



SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 29TH MEETING

Chairman: Mr. BUJ-FLORES (Mexico)

later: Mr. EL-HOUDERI (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya)

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

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The meeting was called to order at 11.05 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 91: PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIAL 1980-1981 (continued)

Arabic language services (A/C.5/35/18 and Corr.1)

1. Mr. RANZY (Egypt) recalled that his delegation had explained its views on the Arabic language services in detail at the previous session of the General Assembly. At that time, his delegation had welcomed General Assembly resolution 34/226, in which it had been decided to strengthen the Arabic language services. Since that resolution had still not been fully implemented, his delegation would not raise new questions of detail.
2. However, in view of the unsatisfactory situation of the services in Arabic, as reflected, for example, in the fact that the summary records of the Main Committees were not issued regularly in that language, his delegation wished to make a number of comments on the report of the Secretary-General (A/C.5/35/18).
3. First, although resolution 34/226 had been adopted in December 1979, the tests for candidates for posts as Arabic interpreters had not been held until April, June and July 1980. The examination for translators had been held in May. Even allowing for the fact that such examinations required a certain amount of preparation, the period between the adoption of the General Assembly resolution and the holding of the examinations seemed excessively long. Furthermore, the translators who had passed the examination had still not been recruited by the United Nations.
4. Consequently, the General Assembly at its current session was not receiving translation and interpretation services at the level envisaged when resolution 34/226 was adopted. His delegation therefore requested the representatives of the Secretary-General to explain why the examinations had been held so late.
5. In paragraph 13 of the report of the Secretary-General (A/C.5/35/18) it was stated, with regard to the recruitment of translators, that "special measures had to be taken to ensure that the number of candidates who would sit for the examination would be large enough to generate the requisite number of staff to fill all vacancies". His delegation would like the Secretariat to explain what special measures had been taken and whether those measures had affected the level of competence of the candidates.
6. His delegation noted with satisfaction the statement concerning interpreters in paragraph 11 of the report of the Secretary-General to the effect that "the best candidates" would be "offered career appointments at grades consonant with their competence and experience", and hoped that the Secretariat would bear in mind the question of career prospects, which was very important for the purpose of ensuring the quality of the services.
7. Mr. LANLOU (Morocco) said that seven years had passed since the introduction of

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(Mr. Lahlou, Morocco)

Arabic as an official language of the United Nations and it might have been expected that the necessary services would already be available to ensure that Arabic was placed on an equal footing with the other official languages, since that was essential for the smooth progress of the General Assembly's work.

8. However, that was not the case, and it was therefore necessary to take up the question once again. At the previous session it had been said that if the Secretariat received the necessary funds, there would be no problems with regard to translation and interpretation into Arabic at the current session. The Secretariat had been given the necessary funds but problems continued to exist, apparently as a result of other difficulties.

9. If the main obstacles were not material in nature, the problem would have to be approached from another angle. In that regard, it was essential that there be a conviction within the Secretariat that appropriate Arabic services were essential if the United Nations was to fulfil its functions effectively. His delegation felt that no such conviction existed, and that its absence was reflected in various ways: for example, no Arabic interpretation had been provided for the meetings of the Group of 77 the previous week, or for the United Nations Day concert. In that connexion, it was significant that the Secretariat officials responsible for the Arabic language services had practically no knowledge of that language.

10. As a result of all those factors, the Arabic interpreters and translators felt uncertain about the future; in addition, they were not offered posts at an appropriate level. The Secretariat should correct that situation, so that Arabic occupied a place equivalent to that of the other official languages of the United Nations. The time had passed when Arabic could be considered a "prestige" language; it now had to be an effective working tool. No experiments should be carried out with Arabic; on the contrary, it was necessary to utilize the experience acquired with the other languages, which had been official languages of the United Nations for a longer period and no longer raised any problems.

11. With regard to paragraph 7 of document A/C.5/35/10, he would like to receive some additional information; he felt that in order to determine whether there was any disparity between services and staff resources for the various languages, it would be useful to compare, for example, the resources allocated to Chinese and those allocated to Arabic.

12. Nevertheless, his delegation considered that the basic problem was psychological in nature and resulted from the fact that the Secretariat did not attach sufficient importance to the Arabic translation and interpretation services. In conclusion, he said that his delegation greatly appreciated the services provided by the Arabic interpreters and translators.

13. Mr. EL-HOUDERI (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) took the Chair.

14. Mr. MONAYAIR (Kuwait) said his delegation did not wish to go into technical

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(Mr. Monayair, Kuwait)

and administrative details concerning the Arabic language services, but it considered that the time had come for Arabic to be placed on an equal footing with the other languages, in the name of Arab culture and civilization, of which it was the vehicle.

15. Mr. WILLIAMS (Panama) said his delegation had expressed on other occasions its understanding of the problems faced by the Arabic language services and had stressed the need to strengthen the Bourgiba Institute for the training of interpreters and translators in that language. The requests made at the thirty-fourth session still had not been fully met. Consequently, his delegation requested the Secretariat to prepare a more detailed study on the Arabic language services.

United Nations Conference on Trade and Development: advances from the Working Capital Fund

International Natural Rubber Agreement (A/35/7/Add.3; A/C.5/35/22)

Common Fund (A/35/7/Add.3; A/C.5/35/19)

16. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) said that the fourth report of the Advisory Committee (A/35/7/Add.3) dealt with two notes submitted by the Secretary-General (A/C.5/35/22 and A/C.5/35/19); paragraphs 2 to 5 of the Advisory Committee's report were concerned with the request made by the Secretary-General in the first of those documents that \$200,000 should be advanced, on a reimbursable basis, to permit the establishment of the International Natural Rubber Organization. The Advisory Committee had considered the Secretary-General's request and had decided to recommend that the General Assembly should authorize the advance.

17. Paragraphs 6 to 11 of the Advisory Committee's report dealt with the request made in document A/C.5/35/19 concerning preparatory work for bringing the Common Fund into operation. As indicated in paragraph 7 of the Advisory Committee's report, that question had been raised at the thirty-fourth session, when the Secretary-General had submitted a statement of the financial implications of that preparatory work. On that occasion, the Advisory Committee had reported orally to the Fifth Committee, at its 84th meeting (A/C.5/34/SR.84), that no new appropriation was needed and that, since it was not known when the Common Fund would be established, the question of the advance could be considered in the context of the resolution on unforeseen and extraordinary expenses for the biennium 1980-1981. The Advisory Committee had also felt on that occasion that there was no need to create a new section 15.B, as the Secretary-General had proposed.

18. At the current session, the Secretary-General was requesting that the General Assembly appropriate an amount of \$1,750,500 on a non-recurrent and reimbursable basis, under section 15 of the programme budget for the biennium 1980-1981, in order to finance the items of expenditure indicated in the Secretary-General's report and enumerated in paragraph 11 of the Advisory Committee's report. The

Advisory Committee had inquired into the staffing proposed by the Secretary-General and, in the light of the replies received, had reached the conclusion that it was not necessary to recommend any reduction in expenditure.

19. He recalled that it was not the first time that an advance from the regular budget was being requested and mentioned, as an example, the case of the International Fund for Agricultural Development, for the establishment of which the Assembly had authorized an advance.

20. The Advisory Committee was accordingly recommending that the General Assembly approve the requests made by the Secretary-General and that additional appropriations would be required under the programme budget for the biennium 1980-1981 in the amount of \$1,950,500 under section 15 (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development) and \$217,600 under section 31 (staff assessment). The approved estimates of income would have to be increased by \$217,600 under income section 1 (Income from staff assessment) and \$1,950,500 under income section 2 (General income).

21. Mr. GARRIDO (Philippines) said his delegation had no objection to an advance of \$200,000 in connexion with the interim arrangements for the establishment of the International Natural Rubber Council, which would be used to pay for temporary assistance, travel and conference services.

22. With regard to the request for an appropriation in the amount of \$1,750,500 for bringing the Common Fund into operation, he observed that at its first session the Preparatory Commission had adopted by consensus a resolution requesting, in accordance with General Assembly decision 34/446, that the Preparatory Commission be advanced the resources necessary for bringing the Fund into operation. Those resources amounted to \$1.8 million and would be reimbursed once the Fund became operational. The resources would be administered in accordance with the decisions adopted by the Preparatory Commission at its subsequent sessions concerning the establishment of the special unit.

23. Taking into account the advantages which the developing countries would derive from the establishment of the Common Fund, his delegation supported the appropriation, since it considered that the work of the Preparatory Commission was very important. Lastly, he recalled that his country had offered to act as host to the headquarters of the Common Fund.

24. Mr. YUSUF (Somalia) asked whether the Secretariat had taken any steps to ensure that the 14 temporary posts referred to in document A/C.5/35/19, paragraph 8, would be filled by staff from the Secretariat itself.

25. With regard to the last sentence of paragraph 9 of that document, in which it was proposed that the temporary posts for the special unit should be considered as being outside the scope of geographical distribution, he wondered whether that procedure would not tend to perpetuate itself, to the detriment of the developing countries.

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26. Mr. PALAMARCHUK (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) noted that, in document A/35/7/Add.3, the Advisory Committee recommended that the General Assembly should approve the appropriations requested by the Secretary-General in document A/C.5/35/19 to finance the preparatory work for bringing the Common Fund into operation; the Advisory Committee also recommended approval of the Secretary-General's request concerning the 14 temporary posts for the special unit to service the Preparatory Commission (A/35/7/Add.3, paras. 11 and 12). His delegation was surprised that the Secretary-General was requesting, and the Advisory Committee was recommending, approval of an appropriation of more than \$2 million at a time when the United Nations was undergoing a serious financial crisis, as had been indicated by various representatives of the Secretary-General and by the Vice-Chairman of the Negotiating Committee on the Financial Emergency of the United Nations.

27. His delegation requested the representatives of the Secretary-General to clarify such action, which, in his view, was illogical. Furthermore, he hoped that the Fifth Committee would give very serious thought to the request, since the United Nations was facing formidable financial difficulties.

28. Mr. Buj-Flores (Mexico) resumed the Chair.

29. Mr. BRODININGRAT (Indonesia) said that his delegation attached great importance to the appropriation of funds for the interim arrangements for the International Natural Rubber Council and for the preparatory work for bringing the Common Fund into operation, the latter question being of vital concern to the developing countries.

30. In the case of both the Common Fund and the International Natural Rubber Council, a decision had been taken by a legitimately established intergovernmental organ. Moreover, the Advisory Committee had carefully scrutinized the Secretary-General's requests and had stated that it considered them to be appropriate. In addition, in both cases the appropriations would be reimbursable, thereby imposing no additional burden on the United Nations regular budget. For those reasons, his delegation fully supported the Advisory Committee's recommendations in document A/35/7/Add.3, paragraphs 5 and 12.

31. Mr. JASABE (Sierra Leone) said that his delegation attached great importance to the setting up of the Common Fund. It also hoped that measures would be taken for the conclusion of international agreements on basic commodities, since only in that way could maximum advantage be derived from the setting up of the Fund.

32. During the initial negotiations for setting up the Fund, and despite the serious problems encountered, a consensus had been reached among nearly all the groups involved. The socialist countries had played an important role in those negotiations. Consequently, at a time when the question of bringing the Common Fund into operation was being considered, equal magnanimity should be shown.

(Mr. Jasabe, Sierra Leone)

33. Under the agreement establishing the Common Fund, the Preparatory Commission would be composed of 28 countries. In his delegation's view, the composition of the Commission should be open to participation by all countries, and his delegation therefore supported its enlargement, as proposed by the Group of 77.

34. By its decision 34/446, the General Assembly had decided to advance the necessary funds to enable the financing of the preparatory work required for bringing the Common Fund into operation, up to a total of \$1.8 million. However, the actual utilization of the funds would be largely determined by the work programme which the Preparatory Commission would establish and by the actual duration of the interim arrangements. The Commission would meet in February 1981. By then it would have decided on its work programme and would have to do its utmost to restrict the length of the interim period.

35. His delegation shared the view that the United Nations should advance the necessary funds to finance the preparatory work; however, he emphasized the need to achieve economies wherever possible. It should be noted that the Secretary-General had indicated that the reimbursement would have first claim against revenues of the Common Fund. Furthermore, as other speakers had indicated, it was an interim arrangement. For all those reasons, his delegation fully supported the Advisory Committee's recommendation.

36. Mrs. MORA de BRACHO (Venezuela) said that her delegation fully identified itself with the support that various delegations had given to the two initiatives with respect to basic commodities which the Committee was considering, since both were of vital importance for the developing countries.

37. Mr. BEGIN (Director, Budget Division), replying to a question from the delegation of Somalia, said that the preparatory work for bringing the Common Fund into operation constituted new work to be carried out not by United Nations staff but by officials from outside the Organization. Thus, the 14 temporary posts for the special unit to service the Preparatory Commission (A/35/7/Add.3, para. 11) would not be filled by staff from Headquarters.

38. As to the clarification requested by the USSR delegation, first of all, as already indicated, in the case of both the International Natural Rubber Council and the Common Fund, the sums involved were advances that were reimbursable to the Organization. Furthermore, with regard to the establishment of the Common Fund, it should be pointed out once more that, as indicated in document A/C.5/35/19, paragraph 1, the General Assembly, by its decision 34/446, had decided "to make appropriate arrangements to advance the necessary funds to enable the financing of the preparatory work required for bringing the Common Fund into operation, up to a total of \$1.8 million". The Secretariat was obliged to comply with that decision. With regard to the International Natural Rubber Council, the legislative basis was an agreement concluded under the auspices of the United Nations which itself constituted a firm basis for requesting funds. He again stressed that both

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(Mr. Begin)

the appropriations were reimbursable advances, and would therefore in no way aggravate the financial crisis. On the contrary: the Secretariat should resort more often to that type of financing.

39. Mr. HUANG (Office of Personnel Services), replying to a question from the delegation of Somalia, said that the reason why it had been decided that the 14 temporary posts for the special unit to service the Preparatory Commission would be considered as being outside the scope of geographical distribution was that the arrangement was an interim one. The staff in question would be appointed for a maximum period of one year. That meant that the measure would in no way undermine the principle of geographical distribution. Should the Preparatory Commission's mandate be extended, in which case the period of appointment of the staff of the unit would also be extended, the decision would be reviewed in order to comply with the principle of geographical distribution.

40. Mr. PALAMARCHUK (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) observed that, neither in document A/35/7/Add.3 nor in document A/C.5/35/19 was it clearly indicated by what time the funds requested would be reimbursed to the United Nations. That was the cause for his concern, in view of the fact that, should the funds not be reimbursed during the biennium 1980-1981, the deficit in the United Nations budget would be increased.

41. If the question was put to a vote, which, in his view, was appropriate and necessary, his delegation would abstain.

42. The CHAIRMAN suggested that, on the basis of the recommendations in paragraph 13 of the Advisory Committee's report, the Fifth Committee should inform the General Assembly that, should the Secretary-General's requests be approved, additional appropriations would be required under the programme budget for the biennium 1980-1981 in the amounts of \$1,950,500 (Sect. 15, United Nations Conference on Trade and Development) and \$217,600 (Sect. 31, Staff assessment). Furthermore, the approved estimates of income would have to be increased by the amounts of \$217,600 (Income Sect. 1, Income from staff assessment) and \$1,950,500 (Income Sect. 2, General Income).

43. At the request of the representative of Indonesia, a recorded vote was taken on the recommendation of the Advisory Committee.

44. Mr. PAPENDORP (United States of America), speaking in explanation of vote before the vote, said that his delegation supported the recommendation of the Advisory Committee on the understanding that it would not result in a net increase in the United Nations budget.

In favour: Afghanistan, Algeria, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belgium, Bolivia, Brazil, Burundi, Canada, Central African Republic, China, Congo, Cuba, Cyprus, Democratic Yemen, Denmark, Ecuador, Egypt, Ethiopia, France, Gabon, Germany, Federal Republic of, Greece, Grenada, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Honduras, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Israel, Italy, Japan, Kenya, Kuwait, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Mauritania, Mexico, Mozambique, Nepal, Netherlands, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Panama, Peru, Philippines, Portugal, Qatar, Romania, Rwanda, Sao Tome and Principe, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Singapore, Somalia, Spain, Sudan, Sweden, Syrian Arab Republic, Thailand, Togo, Tunisia, Turkey, Uganda, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United Republic of Cameroon, United Republic of Tanzania, United States of America, Uruguay, Venezuela, Yugoslavia, Zaire, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

Against: None.

Abstaining: Bulgaria, Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic, Czechoslovakia, German Democratic Republic, Hungary, Mongolia, Poland, Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

45. Additional appropriations of \$1,950,500 under section 15 and \$217,600 under section 31 of the programme budget for the biennium 1980-1981 were approved by 86 votes to none, with 9 abstentions.

Agency support costs (A/35/544 and Corr.1)

46. Mr. CROM (Netherlands) welcomed the fact that, after many years of arduous and persistent effort, it had been possible to arrive at a formula for the reimbursement of agency support costs that was acceptable to all the parties concerned. In his delegation's opinion, the formula adopted by the Governing Council of the United Nations Development Programme in its decision 80/44, which had been endorsed by the Economic and Social Council, would benefit the United Nations system as a whole. Accordingly, in recognition of the valuable work accomplished, the General Assembly should approve that formula, as recommended by the Advisory Committee in paragraph 15 of its report (A/35/544).

47. Mr. NUTT (Canada) said that the search for a solution to the question of the reimbursement of agency support costs had previously been hindered by the fact that agency support costs were not comparable, because of the different accounting methods used, and by basic political problems concerning the proportion of agency costs to be charged to the regular budget or voluntary contributions. The objective of the formula adopted in decision 80/44 of the UNDP Governing Council was effectively to reduce the over-all support costs of the entire system, and not merely to reduce the reimbursement rate for UNDP. In that connexion, it should be noted that the Intergovernmental Working Group on Support Costs had unanimously agreed that such costs had been too high.

(Mr. Mutt, Canada)

48. Decision 80/44 contained elements to ensure that there could be no justification for the transfer of support costs to the regular budget. Paragraph 2 (c) provided guarantees that no agency, including FAO, would receive a lower amount, in absolute terms, than it received in 1981 at a reimbursement rate of 14 per cent, unless the volume of UNDP projects delivery fell below the 1981 level. That measure ensured that the 14-per-cent rate would not apply when the amount reimbursed exceeded that received in 1981.

49. The concept of support costs was based on the idea of a partnership in which the regular programmes of agencies benefited from their participation in projects financed by UNDP. In the case of FAO, the partnership component being financed was smaller than that of the other agencies.

50. His delegation had proposed that the Working Group should include paragraph 2 (d) in decision 80/44 for two reasons: first, because the Working Group had been informed that recently FAO support costs for UNDP-financed projects had been lower than 14 per cent of project expenditures and that consequently UNDP had been subsidizing FAO support costs for projects financed from other sources and, secondly, in order to require the Governing Council to review the reimbursement rate of the support costs of individual agencies in order to ensure that their actual costs were the same as the amounts reimbursed. Paragraph 2 (e) took into account the interests of the agencies located in Geneva. Paragraph 2 (g) requested that an annual report detailing actual support costs incurred should be submitted by each agency; that was an important element of the decision, since for the first time comparable data would be available. His delegation supported the formula contained in decision 80/44 of the UNDP Governing Council and hoped that the General Assembly would approve it.

51. Mr. OREBI (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations), referring to the comments made by the representative of Canada, said that the actual support costs of FAO had almost always been above 14 per cent; in the few cases where such costs had been marginally below that level, the decrease had been due to the changes requested in accounting procedures or to fluctuations in the exchange rate of the Italian lira. He was pleased to note that the efforts made by FAO to increase the efficiency of its operations and effect savings had been recognized, albeit indirectly.

52. Mr. KUYAMA (Japan), after reiterating the importance his delegation attached to the question under consideration, supported the recommendation contained in paragraph 15 of the Advisory Committee's report (A/35/544) to the effect that the General Assembly should approve the reimbursement formula adopted by the UNDP Governing Council. In that connexion, it was important to bear in mind the need to achieve real reductions in support costs, and not simply to transfer such costs from the UNDP budget to the budgets of other agencies.

53. The CHAIRMAN suggested that, on the basis of the recommendation in the Advisory Committee's report (A/35/544), the Fifth Committee should recommend to the General Assembly that it take note of the report of the Advisory Committee and

approve the reimbursement formula embodied in decision 80/44 of the UNDP Governing Council.

54. At the request of the representative of the Soviet Union, a recorded vote was taken on the Chairman's proposal.

In favour: Algeria, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belgium, Bolivia, Brazil, Burundi, Canada, Central African Republic, China, Congo, Costa Rica, Cuba, Cyprus, Democratic Yemen, Denmark, Ecuador, Egypt, Finland, France, Gabon, Germany, Federal Republic of, Greece, Grenada, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Israel, Italy, Japan, Kenya, Kuwait, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Mauritania, Mexico, Morocco, Mozambique, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Peru, Philippines, Portugal, Qatar, Romania, Rwanda, Sao Tome and Principe, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Somalia, Spain, Sudan, Sweden, Syrian Arab Republic, Thailand, Togo, Tunisia, Uganda, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United Republic of Cameroon, United States of America, Uruguay, Venezuela, Yugoslavia, Zaire, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

Against: Afghanistan, Bulgaria, Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic, Czechoslovakia, German Democratic Republic, Hungary, Mongolia, Poland, Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

Abstaining: None.

55. The Chairman's proposal was adopted by 84 votes to 10.

56. The CHAIRMAN announced that the delegation of Austria, which was presiding over the Working Group on Personnel Questions, had prepared a useful working paper to serve as a basis for discussions on that item. In view of the great importance of that document, it would be translated into all the working languages of the Committee. Accordingly, the Working Group could not to hold meetings before Wednesday, 5 November, when the language versions would be available.

AGENDA ITEM 94: ADMINISTRATIVE AND BUDGETARY CO-ORDINATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS WITH THE SPECIALIZED AGENCIES AND THE INTERNATIONAL ATOMIC ENERGY AGENCY (continued) (A/C.5/35/L.18/Rev.1)

57. The CHAIRMAN drew the Committee's attention to document A/C.5/35/L.18/Rev.1, which contained a draft resolution he had prepared on the basis of consultations with interested delegations. The draft resolution had been revised in order to reflect the amendments suggested by some of those delegations.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.