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PROPOSED PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 1982-1983

Use of experts and consultants in the United Nations

Sixteenth 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 use of experts and consultants in the United Nations (A/C.5/36/46). As can be seen from paragraph 1, the report was submitted in response to General Assembly resolution 35/224 of 17 December 1980, in which the Assembly expressed the hope that the information to be submitted to it would enable it, at its thirty-sixth session, to evaluate the existing practices on the use of experts and consultants in the United Nations.
2. In paragraph 4 of his report (A/C.5/36/46), the Secretary-General ascribes past inadequacies in reporting on the use of consultants to the absence of any satisfactory or generally accepted definition of the terms. New administrative instructions will be issued early in 1982 in which a clear differentiation will be made between regular staff, temporary staff, individual contractors, consultants, participants in advisory meetings (ad hoc expert groups) and technical co-operation personnel (para. 5).
3. The Secretary-General indicates that consultants and participants in advisory meetings will be used to provide expertise, special skills or knowledge not normally possessed by regular staff and for which there is no continuing need in the Secretariat (A/C.5/36/46, para. 6). Consultants will not be engaged to assist the regular staff in their normal work or to deal with peak workloads, unexpected demands or to cover temporary absences or vacancies. In paragraph 8 of his report, the Secretary-General states that the latter needs will be met by the appointment of temporary staff or individual contractors. By using different expenditure codes as from 1 January 1982, the Secretary-General proposes to isolate the Organization's expenditure for consultants on the basis of a common and generally accepted criterion (para. 10).

4. The report by the Secretary-General also contains information on the implementation of the guidelines established by the General Assembly at its twenty-seventh session (paras. 25-31) and statistical information on ad hoc expert groups and consultants who provided services in the last two biennia (annexes I-VIII).

5. The Advisory Committee expects that a strict application of the definitions proposed by the Secretary-General should lead to reduced expenditure on consultants. If this is accompanied by greater use of temporary assistance, there will be need for strengthening administrative controls over the use of temporary assistance funds.

6. The Committee believes that up-to-date data on the use of consultants and temporary assistance would assist it in its consideration of the Secretary-General's programme budget proposals. Accordingly, the Committee recommends that the next report by the Secretary-General on the use of experts and consultants should cover the period to February or March 1983 and should be made available to the Committee in time for its examination of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1984-1985. The postponement of the next report to 1983 will also give the Secretary-General more time in which to see how the new definitions are working in practice and whether they will lead to a more efficient management of resources.