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FIFTH COMMITTEE  
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Tuesday, 25 November 1980  
at 10.30 a.m.  
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 35th 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 99: REPORT OF THE INTERNATIONAL CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION (continued)  
(A/35/30 and Corr.1; A/C.5/35/37, 39 and 61)

1. Mr. KUYAMA (Japan), referring to the question of job classification, said that he was pleased to note that, in conformity with article 13 of its statute, the International Civil Service Commission had formulated the first tier (the Master Standard), applicable from 1 January 1981, of its three-tiered system of job classification standards. That measure would help to achieve equity among salaries by linking the grades of civil servants to the duties and responsibilities inherent in the posts they held. In that connexion, his delegation noted that, in the view of the Secretary-General, the methodology recommended by the Commission was complex and labour-intensive. The decision of the Assistant Secretary-General for Personnel Services to implement the Master Standard should be considered in the context thus defined by the Secretary-General. His delegation hoped that the Commission's work on the other two job classification tiers would help to dispel some of the confusion existing within the various organizations regarding the grading for certain occupations.
2. His delegation supported the Commission's recommendation that 30 points of post adjustment should be consolidated into base salary on the basis of no loss and no gain. It was pleased to note that a working group had been established within the framework of the Advisory Committee on Post Adjustment Questions with a view to improving the methodology for cost-of-living measurement. He expressed the hope that the Commission would thus be able to submit recommendations based on the findings of the working group to the General Assembly at its next session.
3. In that connexion, it was necessary to strengthen the Cost-of-Living Section of the Commission's secretariat. In view of the importance of its functions, that Section did not perhaps have the staff it needed to ensure the effectiveness of the post adjustment system. Moreover, his delegation endorsed the request made in paragraph 323 of the Commission's report (A/35/30) for a study of long-term needs together with clear data justifying additional resources needed.
4. His delegation supported the Commission's recommendation concerning the classification of duty stations according to living and working conditions as well as the recommendations concerning the education grant and death grant benefits.
5. He drew attention to the fact that the Commission had decided in 1976 to review the question of language incentives. He expressed the hope that the Commission would take up that matter as soon as possible, since equity as well as rationality required that a critical examination should be made of the anomaly represented by the existing practice.
6. Mr. SADDLER (United States of America) paid a tribute to the members and officers of the International Civil Service Commission for the way in which they had carried out their tasks and for the quality of the Commission's report (A/35/30). His delegation endorsed a number of the Commission's proposals,

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(Mr. Saddler, United States)

inter alia, the conclusions and proposals contained in chapter VII of its report related to action taken under articles 13 and 14 of its statute. However, it was regrettable that the Commission had not been able to consider all the aspects of interorganization exchange programmes, and, accordingly, it would be better to wait until full details were available before taking a position on that matter.

7. The United States endorsed the new salary scales of staff in the General Service category and related categories in New York and the new salary scales of staff in the General Service category in Geneva. He expressed the hope that the heads of the Geneva-based organizations would accept the Commission's recommendations. With regard to the Commission's recommendation concerning death grant benefits, he felt that the Commission should continue to search for a contributory system, because it had not given that matter all the attention it deserved.

8. The Commission had proposed expanding its Cost-of-Living Section at an estimated cost of \$100,000 for the first year; it should be noted that, exceptionally, that proposal had not received the support of ACC. However, if the Commission believed that such an expansion was essential to its work, the Fifth Committee should consent to it. That could be achieved from within available resources, or by reprogramming existing resources, since the United Nations share of the cost involved would not exceed \$15,000.

9. The Commission had also recommended the consolidation of 30 points of post adjustment into base salary. According to the Commission, that measure would eliminate two very serious problems: on the one hand, the anomaly caused by the fact that the base salary constituted a relatively small proportion of staff members' total remuneration; and, on the other hand, the 13 per cent deficit which the Tax Equalization Fund was expected to show at the end of 1980. However, it seemed that, if the Fifth Committee were to approve the consolidation requested, it would create problems more serious than those it hoped to solve. The Commission's proposal was further evidence that current methods of determining the remuneration of United Nations staff members were unsatisfactory, that salaries were excessive and that the post adjustment system was defective. If the post adjustments for certain duty stations were equal to or exceeded the amount of the base salary, then the method used to calculate post adjustments, and the post adjustment itself, were the essential causes of that problem. International civil servants were overcompensated for the effects of inflation, because cost-of-living adjustments were not linked to price movements concerning only that portion of their salaries which staff members spent on goods, services, housing and public utilities at their duty stations, but also took into account other expenditure. While the infrequent consolidation of post adjustment into base salary could be acceptable, his delegation could not support any mechanism based on the faulty methodology used by the United Nations system for calculating the increase in the cost of living. The post adjustment procedure should be applied only to that portion of a staff member's income which was actually spent at his duty station and which was thus affected by the rise in prices at that duty station.

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(Mr. Saddler, United States)

10. The Commission's decision to establish a special working group within the Advisory Committee on Post Adjustment Questions with a view to improving the methodology for cost-of-living measurement was an important initiative. That technical body should adopt a completely new approach to the problem, by trying to find a more accurate formula which took into account only changes in the price of those goods and services actually consumed by United Nations staff.

11. If the Fifth Committee rejected the Commission's proposal concerning consolidation, the problem of the projected deficit in the Tax Equalization Fund for 1980 would remain, because staff assessment rates were too low, lower in fact than the average tax rates of the seven countries where United Nations agencies had their headquarters. The Commission had recommended that staff assessment rates should be lowered after the consolidation of 30 points of post adjustment into base salary, since that would eliminate the Tax Equalization Fund's deficit. However, the formula proposed by the Commission appeared to lower those rates to such a level that staff assessment would no longer be comparable to average tax rates in the agency headquarters countries or to the average tax rates for the comparator civil service. If the Noblemaire principle was to be respected, an increase in the rate of staff assessment was justifiable. That simple measure would have the same effect as the Commission's proposals. It made little sense to correct one anomaly stemming from the allegedly excessive proportion of total salaries represented by post adjustments and at the same time to contravene another equally important principle by further distorting staff assessment rates.

12. With regard to staff members' salaries, which some staff representatives considered to be inadequate, members of the Committee should examine every aspect of that question, formulate policies and take decisions that were fair to the staff, while protecting the authority of the Secretary-General.

13. In its note to the General Assembly transmitted by the Secretary-General (A/C.5/35/37), the Federation of International Civil Servants' Associations (FICSA) had indicated that, since the previous increase in base salaries - which had been in 1975 - there had been a steady decline in purchasing power of salaries due to the fact that the post adjustment system gave only incomplete compensation for cost-of-living increases. His delegation could not accept the validity of that assertion, which was intended simply to lead to an increase in United Nations salaries that were already much higher than those of the comparator civil service.

14. Over the years, United Nations staff members had acquired a wide range of benefits, many of which were not available for the comparator civil service, and which represented an ever-increasing percentage of total compensation. Yet in its report ICSC recommended the improvement of several such benefits. An increase in the amount of the education grant for eligible staff members in the Professional and higher categories was proposed in paragraph 156, and the Commission also indicated that FICSA had requested it to review the extension of the grant to other categories of staff. The United States delegation regarded that increase as excessive, and remained adamantly opposed to the payment of an education allowance to Professional staff whose duty station was in their own country, or to General Service or locally recruited staff whose salaries were already computed on the basis of the best prevailing local salaries.

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(Mr. Saddler, United States)

15. In paragraphs 224 and 226 of the report, ICSC recommended increased frequency of home leave for staff members serving in difficult duty stations and more frequent educational travel for dependent children. Those proposals had not been convincingly justified; moreover, their financial implications were based only on responses to questionnaires, which experience showed tended to underestimate the financial costs involved.

16. In the light of claims by some staff members that their compensation was inadequate, and the Commission's proposal to grant more benefits to staff members, it was urgent that the Commission should complete as soon as possible the studies mentioned in paragraphs 108 and 114 of its report, namely, the study by an appropriate method of the total compensation of United Nations staff and the study to determine the highest paid national civil service, in order to establish whether the Noblemaire principle was being effectively applied.

17. In the meantime, no additional benefits with financial implications should be approved by the Fifth Committee. If the studies showed that United Nations staff remuneration required adjustment, the Committee could then take an appropriate decision. As matters stood, his delegation believed that the United Nations staff's total compensation did not compare unfavourably with that of the highest paid civil service. In any case, if the members of the Committee still desired to apply the Noblemaire principle they could not approve the Commission's proposals in paragraphs 101, 156, 224 and 226 of its report.

18. His delegation continued to believe that it was in the interests of the United Nations system that ICSC should be strong, independent and competent. However, ICSC should pay greater attention to the views of Member States, particularly in the proposals and recommendations it submitted.

19. Mr. STUART (United Kingdom) said that ICSC was and should be playing an essential role in strengthening the United Nations common system. He welcomed the agreement between the Commission and the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Board on pensionable remuneration and the scheme of adjustment, a matter which would be discussed in the debate on agenda item 100.

20. His delegation approved the work being done by ICSC in reviewing the operation of the post adjustment system in accordance with General Assembly resolution 34/165, and the establishment of a special working group of the Advisory Committee on Post Adjustment Questions (ACPAQ) to improve the methodology for cost-of-living measurement. That work was particularly important both for the adjustment of pensions under the new scheme, if it was approved, and for the adjustment of salaries.

21. In that connexion, it was somewhat unfortunate that in paragraph 146 of its report the Commission should announce, as though it were a routine action, its decision to reduce the post adjustment index for Geneva by one class from its October 1979 level. Clearly that was an interim decision, resulting from the *comprehensive review* called for by resolution 34/165, and taking account of the view expressed by several members of the Fifth Committee at the preceding session that

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(Mr. Stuart, United Kingdom)

there were prima facie grounds for believing Professional staff in Geneva to be overcompensated. Although his delegation supported the ICSC decision, it believed that the Commission should have given details of the evidence leading to the decision, which was of great importance in principle. The United Kingdom delegation also considered it regrettable that the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination (ACC) had turned down the ICSC's request for additional staff for its Cost-of-Living Section. It was to be hoped that ACC would reconsider its decision, which in any case did not seem likely to save much money, and that the proposal would be resubmitted in the programme budget for the following year.

22. His delegation was glad to note that work was proceeding on the study of levels of pay in the civil service of the Federal Republic of Germany in order to determine whether the United States civil service remained the highest paid civil service, and that the study would be submitted to the General Assembly at its thirty-sixth session at the same time as the comparative study of total compensation.

23. The margin of United Nations remuneration over that of the United States Federal Civil Service had widened over the past year from 113.9 to 116, but the increase was too small and too recent to warrant any corrective action by the General Assembly, particularly in the year before the submission of the two reports to which he had referred. That also appeared to be the view of ICSC, but it should be more explicit on such an important issue in future reports.

24. The United Kingdom considered that there was no justification for a real-terms increase for Professional and higher staff. Such a step must be judged by reference to the Noblemaire principle, the application of which was being thoroughly reviewed by the Commission. That principle made international civil servants privileged by comparison to national civil servants, but it conferred no automatic right either to inflation-proofing or real improvement of salaries.

25. It was not desirable for the salaries of the top-graded officials of the United Nations common system to be strictly related to those of the comparator civil service. That would mean introducing serious anomalies into the United Nations pay structure and would put the top international civil servants at a disadvantage in relation to their counterparts in the national civil services, which would only aggravate the problem of supplementary payments made to international civil servants of certain nationalities.

26. His delegation supported the Commission's recommendation that 30 points of post adjustment should be consolidated into base salary on the basis of no loss and no gain. He welcomed the Commission's decision to study the working of the system of staff assessment and the Tax Equalization Fund. The members of the Fifth Committee lacked information on the system and would like to see the study in question submitted as soon as possible.

27. His delegation supported the ICSC recommendations concerning the education grant, death grant benefits, and classification of duty stations according to living and working conditions. Measures to remedy adverse conditions at certain duty stations appeared highly desirable, and should represent only a small cost to Member

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(Mr. Stuart, United Kingdom)

States. The same applied to the increases in the education grant, which the Fifth Committee should have no difficulty in approving. With respect to death grant benefits, his delegation agreed with the ICSC's conclusion that the introduction of a contributory scheme would be too costly. That point illustrated the importance of exercising judgement in implementing the Noblemaire principle, since the slavish copying of features in the comparator civil service could be disadvantageous for the Organization.

28. Mr. ZINIEL (Ghana) congratulated the International Civil Service Commission on its positive response to resolutions 34/165 and 34/221 and, particularly, on the emphasis it laid on the conditions of service throughout the United Nations common system and the development of a single unified international civil service. He noted with satisfaction the pledge that the Commission would continue to maintain its independence and impartiality, but said that his delegation was concerned about the long-standing leadership question, which should be resolved during the current session, as any delay would invite political interference.

29. ICSC had worked co-operatively and harmoniously with the Consultative Committee on Administrative Questions (CCAQ) and the Federation of International Civil Servants Associations (FICSA), as could be seen from the recommendations and comments made in paragraphs 101 and 153 and in chapter VII of its report.

30. His delegation was in general agreement with most of the recommendations submitted by the Commission, particularly the recommendation in paragraph 101 on the consolidation of part of the existing level of post adjustment into base salary, which was aimed at rectifying the disproportionate relationship between base salary and total remuneration and at improving the situation with regard to the Tax Equalization Fund. That measure, which would unfortunately result in an extra financial burden, should meet some of the concerns of the staff.

31. For the same reasons, his delegation supported the Commission's recommendation regarding the education grant and the provision of special facilities or treatment for staff serving under unfavourable conditions. However, with regard to the classification of duty stations on the basis of living and working conditions, the Commission should indicate clearly how it intended to measure certain factors such as climate and isolation, as the question could be raised whether there were truly objective criteria for assessing those factors. In any event, if the Commission's recommendations were adopted, their implementation should be subject to strict scrutiny in order to prevent any possible abuse.

32. With regard to the revision of the salary scale requested by certain staff representatives, his delegation might not agree with the argument advanced by the staff representatives but was in favour of establishing a device for the periodic review of staff salaries, perhaps every four or five years. On another question, his delegation supported the decisions taken by ICSC on job classification standards and noted with satisfaction that those decisions, in which CCAQ and FICSA had participated, would be implemented on a progressive basis.

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(Mr. Ziniel, Ghana)

33. It was a matter of great concern to his delegation that the ICSC secretariat did not have the required resources to monitor the post adjustment classification as effectively as it should. His delegation also supported the request outlined in paragraph 322 regarding minimal resources, although it would have preferred the matter to be dealt with jointly with the study of long-term needs called for in paragraph 323. It was also glad that the Commission had requested the Executive Secretary to submit clear data justifying the request for additional resources.

34. Finally, his delegation took note of the Commission's concern, expressed in paragraph 121, regarding supplementary payments to some international civil servants and reaffirmed its respect for the relevant provisions of the Staff Regulations. It felt, however, that the question of the independence of international civil servants should be examined in its totality and objectivity.

35. Mr. MANEKA (Pakistan) expressed his delegation's appreciation to the International Civil Service Commission for its excellent report (A/35/30 and Corr.1), which dealt with a number of questions to which his delegation attached great importance. With regard to the post adjustment system, described in detail in annex VI, he noted in paragraph 126 of the report that the Commission had decided that it would begin by studying on a priority basis such problems as possible distortions in high cost-of-living areas, the problem of out-of-area commitments, particularly for staff assigned to low cost-of-living areas, and the treatment of pension contributions as a part of post adjustment. His delegation felt that the Commission should study the question of out-of-area expenditures for staff in all its aspects, including staff assigned to high cost-of-living areas. The priority accorded to staff in low post-adjustment duty stations might give rise to a mistaken impression that the Commission was not taking a balanced view of the problem.

36. On the subject of anomalies and distortions in the post adjustment system, his delegation recommended another approach to the Commission: could it not be that many of the problems confronting the Organization today derived from the fact that at the time the post adjustment system had been established, more than 20 years before, the United States dollar had been overvalued in relation to other major currencies? If that premise was accepted, then it was worth considering whether the present system of post adjustment might not be perpetuating wide differences in standards of living by compensating for each drop in value of the United States dollar from unrealistically high levels.

37. After giving an example, with supporting statistics, of remuneration at Geneva and New York, he said that his delegation did not wish to give the impression that it wanted to deprive United Nations staff in high cost-of-living duty stations of their acquired rights; it believed, however, that the study of the post adjustment system should leave no important avenue unexplored, even if the results were disturbing to some.

38. His delegation concurred in the view of FICSA, as reflected in paragraph 138 of the report, that in future reports it would be useful to include a layman's description of the nature of the various indices used in making post adjustment

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(Mr. Maneka, Pakistan)

calculations, as well as an explanation of the place-to-place and time-to-time comparisons. In that connexion, he wondered whether the polls carried out to determine the consumption habits of international civil servants might not have had a built-in bias: it was quite possible that respondents might have exaggerated their expenses. A related question was whether the questionnaires were relevant only to certain duty stations or whether they were based on the assumption that all officials, regardless of where they were serving, would have the same consumption patterns.

39. In paragraphs 317 to 322 of its report, the Commission had strongly supported a strengthening of the Cost-of-Living Section, as had FICSA. When the question of the financial implications of the Commission's report came to be studied, his delegation would like the Acting Chairman to brief the Committee fully on the requirements of the Section in terms of staff and data-processing equipment.

40. His delegation supported the proposals regarding the consolidation of 30 points of post adjustment into base salary; the ending of supplementary grants made to members of the Secretariat of certain nationalities by their Governments; the adjustments in education grants; and the classification of duty stations according to living and working conditions. In regard to the proposal in annex VI, paragraph 16, foot-note h, his delegation would like to encourage the ICSC secretariat to develop, for the use of Member States, a separate system which would be related to the United Nations adjustment system, provided the work could be done without increasing the size of that secretariat.

41. Mr. SCHMIDT (Federal Republic of Germany) said that he appreciated the quality of the Commission's work and hoped that the transitory difficulties which it had encountered during the current year would come to an end following the definitive appointment of a Chairman and Vice-Chairman by the General Assembly in conformity with the statute of the Commission.

42. The Federal Republic of Germany was primarily interested in the comments and recommendations on conditions of service, on the application of the Noblemaire principle and on the remuneration of Professional and General Service staff. In reviewing the application of the Noblemaire principle, the Commission had decided to examine the comparisons relating to total compensation and to re-examine the matter of the highest paid civil service. For that purpose, the Commission had decided that the remuneration of civil servants in the Federal Republic of Germany should be used for comparison with the United States Civil Service in the first instance. He assured Member States that his Government would do everything possible to assist the Commission in its work.

43. Other factors should also be taken into account in evaluating the application of the Noblemaire principle. It should not be forgotten that the comparator civil service also included officials who served abroad and that such a situation carried with it additional financial burdens. Officials working at the United Nations could not be regarded as if they were working in their home country. His delegation was therefore gratified to read in paragraphs 107 and 108 of the report that the Commission was beginning to look into the matter of adapting the comparison to the international environment; it hoped the Commission would give greater recognition to the expatriate factor in the international civil service.

(Mr. Schmidt, Federal Republic  
of Germany)

44. His delegation had the impression that the review of the functioning of the post adjustment system had not got off to a very vigorous start and that its continuation had not been precisely mapped out. It requested the Acting Chairman to indicate the position of the Commission more precisely in view of the widespread feeling among Member States that some relationships in the system were still seriously distorted.

45. His Government had no difficulty in going along with the proposed consolidation of some 30 points into the base salary. It could also accept the adjustment of the brackets of approved reimbursable costs, as proposed in paragraph 156 of the report. It could not however understand the rationale for maintaining the floor fixed in 1977 which should either have been reviewed together with the reimbursable costs or completely abolished. Maintenance of the floor was in effect tantamount to giving different reimbursement rates to staff members depending upon the currency in which the expenditure for education was incurred.

46. In regard to the conditions of service in the General Service category, his delegation had noted that the imbalance between General Service and Professional salaries at Geneva persisted, although in a somewhat mitigated form. The Secretary-General should inform the Fifth Committee of the action he planned to take on the Commission's recommendations in that connexion.

47. His Government accepted in principle the classification of duty stations according to living and working conditions as well as the increase in the frequency of home leave and of the travel of schoolchildren in certain difficult duty stations. It could not, however, understand how decisions to amend the Staff Regulations could be taken without going into the details of implementation.

48. As for the introduction of the Master Standard and the development of other grade level standards, it was to be hoped that the Commission would maintain a certain flexibility in its classification work. The need for grading patterns should be seen in the context of career development and not separately from it. His delegation had full confidence in the other actions taken by the Commission under articles 13 and 14 of its statute.

49. Mr. BAHAR (Afghanistan) said that the Commission, in paragraph 101 of its report (A/35/30 and Corr.1), recommended that 30 points of post adjustment should be consolidated into base salary; he believed that, before the General Assembly approved such a recommendation, it should receive additional information to substantiate its validity. He would, in particular, like to receive additional information on the origins of the alleged deficit in the Tax Equalization Fund.

50. In paragraphs 156, 224 and 226 of its report, the Commission recommended a number of measures which would increase the remuneration of international civil servants (education grant, special privileges in certain duty stations etc.). The General Assembly should not approve those recommendations until the Commission had completed its comparison of total compensation between the comparator civil service

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(Mr. Bahar, Afghanistan)

and the United Nations salary system, as envisaged in General Assembly resolution 31/141. Member States could not adopt recommendations to increase the already high compensation of international civil servants without knowing the results of that comparison. Moreover, such a recommendation was even more inappropriate when salaries in the United Nations system exceeded salaries in the United States Civil Service by 16 per cent.

51. On the question of the progressive implementation of the Master Standard, beginning on 1 January 1981, the Commission recommended in paragraph 253 that the legislative bodies of the organizations should delegate to the executive heads the authority to grade posts. That recommendation was unacceptable, as the right to classify posts was the exclusive prerogative of the General Assembly. The proposed post classification should be brought more into line with the Noblemaire principle before it could be effectively applied in the United Nations system.

52. Member States had complained on a number of occasions about the excessive length and lack of clarity of the Commission's reports. The situation had not improved and it was to be hoped that the Commission would pay more heed to the criticism of Member States and follow the laudable example of the Committee on Contributions and of the Joint Inspection Unit.

AGENDA ITEM 95: JOINT INSPECTION UNIT: REPORTS OF THE JOINT INSPECTION UNIT  
(continued)

Report of the Joint Inspection Unit (continued) (A/35/34)

Implementation of the recommendations of the Joint Inspection Unit: report of the Secretary-General (continued) (A/C.5/35/58)

Report on evaluation of the translation process in the United Nations system (continued) (A/35/294)

Status of women in the Professional category and above: a progress report (A/35/182)

53. Mr. VISLYKH (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that, ever since the establishment of the Joint Inspection Unit, the Soviet delegation had encouraged that body to become more effective and to study the most serious problems affecting the United Nations system.

54. It had therefore noted with regret that the Joint Inspection Unit was primarily concerned with local problems of a special nature whose solution would not lead to any fundamental improvement in the United Nations system. While not underestimating the importance of some of the projects considered in the reports of the Joint Inspection Unit (such as the Regional Training Centre for Archivists at Accra, the Commonwealth Caribbean project for the education and training of allied health personnel and the FAO Regional Dairy Development and Training Centre), it considered that the energy and talents of the Inspectors were being wasted on such studies, which could just as easily be carried out by the specialized agencies concerned.

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(Mr. Vislykh, USSR)

55. In several of their reports, the Inspectors proposed that increased financing should be provided for the projects under study. In particular, in the report on the United Nations Institute for Training and Research, they recommended that some of the Institute's expenditure should be financed from the regular budget and not by voluntary contributions. The absurd situation had thus been reached in which the Joint Inspection Unit, whose mandate was to improve the effectiveness of the United Nations system and to propose measures for reducing the contributions of Member States, was, on the contrary, suggesting measures that would entail an increase in such contributions.

56. The Inspectors would do better to tackle problems of interest to the system as a whole, such as the formulation of standards for determining the work-load of Secretariat staff, which in most cases was inadequate, steps for increasing staff productivity and means of identifying activities that had been completed or were obsolete, of marginal usefulness or ineffective. The Joint Inspection Unit should also make a close study of problems related to salary and pension scales, propose steps for avoiding excessive budgetary growth and determine whether the principle of equitable geographical distribution of posts was being applied. It should suggest ways of investing the resources of the Joint Staff Pension Fund more profitably so that the contributions of Member States could be reduced accordingly. Planning within the United Nations system needed to be improved and supervision of programme execution by the various organizations to be strengthened. Measures for reducing the number of meetings and the volume of documentation should be suggested and ways of financing technical co-operation activities should be explored. In-depth study of those problems by the Joint Inspection Unit could lead to a considerable improvement in the effectiveness of the organizations in the United Nations system.

57. His delegation would comment on the report on evaluation of the translation process in the United Nations system when it had seen the related report of the Secretary-General.

58. The CHAIRMAN said that the Secretary-General would not be issuing his comments on the evaluation report of the Joint Inspection Unit, since the Inspectors' recommendations had repercussions on the entire system. The comments of the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination on the evaluation report of the Joint Inspection Unit had however been issued under the symbol A/35/294/Add.1.

59. Mr. METELITS (United States of America) said that his delegation was concerned at the fact that women were still under-represented in the Professional category and above in the organizations of the United Nations system, even though the General Assembly, in resolution 33/143, had expressly requested that the proportion of women should be appreciably increased. The report of the Joint Inspection Unit entitled "Status of women in the Professional category and above: a progress report" (A/35/182) showed a lack of progress over the past three years. That situation called for a number of comments.

60. At the present rate of increase in the proportion of women in the Professional category and above, it would take nearly a century for women to occupy half the posts

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(Mr. Metelits, United States)

in those categories. As the Joint Inspection Unit had rightly pointed out in paragraph 20 of its report, the absence of realistic targets was one of the main causes of that regrettable situation. It was therefore essential to establish targets for reaching the desired goal of a more equitable representation of women in the Professional category and above.

61. The steps so far taken had consisted largely in eliminating recruitment and promotion restrictions. Such purely passive action was not enough, particularly since, in many organizations, all that had normally done was to add a line in vacancy notices inviting qualified women to apply on the same basis as men.

62. The fact that women occupying Professional positions were mostly in P-3 and P-4 posts, and not in P-1 and P-2 posts as in the past, was not a mark of progress but a purely demographic effect brought about by the aging of staff members in the Professional category and above - a phenomenon which had also worked, and at a higher level, to the benefit of men.

63. The report of the Joint Inspection Unit on evaluation of the translation process in the United Nations system (A/35/294) was the fourth such report in 10 years, which indicated the persistence of the problems facing the translation services in the United Nations system. The report revealed that the translation services of the United Nations did not meet the workload standards contained in the annex to document A/35/7/Add.7 and that the cost of translation was therefore higher than foreseen. It even appeared that the cost of translation at the United Nations was higher than that of the contract work performed by private translation agencies, which nevertheless managed to make a profit. Since the workload standards established by the Secretary-General served to estimate conference servicing costs, his delegation believed that it was essential to compare the actual output of the translation services with those standards.

64. His delegation generally supported the conclusions of the Joint Inspection Unit and endorsed the recommendations in the report. In particular, it agreed with the view of the Inspectors that the major problem was that of documents control. The average output of a United Nations translator was 1,170 words per work-day, whereas the standards in force called for an output of 1,650 words per day. The actual output was, therefore, 30 per cent below what was required. As the Joint Inspection Unit indicated, the poor quality of documents was in large measure responsible for that low productivity. The documents control units were not operating effectively and every organization of the United Nations system should devote more attention to that sector. The excellent recommendations on the subject in paragraph 25 of the Joint Inspection Unit's report called for greater authority to be given to the services responsible for documentation quality control.

65. His delegation favoured the establishment of a quota system, such as that referred to in paragraph 30 of the Joint Inspection Unit's report, which would improve the administration of the translation services by urging the originating units to provide more accurate workload forecasts and to submit fewer, more concise and higher-quality documents. It was imperative that the originating units and the translation services of the United Nations should make the best possible use of the

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(Mr. Metelits, United States)

available resources, which might well involve the use of financial incentives. Furthermore, it would be advantageous to resort to outside translation agencies from time to time, if only to ascertain whether the cost of work contracted out was higher and whether the agencies were able to complete the translations in the often limited time available.

66. With reference to the gap between the workload standards established by the Secretary-General and the average output per translator indicated in the Joint Inspection Unit's report, he trusted that the Secretariat would provide all the necessary explanations on the subject and describe the implications for conference planning. At the United States State Department the total cost of translating, revising and typing a technical text of 1,000 words was approximately \$125, whereas at the United Nations it was \$249, or almost double.

67. Mr. BERTRAND (Joint Inspection Unit) said that he would inform his colleagues in the Joint Inspection Unit of the views expressed by the representative of the United States and that account would also be taken of the relevant and important comments made by the representative of the Soviet Union.

68. It was true that the programme of the Joint Inspection Unit for 1979-1980 might seem somewhat diffuse and concerned with minor points. In part that was because several of the Inspectors had just been appointed and had felt it necessary to begin with studies of particular problems, in order to break themselves in. It should not, however, be forgotten that such studies often formed part of a more comprehensive study, such as the study now under way on training programmes at the United Nations. Furthermore, the recent work of the Joint Inspection Unit on the use of consultants, UNICEF, the status of women in the Secretariat, and the translation process in the United Nations system corresponded closely to the sort of work which the representative of the Soviet Union considered suitable for the Joint Inspection Unit. It should also be noted that many of the matters referred to by the representative of the Soviet Union, in particular the budget of the United Nations and staff costs, were now under study.

69. Mr. YOUNIS (Iraq) asked whether the report on evaluation of the translation process in the United Nations system, which had been signed by three Inspectors, expressed solely the views of its authors or those of the Joint Inspection Unit as a whole.

70. Furthermore, he wished to know how the Committee should interpret the comments of the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination, in paragraph 24 of document A/35/294/Add.1, concerning the proposals of the Joint Inspection Unit with regard to self-revision of translated texts.

71. Mr. RUTLEDGE (Chief Editor) said that the proposals formed part of an effort to improve the career prospects of the staff of the translation services, a matter that had been dealt with by a working group consisting of representatives of the Office of Personnel Services, the Department concerned and the staff. The Administrative Committee on Co-ordination had merely indicated that due account should be taken,

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when the language services were restructured, of the proposals of the Joint Inspection Unit with regard to self-revision.

72. Mr. LAHLOU (Morocco) regretted that the Joint Inspection Unit had felt called upon to study the classification of language posts solely from the budgetary standpoint and feared that the Unit was not fully aware of the nature of the problems posed by translation. United Nations documents were so important that it was unreasonable to consider eliminating the revision of translated texts. The Joint Inspection Unit's proposal could, therefore, have a very negative impact on the work of the Organization.

73. Mr. BERTRAND (Joint Inspection Unit) pointed out that, under the terms of the statute of the Joint Inspection Unit, the Inspectors drew up, over their own signature, reports for which they were responsible; those reports were finalized after consultation among the Inspectors so as to test recommendations being made against the collective wisdom of the Unit. That was the practice which the Joint Inspection Unit followed and reports were always circulated at the draft stage among the other Inspectors, who then submitted their comments. That procedure had been followed in the case of the report on translation in the United Nations system and the proposal concerning self-revision had received the endorsement of all members of the Joint Inspection Unit.

74. Mr. GARRIDO (Philippines), speaking with reference to the report on UNICEF, regretted that the Joint Inspection Unit had not annexed to its annual report the comments received from the organizations concerned.

75. Mr. BERTRAND (Joint Inspection Unit) said that the Joint Inspection Unit's report had been issued too early for UNICEF's comments to be included. The reaction of the Executive Board of UNICEF to the Joint Inspection Unit's report, which it had considered in May 1980, had been very positive and most of the Unit's recommendations had already been implemented.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.