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PROPOSED PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 1996-1997

Funding of regional institutes from the regional budget of the United Nations

Thirteenth report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions

1. The Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions has considered the report of the Secretary-General on the funding of regional institutes from the regular budget of the United Nations (A/C.5/50/33). The report has been submitted pursuant to the Advisory Committee's request in its report (A/49/7/Add.10) for the Secretary-General to propose criteria to determine if regional institutes should be funded from the regular budget of the United Nations and the subsequent decision of the General Assembly (49/480) that future requests for funding for regional institutes should be considered only on the basis of criteria proposed and approved by the Assembly to determine if such institutes should be funded from the regular budget of the United Nations.

2. As indicated in paragraph 2 of the Secretary-General's report, there are currently eight regional institutes/centres that receive resources from the regular budget of the United Nations.

3. The functions of these institutes/centres and the circumstance that led to their receiving funds from the regular budget are outlined in paragraphs 4 to 24 of the Secretary-General's report.

4. The Advisory Committee welcomes the comprehensive information provided in the Secretary-General's report. Although the common theme appears to be a decline in voluntary funding for the institutes over the years, the Advisory Committee notes that the circumstances are different in each case and that the General Assembly's approach in granting approval for funding has been on a case-by-case basis. Paragraph 25 of the Secretary-General's report summarizes this aspect.

5. The Advisory Committee points out that, whereas the first five institutes mentioned in the Secretary-General's report were established by either regional legislative bodies or by the Economic and Social Council, the three institutes relating to disarmament were established by resolutions of the General Assembly itself.

6. The Advisory Committee takes note of the Secretary-General's comments in paragraph 26 of his report that "a policy whereby regional institutes/centres should be funded from the regular budget has not been elaborated by the General Assembly and that the Secretary-General has not, on his own initiative, proposed the funding, either in whole or in part of regional institutes/centres from the regular budget". The report then states that "as a rule, activities to be funded from the regular budget should be undertaken by the Secretariat and not be entrusted to institutes and/or centres outside the Secretariat". In this connection, the Advisory Committee recalls recommendation 62 of the Group of High-level Intergovernmental Experts to Review the Efficiency of the Administrative and Financial Functioning of the United Nations 1/ concerning the practice of transferring extrabudgetary posts to the regular budget. The Advisory Committee points out that the report of the Secretary-General does not define what exactly constitutes "outside" the Secretariat.

7. Moreover, the Advisory Committee is aware that some of these entities have de facto become part and parcel of the secretariats of the regional commissions and are responsible for carrying out substantive programmes outlined in the medium-term plan of the Organization. Further, the Advisory Committee understands that those staff members in the institutes/centres who are funded from the regular budget of the United Nations are United Nations staff, subject to the Staff Regulations and Rules of the United Nations, with the exception that their employment is generally restricted to the particular institute or centre.

8. While the Secretary-General, in paragraph 26 of his report, has stated that, for those institutes/centres that currently receive funds from the regular budget, such funding should continue in 1996-1997, no other option or proposals for alternative funding have been made by him. In the opinion of the Advisory Committee, the report of the Secretary-General, while presenting comprehensive background information, does not directly respond to the request for specific criteria to determine if regional institutes should be funded from the regular budget. Under the circumstances, it will be for the General Assembly to decide if the establishment of criteria for general application should be pursued or if the question of regular budget support for regional institutes/centres should continue to be decided on a case-by-case basis, taking into account such special circumstances and considerations as may exist in each case.

Notes

1/ *Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-first Session, Supplement No. 49* (A/41/49).
