

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 17th 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 10.35 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 97: SCALE OF ASSESSMENTS FOR THE APPORTIONMENT OF THE EXPENSES OF THE UNITED NATIONS: REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON CONTRIBUTIONS (continued) (A/35/11)

1. Mr. MGBOKWERE (Nigeria) welcomed the intention of the Committee on Contributions to keep under constant review the question of methods for avoiding excessive or extreme variations in rates of assessment between two successive scales. It was to be hoped that the objectives of fairness and equity would be achieved in the proposals for a new scale of assessments to be submitted at the thirty-seventh session.
2. National income, as a measure of capacity to pay, should be supplemented by other economic and social indicators. His delegation therefore welcomed the proposed study by the Statistical Office on the relative rankings of Member States in respect of selected economic and social indicators in the hope that it would lead to an objective and acceptable set of indicators. He endorsed the conclusions contained in paragraphs 25 and 42 of the Committee's report (A/35/11). In determining capacity to pay, the Committee should take into account the country's relative level of development, the over-all import price index, its source of income, including whether or not it was depletable, access to foreign exchange, economic and social status, the distribution of wealth and per capita income.
3. A country's accumulated wealth, as well as current annual income, should be taken into account in determining capacity to pay. It was not fair to ignore the capital assets accumulated by developed countries while some developing countries, whose earnings had risen substantially in recent years were burdened with obvious problems of under-development affecting their capacity to pay. His delegation also favoured a nine-year base period for the purpose of calculating assessments. He welcomed the determined efforts made by the Committee to compute the national incomes of Member States on a comparable basis, but regretted that sufficient progress had not yet been made in the field of statistics on national wealth despite the survey conducted by the Statistical Commission in 1979 on country practices in compiling balance-sheet statistics. The Statistical Commission should keep the Committee on Contributions informed of future developments in the field of tangible assets and national and sectoral balance sheets. The scale of assessments must be based primarily on capacity to pay and must reflect the economic realities of the developing countries.
4. Mr. MUENCH (German Democratic Republic) said that the method currently used in calculating the scale of assessments complied only inadequately with the General Assembly's request that assessments should be calculated on the basis of capacity to pay. His delegation doubted whether the additional indicators described in the report of the Committee on Contributions would serve to eliminate the short-comings of the existing system. In seeking to improve the methods of measuring capacity to pay, the Committee should consider indicators which had a real bearing on capacity to pay. Such indicators should reflect the widely diverse pattern of socio-economic development and cultural attitudes and must be available for all States. It would be quite difficult to determine the weight which should be

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(Mr. Muench, German Democratic Republic)

assigned to such indicators in relation to the fundamental indicator of national income. In the circumstances, his delegation believed that it was not possible for the time being to improve on the existing method of calculating assessments.

5. Introducing a system of computing assessments to four decimal digits would do little to ensure that the assessments of Member States were more in keeping with their economic conditions. On the basis of the contributions payable for 1980-1981, for example, such a system would result in variations of about \$500 in assessments. It was doubtful whether such a variation would be significant for Member States.

6. With regard to methods for avoiding excessive variations in rates of assessment between two successive scales, his delegation favoured the existing practice of basing the scale on national income statistics for a seven-year period, and warned against the imposition of artificial percentage limits, which would amount to an arbitrary departure from the accepted principle of assessment on the basis of capacity to pay. In applying the low per capita income allowance formula, it was necessary to ensure that middle-income countries did not benefit unduly from adjustments made to reflect inflationary trends or exchange rate fluctuations. His delegation considered the formula providing for a per capita income limit of \$2,000 and a reduction in national income by 75 per cent to be acceptable. The Committee should explore ways of taking into account the particularly difficult economic situation of the least developed countries. One possibility might be to fix the minimum contribution of those countries at a considerably lower level. Another method might be to set a percentage for the combined contribution of those countries, with each country paying an equal share. Both of those methods would be compatible with the principle of capacity to pay and would not diminish the relief enjoyed by those countries which, although not least developed countries, benefited from the low per capita income formula. He hoped that the Committee on Contributions would take his delegation's suggestions into account when drawing up the scale of assessments to be applied as from 1983.

7. The length of the report of the Committee on Contributions would have been reduced considerably if previously published material had not been included in it. In the interest of concision, such material need not be included in future reports.

8. Mr. MANEKA (Pakistan) said that it was not easy for the Committee on Contributions to interpret the wishes of the General Assembly with regard to the mitigation of excessive variations in assessments between two successive scales. A variation of 50 per cent appeared to be very high, but in the case of States assessed at the floor level, it would not result in an increased contribution, while a 10 per cent increase in the case of a country assessed at a rate of 10.00 would mean an increase of 1.00. Those were anomalies which posed a serious challenge to the ingenuity of the Committee on Contributions. It would be helpful if the Committee on Contributions had more precise guidelines, but it had been the inability of the Fifth Committee to solve that problem which had prompted its transfer to the Committee on Contributions in the first place. Although capacity to pay was recognized as the basic principle for the calculation of assessments, neither the Fifth Committee nor the Committee on Contributions had found a way of reconciling measures for the avoidance of excessive variations with that principle.

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(Mr. Maneka, Pakistan)

9. It had been convincingly argued that accumulated wealth should be a factor in computing capacity to pay. While a long base period would reflect some elements of accumulated wealth, it would also distort the assessment of some Member States. If, for example, the base period was expanded to 15 years, the assessment of the poorer countries would go up substantially. Of the various per capita allowance formulae described in paragraphs 38 to 42 of the report of the Committee on Contributions, consideration should be given only to those which did not increase the assessments of the poorer countries.

10. The rates of assessment of the developing countries had been declining over the years; that was a reflection of their relative economic position vis-à-vis the developed countries. His delegation would, however, welcome the day when the developing countries would be in a position to shoulder an ever-increasing portion of the expenses of the Organization, for that would mean that the cherished goal of genuine equality of all Member States would be nearer to realization.

11. Mr. PAPENDORP (United States of America) welcomed the steps taken by the Committee on Contributions to ensure a uniform time period for basic data, as outlined in paragraph 35 of its report; that should lead to improvements in the quality of national income statistics used in calculating the scale of assessments. His delegation endorsed draft resolutions A and B recommended by the Committee for adoption by the General Assembly.

12. Under its terms of reference, the Committee on Contributions was responsible for considering and reporting to the General Assembly on action to be taken with regard to the application of Article 19 of the Charter. That was an important function, especially in the light of the recent comments of the Assistant Secretary-General for Financial Services with regard to the financial situation of the Organization and the complications which could result from the increasing cash deficit. Situations to which Article 19 applied should be treated by the Secretary-General in accordance with established practice and in keeping with the intent and spirit of the Charter. Any exceptions proposed should normally be considered by the Committee on Contributions before being approved by the General Assembly.

13. Mr. FERNANDEZ (Philippines) said that, in the absence of an accepted definition of excessive or extreme variations in rates of assessment between two successive scales, the question should be kept under consideration by the Committee on Contributions. The decline in income of many developing countries during the current times of recession and inflation should be taken into account, and the Committee must have the flexibility to adjust the scale of assessments in the light of economic and social indicators. External aid should not be included in national income statistics since it was not a permanent feature of a country's infrastructure. His delegation would appreciate a more detailed definition of "net income" and "net worth" as used in the report of the Committee, especially since the national accounting methods of Member States were not the same.

14. The Committee should keep under review the question of the level of different inflation rates and their effects on the comparability of national income statistics.

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(Mr. Fernandez, Philippines)

15. Capacity to pay was affected also by the balance-of-payments problems experienced by many developing countries. Owing to increases in the price of oil and the protectionist stance of some countries, many of them were unable to cover their import bill with their foreign exchange earnings and had to increase borrowing from private and international institutions. Such factors should be taken into account in determining the capacity to pay of low-income countries. In view of the difficulties encountered by the Committee in evaluating indicators of socio-economic development, the Statistical Office should make every effort to collect economic and social data which would assist the Committee in determining capacity to pay. The low per capita income allowance formula should not be altered to the detriment of the low per capita income countries, particularly the least developed countries.

16. His delegation supported the draft resolutions recommended by the Committee for adoption by the General Assembly.

17. Mrs. SANDIFER (Portugal) said that the purpose of asking the Committee on Contributions to study various factors affecting the calculation of the scale of assessments had been to arrive at a more equitable scale in which the new economic relations between countries and the changing financial situation were reflected more faithfully. The Committee on Contributions had done an adequate job in responding to the mandate set for it in resolution 34/6 B, although, owing to the complexity of the issues involved and the short time available to it, it had not covered any new ground or reached any definitive conclusions.

18. She found the account of the Committee's discussion of specific questions to be rather vague, if not cursory. In particular, her delegation would have appreciated a more detailed account of the Committee's deliberations on economic and social indicators of capacity to pay and on the question of inflation rates and their effects on the comparability of national income statistics. It was to be hoped that future reports of the Committee would be drafted in less general terms.

19. Her delegation agreed with the view that the imposition of upward or downward limits on variations in assessments could distort the principle of capacity to pay. The possibility of introducing a system of computing assessments to four decimal digits, which the Committee on Contributions had agreed might be useful, should not have been rejected out of hand. Her delegation hoped that the question would be kept under serious review.

20. She wondered why the Committee had concluded in paragraph 18 of its report that the choice of economic and social indicators and of weights might not have been necessarily objective, and was at a loss to understand why the indicators listed in annex II of the report were not considered to be objective. The question of such indicators should be studied further at future sessions of the Committee.

21. Her delegation recognized that, given the complexity and newness of the concept of net national wealth, it was difficult to develop objective measurements

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(Mrs. Sandifer, Portugal)

of such wealth, but the Committee should keep further developments in that very important field under review.

22. The General Assembly should not, on a whim, tamper with the base period for the calculation of the scale of assessments every few years. Statistical continuity must be maintained in order to reflect the full economic picture of each country and avoid any distortion of the capacity to pay. Since the Committee on Contributions currently used a seven-year base period, a sudden switch to a three-year period, which would leave the years 1975-1978 uncovered, should be avoided.

AGENDA ITEM 96: PATTERN OF CONFERENCES: REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON CONFERENCES (continued) (A/35/32 and Add.1; A/C.5/35/12; A/C.5/35/L.5 and L.6)

23. Mr. SERBANESCU (Romania) noted with satisfaction from the report of the Committee on Conferences (A/35/32 and Add.1) that a start had been made on implementing many of the Committee's previous proposals, with some success. The use of the overprogramming system in particular had resulted in a reduction in the use of free-lance interpreters, and his delegation therefore agreed with the recommendation contained in paragraph 23 of document A/35/32. It had also noted with satisfaction the measures the Committee on Conferences planned to take with respect to the planned and actual duration of sessions of subsidiary organs and agreed that a greater effort on the part of delegations could help to prevent time being lost because of late starts, early endings or cancellations of meetings.

24. His delegation was encouraged by the initial results achieved in controlling and limiting documentation and, more specifically, in eliminating summary records for subsidiary organs. That course should be pursued without, however, excluding the possibility of making some exceptions after careful study of truly exceptional cases. Delegations could assist in limiting documentation by exercising greater moderation and discernment when requesting further reports and documents, while, the Secretariat should ensure that documents were more concise and at the same time constantly improve their quality.

25. In discussing the important matter of the organization and servicing of special conferences and preparatory meetings, the Committee on Conferences had allowed itself to become overconcerned with certain aspects of the problem which did not fall within its jurisdiction. The decision to convene a special conference at a particular venue was, in most cases, justified by major political considerations. While not denying the practicality of some elements of the Committee's recommendations, his delegation, therefore, believed that the first three operative paragraphs of the draft resolution contained in paragraph 61 of document A/35/32 were somewhat peremptory.

26. Mr. LEWANDOWSKI (Under-Secretary-General for Conference Services and Special Assignments), replying to questions raised by various delegations, said that the Department of Conference Services agreed with the representative of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya that there had sometimes to be exceptions to the 32-page rule for

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(Mr. Lewandowski)

reports. However, the concern to keep reports concise was not just a matter of cost or length. He believed that shorter reports were more effective and useful to delegations, especially when they included a short summary on the first page. Efforts were also being made to streamline further graphic presentation. It was hoped that when the word-processing system was fully introduced the material would be more readable.

27. As for the delivery of documents to missions, the number of documents supplied in the various languages was based on the annual orders placed. If requirements changed during the year, permanent missions could amend their orders by contacting the Distribution Section. Every effort was made to meet early morning deadlines so that documents could be ready for all missions simultaneously. Unfortunately, circumstances did not permit the Secretariat to deliver documents to individual missions.

28. The representatives of Sierra Leone, Ethiopia and Yugoslavia had referred to the selection of venues for conferences away from Headquarters. The choice of venue was, of course, a matter for the relevant organs. On behalf of the Secretary-General, he could assure members of the Fifth Committee that a dim view would be taken of any member of the Secretariat endeavouring, for whatever reason, to favour one venue over another. Strong measures would be taken against anyone who made any such attempt. His Department was prepared to service any conference anywhere in the world. To date, the cost of living of a particular venue had not officially been taken into account in its selection.

29. The details of the nineteenth session of the Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLA) had not been available at the time the draft revised calendar of conferences had been prepared, but it would, of course, be included when the calendar was published in January 1981. As mentioned by the representative of Uruguay, his Government had agreed to host the session, but no official communication had yet been received from ECLA.

30. The question posed by the representatives of the United States and the Federal Republic of Germany with respect to the rescheduling of meetings to accommodate the tenth session of the Third United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea and the global negotiations were extremely difficult to answer. There were hundreds of possible variations, all with different financial implications. He was prepared to give the representative of the United States privately a list of possibilities, but it was hoped that the Committee on Conferences would be able to meet at some time in the course of the General Assembly to look into the matter.

31. In answer to questions posed by the representative of Malawi, he could inform the Committee that 1,015 meetings had been cancelled in 1979 and it was safe to say that almost all the various bodies had contributed in some degree to the large number of cancellations. He did not believe that it would be worth the extra documentation required to provide a detailed explanation of the reasons for the cancellation of every individual meeting. There were five basic reasons why meetings were cancelled, the first being a lack of speakers. In that respect, he

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welcomed the decision taken by the First Committee that it would not call a meeting unless there was a minimum of four speakers on the list. Secondly, meetings could be delayed in starting or cancelled because of the need to conduct informal negotiations or consultations. In such cases, if the secretary of the Committee informed the Department of Conference Services in time, the meeting could be rescheduled. Thirdly, there were the understandable delays which sometimes occurred towards the end of a session because of last-minute work on draft reports or resolutions. The fourth reason for cancellations was when meetings on similar subjects conflicted and small delegations did not have sufficient representatives to cover two simultaneous meetings on the same subject. Another problem was delay in issuing documents. In that connexion, however, it had to be remembered that the Department of Conference Services was at the end of the line. It could not provide six weeks in advance of a session a document which had only been submitted for processing two weeks before that session. A report which had only been drafted two hours before a particular meeting could not be processed in two hours. Of course, there was always room for improvement, and the Department welcomed constructive criticism. Lastly, meetings sometimes had to be cancelled for lack of conference rooms of a suitable size. In that respect, the Organization was operating at full capacity the whole year round. The increasing need for consultations in various groups, and other informal meetings meant that the Department was increasingly unable to accommodate requests for servicing because of lack of space. It was sometimes subjected to brutally frank remarks about its inefficiency in providing meeting services, but it was powerless unless the Assembly decided to expand facilities. Indeed, lack of space was one of the reasons why more meetings were being held away from Headquarters.

32. As to intersessional departures, he could assure the Committee that all bodies whose requests had been approved by the Committee on Conferences had held their session, which had been financed from available resources for the biennium 1980-1981.

33. The representative of Australia had asked for a cost comparison between summary records and in extenso reports for the Commission on Human Rights. The figures showed that 203 pages had been produced for that Commission in the form of in extenso reports, whereas summary records would have required a total of 1,122 pages. Obviously, there had been significant savings. In chapter VIII of document A/35/32, in the guidelines under recommendation 3, the Committee on Conferences had mentioned the possibility of setting up a service centre on a commercial basis at the site of conferences held at the invitation of a Government. That referred to the need to provide services for delegations in places where they had no mission or consulate. The use of the word "commercial" in a United Nations context was perhaps slightly unfortunate, but it was important that the need for such services should be taken into account in advising Governments about arrangements for such conferences.

34. The decision on the holding of the Trade and Development Board meeting to which the representative of Panama had referred, had been taken too recently to be reflected in the draft revised calendar. It had been the practice for the Trade and Development Board to make proposals for changes in the calendar of conferences in its report to the General Assembly. Once that report was approved, the relevant

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adjustments were made. As far as the financial implications were concerned, services were provided by the United Nations Office at Geneva, on which the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development could call throughout the year.

35. Referring to the comment made by the representative of the Soviet Union, he explained that mention of the daily Journal had been included in the guidelines under recommendation 3 because it had been felt that every aspect of special conferences should be covered. What might be obvious to members of Main Committees was not always obvious to the representatives who attended special conferences. As far as special conferences in general were concerned, the representative of Romania was correct in saying that it was not the Committee on Conferences, less still the Secretariat, that could decide whether a special conference should be held or not. Any such decision was necessarily political in nature. However, the Department of Conference Services did have unique experience since it had serviced all special conferences - which it felt could be of value. Based on that experience, it had come to the conclusion that there were two kinds of special conferences. The first set out to solve a specific problem. However, unless there was more extensive preparation and greater expenditure it was unlikely to be able to do so in the space of two weeks. The second was intended to bring a given situation to public attention. In that case, it might be better to spend the money on the public information media.

36. Turning again to the problem of documentation, he said that very detailed information had been provided to the thirty-fourth session on that subject. The Committee on Conferences, against the background of the report of the Joint Inspection Unit on documentation, might consider preparing a more detailed report for the thirty-sixth session setting out the difficulties. The representative of Indonesia had requested an assurance from the Department of Conference Services that the continuation of the experimental elimination of summary records would lead to an improvement in the situation of documentation in the coming year. In that connexion, some idea of the gains from the elimination of summary records might be of interest. Excluding the ninth session of the Third United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea, a comparison of the period January to August 1979 with January to August 1980 showed that there had been a saving of 183 meetings. In terms of staff costs, that represented savings of 7 2/3 years of précis-writer/translator time, 1 1/3 years of reviser time, and a little over 10 years of typist time. Calculated on the basis of net salaries and common staff costs for regular staff, plus over-time for typists, approximately \$500,000 had been saved, plus some \$60,000 savings in reproduction costs, paper and so forth; those resources could be devoted to other work. Such savings might of course lead the Committee to try to cut the Department's budget for the next biennium. The Department took a very relaxed approach to such a prospect, since it could only provide as much as Member States were willing to pay for. Whether or not representatives would feel the benefit in terms of more prompt issuing of documents was another matter.

37. Informally, the representative of Morocco had intimated that he would request simultaneous distribution of summary records in all official languages, including Arabic. With respect to documents in Arabic, the Department was doing its best to

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solve what were difficult, if not insoluble, problems. A serious problem currently was shortage of office space in a building designed to hold 3,000 staff and now occupied by 6,000.

38. Mr. BRODODININGRAT (Indonesia) said that some of the late starting and early ending of meetings could perhaps be avoided if shorter meetings were scheduled. He wondered why meetings were always scheduled for two and a half hours in the morning and three hours in the afternoon.

39. Some suggestion had been made that it might be possible to replace summary records by press releases. In that connexion, he asked the Secretariat to convey to the Under-Secretary-General for Public Information his delegation's dissatisfaction at the minimal coverage being given to the work of the Fifth Committee in the press releases. He was not sure whether the deterioration was the result of the new machines that were being used or whether it was the judgement of the Department of Public Information that the press was not interested in the work of the Fifth Committee. The kind of press releases being produced would be of no use in replacing summary records.

40. Mr. FALL (Senegal) endorsed the comments of the Committee on Conferences concerning the benefits to be derived from overprogramming, and urged the Secretariat to continue the practice.

41. It was time to set about rationalizing the work of subsidiary bodies on the basis of the studies conducted. His delegation approved of the establishment of a link between the Committee on Conferences and the Ad Hoc Committee on Subsidiary Organs and was in favour of shortening the sessions of subsidiary bodies. At the same time, both the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council should make efforts to shorten their agenda, for example by agreeing to discuss certain items biennially or triennially rather than every year and by reducing the overlap in subject-matter between their subsidiary bodies. The Committee on Conferences could also play a more effective role in controlling the number of special conferences.

42. His delegation was in favour of the introduction of new documents production technology and the suggestion that the Committee on Conferences should give more active consideration to conference services operations at Geneva, Vienna and the regional commissions, while becoming more actively involved in the programming process of the United Nations. It was not, however, in favour of expanding the Committee's mandate, believing that with the resources currently available the Committee would do better to pursue the parts of its existing mandate that it had not so far fulfilled. Similarly, it was unenthusiastic about giving the Secretary-General the authority to adjust the calendar of conferences should developments so require. The subject required deep thought before any action was taken.

43. While it appeared that the discontinuance of summary record coverage for subsidiary bodies had had a beneficial effect on the volume of documentation and the progress made in negotiations within the United Nations, it was apparent that

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(Mr. Fall, Senegal)

the General Assembly's decision in resolution 34/50 posed problems for some committees, among them the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People. In the case of that Committee, the lack of summary record coverage meant that delegations had themselves to arrange for the statements delivered to be translated into their languages, and also had to bear the cost of such translation. On purely technical grounds, therefore, his delegation favoured restoring summary record coverage to that Committee, and would submit a formal amendment to the recommendation contained in paragraph 9 (a) of document A/C.5/35/12. Out of respect for the Fifth Committee's desire to hold down the cost of documentation, the amendment would propose the restoration of summary records, not for all meetings, as the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People would obviously like, but for a maximum of six meetings a year, leaving it to the Committee Chairman to request summary record coverage for those meetings he thought appropriate.

44. Mr. MANEKA (Pakistan) said that, while his delegation supported efforts to limit the volume of documentation in the United Nations, the need for adequate Secretariat support for the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People was self-evident. He therefore endorsed the request made by the Chairman of that Committee in document A/C.5/35/L.6.

45. Mr. TOLMO MONTHE (United Republic of Cameroon) expressed a preference for postponing a decision on the subject of special conferences until the matter had been studied in depth.

46. His delegation supported the proposal just put forward by the Senegalese delegation in view of the delicate political mandate and the historic responsibility of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People.

47. Mr. LAHLOU (Morocco) said that the position of the Arab States on the desirability of summary records for the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People was broadly similar to that of the African States regarding the United Nations Council for Namibia and the Special Committee against Apartheid. Those bodies had been called upon to perform historic tasks that lay at the heart of the Organization's existence; he hoped the Fifth Committee would support the call from the Senegalese delegation.

48. Turning to the remarks made by the Under-Secretary-General for Conference Services, he said that it was not his intention to request the simultaneous distribution of summary records in all languages, Arabic included, as he was well aware of the problems faced by DCS. The fact remained, however, that while several summary records from the current session were now available in English, only one was yet available in either French or Arabic. Delegations were entitled to expect that summary records would be made available in at least one language other than English. While he would not insist on the simultaneous publication of summary records in all languages, his forbearance should not be interpreted by the Secretariat as encouragement to do nothing about the present situation.

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49. Mr. EL-SAFY (Egypt) said he saw no reason to associate the problems of overcrowding at Headquarters with the Arabic language services. Arabic, the most recent addition to the Organization's official languages, should be treated on exactly the same footing as all other official languages. There had been errors and inaccuracies in documents recently issued in Arabic which, his delegation felt sure, would not have occurred had the Secretariat shown the same concern for Arabic as for the other languages.

50. Mr. MARTORELL (Peru) expressed satisfaction at the fact that, in accordance with the recommendation in document A/C.5/35/12, paragraph 9, summary record coverage of the International Law Commission and the Committee of the Whole Established under General Assembly Resolution 32/174 would continue.

51. Mr. ALLAFI (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) said that the General Assembly's decision to discontinue summary record coverage of subsidiary bodies had been a very sensible one. Nevertheless, his delegation, for humanitarian reasons, attached especial importance to the cause of the Palestinian people and felt, accordingly, that the Fifth Committee should deal sympathetically with the request by the Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People (A/C.5/35/L.6). To accede to that request would not, it believed, be at variance with either the letter or the spirit of resolution 34/50.

52. Mr. RAKOTO (Madagascar) urged that summary records should be provided for UNCITRAL, as requested in document A/C.5/35/L.5. An exception to the rule should also be made in the case of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, since statements in that Committee were often controversial and contained fine points of substance.

53. Mr. DENIS (France) concurred with the Moroccan delegation's point of view on the issuance of summary records in French, and deplored the fact that documents in English were generally released long before the versions in other working languages, giving English-speaking delegation an obvious advantage, as they had longer to study an issue and could therefore exert greater influence on the ensuing discussions.

54. Summary record coverage should be provided, in his delegation's view, if there was a clearly established need for it: for example, during the discussions leading to the formulation of a legislative text, when it was important to document the legislators' intent for the purposes of interpreting the final instrument adopted. He was willing to be persuaded of the need for such coverage in the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, but that would require arguments more cogent than mere allusions to the Committee's "historic responsibility"; any committee chairman could be expected to advance the same claim.

55. Mr. LEWANDOWSKI (Under-Secretary-General for Conference Services and Special Assignments) said that office space had become a real problem for the Department for the first time during the past year; the causes of the problem were in no way associated with the Arab language services, however. The Headquarters building

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was simply becoming overcrowded, and the overcrowding in DCS was beginning to affect the documentation process.

56. It was essential to the smooth running of the Organization that DCS should continue to be housed within the Secretariat building proper; but attempts to transfer other units to alternative accommodation outside the building were often frustrated by appeals to political considerations. The situation could not go on much longer. Delegations should take the time to visit the makeshift offices in the first basement where the verbatim records of the Security Council were currently being prepared in all six official languages; they should do so preferably after midnight. It would then be clearer to them that such substandard working conditions must eventually affect the speed and accuracy with which DCS staff produced meetings records. Further disruption would occur when the printing facilities were moved to the new production area in 1981.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.