



SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 50th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. BUJ-FLORES (Mexico)

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

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TRIBUTE TO THE MEMORY OF EIGHT INTERNATIONAL CIVIL SERVANTS

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15 December 1980

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The meeting was called to order at 10.55 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 99: REPORT OF THE INTERNATIONAL CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION (continued)
(A/35/7/Add.15, A/35/30 and Corr.1; A/C.5/35/37, A/C.5/35/39, A/C.5/35/61,
A/C.5/35/96, A/C.5/35/L.31/Rev.1)

1. Mr. SCHMIDT (Federal Republic of Germany), introducing the draft resolution contained in document A/C.5/35/L.31/Rev.1, said that the sponsors had incorporated in the revised version almost all the suggestions made by other delegations. Those suggestions had resulted in clarifications of the draft resolution's intention and, at times, changes in the emphasis laid upon the various provisions, but there had been no major change in the substance. There was only one exception: at the suggestion of the Panamanian representative, a request to the Commission to review the possibility of extending the educational grant to all internationally recruited staff, wherever they might serve, had been incorporated as operative paragraph 3 of section IV.

2. Mr. HOUNA GOLO (Chad) pointed out that the revised version of the draft resolution was not available in French. In an effort to co-operate with the Chairman, however, and on the understanding that the revisions made by the sponsors entailed no change in the substance, his delegation would be prepared to proceed with the discussion on the basis of the French version of the original draft resolution in document A/C.5/35/L.31.

3. Mr. PALAMARCHUK (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) observed that the Russian text of the revised draft resolution was not available either. In a spirit of co-operation, however, he would be prepared to work on the basis of the English text.

4. He requested two separate recorded votes, the first on section IV of the draft resolution and the second on the draft resolution as a whole.

5. The CHAIRMAN said that, since delegations appeared to be willing to consider the revised draft resolution before it was available in all languages, he would now invite the Committee to take a decision on section IV of the text.

6. A recorded vote was taken on section IV of draft resolution A/C.5/35/31/Rev.1.

In favour: Algeria, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Bahamas, Bahrain, Barbados, Belgium, Benin, Brazil, Burundi, Canada, Chad, Chile, Costa Rica, Cyprus, Democratic Yemen, Denmark, Ecuador, Egypt, Ethiopia, Fiji, Finland, France, Germany, Federal Republic of, Ghana, Greece, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Kenya, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Madagascar, Malaysia, Mauritania, Mexico, Morocco, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Peru, Portugal, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Spain, Sudan, Swaziland, Thailand, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United Republic of Cameroon, Uruguay, Venezuela, Yugoslavia, Zaire, Zambia.

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

Abstaining: Central African Republic, Congo, Ivory Coast, Romania, Rwanda, Senegal, Somalia, United Republic of Tanzania.

7. Section IV was adopted by 70 votes to 11, with 8 abstentions.

8. Mr. YUSUF (Somalia) said that he had abstained in the vote because he had at no stage been consulted over the contents of the draft resolution.

9. Mr. KABA (Guinea) said that, although his delegation had not wished to hold up proceedings, it had felt unable to take part in the vote, in view of its difficulties with the English language.

10. Mr. BOUZARBIA (Algeria) said that, after consultations with other delegations concerning the provisions of section IV on which he had commented earlier in the Committee's discussions, he had decided to vote for the revised proposal, on the understanding that the criteria used to identify difficult duty stations would be applied equally and without discrimination in respect of all staff, and in the hope that the matter would continue to be studied by the Commission.

11. Mr. FALL (Senegal) and Mr. ABOUA (Ivory Coast) said that they had abstained because it was not possible for them to take a position on such a delicate text as section IV of the draft resolution without the benefit of a text in their working language.

12. Mr. SUEDI (United Republic of Tanzania) said that he had abstained on account of paragraphs 4 and 5 of section IV; the difficult duty stations referred to should have been identified before the Committee was asked to decide what remedial measures were necessary.

13. The CHAIRMAN announced that the revised draft resolution had now been circulated in all the official languages.

14. Mr. PAPENDORP (United States of America) said that he had voted against section IV and would abstain in the vote on the draft resolution as a whole for the reasons set out in detail by his delegation in its statement on 25 November (A/C.5/35/SR.35, paras. 6-18).

15. The United States delegation could not support the consolidation of 30 points of post adjustment into base salary. It believed that the methodology used by the Secretariat was faulty, in that adjustments based on changes in the cost of living were applied to a staff member's entire salary instead of to the portion that was intended to compensate for different living costs at different duty stations. That, it believed, was the reason for the current difficulties that the post adjustment system posed.

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(Mr. Papendorp, United States)

16. His delegation was not in favour of extending benefits for United Nations staff until ICSC had prepared its report on the total remuneration and conditions of service enjoyed by United Nations staff in relation to those provided by the best-paying national civil service. Benefits under the education grant, it believed, were already too high; it opposed their payment to staff members living in their own country and disagreed emphatically with the idea of extending them to other staff members. And, for the same reasons as the Tanzanian delegation, it could not, for the moment, support the proposal to change the frequency of home leave at difficult duty stations.

17. A recorded vote was taken on draft resolution A/C.5/35/L.31/Rev.1 as a whole.

In favour: Algeria, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Bahamas, Bahrain, Barbados, Belgium, Benin, Brazil, Burundi, Canada, Central African Republic, Chad, Chile, China, Colombia, Congo, Costa Rica, Cyprus, Democratic Yemen, Denmark, Ecuador, Egypt, Ethiopia, Fiji, Finland, France, Germany, Federal Republic of, Ghana, Greece, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, India, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Ivory Coast, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kenya, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Madagascar, Malaysia, Mauritania, Mexico, Morocco, Netherlands, New Zealand, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Peru, Philippines, Portugal, Qatar, Rwanda, Senegal, Singapore, Spain, Sudan, Swaziland, Thailand, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United Republic of Cameroon, United Republic of Tanzania, Upper Volta, Uruguay, Venezuela, Yugoslavia, Zaire, Zambia.

Against: None.

Abstaining: Afghanistan, Bulgaria, Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic, Czechoslovakia, German Democratic Republic, Guinea, Hungary, Mongolia, Poland, Romania, Somalia, Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, United States of America.

18. The draft resolution was adopted by 84 votes to none, with 14 abstentions.

19. Mr. YUSUF (Somalia), speaking in explanation of vote, said the reasons that had motivated his abstention on section IV had also prompted him to abstain in the vote on the draft resolution as a whole.

20. Mr. EL-SAFETY (Egypt) expressed his regret that the draft resolution failed to cover two vitally important issues: the practice followed by some Governments of making supplementary payments to members of the international civil service; and the remuneration of nationally recruited professional staff, particularly in developing countries, in accordance with local scales of pay. His delegation had voted in favour of the draft resolution in a spirit of compromise, on the understanding the Commission would keep those points under consideration and report on them to the General Assembly at its thirty-sixth session.

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21. Mr. OREBI (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations), also speaking on behalf of UNESCO, WHO, and IFAD, associated himself with the draft resolution just adopted and expressed his appreciation to the Commission and its secretariat, whose dedicated efforts tended to be ignored or, at best, taken for granted.

22. Mr. AKWEI (Acting Chairman, International Civil Service Commission) expressed appreciation for the Committee's positive response to the recommendations of ICSC as reflected in its vote on the draft resolution.

23. As members would have noted, there was no reference in that draft resolution to the issue of the staff assessment scales of the General Service and related categories. That did not, however, indicate that staff assessment of those categories was exempt from the application of the provisions of the draft resolution; rather it meant that no reference could be made to the matter until it was discussed in the context of chapter III of the ICSC report, dealing with pensionable remuneration.

24. With respect to the subject of supplementary payments, he said that ICSC would have wished the Committee to reach some conclusion regarding its recommendation on that very vital matter. He was afraid that its failure to provide guidance might have a profound effect on the independence and integrity of the international civil service, and on the structure of its remuneration. As the representative of Egypt had suggested, the Commission would keep the matter under review; however, it might be somewhat inhibited by the lack of response from the Fifth Committee.

25. He understood that the secretariat of ICSC had been in touch with the delegation of the Soviet Union with respect to the questions it had raised at a previous meeting, and that satisfactory explanations and clarifications had been given.

26. A number of delegations had expressed concern about the criteria to be used by ICSC in classifying difficult duty stations. Those concerns would be taken into account and the Commission would do everything it could to ensure that the privileges approved by the Committee would be enjoyed only at those duty stations where they were fully warranted.

27. Mr. RUEDAS (Assistant Secretary-General for Financial Services) said that the Secretary-General, consistent with the position regarding supplementary payments he had set forth in writing on behalf of the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination (ACC) in document A/C.5/35/61, shared the uneasiness of the Acting Chairman of ICSC regarding the Fifth Committee's failure to adopt any position or to give any instruction on the matter. In expressing that view, he spoke on behalf of not only the Secretary-General but also the Assistant Secretary-General for Personnel Services.

28. The CHAIRMAN said he had been informed that consultations were taking place on a possible draft resolution or draft decision on the subject of supplementary

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(The Chairman)

payments to be submitted at a later stage. As members of the Committee were aware, chapter III of the report of ICSC (A/35/30) would be taken up under agenda item 100.

29. Mr. JASABE (Sierra Leone) said that, had his delegation been present during the vote, it would have voted in favour of draft resolution A/C.5/35/L.31/Rev.1.

AGENDA ITEM 92: MEDIUM-TERM PLAN FOR THE PERIOD 1980-1983 (continued)

Identification of activities that have been completed or are obsolete, of marginal usefulness or ineffective (continued) (A/35/709; A/C.5/35/40 and Add.1; A/C.5/35/L.36)

30. Mr. FRASER (United Kingdom) introduced the draft resolution contained in document A/C.5/35/L.36 and announced that the Federal Republic of Germany had joined the list of sponsors. He said that foot-note 1 should read "A/C.5/35/40 and Add.1".

31. He drew particular attention to operative paragraph 7, explaining that the deferment until the thirty-seventh session of the submission of the full and comprehensive report called for under General Assembly resolution 3534 (XXX) was proposed in order to allow time for the implementation of whatever recommendations might be made at the thirty-sixth session of the General Assembly by the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination (CPC). His delegation hoped that it would be possible to adopt the draft resolution by consensus.

32. Mr. SHUSTOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that for several years Member States had been reiterating the special importance they attached to the identification of activities that had been completed or were obsolete, of marginal usefulness or ineffective, and had increasingly stressed the need to finance new activities from resources redeployed as a result of the elimination of obsolete, marginally useful or ineffective activities. While it was positive to note that the termination of programme elements identified by the Secretary-General would release 417 Professional work months for redeployment, which was a step in the right direction, the Secretariat had certainly not explored every possible avenue. At its twentieth session, CPC had noted with concern that the submission of the programme performance report for 1978-1979 had been inappropriately used by the Secretariat to respond to General Assembly resolution 34/225, and that the Secretary-General had failed to provide the information called for in paragraph 3 of that resolution. His delegation fully supported that severe, but just, assessment. The report currently before the Committee, together with that contained in document A/C.5/34/4, had identified a mere 449 work months - representing approximately three tenths of 1 per cent of the existing staff resources in the Professional category and above - for redeployment as a result of terminated activities. That was an extremely modest result, particularly in view of the fact that five years had elapsed since the adoption of General Assembly resolution 3534 (XXX), in which Member States had indicated that new programmes should be financed through the redeployment of existing resources. Moreover, the request for the identification of the 10 per cent of programme elements of lowest priority had not been met.

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(Mr. Shustov, USSR)

33. It was high time that the Secretariat developed effective procedures for the identification exercise and started implementing them. The delay in responding was difficult to understand. The identification exercise, while it must form an ongoing and integral part of programme planning and evaluation, could only be carried out effectively by the Secretariat. Similarly, the responsibility for eliminating the various short-comings identified by the Secretariat in the course of the exercise rested exclusively with the Secretariat itself.

34. By following the relevant guidelines laid down by the General Assembly with respect to preparation of the programme budget, which necessarily involved calculating the cost of every programme, at every level, it should be possible to iron out all the difficulties and facilitate the identification of completed, obsolete, marginally useful or ineffective activities. His delegation was unable to agree with the contention in paragraph 10 of the Secretary-General's report (A/C.5/35/40) that it was impossible to determine the exact number of work months to be devoted to a particular programme element or the precise amount of non-staff costs that would be required. If that could not be determined in the context of the programme budget preparations, then he wondered how the budget could be drawn up at all. Every programme had to be costed and evaluated to ensure that the zero growth rate on which the programme budget should be based was not exceeded. If that procedure had not been adopted in the past, then it was an intolerable violation of the guidelines laid down by the General Assembly.

35. The Secretariat should not be unduly concerned about the way in which the released resources were to be redeployed; that was a matter to be settled at the intergovernmental level. In that connexion, he disagreed with the statement contained in paragraph 11 of document A/C.5/35/40 that the Secretary-General should be free to redeploy resources to other activities as soon as the determination had been made. The task of the Secretary-General was to identify activities that had been completed or were obsolete, of marginal usefulness or ineffective and to inform Member States of the resources released, so that the fate of those resources could be decided by the relevant intergovernmental organs. For the Secretariat to take such a decision was totally inappropriate. Member States should be furnished with full information on programme analysis and evaluation at the time of preparation of the programme budget. That information should be accompanied by proposals for the termination of obsolete, marginally useful or ineffective activities, together with an indication of the Professional and General Service staff resources, on a full-cost basis, which could thereby be released for redeployment. Member States would take the necessary decisions in the light of that information, and programme requirements could then be matched to available resources.

36. Turning to the draft resolution contained in document A/C.5/35/L.36, he said that his delegation generally supported it but felt that the Secretary-General should undertake the identification exercise in the over-all framework of programme budget preparation and report to CPC at its twenty-first session on the results of his efforts. CPC should then comment on the Secretary-General's proposals so that a final decision on the termination of programmes and redeployment of released resources could be made by the General Assembly at its thirty-sixth session.

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37. Mr. BRODODININGRAT (Indonesia) asked whether it was the intention of the sponsors of draft resolution A/C.5/35/L.36 to limit the study which CPC would be requested to carry out to the question of an integrated and comprehensive procedure for the identification of activities that were completed, obsolete, ineffective or of marginal usefulness. There were a number of other relevant issues which CPC might study further, such as the question of the criteria to be used in such an identification exercise. Accordingly, he suggested that the words "in the context of this study" should be deleted from paragraph 5 of the draft resolution.

38. The CHAIRMAN suggested that the representative of Indonesia should consult with the sponsors of the draft resolution in order to determine whether his proposed amendment was agreeable to them.

39. Mr. RUEDAS (Assistant Secretary-General for Financial Services) said that, in general, the identification of activities that were completed, obsolete, ineffective or of marginal usefulness was one of the most difficult tasks facing not only the Secretary-General but Member States as well. In his report on that question, the Secretary-General had indicated that no systematic framework had as yet been defined to enable him to carry out the identification exercise and had made suggestions which he considered would enable him to achieve more effective results. He (Mr. Ruedas) noted that the draft resolution A/C.5/35/L.36 called upon the Secretary-General to submit a new report to CPC on his efforts to identify obsolete, marginally useful and ineffective activities in connexion with the preparation of the programme budget for 1982-1983. The Secretary-General would, of course, comply with any request from the Assembly, but he would have difficulty in preparing the report in question in the absence of clear guidance from the Assembly as to the approach to be taken. The Secretary-General's desire was that Member States should be involved in the identification of such activities during their review of the medium-term plan. The preparation of the programme budget constituted the second, more concrete and quantified stage in the same process.

40. The United Kingdom representative had inquired at the preceding meeting whether the Secretariat could quantify the savings that would result from the termination of the activities identified in the Secretary-General's report (A/C.5/35/40 and Add.1). The Secretary-General had drawn attention in paragraphs 9 to 13 to the methodological problems involved in arriving at exact figures. Assuming that the activities in question were carried out by staff at an average level of P-4, the approximate cost was \$2 million. The Secretary-General had included suggestions in his report regarding the programmes and subprogrammes towards which the resources released might be redeployed, subject, of course, to the approval of the General Assembly.

41. The representative of Poland had asked what relationship there was between the preparation of the programme budget proposals and the identification of activities that were completed, obsolete, of marginal usefulness or ineffective. He (Mr. Ruedas) had referred to that matter in his introductory statement. The identification of such activities had to be part of the planning process, in which Member States participated through intergovernmental sectoral or functional bodies; the results of such intergovernmental review provided the framework for the preparation of the programme budget, at which time the Secretary-General obviously

(Mr. Ruedas)

made a further effort to identify activities that were completed or could be terminated. The method which would be used in the preparation of the programme budget for the forthcoming biennium would have to be defined by the Office of Financial Services in the near future, and he assured the representative of Poland that it would be described in the next programme budget. The representative of Poland had also asked what was new in the approach of the Secretary-General in his report and how co-operation was ensured between the Secretariat units servicing CPC and the Office of Financial Services, which serviced the Fifth Committee and the Advisory Committee. The Secretary-General's approach, as reflected in document A/C.5/35/40, was not so much new as more mature. The Secretary-General now had four years' experience of the identification exercise and had acquired a better understanding of the difficulties entailed. The Secretary-General had submitted a report which was impartial and characterized by intellectual honesty; in it he indicated his dissatisfaction with the existing situation and his desire to improve it. As to co-operation within the Secretariat, he stressed that the Secretary-General's position remained consistently the same in his relations with both CPC and the Fifth Committee. The Office for Programme Planning and Co-ordination and the Office of Financial Services co-operated fully in identifying programmes that were completed, obsolete, of marginal usefulness or ineffective. The Secretary-General's report in document A/C.5/35/40 and Add.1, although prepared for the most part by the Office of Financial Services, had benefited from the valuable contributions of the Office for Programme Planning and Co-ordination. The search for a more comprehensive approach to the identification exercise was a joint effort in which the Office for Programme Planning and Co-ordination focused on the programme aspects and the Office of Financial Services emphasized the budgetary aspects.

42. The representative of Poland had also inquired why the Secretary-General proposed to defer to the thirty-seventh session the submission of the report requested by the General Assembly in paragraph 6 of resolution 34/225. As indicated in paragraph 54 of the Secretary-General's report, the time remaining seemed too short to evaluate properly the effectiveness of the proposed procedure. Deferring the report to the thirty-seventh session would allow time for the Secretary-General to acquire further, more detailed experience in the identification of activities that had been completed or could be terminated on other grounds.

43. Mr. ABRAZSEWSKI (Poland) said that the answers provided by the Assistant Secretary-General would help his delegation to determine its position on draft resolution A/C.5/35/L.36. The reasons given for deferring the final report of the Secretary-General to the thirty-seventh seemed valid and convincing. The assurances given by the Assistant Secretary-General concerning co-operation within the Secretariat were also entirely satisfactory.

44. He asked whether the Secretary-General would present the conclusions he reached in response to paragraph 6 of the draft resolution in the foreword to the budget or elsewhere.

45. Mr. RUEDAS (Assistant Secretary-General for Financial Services) said that the manner in which the Secretary-General would report on the results of the identification exercise in the programme budget proposals would, of course, depend

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(Mr. Ruedas)

on the results achieved. Most likely, a brief account of how the exercise had been carried out and the results obtained would be included in the foreword and more detailed information would be provided under individual sections of the budget.

46. Mr. NUTT (Canada) said that the fact that only 14 programme elements had been identified as obsolete, of marginal usefulness or ineffective, was somewhat disappointing. Even if those activities were terminated, it would not be possible to avoid new appropriations at the current session. His delegation had hoped that greater redeployment of resources would have been possible.

47. The Secretary-General's report, though long in coming, was a good one because it finally outlined how the current ad hoc identification exercise could be coherently pursued as an integral part of the programme planning process. He therefore endorsed the Secretary-General's suggestions in paragraph 53 and stressed the urgent need for the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination to complete its study on the setting of programme priorities and the need for intergovernmentally agreed criteria. He also concurred with the Secretary-General on the importance of procedures for the participation of the competent sectoral, functional and regional intergovernmental bodies in the review of the medium-term plan.

48. He noted the measures outlined in paragraph 50 of the Secretary-General's report relating to preparations for the programme budget for 1982-1983 and trusted that they would lead to the identification of activities which could be discontinued. Towards that end, it would be necessary to remedy such existing deficiencies as the absence of priorities at the programme element and subprogramme levels and the lack of programme element information sheets for political, humanitarian, legal and public information programmes. In addition, the practice and methodology of internal programme evaluation must be further developed and refined. His delegation trusted that the Secretary-General would vigorously pursue the steps indicated in his report, which should lead to a more effective use of resources and a sense among Member States that better use was being made of their contributions.

49. Lastly, he expressed support for draft resolution A/C.5/35/L.36.

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

Administrative and financial implications of the draft resolution submitted by the Second Committee in document A/C.2/35/L.111, as orally revised, concerning agenda item 61 (q) (continued)

50. Mr. JASABE (Sierra Leone) said that, if his delegation had been present during the voting on the proposal made by the representative of Bangladesh at the preceding meeting, it would have voted in favour of it.

TRIBUTE TO THE MEMORY OF EIGHT INTERNATIONAL CIVIL SERVANTS

51. The CHAIRMAN said that members had no doubt learned of the tragic air crash on 5 December 1980 in which eight international civil servants had lost their lives. The victims were Mr. K. K. Apeadu, Mr. H. M. Caspari and Mr. J. Mfuru of the

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United Nations Development Programme, Mrs. Helen Lewis-Jones Caspari of the United Nations Fund for Population Activities, Mr. Hen-chie Chen of the Department of Technical Co-operation for Development, and Mr. Eva, Mr. Poikolainen and Mr. Baldwin of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. He asked the Secretary-General to convey the condolences of the Fifth Committee to the families of the deceased.

52. On the proposal of the Chairman, the members of the Committee observed a minute of silence in tribute to the memory of the late international civil servants.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.