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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 53rd MEETING

Chairman: Mr. SENGWE (Zimbabwe)

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

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The meeting was called to order at 4.45 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 48: STRENGTHENING OF THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM (continued)

AGENDA ITEM 112: REVIEW OF THE EFFICIENCY OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE AND FINANCIAL FUNCTIONING OF THE UNITED NATIONS (continued) (A/INF/51/6 and Corr.1 and A/51/829)

AGENDA ITEM 116: PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 1996-1997 (continued)

Executive summary of the measures set forth in the letter dated 17 March 1997 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the General Assembly and letter dated 17 March 1997 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the General Assembly concerning the strengthening of the United Nations system

1. Mr. BISTA (Nepal) said that his delegation welcomed the Secretary-General's proposal of 17 March 1997 (A/INF/51/6) but would like the Executive Coordinator for United Nations Reform to clarify, with regard to the merging of the Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development, the Department for Economic and Social Information and Policy Analysis and the Department for Development Support and Management Services into one department, what was meant by the comment that later on the Secretary-General might submit changes to the mandates and priorities.

2. His delegation was particularly concerned to see that the measures referred to in the letter of 17 March 1997 made no reference to the assistance which the least developed countries so urgently needed. Such assistance was not mentioned in the context of social development, where the specialized agencies of the United Nations had given priority to poverty alleviation, nor in the context of coordination of the activities of the United Nations agencies.

3. Ms. ASHIPALA-MUSAVYI (Namibia) said that her country attached great importance to the activities of the funds and programmes of the United Nations at the country level since they complemented the development activities of the developing countries; she wondered whether the autonomy of those funds and programmes would remain intact following the reform, and what repercussions the reform would have on the funds and programmes at the various headquarters.

4. With regard to staffing, she said that the target of 50 per cent participation by women by the year 2000 must be adhered to. Decisions concerning personnel must be based on the need for achieving gender balance. In applying the principle of equitable geographical distribution it was important not to overlook the fact that women were insufficiently represented. It would be useful to know, in particular, how many women there were in the Secretariat, what posts they occupied and what regions they came from.

5. Mr. MOKTEFI (Algeria) wondered what would be the repercussions of combining the three departments responsible for economic and social development, particularly whether any posts would be eliminated, whether there would be a

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reduction in the total funds currently allocated to the three departments and how much would be allocated to the new department. He would also like to know what impact the merger would have on the Organization's general development policy. His delegation also wondered whether the establishment of the Management Reform Group, which was to replace the Efficiency Board, would involve the creation of new posts.

6. Mr. SOONG-CHULL SHIN (Republic of Korea) said that his delegation was pleased to hear that some of the managerial activities and decisions would be submitted to the General Assembly and that the mandate in the economic and social field would not be affected by the merger of the three departments. It welcomed the plan to turn the Organization into a more effective instrument for providing services to the international community and to strengthen its work in the economic and social fields. His delegation would like to know what differences there would be between the seemingly similar functions of the Policy Coordination Group, the Executive Coordinator for United Nations Reform and the Management Reform Group. If there was any overlap between their functions it might create problems in terms of rational allocation of already scarce resources and hamper the reform process. As the Secretary-General had rightly pointed out, reform was not an end in itself but a means of enhancing the efficiency of the United Nations system, and it should be achieved through the efforts and cooperation of Member States and by a more proficient and accountable staff. In that context he welcomed the Secretary-General's pledge to increase the expertise of the United Nations staff by upgrading their skills and introducing work-related incentives.

7. Mr. RI KWANG NAM (Democratic People's Republic of Korea), speaking on a point of order, asked the Chairman to refer to the Republic of Korea and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea by their proper names and not to refer to either simply as Korea, which was the name used for the peninsula in which both countries were situated.

8. Mr. STRONG (Executive Coordinator for United Nations Reform), replying to the questions raised by the representative of Nepal, said that the Secretary-General's proposals were not intended to affect mandates or other arrangements established by Governments through the General Assembly and that any changes that were proposed would be submitted to Member States in accordance with the usual procedure. As regards the least developed countries and poverty, he recalled that the Secretary-General had pointed out, in document A/51/829, that the new Secretariat arrangements should serve to bolster support for Africa's development, South-South cooperation and the sustainable development of small island developing States. Development was central to the United Nations mission. The reforms were intended to strengthen the Secretariat's capacity in those areas, and poverty alleviation and the development of the least developed countries were important priority issues.

9. As to whether the autonomy of funds and programmes would be affected by consolidation measures at the country level, he pointed out that it was always necessary to strike a balance between autonomy and coherence or consistency. Autonomy referred to the operational and implementation aspects. There was no absolute line between the authority delegated to officials, on the one hand, and

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the system - which was consistent with respect to the policies that guided its operations - on the other. Autonomy and consistency were constantly under review. The establishment of four sectoral groups and their executive committees at Headquarters would contribute to that review process.

10. He agreed that gender balance in staffing must be more than a principle and that it must be promoted.

11. Concerning the distinction, mentioned by the representative of the Republic of Korea, between the Policy Coordination Group, the sectoral groups and their Executive Committees and the Management Reform Group, he said that the Policy Coordination Group was a mechanism whereby the Secretary-General held consultations with senior officials on major issues. It was not in itself a decision-making body. The Executive Committees of the four sectoral groups could take decisions in areas where the activities of one group might affect the activities of the others. The intention was to enhance effectiveness and performance in the programmes for which the Committees were responsible. The Executive Committees had not been established to facilitate the reform process, they were a result of that process. While each of those mechanisms had different functions, they all contributed to achieving the goals of reform by expediting procedures, improving the deployment of resources and ensuring a better coordinated administrative and decision-making process.

12. The CHAIRMAN said that the concern raised by the representative of Namibia related to gender balance in the context of equitable geographical representation.

13. Mr. CONNOR (Under-Secretary-General for Administration and Management) said that the Department regularly prepared tables giving a breakdown of the staff of each department by sex, but without indicating countries of origin.

14. Turning to the question by the representative of Algeria on the merger of the three economic and social departments, he said that the Secretary-General had just appointed the person who was to head the new department, and who would draw up a plan for it. The reform measures could be expected to have an impact on resources, although it was too early to say how great that impact would be. It would not, however, affect programme outputs. It was fortunate that the reform process had been preceded by efforts to achieve consistency with the medium-term plan, thereby ensuring transparency.

15. The Efficiency Board had been disbanded and its outputs and working groups had been absorbed by the Management Reform Group. It was too early to say whether the creation of the Management Reform Group would have programme budget implications, but if it did they would be minimal.

16. He apologized to Egypt and its Ambassador for the omission of Egypt from the list of countries whose contributions had been paid in full.

17. Mr. ZHANG Wanhai (China) requested clarification on two points. First of all, according to the Secretary-General, the reform would be implemented on the basis of a two-track process, the first track relating to measures falling

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within his authority and the second track involving measures subject to consultations with or decisions by the Member States. He wished to know when the reform agenda, particularly the first track, would be implemented. Secondly, he wished to know whether the reforms proposed by the Secretary-General would require an adjustment of the medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001.

18. Mr. LATIF (Egypt) asked how the Secretary-General's reform agenda would be coordinated with the work of the two working groups of the General Assembly on that issue, namely, the Working Group on an Agenda for Development and the Working Group on the Strengthening of the United Nations System. Secondly, what were the exact goal and guiding principles of the reform agenda? Third, would the merger of the three economic and social departments into a single department be limited to the creation of a high-level post for the person who was to head the new department, or would other integration measures be taken? Fourth, as a developing country, Egypt was concerned that the proposal for all United Nations Funds and Programmes conducting development activities in a particular country to join together in a common United Nations Development Assistance Framework might lead to their merger into a single organ or agency. Fifth, what specific proposals did the Secretary-General have for reforming the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and would those proposals be presented before or after the fifth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development or before or after the special session on Agenda 21 to be held in June? Lastly, he wished to know what proportion of the resources saved through the reform process would go to development activities and exactly how they would be distributed.

19. Ms. ACHOURI (Tunisia) requested clarification as to which measures under the two-track reform process would be within the authority of the Secretary-General, and which would require a decision of the Member States. Secondly, she wished to know whether the Secretary-General had abandoned the idea of creating a post of Deputy Secretary-General, since there was no mention of it in his letter to the President of the General Assembly (A/51/829) and, if not, what level and functions would be assigned to the post and what the occupant's relationship would be with Member States, Under-Secretaries-General and Assistant Secretaries-General. Third, what savings would be achieved by merging the three economic and social departments and to what extent would they contribute to Africa's development, South-South cooperation and the sustainable development of small island developing States? Fourth, she wondered whether the function to be performed by the new Office for Communications and Media Services in providing information to non-governmental organizations (NGOs) might duplicate the functions already performed by the NGO Liaison Service and whether it might not be more appropriate to incorporate that Service into the new Office and to use the resources thus released to support the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations in its new function of overseeing the evolution of civil society. Fifth, she wished to know what legal status the Code of Conduct which was currently being drafted would have: would it constitute a binding document or simply guidelines, would it entail disciplinary measures, and would it apply to all United Nations staff, including gratis personnel? Lastly, she wished to know what the Secretary-General would do to ensure that the proposed reform did not affect the implementation of activities and programmes already approved by the General Assembly.

20. Ms. LETROT (France) asked whether there would be any liaison between the new, unified economic and social department and the Economic and Social Council. Secondly, she wished to know what precise authority the new Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services would have: would it be responsible solely for organizational matters or would it also be able to draw up the agendas of meetings in certain spheres? Third, in connection with the special session on Agenda 21 to be held in June, she wished to know how Secretariat services, particularly those in the environment and sustainable development areas, would be organized and how the issue of special expertise in the water and energy areas would be approached. Lastly, what criteria would guide future appointments to the post of Resident Coordinator of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)?

21. Mr. YUSSUF (United Republic of Tanzania), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, asked how the Secretary-General was going to fulfil his commitment to abide by the provisions of General Assembly resolutions, particularly resolution 50/214 of 23 December 1995, when the revised estimates for 1997 and the proposed programme budget for the period 1998-2001 provided for fewer resources than in past years. With regard to staff reductions, it was essential to comply with paragraph 11 of General Assembly resolution 221 B of 18 December 1996, in which the Assembly noted the assurances of the Secretary-General that he would not take any decision on the involuntary separation of staff members. It was not clear how the Secretary-General was going to allocate the savings achieved through the reform agenda to development activities, when the authority to redistribute resources and transfer funds within the budget rested solely with the Member States. With regard to the merger of the three economic and social departments, one might assume that the corresponding budget programmes would also be merged and that the resources allocated to development activities would thus be reduced to a third of their current level. Accordingly, he wished to know precisely what impact the reform process would have on the structure of those programmes and on the provisions of General Assembly resolutions governing the resources allocated to the three departments. Lastly, he requested the Secretary-General to provide a breakdown of documentation costs for 1994, 1995 and 1996 and to reduce the documentation not only of the General Assembly but also of the Security Council and other organs.

22. Ms. GOICOCHEA (Cuba), referring to the Secretary-General's decision to establish machinery to replace the current Efficiency Board, asked for clarification of the Board's current status. In addition, in view of the fact that the establishment of the new machinery would have budgetary implications, she wished to know whether the Secretariat intended to follow the normal procedure for the authorization of bodies when there were programme budget implications.

23. With regard to the Secretary-General's decision to establish a trust fund to support the reform process, she wished to know which specific programmes or mandates would be financed from that source.

24. She asked whether the proposals for substantive reform put forward by the Secretariat, such as those concerning the Department of Administration and Management, the merging of the three departments dealing with economic and

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social issues and the establishment of a Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services, would be included in the budget proposals for 1998-1999 or whether they would be considered in the form of revised estimates.

25. She asked whether the proposed administrative decentralization would involve the transfer of functions from the Department of Administration and Management to other departments and, if so, whether there were plans to increase the budget resources of the other departments. In that connection, she also wished to know whether, with regard to the transfer of resources to development-related programmes, the Secretariat would include under that heading the resources released as a result of the transfer of functions to which she had referred. Furthermore, if those resources were to be included, account would have to be taken of the fact that paragraph 21 of General Assembly resolution 51/221 provided that no changes could be introduced in the budget methodology, budgetary procedures and practices or the financial regulations without prior review and approval by the General Assembly. What was proposed would entail precisely the kind of changes envisaged in that paragraph and her delegation therefore wished to know how the Secretariat would comply with the resolution. In addition, it wished to know what specific impact the transfer of resources to development would have, given the fact that the United Nations was not an executing agency for development activities.

26. With respect to the merger of the three departments, she pointed out that the General Assembly had outlined the guiding principles for structural reform in the Secretariat in its resolution 46/232, of 2 March 1992, and she asked how those principles had been followed in the current proposal for a merger.

27. She wished to know what the situation of the secretariats of the other Main Committees of the General Assembly would be under the planned reform and how the secretariats of the Special Committee on Decolonization, the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and the Disarmament Commission, as well as support services other than conference services, would be affected.

28. Explanations should be provided as to how under the Secretary-General's proposal to decentralize such activities as translation, printing and publications, account was taken of the provisions of resolution 50/230, which stipulated that the economy measures must not adversely affect the recruitment of staff on as wide a geographical basis possible, which also applied to temporary staff of Conference Services.

29. She asked how the proposed reorientation of public information fit in with the concept of the United Nations, which was primarily to serve Member States. She asked whether proposals would be submitted to the Committee on Information at its next session so that it could provide its views thereon.

30. On the subject of United Nations activities at the country level, she asked how the Secretary-General intended to respect the wishes of Governments with regard to the establishment of local offices.

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31. As far as the proposed reduction of documentation was concerned, her delegation believed that a decision by the General Assembly was required, since the matter was related to the items on the pattern of conferences and the programme budget. She wished to know whether the proposals were already being applied and what role the Committee on Conferences and the Publications Board would have to play.

32. In resolution 51/220, the General Assembly had taken a decision on the level of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1997-1998 and had not accepted the Secretary-General's proposal, which had included a reduction of 1,000 posts, equivalent to \$204.7 million, as part of the efficiency measures. She wished to know whether the budget proposals which the Secretariat would submit would be guided by the amount approved by the General Assembly in that resolution.

33. As to the negative nominal growth envisaged for the biennium, she asked whether the effects of inflation and variations in exchange rates would have to be absorbed and, if so, what role would be played by the intergovernmental mechanism envisaged in resolution 41/213.

34. Mr. CONNOR (Under-Secretary-General for Administration and Management) said that the Secretary-General had set in motion a series of studies which were expected to be completed by July. The conclusions of those studies would be presented in future documents, such as the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1998-1999. The Secretary-General had emphasized his commitment to ensuring the delivery of all the programme outputs provided for in the medium-term plan. The reform would affect how those outputs were achieved, but not whether they would be delivered.

35. The Secretary-General had made no mention in the documents he had submitted of the possibility of establishing a post of Deputy Secretary-General, but that did not mean that he had ruled out the idea.

36. There was not always a clear delineation between those measures which were within the purview of the Secretary-General and those which were not, and opinions on that question might very well differ. In the area of management reform, the Secretary-General had the authority to take decisions on streamlining the Organization's administrative procedures, which were one of the main reasons why overheads accounted for 38 per cent of the budget.

37. The proposed programme budget for 1998-1999 would respect the decisions of the General Assembly, since it would include requirements very close to the figures approved by the General Assembly in December 1996 for the budget outline. At that time, the Assembly had increased the real resources requested by the Secretary-General by \$153 million, of which \$70 million represented a redistribution of resources for special political missions and other activities.

38. There had been no involuntary separations of staff members, nor were any anticipated. The Office of Human Resources Management was endeavouring to find posts for the 14 staff members and was confident that it would succeed in finding them shortly.

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39. Such additional resources as might be required would be included in the budget proposal to be submitted later in 1997. There would probably be changes in comparison with the budget outline, and the General Assembly would have to deal directly with the matter. The Secretary-General was fully aware that the changes in structures and staffing tables required the approval of Member States.

40. The measures to reduce documentation were not selective. The aim was to ensure that documents were more focused and action-oriented. Computer technology represented an important tool which should be used to the fullest extent possible. There were already thousands of hits each month on the United Nations Internet pages. By 1 July all missions of Member States would have the necessary equipment to access United Nations documents electronically.

41. The Efficiency Board had been disbanded. The resources of the trust fund for the Board had proved to be sufficient; there was a surplus and a decision would be taken shortly on how it would be used.

42. Replying to the question as to whether the redistribution of some of the functions of the Department of Administration and Management to other departments would be accompanied by a transfer of resources, he said that the Secretary-General had issued clear instructions that that process should lead to a reduction of total resources in absolute terms.

43. The fate of the secretariats of the various committees and bodies was being studied by the senior official of the new consolidated department in the economic and social spheres, and by the heads of the Department of Administration and Management and the Department of Political Affairs, as part of the comprehensive package of reform proposals to be submitted to the General Assembly in July.

44. There would be no changes to the various conference-servicing units. The Integrated Management Information System (IMIS) would be fully operational by the end of 1997 and it would be necessary to make provision in the budget for the expenses of maintaining IMIS, which had already been approved by the Advisory Committee. That was another area that would be a responsibility of the current Assistant Secretary-General for Conference and Support Services.

45. In accordance with General Assembly resolution 51/220, the Assembly would be informed of the number of posts for the biennium 1998-1999.

46. It had not been assumed that the effects of inflation and exchange rate fluctuations would be absorbed in the budget. Instead, with the real resources approved by the General Assembly and with the rates of inflation and exchange that were anticipated, the programme budget was projected to show a negative nominal increase, in addition to a \$123 million reduction in real terms.

47. Mr. STRONG (Executive Coordinator for United Nations Reform) said that the Secretary-General had clearly stated his intention to undertake extensive consultations with Member States on the reform process through existing intergovernmental mechanisms, even with respect to matters over which he

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exercised the authority conferred on him by the Charter. Consultations had already been held with various working groups established by the General Assembly.

48. The objective of the reform mechanism created by the Secretary-General, namely, the Policy Coordination Group, the Executive Committees for the four sectoral areas and the Office of the Executive Coordinator for United Nations Reform, was to strengthen links between the various units of the Organization in order to enhance efficiency and coordination, not to create new structures. The Office of the Executive Coordinator was the only new office and its personnel without exception consisted of staff who had been reassigned from other offices.

49. Upon assuming office, the Secretary-General had already outlined the objectives and principles of the reform process and he would spell them out in greater detail in the more comprehensive report to be submitted in July.

50. It was possible that, in addition to the merging of the three Departments in the economic and social fields, further consolidations would be proposed. If so, the proposals would be included in the above-mentioned report.

51. The search for a common United Nations Development Assistance Framework was not the same as the earlier proposal to combine Funds and Programmes. On the contrary, it assumed that the Funds and Programmes would continue to exist, but within the framework of the four sectoral areas, thereby improving coordination between Headquarters and country-level activities.

52. The Secretary-General had not approved any concrete proposal concerning the United Nations Environment Programme. He recognized the importance of that issue, particularly in the light of the General Assembly's special session for the purpose of an overall review and appraisal of the implementation of Agenda 21, and had requested the Executive Coordinator for United Nations Reform to be available for facilitating consultations between Member States.

53. The savings achieved through reform measures would be redistributed in a manner consistent with the prerogatives of the General Assembly. Such savings would be a consequence and not an objective of the reform process, whose principal objective was to better define and enhance the effectiveness of the Organization's activities.

54. The role of the Department of Public Information and its NGO Section as well as relations with civil society were important matters which would be fully taken into account in the reorientation of the Organization.

55. As for specialized knowledge in the field of water and energy resources, the elimination of the duplication that existed in the three Departments which had been merged would serve to improve the Organization's capacity in that area.

56. With regard to the impact of reform on existing mandates, it should be emphasized that the objective of the process was to increase the Secretariat's capacity to provide backstopping for those mandates within current budgetary constraints.

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57. Mr. STOBY (Deputy Executive Coordinator for United Nations Reform) said, with reference to documentation, that quality should be the prime concern and that the Secretary-General was endeavouring to ensure that documents prepared by the Secretariat were more concise and action-oriented. However, quantity could have an impact on quality. The 25 per cent reduction in documentation would not be applied selectively to some bodies, but across the board. Efforts would be made to reduce to 16 the maximum number of pages of Secretariat documents and, in the case of documents of intergovernmental bodies, in which the number of pages was determined by Governments, the Secretariat would consult with the bodies concerned to secure their cooperation.

58. The composition of the new Department in the economic and social fields and the technical support services which it would provide would be determined by the senior official responsible for the Department.

59. The First, Second and Fourth Main Committees and the Plenary of the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and its subsidiary organs and intergovernmental bodies were included in the new consolidation and the new Department would provide services to them. With regard to certain intergovernmental bodies concerned with political matters, such as the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and the Committee of 24, among others, a careful review would be carried out of each case, but the Secretary-General envisaged that the new Department would provide technical services to those bodies.

60. The CHAIRMAN suggested that an organizational chart of the new structure should be prepared.

61. Mr. HANSON (Canada) welcomed the merger of the three Departments in the economic and social fields and the announcement that resources would be transferred from administration to programmes. Development objectives were achieved mainly through the implementation of programmes, projects and activities in the field in the developing countries and not through the establishment of bureaucratic structures in such places as New York. He wondered whether it was proposed to make every effort possible to ensure that activities in the field derived maximum benefit from the reallocation of the resources made available by the adoption of efficiency measures.

62. Mr. SULAIMAN (Syrian Arab Republic) asked what would be the role of gratis personnel in the reform process and what would their future be. With regard to the decentralization of translation services, it would be helpful to know how it would be done in practice. Concerning the impact of the merging of the three Departments on the development of the less developed countries, he wished to know how the Secretary-General would ensure the continuity of the role of the United Nations, in circumstances in which there was talk of the abolition of posts. He also wished to know whether the effect of the reduction of documentation would be the same for all official languages. With regard to the United Nations Code of Conduct, the opinions of staff should be reflected in the Code.

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63. There had been a sense of frustration in the Secretariat when the Secretary-General had referred to the proposed reduction of 1,000 posts in the 1998-1999 budget. It was surprising to hear that the reduction was within the Secretary-General's prerogative when it should be the subject of a vote by the General Assembly.

64. Mr. STEIN (Germany) asked whether any change could be expected in the existing human rights institutions, in view of the Secretary-General's statement that human rights-related issues would be of concern to the four principal sectoral areas of the Organization's work, namely, Peace and Security, Economic and Social Affairs, Development Operations and Humanitarian Affairs, and, if so, then what form would the changes take. With regard to the merging of the three Departments in the economic and social field, he wished to know which functions of the Department for Development Support and Management Services were to be reallocated. The Secretary-General had indicated that 38 per cent of the Organization's regular budget was devoted to administration and other non-programme costs and that efforts were being made to reduce those resources by at least a third by the year 2001 and to make them available for development activities. Even though the German delegation was not opposed to that measure, it would welcome clarification of how it would be implemented and, in particular, a breakdown in writing of the costs that accounted for 38 per cent of the budget so that it could be compared with the current structure and figures of the budget.

65. Ms. GOICOCHEA (Cuba) said that she had not received answers to all her questions. She wished to know, first of all, what programme budget implications transferring some of the functions currently carried out by the Department of Administration and Management to other departments would have; secondly, what specific administrative spheres would be transferred to programmes; thirdly the total volume of resources to be reduced; fourthly, the volume of current resources of the Department of Administration and Management to be transferred to other departments; and, fifthly, whether the Secretary-General's proposal would involve any modification of the provisions of paragraph 1 of General Assembly resolution 51/221 B and, if so, what changes would be made.

66. She also sought clarification as to whether there would be a budget proposal or whether a full budget would be prepared that would subsequently be revised, and whether the budget estimates to be submitted to the Advisory Committee in May and to the Committee for Programme and Coordination (CPC) later on would reflect all the proposed changes. If that was not the case, she wished to know when they would be reflected and how ACABQ and CPC would revise them. With regard to inter-agency services, she wished to know what would happen in the case of the services provided to the Security Council and to the Fifth and Sixth Committees of the General Assembly. Also, bearing in mind the provisions of General Assembly resolution 50/232, she sought further information regarding the recruitment of temporary staff for Conference Services. Lastly, she requested that the answers to the questions she had just raised should be circulated in a conference room paper.

67. Mr. SIAL (Pakistan) said that during the session delegations had been informed that staff costs accounted for 75 per cent of United Nations expenses,

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whereas in the Secretary-General's proposal it was estimated that up to 38 per cent of the resources of the regular budget were devoted to administrative and other non-programme costs. He wished to know how the figures of 75 per cent and 38 per cent had been obtained.

68. With regard to the Code of Conduct, his delegation believed that the question of accountability was extremely important and requested that the views of the Advisory Committee on that subject, set out in paragraph 29 of its report of 22 October 1996 (A/51/533), should be borne in mind when preparing the code.

69. Mr. STRONG (Executive Coordinator for United Nations Reform) said he wished to address the observation that reform of Headquarters should take into account the fact that development objectives were an integral part of projects and programmes in the field. He wanted to assure Member States that the process of rationalizing Headquarters was intended both to free additional resources for individual projects and programmes and to ensure that those projects and programmes received from Headquarters the skills, services and support they needed.

70. As to how the Secretary-General would guarantee improved performance in the area of development, he stated that the best guarantee was the promise the Secretary-General had himself given to Member States in that regard. The Secretary-General considered reform to be not only a process of reducing expenditures but also, and most importantly, a process that would enhance the Secretariat's capacity to carry out the mandates entrusted to it by Member States.

71. As to the effect the reduction of documentation in the different official languages would have, he wished to assure the Committee that such a reduction would be carried out in an equitable manner without prejudice to any individual official language.

72. In the field of human rights, a series of reforms had already been given careful consideration, and some specific reforms had even been implemented. For the time being, the Secretary-General did not intend to go any further. Any new proposals would be submitted once the second phase of the reform process had begun.

73. Lastly, with regard to the question of which functions of the three Departments that were to be consolidated would be transferred to other Departments, he said that, for example, the provision of secretariat services to the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council had already been transferred to the new Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services and that the possibility of transferring other functions to other Departments would be considered carefully.

74. Mr. CONNOR (Under-Secretary-General for Administration and Management) said that the Secretary-General would consult with Member States regarding the redistribution of resources to give activities in the field maximum impact.

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75. The General Assembly had before it the report submitted by the Secretary-General on gratis personnel, and the Secretariat expected the Assembly to provide it with guidance in the matter.

76. With regard to translation, a significant volume of work was being done in a decentralized manner, and experiments in remote interpreting were being conducted.

77. As to how mandates were to be carried out when the elimination of 1,000 posts had been proposed, he wished to point out that those posts were currently unoccupied, and many of them had been vacant for 9 or 10 months.

78. The Code of Conduct had been prepared largely by the Office of Legal Affairs with contributions from the major programme directors. It had been considered in a number of forums and had been the subject of many consultations, particularly with regard to the need to submit financial statements, a question that had not been addressed before in that context. The Code of Conduct must be adopted by the General Assembly.

79. The abolition of posts was a prerogative of the General Assembly.

80. The restructuring of the human rights sector had been going on for nearly a year and a half and was nearly completed. He would shortly submit a final report on the matter, and the staffing table would be determined within the framework of preparations for the programme budget for the biennium.

81. It had been determined that administrative costs accounted for 38 per cent of the budget on the basis of a detailed analysis and not simply by adding up the sections of the budget. The full report on the reform process would contain a breakdown of that percentage, which bore no direct relation to staff costs, the latter being present in both programme and administrative activities.

82. The programme budget implications of decentralization, the share of administrative resources to be transferred to programmes and the functions of the Department of Administration and Management that would be assigned to other departments were currently under review in the context of measures to reduce administrative costs. It should be recalled that the Secretary-General had set the year 2001 as the deadline for implementation of those measures.

83. In April a budget proposal would be submitted to the Advisory Committee, to be followed by revised estimates. No change in the level of services provided to the Fifth and Sixth Committees of the General Assembly was anticipated.

84. The CHAIRMAN said that the way in which the figure of 38 per cent had been reached was highly subjective.

85. Mr. CONNOR (Under-Secretary-General for Administration and Management) said that a conservative criterion had been used and that a figure of 41 per cent or even 50 per cent could have been reached; however, he considered 38 per cent to be a good approximation. For many years the budget of the Department of

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Administration and Management had been fixed at 42 per cent of the total, and that figure had never been questioned.

AGENDA ITEM 165: FINANCING OF THE MILITARY OBSERVER GROUP OF THE UNITED NATIONS MISSION FOR THE VERIFICATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND OF COMPLIANCE WITH THE COMMITMENTS OF THE COMPREHENSIVE AGREEMENT ON HUMAN RIGHTS IN GUATEMALA (continued) (A/51/815 and A/51/826)

86. Mr. HOSANG (Director of the Peacekeeping Financing Division), introducing the report of the Secretary-General on the financing of the Military Observer Group of the United Nations Mission for the Verification of Human Rights and of Compliance with the Commitments of the Comprehensive Agreement on Human Rights in Guatemala (MINUGUA) for the period from 15 February to 31 May 1997 (A/51/815), said that following the issuance of the report, the Advisory Committee had been provided with revised estimates of \$4,414,900 gross, a reduction of \$155,900 gross with respect to the estimates contained in the report. The revised estimates provided for 142 military observers and 30 civilian staff, i.e., 13 observers and 6 civilians fewer than the staffing level authorized by the Security Council, owing to a reduction in the number of team sites from eight to six.

87. The actions to be taken by the General Assembly were the establishment of a special account for the Military Observer Group of MINUGUA and the appropriation and assessment of the amount required for the period from 15 February to 31 May 1997, inclusive of the amount of \$3 million already approved by the Advisory Committee.

88. The Advisory Committee recommended that the General Assembly should approve the appropriation and assessment of the amount of \$4 million gross for the period from 15 February to 31 May 1997 and the establishment of a special account for the Military Observer Group.

89. Mr. BOYNTON (United States of America), referring to the mission subsistence allowance, asked whether the 120 observers would be housed in accommodation provided by the United Nations while working 10 days outside the team sites and, if so, why they were to receive \$82 per day instead of \$36. He also wished to know why they were to receive \$107 per day for the first 10 days at the sites, where accommodation would be provided by the United Nations, and why 68 civilian pattern vehicles were being provided for 30 civilian staff. He also wondered what the financial impact would be of the one-month delay in the deployment of the observers and whether it had been reflected in the financial estimates. Furthermore, while the number of team sites had been reduced from eight to six, the number of locally recruited civilian staff had not been reduced proportionally, from 24 to 18, but merely from 24 to 20. It was also unclear why the initial estimates for water, electricity, and so on, had tripled.

90. Ms. CASTELLANOS (Guatemala) expressed appreciation to the international community for its continued support of the Guatemalan peace process, as reflected in the General Assembly and Security Council resolutions on MINUGUA.

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91. On 3 March, the deployment of additional MINUGUA personnel for the verification of the ceasefire agreement had taken place; that was a positive development which demonstrated the will of the Government of Guatemala and the Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca to bring about the establishment of a firm and lasting peace in the country and thus contribute to the establishment of regional peace and security.

92. Mr. HOSANG (Director of the Peacekeeping Financing Division) said that he doubted whether he could reply immediately to all of the questions raised by the United States representative, but that replies would be forthcoming later, either in writing or at an informal meeting.

93. The vehicles were for the use of the observers and the civilian staff. The reduction in activities did not necessarily mean a parallel reduction in civilian staff, whose number was determined by operational needs. One of the reasons for the reduction recommended by the Advisory Committee was the anticipated delay in filling all the posts. With regard to the cost of electricity and water, it should be noted that the generators had to be kept running 24 hours a day. As to the mission allowances, they would be reduced where accommodation was provided by the United Nations. In the case of the observers, it was his understanding that they would not use accommodation provided by the United Nations outside the headquarters area.

AGENDA ITEM 119: SCALE OF ASSESSMENTS FOR THE APPORTIONMENT OF THE EXPENSES OF THE UNITED NATIONS (continued)

Draft resolution A/C.5/51/L.46

94. Mr. BOYNTON (United States of America) introduced draft resolution A/C.5/51/L.46 on the scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations.

95. He welcomed the methodology proposed by the European Union and other countries, which had led to improved transparency and flexibility. Nevertheless, it had not gone far enough in reducing the dependency on a single contributor. Thus, in the draft proposal, the European Union proposal had been modified by the establishment of a maximum rate of 20 per cent.

96. Like the European Union, his country proposed the use of gross national product with a statistical base period of three years and annual adjustments, and a relief gradient of 75 per cent for countries whose per capita incomes fell below the world average. Nevertheless, permanent members of the Security Council would not be eligible for relief; given the special role and authority that they enjoyed, a significant level of assessment for them was justified.

97. He hoped that all Member States would study the proposal carefully, although he did not rule out consideration of other proposals that could achieve the same objectives with regard to maximum rates and more equitable burden-sharing. His delegation was participating actively in the informal consultations on the item, and its proposal was not intended to affect the progress of those consultations. The scale of assessments reflected an

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agreement among Member States on how to share the costs of the Organization; any decision having such an important financial impact should only be adopted by consensus.

98. Mr. HANSON (Canada) took note with interest of draft resolution A/C.5/51/L.46 and of the assurances given by the United States representative that it would not affect the search for consensus in informal consultations. The second preambular paragraph mentioned a document that had not yet been issued; a resolution of that nature could not be adopted without examining the document in question. His delegation was firmly opposed to any maximum rate of under 25 per cent, as well as to the notion of establishing a maximum rate, and was also opposed to the establishment of a minimum rate.

99. Mr. ACAKPO-SATCHIVI (Secretary of the Committee), drawing attention to an error in the French version of the draft resolution, said that paragraph 1 (f) should read "75 per cent" instead of "85 per cent".

100. Mr. MENKVELD (Netherlands), speaking on behalf of the European Union, recalled that the Committee functioned on the basis of consensus, and that draft decisions or draft resolutions should be introduced by the Chairman or by the coordinators of informal consultations. The basis for the informal consultations on the scale of assessments was the summary prepared by the coordinator of the consultations, which contained the proposals of various Member States, including the United States. The delegations of the States members of the European Union would continue to collaborate with the coordinator of the consultations with a view to the submission in a few days' time of a new draft resolution on the scale of assessments.

101. Mr. TOYA (Japan) endorsed the Netherlands statement.

102. Mr. YUSSUF (United Republic of Tanzania), speaking on behalf of the States members of the Group of 77 and China, said that those States would study the draft resolution presented by the United States and would voice their opinions in due course.

103. Mr. ZHANG Wanhai (China) said that he was opposed to the formulation of paragraph 1 (c) and (g) of the draft resolution and that most Member States were also opposed to it.

104. Ms. PEÑA (Mexico) said that, while it was true that the Committee operated on the basis of consensus, States were entitled to present draft resolutions if they so deemed it appropriate. Her delegation would study the United States proposal and would participate in the informal consultations aimed at producing, preferably by consensus, a draft resolution on the scale of assessments.

105. Mr. ACAKPO-SATCHIVI (Secretary of the Committee) said that a correction should be made in paragraph 1 (g) of the French version of the draft resolution. Instead of "Les membres du Conseil de Sécurité", it should read "Les membres permanents du Conseil de Sécurité".

The meeting rose at 7.25 p.m.