was recommending additional appropriations in the amounts of \$219,200, \$76,000 and \$50,800 under sections 26, 29A and 28D of the programme budget for 1980-1981 and an additional appropriation of \$61,400 under section 31 (Staff assessment), to be offset by additional revenue in the same amount under income section 1 (Income from staff assessment).

81. Mr. MAJOLI (Italy) said that his delegation felt that the elimination of the backlog in the publication of the Treaty Series was important and should be facilitated. Accordingly, the amount requested by the Secretary-General should be granted. However, an additional financial burden amounting to \$346,000 should only be assumed on the understanding that, as paragraph 11 of the report of the Advisory Committee pointed out, the additional resources should be used solely for the tasks envisaged. The appropriation should be considered a provisional arrangement which would be eliminated as soon as possible.

82. Mr. RAKOTO (Madagascar) said that his delegation recognized the importance of the reservations and recommendations contained in paragraphs 11 and 12 of the report of the Advisory Committee. It was not opposed to recommending that the amount requested should be appropriated, provided that the funds came from the regular budget, since any additional contribution would place his country in a very difficult situation.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.