

FIFTH COMMITTEE
59th meeting
held on
Monday, 29 March 1993
at 10 a.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 59TH MEETING

Chairman: Mr. DINU (Romania)

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

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AGENDA ITEM 104: PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 1992-1993 (continued)*

Revised estimates as requested by the General Assembly in resolution 47/212

* Items considered together.

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The meeting was called to order at 10.35 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 103: REVIEW OF THE EFFICIENCY OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE AND FINANCIAL FUNCTIONING OF THE UNITED NATIONS (continued)

AGENDA ITEM 104: PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 1992-1993 (continued)

Revised estimates as requested by the General Assembly in resolution 47/212 (A/47/7/Add.15; A/C.5/47/88)

1. Mr. BAUDOT (Controller) said that, although it was unusual, the submission of revised estimates during the second year of the current biennium was justified owing to the scale of the changes resulting from the restructuring. The report of the Secretary-General dealt with the reasons that had led to the establishment of three new departments to replace the Department of Economic and Social Development, the functions of those new units, the resources which they would need, the redeployment of functions and posts that would result from the regrouping of the activities in that sector, the implications of that reorganization for other departments and, lastly, the changes planned in the area of common services. The General Assembly was invited to take a decision on the revised appropriation for the biennium 1992-1993 (which would have no impact on contributions), the distribution of that amount according to chapter, and the number and distribution of high-level posts. The General Assembly was also invited to express its views on the restructuring.

2. Referring to the financial aspects of the report of the Secretary-General, the Controller pointed out that the Secretariat had proceeded on the basis of the revised estimates approved by the General Assembly in December 1992, which had amounted to \$2,468,039,000. The new amount was lower than that figure by \$263,400; the net reduction resulted from: a decrease of \$4,516,000 in the area of high-level posts, an increase of \$1,511,200 for new activities resulting from the Rio Conference, an increase of \$757,800 corresponding to the application, as of 1 April 1993, of different salaries for staff members whose posts would be redeployed and, lastly, an increase of \$1,983,700 representing the costs of redeploying those staff members. The amounts were based on very prudent assumptions, which had been discussed with the Advisory Committee, and the Secretary-General intended to try to reduce the costs further. With regard to the three new departments, the estimated resources were the following: \$16,591,300 for the Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development, \$16,664,700 for the Department of Economic and Social Information and Policy Analysis, and \$10,843,500 for the Department of Development Support and Management Services.

3. The proposals by the Secretary-General concerning the posts included in the regular budget were in keeping with the policy guideline followed since the adoption of General Assembly resolution 41/213, which was characterized by extreme restraint with regard to the creation of posts. Prior to the 15 per cent reduction requested under the resolution, the Secretariat had had 11,422 posts (biennium 1988-1989). That figure had fallen to 10,048 for the biennium 1990-1991 and had been set at 10,118 for the biennium 1992-1993 and was established at 10,105 under the new revised estimates. Furthermore, there was a proposal to reduce to 35 the number of high-level posts, of which there had been 57 in the biennium 1988-1989.

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4. Within the framework of that policy and in order to ensure the desired flexibility, the Secretariat had progressively systematized, starting in 1992, the temporary redeployment of posts. During the first restructuring phase, 74 vacant posts had been placed at the disposal of the Secretary-General. During the second phase, 23 posts had been placed at the disposal of services that urgently required an increase in staff. As of 29 March, 55 posts had been temporarily redeployed to units dealing with human rights, peace-keeping and the like. The redeployment carried out within the economic and social sector and common services sector had made it possible to find resources for new activities without requesting the creation of posts. Thus, of the 13 posts in the former Department of Economic and Social Development which were planned to be assigned to activities concerning desertification and climate change, two had been redeployed temporarily to the Department of Administration and Management. In total, the planned redeployment of posts would affect 9 per cent of all Secretariat posts. The proportion amounted to 53 per cent for activities in the economic and social sector covered under section IV of the budget and 21 per cent if the sector was considered as a whole, including the regional commissions which were not affected by redeployment. For most of the holders of those posts, the activities would remain the same, but they would have new superiors. With regard to common services, the proposed redeployment (from the Department of Administration and Management to the Department of Public Information) represented only 4 per cent of the posts.

5. In total, 146 posts would be redeployed from one duty station to another: 59 from Vienna to New York (Social development), 27 from Rome to New York (World Food Council), 2 from Geneva to New York (Sustainable development), 42 from New York to Geneva (Transnational corporations and science and technology), and 16 from New York to Vienna (Peaceful uses of outer space).

6. The distribution of the posts on the staffing tables of the three new departments was set forth in table III in the report of the Secretary-General. Referring to the figures that were indicated there and represented a total of 696 posts, he recalled that the corresponding figure had been 709 under the programme budget approved for the biennium and 683 under the revised estimates adopted at the end of 1992. Accordingly, there was no significant change in that regard.

7. Because of a number of uncertainties, including the results of the decentralization efforts, the revised estimates were not very detailed with regard to the distribution of extrabudgetary posts. Nevertheless, the Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development (DPCSD) would probably not have any post in that category. On the other hand, the Department of Economic and Social Information and Policy Analysis (DESIPA) should have 40 Professional and 75 General Service category posts. Sixty-five Professional and 88 General Service category posts financed through extrabudgetary funds would be transferred to the Department of Development Support and Management Services (DDSMS). Assigning the Office for Project Services (OPS) to DDSMS would also provide it with 86 Professional and 137 General Service category posts (para. 104). Without taking account of the 34 L-7 posts referred to in paragraph 108 of the report of the Secretary-General, which would be broken down shortly, DDSMS would have a total of 566 posts and DESIPA a total of 392 posts.

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Those figures reflected the great importance attached to economic and social activities.

8. The proposals by the Secretary-General concerning high-level posts were set forth in a precise manner in table I and paragraphs 7 to 17 of his report.

9. In view of the preparation of the revised estimates under consideration, the General Assembly had agreed that the draft programme budget for the biennium 1994-1995 should be submitted later than initially planned. The revised amount of \$2,467,775,800 which the General Assembly was invited to approve under the revised estimates would serve as the basis for preparing the draft programme budget (including the calculation of the growth rate). The results of the restructuring would be reflected in that document, including the internal organization of the new departments, their activities and the links between them and the medium-term plan, the modalities for integrating the Office for Project Services (OPS) into DDSMS and the social development activities of DPCSD, the exact size of the economies of scale referred to in document A/C.5/47/88 and the decentralization efforts.

10. With regard to posts, the Secretariat would continue the policy of simplifying the policy-formulating levels. In accordance with the assumption made by the Secretariat in order to draw up the outline of the draft programme budget, it would try to make corrections so as not to have to request a net increase in the number of posts. He hoped to be able to reduce progressively the weight of the common services through, inter alia, the implementation of the integrated management system. The Secretariat would continue to strive for greater flexibility in utilizing posts and organizing the careers of staff members. Lastly, the redeployments currently proposed on a temporary basis would be proposed on a permanent basis. An effort would be made to illustrate better the connection between activities adopted and priorities set as well as the complementarity linkages between budgetary and extrabudgetary resources. The question of L-category posts would also be dealt with.

11. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions), introducing the Advisory Committee's report (A/47/7/Add.15), said that ACABQ had not thought it essential to comment on every aspect of the Secretary-General's report. It had formulated its comments in a constructive spirit with a view to their being taken into account by the Secretary-General when he prepared his proposals for the biennium 1994-1995.

12. Paragraph 5 of the ACABQ report referred to the Advisory Committee's late receipt of the Secretary-General's report. Such occurrences were becoming increasingly frequent, even when the dates of submission had been confirmed to the Committee. Moreover, all too often the Secretariat set deadlines without sufficient regard for the time required by ACABQ and the Fifth Committee to consider the documents, thereby threatening to undermine the roles played by the two bodies.

13. Paragraph 6 of the ACABQ report reflected observations made on various occasions. A related question was the extent to which Member States were being consulted and the status of changes referred to in the relevant reports, namely whether they were decisions or proposals placed before Member States.

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14. In spite of numerous reports and statements by the Secretary-General, it was difficult to know exactly what the restructuring involved. There was an overall impression of a piecemeal approach, when what was required was an overall restructuring plan consisting of a set of coordinated, well-thought-out measures to be taken in the context of a time-frame. He had no wish to enter into a discussion of whether reform should be a continuous process, but he would stress that the need for a restructuring plan, together with a time-frame, was not incompatible with the necessity for an ongoing evaluation of the administrative and management structures of the Secretariat.

15. Paragraph 7 of the ACABQ report distinguished between external consultants without inside knowledge of the Organization and experts with an intimate knowledge of it. The proposals of the former were often more attractive in theory than in practice. ACABQ cautioned against over-reliance on their expertise and recommended that account should be taken instead of the considerable in-house expertise.

16. As paragraphs 9 to 15 of its report explained, ACABQ had had difficulty in analysing the implications of the Secretary-General's proposals for a number of reasons relating to the format and presentation of the document in which they were set out. Neither policy nor budgetary matters were treated in a fully transparent way. Although the document dealt with estimates, it did not give a full description of programmes and related mandates. Among its other shortcomings, the document lacked information on the distribution of resources and subprogrammes by department and information on the internal structures of departments. From the beginning of the restructuring, the orderly presentation of sections and related estimates had been disrupted: for example, the various categories of costs shown in table II of the Secretary-General's report related to differing periods within the current biennium (A/47/7/Add.15, para. 15).

17. For the reasons given in paragraph 15 of its report, ACABQ considered that it was not possible to evaluate the financial effects of the restructuring. The Secretary-General's report showed a saving of \$263,400 compared with the amount approved by the General Assembly in December 1992, but it failed to take into account potential costs arising from the transfer of posts over and above the estimate of \$2 million for that purpose (A/47/7/Add.15, paras. 25-27). The necessary budgetary information would not be available until the Secretary-General made his proposals for the biennium 1994-1995. Again, ACABQ stressed the role played by other intergovernmental bodies, including CPC, in reviewing the programmatic aspects of the budget.

18. The Advisory Committee's comments on the changes in organizational structure proposed by the Secretary-General should not be construed as a rejection of those proposals. As was stated in paragraph 23 of its report, it was for the General Assembly to decide on the best way of proceeding with regard to the transfer of functions between duty stations. ACABQ, for its part, believed that a more adequate explanation of rationale was required.

19. The establishment of three new departments called for a sustained effort of coordination, particularly in assigning the functions of policy development and policy analysis to two of the departments. How the functions formerly assigned to the Director-General would be discharged also needed elaboration. Since the

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Secretary-General considered decentralization an important part of restructuring, the activities for decentralization would have to be identified.

20. For the reasons given in paragraph 28 of its report, ACABQ welcomed the overall objective of the Secretary-General's proposal to integrate the Office for Project Services of UNDP into the new Department of Development Support and Management Services. Before the measure could take effect, however, there were questions to be answered regarding the respective roles of the UNDP Governing Council and the General Assembly. The Advisory Committee trusted that its views would be taken into account when the Secretary-General's proposal and the modalities for its implementation were considered.

21. Little information had been given about the changes in the Department of Administration and Management, and the report by a consultant on reforms in that Department had not been made available to ACABQ. Moreover, ACABQ understood that the proposals of the Secretary-General referred to in paragraph 33 of its report needed refinement, and it had requested that the Secretary-General indicate in his proposals for 1994-1995 the results of any such refinement.

22. Some significant issues remained with respect to the administration and management of peace-keeping operations. ACABQ once again requested the Secretary-General to deal with those issues on an urgent basis (A/47/7/Add.15, para. 34).

23. On the question of vacancy management, the Advisory Committee maintained the position it had expressed in 1992 in document A/47/7/Add.1. In addition, the representatives of the Secretary-General had reiterated to ACABQ their intention to report at six-monthly intervals regarding the situation of posts that had been temporarily redeployed among budget sections (A/47/7/Add.15, paras. 35 and 36).

24. Paragraph 37 of the ACABQ report indicated that there had been 57 high-level posts before the implementation of the relevant recommendation of the Group of High-level Intergovernmental Experts and that the revised estimates considered in 1992 had provided for 36, with ITC being included in both figures. The Secretary-General's current proposal would result in a net reduction of three more high-level posts, excluding the ITC post. The Secretary-General was also seeking to retain the resources for three eliminated Assistant Secretary-General posts.

25. With respect to the downgrading to the D-2 level of the post at the head of the ITC secretariat, ACABQ considered that decisions of the General Assembly and GATT were required before action could be taken. As to the reduction of extrabudgetary posts, ACABQ trusted that the operational needs of the programmes would be taken into account.

26. The Advisory Committee, having often questioned the justification for a number of high-level posts, welcomed the Secretary-General's efforts to streamline the senior management structure of the Secretariat. In its view, however, the abolition of such posts deserved to be explained as carefully as their creation had been. It would therefore have expected each of the proposals for abolition in documents A/C.5/47/2 and Corr.1 and A/C.5/47/88 to be justified

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at greater length. With regard to the four high-level posts in the Department of Administration and Management, it was recommending that action should be deferred to enable the Secretary-General to review the matter in the light of its comments and such guidelines as the General Assembly might wish to give (A/47/7/Add.15, paras. 41 and 42). The other proposals should be considered by the General Assembly pursuant to its resolution 47/212.

27. ACABQ had considered at length the proposal to establish a D-3 category, which was a technical matter of far-reaching implications, both long-term and system-wide. It was therefore important not to act precipitately and to consult the competent bodies first, especially as the proposal was not viable in its current form and, despite the arguments put forward by the Secretary-General on page 6 of circular ST/IC/1992/73, the purpose of the new category was unclear. ACABQ questioned how a limited number of D-3 posts would really improve the career prospects of international civil servants. If the objective was to clarify reporting lines, better ways could be found. If the aim was to compensate a few professionals for their managerial responsibilities, again a better way could be found. In the long run, the proposed new category could compromise the attempt to rationalize high-level posts and reduce their number, especially as there was no intention to eliminate the Assistant Secretary-General level completely. Lastly, it was not clear what was wrong with the current situation, in which there was a mix of career and short-term political appointees at the Assistant Secretary-General level.

28. In paragraph 15 of his report, the Secretary-General stated that he intended to make a further submission on the subject to the General Assembly and was proposing in the meantime that resources for three Assistant Secretary-General posts proposed for abolition should be retained in the budget. The Advisory Committee considered it unlikely that the resources would be required during the current biennium but had not recommended their deletion from the budget. Instead, ACABQ had requested the Secretary-General to take into account its views on the D-3 posts when he reviewed the question of the four high-level posts in the Department of Administration and Management (A/47/7/Add.15, paras. 42 and 48).

29. Mr. JARAMILLO (Colombia), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77, said the Secretary-General's proposals must be examined in the light of resolution 46/232, whereby the General Assembly had reaffirmed that the reform process should be compatible with the execution of programme mandates assigned by deliberative bodies. The medium-term plan and the International Development Strategy for the Fourth United Nations Development Decade were particularly important in that regard. The reform process must also be consistent with General Assembly resolutions 45/264 and 46/235 on the revitalization of the United Nations in the social and economic fields. The programmes and priorities approved by the General Assembly should not be altered by the reform process; that implied the need to provide substantive support to the intergovernmental machinery and the strengthening of technical cooperation.

30. With respect to its pre-eminent concern - the integrated implementation of approved programmes - the Group of 77 wished to make a number of observations. The creation of three new departments to replace the Department of Economic and Social Development represented a step in the right direction, since it would

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result in a better division of labour between the competent services. However, the functions relating to the implementation of the New Agenda for the Development of Africa and the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries were not clearly defined, despite the importance of those projects for the developing countries; it was essential to indicate which units would be responsible for these functions. There was also a need for a clearer division of labour among the units and bodies responsible for the delivery of technical cooperation - an action which implied a clearer definition of the role of the new Department for Development Support and Management Services and an increase, or at least not a decrease, in the level of sources devoted to those important purposes.

31. With respect to the transfer of functions in two high-priority sectors - transnational corporations and science and technology - to the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), it was necessary to identify clearly the units that would be assigned the new functions and to choose the modalities that would ensure full implementation of the mandates deriving from the medium-term plan and the International Development Strategy for the Fourth Development Decade. Of particular importance in that connection were the science and technology functions performed by the governmental sector.

32. Regarding the eventual decentralization of activities relating to natural resources, water and energy, it was necessary to consider retaining at Headquarters a modified service capable of providing information about those questions on a world-wide basis.

33. The description of the functions of the Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development should contain precise definitions of the functions relating to climate change and desertification.

34. More complete information was needed regarding the reasons that had led the Secretary-General to propose eliminating the post of Executive Director of the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements. Whatever the final decision, the full implementation of the Centre's programme mandates should be ensured, and its intergovernmental body should continue to receive the necessary technical support.

35. Given the work carried out by the International Trade Centre in the promotion of exports from developing countries, the position of Director must be maintained at the rank of Assistant Secretary-General, and that post should be filled as soon as possible.

36. Transfers of functions between different duty stations must be adequately justified from the operational point of view. Decisions in those matters should not be permitted to prejudice the freely made decisions of Governments concerning intergovernmental bodies. Restructuring should also ensure that those bodies would receive adequate technical support from the Secretariat.

37. Another concern of the Group of 77 was to ensure that restructuring entailed no change in programmes approved by the General Assembly. To that end, the resolution to be adopted should take into account a few additional elements.

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38. First, the General Assembly had determined on several occasions that in matters of programme implementation, the least developed countries would have priority. Therefore, the reference to that priority in the list of functions of the Department for Development Support and Management Services could be misleading. In the case of countries in transition, the treatment foreseen by the General Assembly was completely different. The restructuring should take that fact into account.

39. Second, the functions of the Department of Economic and Social Information and Policy Analysis included, as part of the "monitoring and assessment from a global perspective of economic and social policies and trends", the "analysis of efficient domestic macroeconomic management". That might imply an infringement of the sovereignty of Member States, and that function should therefore be reformulated, with strict respect for the limits imposed by the Charter and the General Assembly.

40. Third, the designation by the Secretary-General of "United Nations representatives" was in conflict with the rules in force, according to which the Resident Coordinator represented the Organization at the national level but did not perform political representation functions. Because the United Nations was not itself a State, it was inappropriate to suggest that it could be represented politically vis-à-vis Member States. Furthermore, recent intergovernmental negotiations had revealed substantive disagreements regarding the concept of a "unified approach at the country level".

41. Mr. MARUYAMA (Japan) praised the Secretary-General for his efforts and expressed the hope that they would be continued in close consultation with Member States and in accordance with their decisions. As the Advisory Committee had recommended in paragraph 6 of its report, the restructuring must be carried out on the basis of a long-term plan and within a specific time-frame. His delegation recognized the prerogatives of the Secretary-General in his position as chief administrative officer of the Organization, but insisted that he should comply with the directives given by the General Assembly in its resolutions 41/213, 45/264, 46/232 and 47/212 and in the resolutions relating to the medium-term plan. It noted with concern that the Secretary-General's report had not shown in what way the proposed reform related to the envisaged redeployment of resources or how it would improve the implementation of existing programmes. The specialized bodies concerned must have an opportunity to examine fully the impact of restructuring on those programmes before the General Assembly began its consideration of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1994-1995; his delegation was ready to participate actively in that process.

42. Despite the reduction of 13 high-level posts during the first phase of restructuring, little would be saved in the current biennium, and his delegation concluded that the changes made were perhaps not cost neutral. It was therefore important to provide Member States with an estimate of the costs that those changes would imply for the 1994-1995 biennium. His delegation hoped that the economies of scale announced by the Secretary-General would be realized and believed that Member States should also examine the implications of restructuring for future biennial budgets. With regard to the supplementary information provided to the Advisory Committee by the Secretary-General's representatives, his delegation noted with satisfaction the objectives set out

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(Mr. Maruyama, Japan)

in paragraph 16 of the Advisory Committee's report. With respect to the preparation of a draft programme budget for the 1994-1995 biennium, his delegation would rely on the Secretary-General to continue to hold spending for his proposals within the limits of the general plan approved by the General Assembly during its forty-seventh session.

43. His delegation could support the creation of three departments at Headquarters to deal with economic and social issues, provided a number of conditions were met. First, the Secretary-General should be personally involved in the coordination of the activities of the three departments relating to policy formulation and implementation. Second, the Department of Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development should remain of reasonable size and exercise its coordination function as primus inter pares among the departments, each department's respective area of competence being clearly defined. Third, the Office for Project Services could not be separated from UNDP unless the proposal was thoroughly discussed and the UNDP Governing Council took decisions regarding the autonomous character of the Office, the provision of continuing administrative support by UNDP and continuing supervision of the Office by the Governing Council.

44. Many proposals to transfer posts from one duty station to another lacked substantive or programmatic justification and were not in line with the relevant intergovernmental decisions. In particular, his delegation questioned the transfer of 59 posts from the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs at Vienna to New York, as well as the transfer of the Outer Space Affairs Division from New York to Vienna and the World Food Council from Rome to New York. He noted with concern that the Secretary-General also proposed transferring 55 posts from New York to UNCTAD at Geneva without indicating how they would be integrated into the UNCTAD structure. The Secretary-General had made clear neither the precise "critical mass" necessary to perform secretariat functions in the areas of transnational corporations and science and technology for development, nor the concrete use of those staff members who would be retained to work on sustainable development at UNCTAD. The Trade and Development Board, the Commission on Transnational Corporations and the Commission on Science and Technology for Development would each have to examine the desirability of such transfers in view of the resources necessary for the implementation of their priority programmes.

45. His delegation endorsed the observations and recommendations put forward by the Advisory Committee with regard to vacancy management, as well as the reduction and use of high-level posts, including the proposed D-3 positions. While he appreciated the efforts of the Secretary-General to streamline the senior management structure of the Secretariat, he could not support the downgrading of the four Assistant Secretary-General posts, particularly those of the Controller and the Chief of the Office of Human Resources Management. Such action would not be in keeping with the need to enhance the financial and managerial accountability of the Organization and the need to strengthen administrative support capabilities in response to the rapidly growing peace-keeping operations. Furthermore, his delegation cautioned against reducing extrabudgetary high-level posts without taking into account the specific duties performed by their incumbents, the hierarchical level required or the operational needs of the bodies concerned.

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(Mr. Maruyama, Japan)

46. His delegation shared the view of the Advisory Committee that it was a matter of urgency for the Secretary-General to deal with such aspects of restructuring as the strengthening of the Field Operations Division and coordination of management and administration of peace-keeping by the Secretariat components concerned, so as to improve the planning and budgeting procedures for such operations.

47. The Fifth Committee should recommend to the General Assembly that it should maintain the overall level of appropriations it had approved in resolution 47/220, and that decisions on how the resources should actually be allocated to sections of the revised estimates should be subject to programmatic review of the relevant sections and programmes by the intergovernmental bodies concerned. Lastly, the Secretary-General should submit a definitive restructuring plan covering decentralization for the approval of the relevant intergovernmental bodies to serve as a basis on which to draw up a draft programme budget for the biennium 1994-1995.

48. Mr. HAAKONSEN (Denmark), speaking on behalf of the European Community and its member States, said they believed that it was the prerogative of the Secretary-General to determine the structure of the Secretariat. The initiatives taken by the Secretary-General were long overdue and derived in large part from the decisions adopted by the Conference on Environment and Development and the eighth session of UNCTAD.

49. The report was a difficult document to tackle owing to its technical presentation, and especially given its late submission. Despite the directives given by the General Assembly in resolutions 46/232 and 47/212, the report provided neither a clear overall perspective of the restructuring process nor a satisfactory account of either the programmatic implications and justifications of restructuring or of the financial implications. The European Community and its member States therefore shared the view of the Advisory Committee that it was difficult to evaluate the "global" allocation of resources and that the Secretary-General should provide more detailed information in his draft programme budget for the biennium 1994-1995. Specifically, they insisted that further information concerning the impact of restructuring on the programmes should be provided both to the Committee for Programme and Coordination when it considered the programme budget, and to other intergovernmental bodies. He hoped that the Secretary-General, when implementing the restructuring, would take fully into account the provisions of General Assembly resolution 47/214 concerning the establishment of a system of responsibility and accountability of programme managers.

50. The European Community and its member States were pleased to see that the process of restructuring under way had led to certain marginal savings. With respect to the Secretary-General's proposals concerning the economic and social sectors, they welcomed the approach adopted, but stressed the importance of ensuring optimum coordination of all the activities in those fields at Headquarters and elsewhere. They shared the concerns of the Secretary-General and the Advisory Committee in that regard and wished to know what initiatives the Secretary-General intended to take.

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(Mr. Haakonsen, Denmark)

51. With regard to the Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development (DPCSD), the European Community and its member States welcomed the fact that the new department would be expected not only to prepare but also to implement the results of global conferences, and noted the proposal to integrate the World Food Council in DPCSD. They wished to know what the Secretary-General's plans were with regard to Habitat and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), which would be placed under joint management. Lastly, with respect to the creation of the Department for Development Support and Management Services, the European Community and its member States, as donors, wished to know what implications that would have for UNDP and other voluntarily funded agencies; he wished to stress the importance of maintaining the flexibility and efficiency of the Office of Project Services and its semi-autonomous and self-financing character.

52. With regard to decentralization, and in particular the possibility of assigning certain Headquarters functions to the regional economic commissions, it was important, before any decisions were taken along those lines, to ensure that the commissions in question had attained the necessary level of efficiency and effectiveness.

53. The European Community and its member States, which were well-known supporters of a unified United Nations presence at the country level and had strongly supported resolution 47/199, concurred with the Advisory Committee that it was important to conduct full consultations with Member States with respect to all issues related to the role of the United Nations representative. Regarding the proposal to move the Field Operations Division from the Office of General Services to the Office of the Under-Secretary-General, he recalled that on the adoption of resolution 47/224, the European Community and its member States had stressed the urgent need for more effective planning of peace-keeping operations as well as an improvement of budgetary information and presentation. The European Community and its member States, encouraged by the first two rounds of informal consultations held at their initiative, fully endorsed the comments of the Advisory Committee, which in paragraph 34 of its report requested the Secretary-General to deal with those issues on an urgent basis.

54. He noted that, compared to the proposals for high-level posts contained in document A/C.5/47/2 and Corr.1, the new provisions would entail a further reduction of three high-level posts. Although the European Community and its member States were in principle hesitant about commenting on such decisions by the Secretary-General, they felt it necessary in the current case to voice certain concerns regarding the Department of Administration and Management. In view of the important supervisory functions of that Department, its senior officials should have a degree of authority equivalent to that of their colleagues in other important areas of the Organization, and the European Community and its member States therefore supported the recommendation of the Advisory Committee that action on the Secretary-General's proposal regarding the high-level posts in that Department should be deferred until the forty-eighth session of the General Assembly. Regarding the possible introduction of a senior career level above D-2, the issue was complex and should be studied further, in particular by the International Civil Service Commission, as recommended by the Advisory Committee.

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(Mr. Haakonsen, Denmark)

55. Stressing that his comments on behalf of the European Community and its member States had been voiced in a constructive spirit, he commended the Secretary-General for his efforts and stressed that restructuring should be implemented within a clearly limited time-frame and in accordance with the principles set forth in resolution 46/232.

The meeting rose at 12.35 p.m.