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Agenda item 100

PROPOSED PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 1982-1983

Establishment of an Information Systems Unit in the Department
of International Economic and Social Affairs

Report of the Secretary-General

SUMMARY

This document has been prepared in accordance with General Assembly resolution 35/217, section XIII, in order to report on the activities of the Information Systems Unit, in the Department of International Economic and Social Affairs, in creating and maintaining the Development Information System, and to provide information on the progress of the System so that the General Assembly may decide at its thirty-sixth session on the possible continuance and methods of financing of the System.

The Development Information System is a computerized information system which provides access to the unpublished reports and studies produced by or for the Department of International Economic and Social Affairs, the Department of Technical Co-operation for Development, and the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements. During 1981 there has been considerable demand for the services offered by the Unit in the form of on-line searches, provision of copies of documents cited in the system, and the issuing on a regular basis of Development Information Abstracts.

This document gives a brief summary of the background of the Unit and its Development Information System, outlines the activities of the Unit in 1981, describes its role in a network of similar information systems, and outlines the activities that could be undertaken in 1982-1983, should the General Assembly decide on the continuation of the System. The report presents the estimated expenditures of the Unit during 1980-1981 and cost estimates for 1982-1983. It also includes an analysis of the use made of the services provided by the Unit in 1981, indicating the level of demand on the part of its users for information for development which is not otherwise easily accessible.

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ACABQ	Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions
AGRIS	International Information System for Agricultural Sciences and Technology (FAO)
CEPAL	Comision Económica para América Latina (Economic Commission for Latin America, Santiago)
CHS	United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Nairobi)
CPC	Committee for Programme and Co-ordination
DEVSIS	Development Sciences Information System
DIS	Development Information System (United Nations/IESA)
ECA	Economic Commission for Africa (Addis Ababa)
ESCAP	Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (Bangkok)
ICC	International Computing Centre (Geneva)
IDRC	International Development Research Centre (Ottawa)
IESA	Department of International Economic and Social Affairs (United Nations)
ILO	International Labour Organisation (Geneva)
IOB	Inter-Organization Board for Information Systems (Geneva)
ISU	Information Systems Unit (IESA)
JIU	Joint Inspection Unit
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (Paris)
PADIS	Pan African Documentation and Information System (ECA)
POPIN	Population Information Network (United Nations)
TCD	Department of Technical Co-operation for Development (United Nations)
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme (New York)
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (Paris)
UNFPA	United Nations Fund for Population Activities (New York)
UNBIS	United Nations Bibliographic Information System (United Nations)

INTRODUCTION

1.   The United Nations, in pursuit of its economic and social development
programmes, generates a wealth of substantive information in the form of
unpublished reports, studies and papers. Examples of such documents include
mission reports written in the course of project execution which contain
information not necessarily included in the final report of the project and seminar
or workshop papers.

2.   By its very nature, this material is not easily accessible to those who need
it. The Information Systems Unit (ISU) was therefore established in the Department
of International Economic and Social Affairs in recognition of the need to promote
awareness of the existence of this type of information and to facilitate access to
it.

3.   ISU established a computerized information system to store, retrieve and
disseminate the information. This system, the Development Information System (DIS)
uses a small in-house minicomputer and MINISIS, a software package provided free of
charge to the United Nations by its developer, the International Development
Research Centre (IDRC), Ottawa, Canada.

4.   The primary aim of DIS is to capitalize on United Nations expenditures on
research and technical co-operation projects by facilitating access to the vast
store of information about activities already carried out, so that ongoing and
newly instituted work may build on past experience, providing an accumulation
rather than a repetition of effort.

I. BACKGROUND

5.   The establishment of the Information Systems Unit was first proposed by the
Secretary-General before the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination (CPC) at its
sixteenth session in 1976, following the presentation to the Directors of the
Department of Economic and Social Affairs of a feasibility study pointing out the
wealth of unpublished material available in the department and the benefits to be
gained from providing access to this material.

6.   Following the presentation to the General Assembly at its thirty-second
session of information on the planned operation of the Unit 1/ the General
Assembly, in its resolution 32/212, section V, authorized the establishment of the
Unit on a trial basis and requested the Secretary-General to report to the General
Assembly at its thirty-third session on the progress achieved so that the Assembly
might decide whether computerization might be undertaken. The Unit was to be
funded from extra-budgetary resources during 1978-1979.

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1/   A/C.5/31/69 and A/C.5/32/47.

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7.   The report of the Secretary-General 2/ was considered by the General Assembly at its thirty-third session. Resolution 33/116 A, section II, authorized the use of computerization in carrying out the work of the Unit in 1979 and requested the Secretary-General to submit to the Assembly at its thirty-fourth session a report on the two-year operation of the Unit, taking into account the conclusions and recommendations of CPC, the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU), and the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ).

8.   At its thirty-fourth session, the General Assembly considered the reports of the Secretary-General, 3/ of ACABQ 4/ and of JIU, 5/ and decided in its resolution 34/233, section I, that, subject to the availability of additional voluntary funds, the pilot operation of the Development Information System of the Information Systems Unit be extended for a further year. In that resolution it also requested that the use made of the system be monitored and that the system be submitted to the Inter-Organization Board for Information Systems (IOB) for review and comment.

9.   As noted in paragraph 7 of the Secretary-General's report on the establishment of the Information Systems Unit 6/ it was not possible for IOB to carry out a review of DIS in 1980. The Secretary-General therefore requested UNESCO to provide the General Assembly with an independent evaluation of DIS.

10.   At its thirty-fifth session the General Assembly considered the reports of the Secretary-General 6/, of the UNESCO evaluator, and of ACABQ 7/ on the establishment of ISU in the Department of International Economic and Social Affairs and decided, in its resolution 35/217, section XIII, that the salaries and common staff costs of the basic staffing complement of the Development Information System of the Information Systems Unit, consisting of two Professional posts (one P-4 and one P-2) and two General Service posts (one G-5 and one G-3), be funded temporarily by the regular budget for 1981; that other operating and servicing costs be financed through extrabudgetary funds; that the the System be submitted to continued external evaluation; and that a report thereon be circulated to delegations in a timely manner so that the Assembly may pronounce itself on the possible continuance and methods of financing of ISU at its thirty-sixth session.

11.   IOB agreed to carry out a further evaluation study of DIS in 1981 and its report has been submitted to the General Assembly.

2/   A/C.5/33/4.

3/   A/C.5/34/5.

4/   A/34/7/Add.2.

5/   JIU/REP/79/12.

6/   A/C.5/35/32 and Corr.1.

7/   A/35/7/Add.9.

II. DESCRIPTION OF THE INFORMATION SYSTEMS UNIT AND THE DEVELOPMENT INFORMATION SYSTEM

12. The steps taken in the establishment of ISU and the design of DIS have been fully described in paragraphs 12 to 29 of document A/C.5/35/32. What follows is a description of the Unit and the system as currently operational.

13. ISU has a staff of four - two Professionals and two General Service. The work of the Unit consists of maintaining the computerized Development Information System and providing services to the users of the system. In brief, these activities include:

    (a) Collection and selection of documents suitable for the system;

    (b) Processing the material and entering the bibliographic records via on-line terminal into the computer;

    (c) Preparing and distributing six issues per year of Development Information Abstracts, a current awareness tool designed to inform users of the latest items added to the DIS data base;

    (d) Providing on-line searches on request;

    (e) Providing copies of documents to users on request.

14. Documentation selection is based upon the following criteria:

    (a) Material should be unpublished so that the activities of ISU will complement those of the Dag Hammarskjöld Library, which collects and disseminates published material;

    (b) Material should contain information potentially useful to United Nations officials and consultants carrying out substantive activities, other United Nations family organizations, Member Governments and institutions active in economic and social development;

    (c) In general, only material written in the past 10 years should be selected.

15. Suitable material is contributed to the Unit by the IESA Population Division, the IESA Statistical Office, the Ocean Economics and Technology Branch of IESA, the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs, the Centre for Human Settlements, the Reports Section of TCD, and the Division of Natural Resources and Energy of TCD. Once processed, the documents are returned to the originating units.

16.   Document processing is carried out in accordance with internationally recognized bibliographic standards. The bibliographic format follows the UNISIST Reference Manual for Machine-readable Bibliographic Descriptions, while data elements included in each record are the same as those used by institutions contributing to DEVSIS. 8/ The most important element of the computer record for searching purposes is the string of subject descriptors. These are selected from the Macrothesaurus for Information Processing in the Field of Economic and Social Development, second edition, published by OECD in 1978. The Macrothesaurus is used by many United Nations organizations (CEPAL, ECA, ESCAP, ILO, UNDP, UNESCO) as well as by hundreds of national information systems, libraries and documentation centres around the world.

17.   Computer processing is carried out using a small in-house minicomputer. The minicomputer equipment was acquired in July 1980 after several alternatives for obtaining access to computer equipment - time-sharing, leasing and outright purchase of equipment - had been considered. Time-sharing was considered too expensive and, as the Unit could not commit itself beyond the end of the year, it was decided that the most effective and economical manner of obtaining access to computer equipment would be the leasing of equipment with an option to either cancel or purchase outright.

18.   The software used is MINISIS, a data base management system developed by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), Ottawa, Canada, and made available to the United Nations free of charge. MINISIS is used by a growing number of institutions around the world including ILO, ECA and national institutions in Canada, China, Korea, Malaysia, Morocco, the Netherlands, Romania, Singapore, Tunisia, the USSR and Zaire. The Arab League has also expressed strong interest in MINISIS and is actively collaborating with IDRC to adapt the system to the Arabic language. MINISIS is compatible with ISIS software used in UNESCO, CEPAL and the International Computing Centre in Geneva.

19.   At two-monthly intervals, a selection of material recently entered into the DIS data base is listed in Development Information Abstracts. Computer processing to sort the items, create the indexes and print the master copy for reproduction is carried out using the Unit's minicomputer and MINISIS software. Each issue of Development Information Abstracts contains between 100 and 150 items. Each issue includes trilingual subject indexes (English, French and Spanish) generated automatically from the computerized trilingual Macrothesaurus, a geographic index, an author index, and an institution index. The journal has been distributed free of charge to the 600 institutions that have requested it.

20.   The most important use to which DIS is intended to be put is the provision of on-line searches on demand. Intended users of this service are professionals working in research, planning and execution of development activities who wish to know what work has already been carried out in a particular subject or geographic

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    8/   Development Sciences Information System, currently in operation at IDRC with contributions from seven other national institutions around the world.

area. Typical questions are: What work has been carried out in water resources exploration in the Sahel countries? What reports are available on United Nations activities in training for development planning? The requester receives a computer print-out listing all the items in the DIS data base that correspond to his request. The list includes full information about each document, including an abstract which helps the user to decide whether he needs to see the original document, and a location symbol showing where the document can be found.

21. Requests for copies of documents arise when the user identifies either in a list of search results or in an issue of Development Information Abstracts documents that he would like to read. The Unit that originally contributed the document is requested to lend the document to ISU which photocopies it and sends it to the requester. Material which has not yet been derestricted is not loaned or copied.

III. ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN DURING 1981

22. In 1981 the activities of ISU were concentrated in the following areas:

  (a) Collection and computerization of IESA and TCD material;

  (b) Preparing and distributing five issues of Development Information Abstracts;

  (c) Providing on-line searches on request;

  (d) Providing copies of documents referenced in the data base on request;

  (e) Processing of reports in preparation for a further issue of a published human settlements bibliography;

  (f) Obtaining user feedback in preparation for the IOB evaluation.

A. Collection and computerization of IESA and TCD material

23. During 1981, the Unit continued to receive a steady flow of material from the Reports Section and the Division of Natural Resources and Energy of TCD and from the Statistical Office and the Population Division of IESA. The Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs, which had not contributed material since its move to Vienna, has now made arrangements for its unpublished reports to be entered into the system, thus improving the system's coverage of social questions.

24. ISU estimated that, given its present level of staffing, 1,000 reports would be processed and added to the DIS data base in 1981, bringing the total number of documents in the data base to an estimated 4,200 at the end of the year. By the end of September 1981, there were 4,100 items in the data base and ISU thus expects to exceed its goal by the end of 1981.

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25. The data base is soon to be further enlarged by the addition of PADIS/DEV data base amounting to some 1,000 records and several CEPAL data bases containing some 4,000 records, thus providing access to a total of a further 5,000 items which were previously unavailable to United Nations staff members in New York.

B. Development Information Abstracts

26. At its first meeting for 1981, on 27 February, the Working Group of the Publications Board approved the issuing on a regular basis of the Development Information Abstracts, provided that funds for its reproduction were reimbursed to the Reproduction Section from the extrabudgetary funds available to Reproduction Section from the extrabudgetary funds available to the Unit. Five of the planned six issues will have been prepared by the end of 1981. Issue number one for 1981 was printed and distributed in April 1981 and issue number two in July, 1981. Issue number three was sent for printing in September. Eight hundred copies of the first issue were reproduced and, as that issue quickly went out of stock, 1,000 copies of subsequent issues were reproduced. There are at present 600 institutions which have asked to receive the journal on a regular basis. The Unit was recently requested by the OECD Development Centre to distribute information concerning the Development Information System and its services to the 1,000 institutions from all over the world associated with the OECD Development Centre and it is expected that this project will result in an even larger user community for the Unit.

C. On-line searches

27. Requests for on-line searches averaged 85 per month during 1981. From January through September 1981, 220 individuals requested and received a total of 755 searches. Between May 1980, when ISU first started offering this service, and September 1981, a total of 2,015 on-line searches were carried out.

28. In 1981, ISU installed a modem on its computer allowing users from outside the Unit to dial up to the computer to carry out on-line searches of the data base. Several users within the United Nations have taken advantage of this capability, while requests for dial-up access to the system from users in other parts of the world were also received. However, in order to avoid distant users having to incur long-distance charges in dialling to the data base in New York, it might be possible in the future to make access available to such users through a telecommunications network.

D. Document delivery

29. From January through September 1981, 380 document copies were requested. The bulk of these copies have been provided but some backlog remains of items for which derestriction has been requested.

30. The reports contributed to DIS by the Centre for Human Settlements are presently being microfiched for CHS by the International Development Research

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Centre. The Reports Section of TCD is microfiching its collection of reports, including those cited in the DIS data base. This will greatly facilitate the provision of copies of such reports to requesters.

E. Human settlements bibliography

31. In the framework of efforts by the Centre for Human Settlements to create a Human Settlements Information System and thus fulfil the recommendation of the 1976 United Nations Conference on Human Settlements that dissemination of knowledge and experience in the field of human settlements receive high priority, ISU has been participating in a joint project with the Centre for Human Settlements to computerize material written by or for the Centre.

32. In April 1980, the Centre for Human Settlements published the Bibliography of Reports and Films, based on a computer print-out provided by ISU of some 1,200 human settlements reports forming part of the DIS data base. The Centre has now requested ISU to prepare a second bibliography, to be published in early 1982. As in the first CHS/ISU project, the Centre is providing the work months for the abstracting and indexing of the reports, and ISU is undertaking entry of data into the DIS data base, the creation of the bibliography and its indexes and the provision of the computer print-out which will be used as a master for the reproduction of the printed volume. Reports cited in both the human settlements bibliographies will be available on microfiche.

F. Obtaining user feedback in preparation for the IOB evaluation of the System

33. In view of the fact that the General Assembly had requested that the Development Information System be submitted to continued external evaluation, the Unit designed a questionnaire which was sent out with both the first issue of Development Information Abstracts and with the search results in order to obtain user feedback from the System's users concerning the usefulness of these services. The returned questionnaires were provided to the IOB evaluator for analysis.

IV. CO-OPERATION WITH OTHER INFORMATION SYSTEMS

34. Information systems should not exist in a vacuum. Besides satisfying the needs of their users, it is essential that they strive for compatibility and share resources with other information systems serving similar audiences, in order to strengthen over-all information services in the subject field and reduce or eliminate wasteful duplication.

35. Within the United Nations system it is particularly important that efforts be made to maintain a co-ordinated approach to the provision of information concerning activities in the large number of subject fields covered by these bodies. For this reason, ISU is making a special effort to co-operate with other United Nations Information systems that provide information for development and to maintain compatibility with these systems.

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36. The UNESCO evaluation report 9/ on the Development Information System, which was made available to the General Assembly at its thirty-fifth session, stressed the need for a central focal point for the provision of information in the area of development, and expressed the opinion that ISU could play an important role within a network of development information services. Such a role, it was stated, could include such activities as maintenance of a common thesaurus, ensuring compatibility of software and record structure, and generally providing technical support and advice to other network members. The report advocated the creation of a master data base incorporating the data bases of ISU, the regional commissions and national agencies, a copy of which could be kept at each regional commission and in New York, in order to provide central access points to the data base. An extremely valuable source of development information would thus emerge and become widely accessible.

37. In recognition of the continuing importance of improved co-ordination in this area through such activities, ISU has further developed its co-operative relationship with several information systems and networks in the United Nations system during 1981. The following paragraphs outline these activities.

A. Regional economic commissions

38. The information system activities of the regional economic commissions relating to information for development are identical in aim to those of DIS. For this reason, it is highly desirable for co-operation to be maintained among the regional commissions information systems and between these systems and DIS. During 1981, several initiatives were made to establish co-operative programmes among the regional commissions and other United Nations system information systems.

1. Pan African Documentation and Information System (PADIS)

39. ECA's Pan African Documentation and Information System began operation in Addis Ababa in 1980 with the installation of a minicomputer and MINISIS software identical to that used for DIS. ISU had participated in the original feasibility study in 1979 which made recommendations concerning the design of PADIS. The first of the PADIS components to become operational - PADIS/DEV - is a data base of African development literature, the aims and audience of which are very close to those of DIS and to those of other development information systems such as DEVSIS.

9/ An evaluation of the Development Information System of the Information Systems Unit in the Department of International Economic and Social Affairs: report prepared by UNESCO for the General Assembly of the United Nations, 25 September 1980.

40. In April 1981, ISU was invited by ECA to a meeting in Addis Ababa of representatives of the information systems of the United Nations system to discuss mechanisms for co-operation between these information systems and PADIS. As a result of this meeting, PADIS will enter into co-operative arrangements with other international information systems in the areas of data base exchange, co-operative training activities and the strengthening of African national information centres. ISU has made available to ECA a copy of its data base for merging with the PADIS/DEV data base, and will make PADIS/DEV available to users of DIS.

41. ISU is considering adopting the bibliographic format developed by ECA for PADIS. This format, which was developed in consultation with several African information systems and with the relevant international information systems, is compatible with UNBIS, DEVSIS and AGRIS.

2. Technical Expert Group Meeting on Common Indexing Tools

42. The regional commissions for Africa, Latin America, and Asia and the Pacific are, like ISU, using as their document indexing tool the Macrothesaurus for Information Processing in the Field of Economic and Social Development.

43. At present there is no central co-ordinating unit for the Macrothesaurus. Since the last edition appeared in 1978, expansion of the economic and social development field, particularly in the planning and energy sectors, has taken place. Macrothesaurus users at both the national and international levels have therefore been adding new terms as they required them without there being any mechanism for co-ordinating these additions. These organizations therefore risk moving away from each other in terms of compatibility in terminology.

44. For this reason, the Technical Expert Group Meeting on Common Indexing Tools was held in New York from 15 to 17 June. The Meeting, which was arranged and hosted by ISU, was attended by representatives of the information systems of CEPAL, ECA, ECWA, ESCAP, IDRC, ISU and OECD as well as by observers from the Dag Hammarskjöld Library, TCD and UNDP.

45. The Meeting recommended that a programme for the ongoing management and maintenance of the Macrothesaurus be set up and that such a programme, in order to reflect the global acceptance of the Macrothesaurus, should be brought under the auspices of the United Nations. The regional commissions were seen as the regional managers of this programme, while ISU was requested to set up, in consultation with the regional commissions, mechanisms to manage the programme at the global level. As a result of the meeting, mechanisms necessary to maintain the Macrothesaurus were drawn up.

46. ISU was asked to provide computer facilities for the maintenance of the Macrothesaurus and to distribute updates to users on a regular basis.

47. The meeting also discussed a programme of exchange of data bases and the need to promote standardization of data base structure in order to facilitate information exchange.

48. Follow-up on these recommendations is already planned or in progress. ISU has sent a copy of its data base to ECA, ECWA and CEPAL and has received a copy of the CEPAL data base. In order to promote standardization of data base structures, a workshop of participants from the regional commissions and from ISU will be held at IDRC in Ottawa in late 1981 to produce a model data base structure and a model manual and worksheet.

B. Population Information Network (POPIN)

49. The DIS data base contains a considerable number of reports on population questions and will thus constitute a part of the Population Information Network. The Co-ordinating Unit of POPIN operates within the Population Division of IESA which invited ISU to its expert meeting held in Geneva in April, 1981 to determine the mechanism and work plan of POPIN. The POPIN Co-ordinating Unit will use the computer facilities of ISU to create a referral system of POPIN members. Within the framework of POPIN, ISU is working with the UNFPA library to enter into the DIS data base some 600 reports resulting from UNFPA projects in order to facilitate the preparation of UNFPA abstracts publication and in order to bring together in a single data base the population-related reports generated by IESA, TCD and UNFPA.

C. Inter-Organization Board for Information Systems (IOB)

50. In compliance with the request by IOB that organizations with computerized information systems contribute to the experimental Documents for Development data base, ISU has provided IOB with a copy of the DIS data base.

D. Dag Hammarskjöld Library

51. ISU has offered the Dag Hammarskjöld Library access to the DIS data base via its dial-up service. The Library was not able to take advantage of the offer as it does not have access to a terminal with dial-up facilities. However, the Library did refer several of its users to DIS for assistance during the course of the year. When on-line searching becomes operational on the Library's UNBIS system, a copy of the DIS data base will be made available for searching in the Library.

E. International Computing Centre (ICC)

52. At the request of the Director of the International Computing Centre in Geneva, ISU provided a copy of the DIS data base to ICC who intends to make the data available for on-line searching to United Nations organizations in Geneva.

V. POSSIBLE ACTIVITIES IN 1982-1983

53. Bearing in mind that the General Assembly decided in its resolution 35/217, section XIII, to pronounce itself on the possible continuance and methods of financing of the Information Systems Unit at its thirty-sixth session, the

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following are the possible activities that could be undertaken in 1982-1983, should the General Assembly decide affirmatively.

A. Development Information System

54. DIS now has a considerable number of users and the responses to the questionnaires sent to them indicate that they find the system and its services useful to their work in development research, development planning, or project implementation. In continuing to serve the users, work on DIS would be carried out in the following areas:

(a) Continuing to enlarge and extend the coverage of the DIS data base. There is no shortage of material from the various inputting units suitable for this data base. It is estimated that a further 1,000 reports will be processed and added to the data base per year, bringing the total by the end of 1983 to some 6,500 citations.

(b) Continuing to provide on-line search services and document delivery on request, and preparing and distributing six issues per year of Development Information Abstracts.

B. Co-operation with other information systems

55. ISU is in a position to play a role in the co-operative efforts required to create a centralized and easily accessible source of development information. It already has a computerized information system in place compatible with other development oriented information systems, it already maintains the trilingual Macrothesaurus for Information Processing in the Field of Economic and Social Development in computerized form, and it is geared towards provision of information for development to an international audience. In fact, the recommendations resulting from the Technical Expert Group Meeting on Common Indexing Tools in which a programme for the maintenance of the Macrothesaurus and the promotion of information exchange was laid down, find that ISU would be in the best position to carry out these tasks. This would involve:

(a) Computerizing the additions and changes to the Macrothesaurus and distributing them on tape or in hard copy to the regional commissions for distribution to national users;

(b) Producing, as a United Nations sales publication, a new edition of the Macrothesaurus (note that this has proved to be a profitable publication in the past);

(c) Creating a data base comprising the data bases of the regional commissions and ISU, updating it regularly, and distributing it to each of the regional commissions;

(d) Planning, in consultation with the regional economic commissions, means to further these co-operative efforts.

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VI. COST ESTIMATES

56. By its resolution 35/217 section XIII, the General Assembly decided that the salaries and common staff costs of the basic staffing complement of the Unit, consisting of two Professional posts and two General Service posts, be funded from the regular budget in 1981 and that other operating and servicing costs be financed from extrabudgetary funds. The cost estimate for the operation of the Unit in 1981, as reported under option B, paragraph 75, of document A/C.5/35/32 and Corr.1, was $183,300, of which $105,700 for salaries was charged to the regular budget. The remainder, specialized services and materials and common services, was funded from extrabudgetary resources.

57. Extrabudgetary contributions towards the operating costs of the Unit in 1981 were received from Sweden ($15,000) and $20,000 was made available by the Department of Technical Co-operation for Development, from the resources of the account for reimbursement of support costs of technical co-operation, in respect of services rendered to the Department. In addition, approximately $25,000 was donated by Canada to cover the cost of leasing the minicomputer equipment. The Unit thus received a total of $60,000 from extrabudgetary sources in 1981, of which $35,000 were in liquid funds.

Estimated expenditure 1980-1981

		$
1.	Staff	
	Salaries and common staff costs for 2 Professionals (1 P-4, 1 P-2) and 2 General Service (1 principal level and 1 other level) a/	245,700
2.	Travel	393
3.	Equipment	59,455
	Lease of minicomputer b/ Maintenance of minicomputer Lease of word processor	
4.	Specialized services and materials	16,050
5.	Common services (1981)	11,900
6.	Reimbursement of support of substantitve activities	22,420
		355,918

Estimated expenditure 1980-1981 (continued)

Total amounts spent from funding sources 1980-1981	**$**
FUNDPAP	125,568
JIA Account	57,000
Canada	37,500
Programme Support Account	30,150
Regular budget	<u>105,700</u>
	355,918

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a/   The P-4 post was filled at the P-3 level and the principal level post at the other level in 1980-1981. Figures include common staff costs carried over from 1979.

b/   In 1980 the Unit acquired a minicomputer under a lease purchase arrangement with an option to either cancel or purchase outright. The minicomputer was retained under the same agreement in 1981. The leasing cost was met by the Government of Canada.

58.   The following are the cost estimates for the biennium 1982-1983 in the event that the General Assembly decides to continue the operation of the unit.

		1982	1983
1.	Staff		
	Salaries and common staff costs of two Professionals (1 P-4 and 1 P-2) and two General Service (1 principal level and 1 other level)	143,400	153,900
2.	Travel		
	Consultations with regional commissions	4,900	4,800
3.	Equipment		
	(a) Lease of minicomputer	24,450	25,550
	(b) Equipment maintenance	10,850	11,350
	Subtotal	35,300	36,900

			1982	1983
4.	Specialized services and materials			
	(a)	Reference sources	480	520
	(b)	Software update fee	2,400	2,600
	(c)	Data processing supplies	1,930	2,070
	(d)	Reproduction of abstract journal	5,800	6,200
	(e)	Rent of photocopy machine for document delivery service	1,260	1,340
		Subtotal	11,870	12,730
5.	Common services			
	Rental of office space		17,400	19,200
	Communications		2,200	2,600
	Supplies		800	1,200
		Subtotal	20,400	23,000
		TOTAL	215,870	231,330

TOTAL for the biennium $447,200

VII. CONCLUSIONS

59. It will be recalled that the General Assembly, subsequent to its discussions on the Information Systems Unit during its thirty-fifth session, decided that its considerations on the future of the Unit at its thirty-sixth session would be based on an external evaluation by the Inter-Organization Board for Information Systems. The report of the IOB is contained in document A/C.5/36/7 to which is annexed the report of a consultant engaged by IOB to carry out the evaluation. In its report, IOB concludes, on the basis of this study, that there are two options open to the General Assembly for the future of the Unit. One is to bring the resources available to the Unit to a level at which it could provide a comprehensive system covering effectively development-related literature, for which he estimates an annual cost of $300,000. The other alternative, in the case that the General Assembly would not wish to make resources available at this level, would be to discontinue the Unit. IOB abstains from recommending either of the two alternatives as this is a choice which should be made by the General Assembly.

60. From the discussions of the General Assembly at its thirty-fifth session, there would seem to be three possible methods of financing the Unit, should the General Assembly decided to recommend its continuation:

    (a)   including the costs of the Unit in the regular budget;

    (b)   operating the system on a cost-recovery basis;

    (c)   seeking further funds from voluntary and overhead sources.