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FIFTH COMMITTEE
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Friday, 5 December 1980
at 10.30 a.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 47th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. BUJ-FLORES (Mexico)

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

CONTENTS

TRIBUTE TO THE MEMORY OF MR. FRANCISCO SÁ CARNEIRO, PRIME MINISTER OF PORTUGAL

AGENDA ITEM 101: FINANCING OF UNITED NATIONS PEACE-KEEPING FORCES IN THE MIDDLE
EAST (continued)

(b) UNITED NATIONS INTERIM FORCE IN LEBANON: REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL
(continued)

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

Reclassification of regular-budget posts

Revised estimates resulting from resolutions and decisions adopted by the Trade
and Development Board at its twentieth and twenty-first sessions held in Geneva
(continued)

First-class travel in the United Nations organizations

United Nations accommodation at Nairobi (continued)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.40 a.m.

TRIBUTE TO THE MEMORY OF MR. FRANCISCO SA CARNEIRO, PRIME MINISTER OF PORTUGAL

1. The CHAIRMAN said that, on behalf of the Committee, he wished to extend to the people and Government of Portugal condolences on the death of that country's Prime Minister, Mr. Francisco Sá Carneiro.

2. Mrs. SANDIFER (Portugal) said that the Government and people of her country greatly appreciated the many expressions of sympathy they had received.

AGENDA ITEM 101: FINANCING OF THE UNITED NATIONS PEACE-KEEPING FORCES IN THE MIDDLE EAST (continued)

(b) UNITED NATIONS INTERIM FORCE IN LEBANON: REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (continued) (A/35/613, A/35/668; A/C.5/35/L.29)

3. Mr. PAPENDORP (United States of America) said that his delegation considered the amounts requested by the Secretary-General for UNIFIL in document A/35/613 to be within the limits authorized by the General Assembly in its resolution 34/9 B. Accordingly, it agreed with the recommendations of the Advisory Committee in paragraphs 9 and 10 of its report.

4. The Secretary-General had also requested an amount of \$76,983,000 for the period 19 December 1980 to 18 June 1981, should the Security Council decide to renew the Force's mandate. His Government agreed with the observations and recommendations of the Advisory Committee in paragraphs 13 to 15 and 17 to 19 of its report, which would result in a reduction of \$3.9 million in the Secretary-General's estimate, and could endorse an amount of \$12,180,500 (less staff assessment) per month, for periods beyond 18 December 1980.

5. With regard to the reclassifications requested by the Secretary-General, his delegation maintained that all reclassifications must be fully justified and reviewed by the Classification Section of the Office of Personnel Services prior to being presented to the General Assembly.

6. His Government fully supported the United Nations peace-keeping forces and their efforts to maintain peace in the Middle East. He drew attention to the comments of the Secretary-General and the Advisory Committee on the withholding of assessed contributions and made a special appeal to all Member States which were withholding their assessed contributions to reconsider their positions. He also called upon Member States which were in arrears to pay their contributions in an expeditious manner. The peace-keeping operations of the United Nations were facing a financial emergency. The Secretary-General estimated withholdings to be some \$54.5 million in respect of UNDOF and some \$84.1 million in respect of UNIFIL, or a total of \$138.6 million. Non-payment of assessed peace-keeping contributions was of immediate concern because it might threaten the continued participation of troop-contributing States which could not afford the financial sacrifice involved in providing troops without adequate reimbursement. Non-payment

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(Mr. Papendorp, United States)

was also incompatible with the fundamental principles of the Charter by which all Members were bound.

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

Reclassification of regular-budget posts (A/35/7/Add.8)

7. Mr. ESELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) said that, in view of the discussions in the Committee on the question of job classification and in view of the fact that the Committee would be considering at a later stage a separate report by the Secretary-General on the classification of language posts, he did not intend to go into too many details concerning the Advisory Committee's report on the general question of reclassification of regular budget posts. The Advisory Committee's report had been prepared after thorough consultations with the representatives of the specialized agencies. At the preceding session, in introducing the Advisory Committee's first report on the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1980-1981, he had commented on the problem of reclassification in connexion with the Secretary-General's requests for the reclassification of various posts. He had indicated that he was somewhat unhappy that the Advisory Committee had to be involved from time to time with reclassification proposals and had suggested that the Advisory Committee might wish to consult further with the representatives of the Secretary-General and the specialized agencies with a view to formulating proposals for handling the problem.

8. In paragraphs 8 to 13 of its report, the Advisory Committee attempted to describe the magnitude of the problem, and in paragraphs 14 to 24 it presented information on the experience of the specialized agencies. The Advisory Committee's observations were set out in paragraphs 25 to 44.

9. Frankly speaking, he was not entirely satisfied with the report which the Advisory Committee had submitted. It did not contain a recommendation that would lay the problem to rest once and for all. Some members of the Advisory Committee believed that the Secretary-General should never submit proposals for reclassification, while others believed that, the United Nations being what it was and bearing in mind the need to grant recognition to staff members for work well done, it would be virtually impossible for the Secretary-General never to request the reclassification of a post. The Advisory Committee's recommendations in paragraphs 41 to 44 represented a compromise, and he personally was not completely satisfied with them. In paragraph 44, the Advisory Committee commented on an important factor which motivated requests for reclassifications, namely, the desire to reward staff members for meritorious service. That was a matter which could not be dismissed lightly, but the Advisory Committee did not feel able to make a specific recommendation on it at the present time. The Secretary-General might wish, if he considered the problem serious enough, to make specific proposals on it to the General Assembly.

10. The Advisory Committee believed that the problem of reclassifications could not be completely eliminated, but hoped that, with the adoption of the ICSC recommendations on job classification, it would be possible to minimize the frequency of such requests.

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(Mr. Melle, ACABQ)

11. He suggested that the Fifth Committee might wish to take note of the Advisory Committee's observations and comments and endorse the recommendations in paragraphs 41 to 44 of its report.

12. Mr. JONAH (Assistant Secretary-General for Personnel Services) expressed appreciation to the Advisory Committee for its report and especially for commenting in paragraph 44 on a rather serious problem in the Secretariat. Consultations were proceeding in the Secretariat to determine how best to deal with that issue, which, in the view of both the staff and the Administration, urgently required a solution. It was to be hoped that the Secretary-General would be in a position to make recommendations in due course.

13. Mr. GARRIDO (Philippines) asked the Assistant Secretary-General whether requests for reclassification diminished in any way the options of appointment and promotion bodies.

14. Mr. JONAH (Assistant Secretary-General for Personnel Services) said that there was some connexion between such requests and the options of appointments and promotion bodies, since the latter considered recommendations to promote staff members to higher-level posts; and, barring reclassification, promotion was the only way of granting recognition to individuals who performed well.

15. Mr. GARRIDO (Philippines) said that he attached importance to the appointment and promotion bodies and considered that more cases should be referred to them.

16. Mr. VISLYKH (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that the reclassification of regular-budget posts was an ill that had long afflicted the Organization. As documented in the report of the Advisory Committee, year after year the Secretary-General regularly made dozens of requests for the upgrading of such posts, and that practice had placed a substantial additional burden on Member States. In just two years, the cost of upgradings had been more than \$1 million and the cumulative effect of reclassifications over the lifetime of the Organization was staggering indeed. Everyone was aware that the reclassifications had absolutely nothing to do with any increase in the responsibilities or productivity of the persons filling the reclassified posts. His delegation was convinced that an end must be put to such a practice and the Advisory Committee seemed to have reached the same general conclusion. It therefore endorsed the Advisory Committee's recommendations and expected the Secretary-General to take the Advisory Committee's comments and observations into account and to refrain from requesting any reclassifications in the budget proposals for the forthcoming biennium.

17. The CHAIRMAN suggested that the Committee should recommend to the General Assembly that it take note of the comments and observations of the Advisory Committee in its ninth report (A/35/7/Add.8) and endorse the recommendations contained therein.

18. It was so decided.

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Revised estimates resulting from resolutions and decisions adopted by the Trade and Development Board at its twentieth and twenty-first sessions held in Geneva
(continued) (A/C.5/35/46)

19. The CHAIRMAN recalled that the Chairman of the Advisory Committee had reported orally at the 44th meeting on the report by the Secretary-General.

20. Mr. BEGIN (Director, Budget Division) said that in the course of the Committee's discussion of the revised estimates for UNCTAD, a number of questions had been asked regarding resolution 216 (XX) of the Trade and Development Board, which provided for the convening of meetings of governmental experts of regional groups on the question of economic co-operation among developing countries. At its 535th meeting, the Trade and Development Board had decided to devote four weeks of meetings to the question of economic co-operation among developing countries; at its subsequent meeting, the Board had approved a calendar of meetings for the remainder of 1980 and for 1981 which listed those meetings without specifying the dates. At its 545th meeting, in September 1980, the Board had approved a revised calendar for 1980-1981, according to which the meetings of governmental experts would be held from 3 to 14 October 1980 and from 11 to 22 May 1981. Thus, the information presented by the Secretary-General in paragraph 16 of his report and in table A of the annex was not entirely accurate. It was customary for the Trade and Development Board to draw up a calendar of meetings and revise it as necessary because flexibility was essential for negotiating bodies. It was regrettable, however, that, as a result, the calendar of UNCTAD did not lend itself to control by the General Assembly or the Committee on Conferences. The Committee on Conferences would be dealing with that situation, as requested in resolution 35/10. If the Fifth Committee wished to take a decision on the principle of the financing of meetings authorized by the Trade and Development Board, the amount to be taken into account was \$76,900, or half the amount indicated in table A of the annex to the Secretary-General's report, since half of the meetings had already been held. The Secretariat was not seeking the approval of an appropriation but merely requesting that the General Assembly should authorize it to include the meetings in question in the consolidated statement of conference servicing costs to be submitted towards the end of the current session.

21. Mr. STUART (United Kingdom) said that his delegation would like the Committee to vote on approval of the expenditure which had not yet been incurred. The Committee could thus demonstrate where it stood on the principle, even though much of the expenditure had already been incurred and thus had escaped its control. The Director of the Budget Division had stated that the Committee on Conferences would be considering the problem of how to ensure that decisions of the Trade and Development Board on the calendar of conferences of UNCTAD would be subject to the financial control of the General Assembly. He asked whether the Secretariat believed that that was an adequate solution, bearing in mind that the Committee on Conferences did not deal with budgetary problems, and whether the Secretariat had any specific proposals as to how the Fifth Committee might exercise financial control over the activities of UNCTAD.

22. Mr. BEGIN (Director, Budget Division) said that the Secretariat made every effort to inform the General Assembly of all meetings to be held during the

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(Mr. Begin)

following year. In some circumstances, however, especially bearing in mind the course of negotiations in some bodies, it was necessary to make changes in the calendar. Such flexibility was essential and the Committee on Conferences should be involved when such cases arose. Even though members might consider it unsatisfactory for the Secretariat to report after the event on meetings that had been held, it was still necessary to do so, indicating the exceptional reasons for the situation and the related expenditures calculated on a full-cost basis. The current situation had not arisen because of any desire on the part of the Secretariat to confront the General Assembly with a fait accompli; the aim of the Secretariat was merely to request the General Assembly to authorize the meetings scheduled for the following year.

23. Mr. STUART (United Kingdom) said that, in the light of the reply of the Director of the Budget Division, he reserved his judgement as to whether a solution providing for adequate control by the General Assembly over the conference activities of UNCTAD could be devised by the Committee on Conferences. Unless that Committee produced a satisfactory proposal by the thirty-sixth session, his delegation would resume its efforts in the matter.

24. Mr. ROOBAERT (Belgium), on behalf of the countries of the European Economic Community, formally proposed that the Committee should decide not to finance the implementation of Trade and Development Board resolution 216 (XX) concerning meetings of governmental experts from the regular budget of the United Nations, and should accordingly request the Advisory Committee to delete the amounts concerned from the consolidated statement of conference servicing costs.

25. Mr. PAPENDORP (United States of America) supported the Belgian representative's proposal, and called for a recorded vote.

26. Mr. SUEDI (United Republic of Tanzania) said that he did not understand the intent of the Belgian proposal. The Fifth Committee could certainly reach a decision on the appropriations required to implement the Trade and Development Board's resolution; but he did not think it could reverse a decision adopted by UNCTAD and rule that the meetings in question should not take place.

27. The CHAIRMAN said he took it that the Belgian proposal applied only to the financial appropriations requested.

28. Mr. VISLYKH (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that his delegation could not agree to the imposition on all Member States of a financial burden deriving from activities that were of interest to only a limited number of countries. He would vote in favour of the Belgian proposal.

29. Mr. HILLEL (Israel) said that he also would support the proposal in view of the need for strict observance of the principle of the universality of United Nations conference activities.

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30. Mr. BOUZARBIA (Algeria), Mr. SUEDI (United Republic of Tanzania), Mr. KOMMO MONTHE (United Republic of Cameroon), Mr. AVOKOYA (Nigeria), Mr. YOUNIS (Iraq), Mr. EL-SAFY (Egypt), Mr. FALL (Senegal), Mr. RUGWIZANCOGA (Rwanda) and Mr. LAMBA (Upper Volta) stated that they would vote against the Belgian proposal, since the decision to hold the meetings of governmental experts had already been taken by UNCTAD.

31. A recorded vote was taken on the Belgian proposal.

In favour: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic, Canada, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, Finland, France, German Democratic Republic, Germany, Federal Republic of, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Mongolia, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America

Against: Algeria, Argentina, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Brazil, Burundi, Central African Republic, Chad, Chile, China, Congo, Cyprus, Democratic Yemen, Ecuador, Egypt, Ethiopia, Gabon, Guinea, Guyana, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Ivory Coast, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Mali, Mauritania, Mozambique, Nigeria, Oman, Panama, Peru, Philippines, Romania, Rwanda, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Singapore, Somalia, Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic, Thailand, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, United Republic of Cameroon, United Republic of Tanzania, Upper Volta, Uruguay, Venezuela, Yemen, Yugoslavia, Zaire, Zambia

Abstaining: Mexico

32. The proposal was rejected by 63 votes to 30, with 1 abstention.

33. Mr. TANC (Turkey) said that his delegation had voted in favour of appropriations for any meetings held under the terms of Trade and Development Board resolution 216 (XX). It had done so, however, on the understanding that participation in those meetings should be open to all developing countries, identified according to objective economic and social criteria.

34. Mr. STUART (United Kingdom) said that he had voted in favour of the Belgian proposal because three major principles were at stake. The first was whether the regular budget should be used to finance meetings limited to certain Member States and geographical groups from which other States were excluded; he believed it should not. The second was whether the Fifth Committee should be able to exercise budgetary control over conference servicing costs, to present the Committee with estimates of conference servicing costs only after the meetings in question had been held was, he felt, a denial of the General Assembly's authority, and any recurrence would seriously affect his delegation's attitude to the entire

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(Mr. Stuart, United Kingdom)

budget. The budgetary control system must be made to work. The third principle was whether the Assembly should exercise any control over UNCTAD spending; if not, he failed to see why the Fifth Committee was required to consider the matter.

35. The CHAIRMAN suggested that the Committee should inform the General Assembly that conference servicing requirements not exceeding \$611,678 for the meetings scheduled for 1981 pursuant to the resolutions and decisions adopted by the Trade and Development Board would be considered in the context of the consolidated statement of conference servicing requirements to be submitted before the end of the current session.

36. It was so decided.

37. Mr. WILLIAMS (Panama) pointed out that the revised estimates included \$183,448 for a special session of the Committee on Shipping. That session was scheduled for May-June 1981, but the report which the Committee on Shipping was supposed to discuss would not be ready until the following November; moreover, a regular session on the same subject had already been scheduled for 1982. He felt, therefore, that approval of the amount in question should be withheld until an explanation had been provided.

First-class travel by the United Nations organizations (A/35/7/Add.17; A/C.5/35/62)

38. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions), introducing the report of ACABQ (A/35/7/Add.17) pointed out that the claimed savings from the restriction of first-class travel by United Nations staff were only a rough estimate, and that the number of authorized exceptions to resolution 32/198 in 1980 showed a marked increase over the figure for 1979. The Advisory Committee believed that the increasing practice of allowing first-class travel and the use of Concorde did not conform strictly to the spirit of resolution 32/198. It did not feel that travel by Concorde should be banned, but there was a need for tighter controls, as indicated in paragraph 7 of its report.

39. The Advisory Committee had accepted the Secretary-General's recommendation on travel by the Director-General for Development and International Economic Co-operation, and it indicated the necessary modification to resolution 32/198 in paragraph 9 of its report.

40. Mr. KUYAMA (Japan) asked how much extra expense the travel by Concorde reported by the Secretary-General represented over the cost of first-class travel, and whether the claimed savings made up the difference.

41. Mr. GARRIDO (Philippines) asked whether travel by Concorde was authorized for journeys of less than nine hours.

42. Mr. PAL (India) asked whether, during the passage of resolution 32/198, consideration had been given to the travel of permanent representatives - who ranked diplomatically with the Secretary-General - travelling on United Nations business; and, if not, whether an appropriate exception could be made to the resolution.

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43. Mr. FALL (Senegal) said that stricter control should be exercised over exceptions to the rule established in resolution 32/198, and the exception sanctioned by the Advisory Committee in paragraph 8 of its report should not be used as a justification for other exceptions.

44. Resolution 32/198 placed the chairmen of United Nations committees, who were generally ambassadors or permanent representatives, on the same footing as under-secretaries-general and assistant secretaries-general and permitted them to travel first-class at United Nations expense on journeys lasting longer than nine hours. To change that provision could cause difficulties. The Secretary-General was allowed some discretion to make exceptions, and the Committee should trust his judgement.

45. Mrs. DORSET (Trinidad and Tobago), referring to paragraph 3 (d) of the Secretary-General's report (A/C.5/35/62), asked whether the people concerned would have had to reimburse the Organization had it been determined after the fact that special circumstances had not existed.

46. Mr. RUEDAS (Assistant Secretary-General for Financial Services), replying to questions, said that he did not have with him exact calculations with respect to the exceptions authorized for travel by Concorde, although the Concorde fare in respect of a New York/Paris/New York journey was shown in the foot-note to the Advisory Committee's report (A/35/7/Add.17) as being \$530 higher than the first-class fare. He estimated that the additional costs for the 21 cases mentioned in paragraph 5 of that report would be somewhere between \$10,000 and \$15,000. Authorization to travel by Concorde had been given, because of tight schedules, even in cases in which a normal transatlantic flight took less than nine hours. The question of official United Nations travel by permanent representatives had not, he believed, been discussed at the time of the adoption of General Assembly resolution 32/198, but it would be necessary to consult the records to confirm that assertion. It was clear from paragraph 2 (b) of that resolution that no distinction was made between permanent representatives and other persons who chaired intergovernmental committees. Under paragraph 3 of the resolution the Secretary-General was authorized to exercise his discretion in making exceptions on a case-by-case basis, and there might be therefore some difficulty in interpreting that provision to cover all permanent representatives in a blanket fashion. In the case of retroactive authorization of first-class travel, the officials concerned would indeed have had to reimburse the difference between the first-class and economy-class fare if it had later been deemed that circumstances had not been such as to warrant that authorization. The Chairman of the Advisory Committee had stated that the Secretary-General could report any difficulties that arose in the application of the Advisory Committee's recommendation that only his accompanying security officer was authorized to travel with him by Concorde. He wished to say that there were cases where it was necessary for the Secretary-General to hold consultations during the journey, and he should have some discretion in the matter of who should accompany him for that purpose. In that regard, the discretion he was already given under paragraph 3 of General Assembly resolution 32/198 would seem adequate to cover such eventualities. The Secretary-General would naturally report to the Advisory Committee and to the Fifth Committee any exceptions made on a case-by-case basis.

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47. Mr. HAMZAH (Syrian Arab Republic) said that, in order not to delay the Committee's work, his delegation would support the recommendations made by the Advisory Committee in paragraphs 7 and 9 of its report. However, he requested that at the next session the Secretary-General's report should be submitted earlier so that there would be sufficient time for delegations to make proposals with respect to entitlement to first-class travel on official missions.

48. Mr. FALL (Senegal) reiterated that the principle behind resolution 32/198 was to place restrictions on first-class travel. It was true, as the Assistant Secretary-General had said, that paragraph 3 of that resolution allowed for certain exceptions. However, under paragraph 2 (b), first-class travel could not be authorized for journeys of less than nine hours for people other than those covered by paragraph 2 (a). With proper planning of missions and travel it should also be possible, in most cases, to avoid the need to travel by first class on grounds of urgency. He believed that resolution 32/198 did provide sufficient flexibility, without opening the door to abuse.

49. With respect to the travel of chairmen of intergovernmental committees, the situation before the adoption of General Assembly resolution 32/198 had been somewhat unusual, in that members of expert groups, who might well be quite junior diplomats, had been automatically entitled to first-class travel, while permanent representatives serving as committee chairmen had not. The intention of the drafters of resolution 32/198 had been to correct such anomalies and to put everyone on the same footing. That resolution had been the outcome of lengthy negotiations, and was a very fragile edifice which might well collapse if a single brick were to be removed.

50. Mr. GODFREY (New Zealand) said that the reason why the Secretary-General's report had not come before the Committee earlier in the session was obviously because it covered the period 1 October 1979 to 30 September 1980. In the light of the statement made by the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic, it might be worthwhile to request the Secretary-General to prepare a report covering a nine-month period ending on 30 June 1981. It should then be possible for the Secretariat to submit the document at the beginning of the next session.

51. Mr. PAL (India) said it appeared that not much thought had been given to the question of the travel of permanent representatives on United Nations business at the time of the adoption of resolution 32/198. He wondered whether it might be possible to make an exception in their case. However, since his delegation had no wish to make any proposal which would have major financial implications, it would first like to have an idea from the Assistant Secretary-General of how many permanent representatives had travelled on United Nations business in the past year, and what the costs had been. He would like to have that information before the Committee was called upon to take a decision.

52. The CHAIRMAN agreed to postpone any decision pending an answer by the Assistant Secretary-General to that question. In connexion with the observation made by the representative of New Zealand, he suggested that the Fifth Committee should request the Secretary-General when reporting to the General Assembly at its thirty-sixth session to cover the period 1 October 1980 to 30 June 1981, so that the Committee

would consider the matter in the early part of the thirty-sixth session, and thereafter to submit reports on an annual basis.

United Nations accommodation at Nairobi (continued) (A/35/7/Add.11; A/C.5/35/35 and Add.1; A/C.5/35/L.27)

53. Mr. OKEYO (Kenya) announced that Panama, Senegal and the Sudan had become sponsors of the draft resolution contained in document A/C.5/35/L.27.

54. Announcing some revisions to the draft resolution, he said that a new second preambular paragraph should be added reading: "Having also considered the report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (A/35/7/Add.11)". The words "with the addition of" in the second line of operative paragraph 2 should be replaced by the words "and decides to restore", and the figure in the penultimate line of that paragraph should now read 254,944,000 Kenyan shillings.

55. He stressed that the draft resolution was the result of lengthy consultations and represented a delicate balance. He recognized that the new wording of operative paragraph 2 might be somewhat inelegant and repetitious in terms of language, but stressed its political importance to the sponsors. He hoped that it would be possible for the Committee to adopt the draft resolution without any further changes, which might upset the balance.

56. Mr. MAGARA (Uganda) expressed his delegation's strong support for the draft resolution in view of the emphatic statement it had already made that a United Nations headquarters in Africa which was inferior to similar facilities in other places would be unacceptable. He noted that the restoration of the conference rooms originally envisaged would go a long way towards meeting the desire for first-class United Nations headquarters facilities, which would be the first of their kind in a developing country. Not only did his delegation fully endorse the draft resolution, but it would in the future support any measures to expand the accommodation in Nairobi.

57. Mr. GARRIDO (Philippines) proposed that the new wording in paragraph 2 introduced by the Kenyan representative should be slightly amended to read "and also decides to restore".

58. Mr. OKEYO (Kenya) accepted the change suggested by the Philippine representative.

The meeting rose at 1.15 p.m.