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Agenda item 101

PROGRAMME PLANNING

Report of the Fifth Committee (Part I)

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. At its 4th plenary meeting, on 18 September 1981, the General Assembly decided to include in the agenda of its thirty-sixth session the item entitled "Programme planning" and to allocate it to the Fifth Committee.
2. The Fifth Committee considered the item at its 27th, 30th, 33rd, 34th, 35th, 36th, 37th and 65th meetings, on 30 October, 3, 5, 6, 9 and 10 November and 7 December 1981.
3. For its consideration of the item, the Committee had before it the following documents:
 - (a) Report of the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination on the work of its twenty-first session; 1/
 - (b) Report of the Secretary-General on setting explicit priorities among United Nations programmes (A/C.5/36/1).
4. The following reports of the Joint Inspection Unit and the related reports of the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination were considered in conjunction with this item:

1/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Thirty-sixth Session, Supplement No. 38 (A/36/38).

(a) Status of internal evaluation in the organizations of the United Nations system (A/36/181; A/36/479, paras. 6-10);

(b) Second report on evaluation in the organizations of the United Nations system (A/36/182; A/36/479, paras. 11-28);

(c) Report on the setting of priorities and the identification of obsolete activities in the United Nations (A/36/171 and Add.1).

5. The comments and observations made in the course of the discussion of the item and the replies to queries raised are reflected in the summary records of the relevant meetings of the Fifth Committee (see A/C.5/36/SR.27, 30, 33-37 and 65).

II. CONSIDERATION OF DRAFT RESOLUTIONS

A. Draft resolution A/C.5/36/L.21/Rev.1

6. At the 65th meeting, the representative of the United Republic of Cameroon introduced and orally revised a draft resolution (A/C.5/36/L.21/Rev.1) on behalf of Algeria, Ghana, India, Indonesia, Morocco, Romania, the United Republic of Cameroon and Yugoslavia. The draft resolution was subsequently sponsored also by Ethiopia.

7. At the same meeting the Committee adopted draft resolution A/C.5/36/L.21/Rev.1, as orally revised, without objection (see para. 13, draft resolution A).

B. Draft resolution A/C.5/36/L.31/Rev.1

8. At the 67th meeting, on 8 December, the United States of America submitted a draft resolution (A/C.5/36/L.31/Rev.1).

9. At the 67th meeting, on 8 December, the representatives of India, Sweden and Yugoslavia orally proposed that in operative paragraph 2 "thirty-seventh" be replaced by "thirty-eighth".

10. At the same meeting, the representative of India orally proposed that in operative paragraph 2, after the words "General Assembly", the words "through the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination" be inserted.

11. At the same meeting, the representative of the United States of America accepted the amendments referred to above, and further revised the draft resolution by replacing the words "to improve their subsequent evaluability" in paragraph 1 (c) by the words "to make them more susceptible to evaluation".

12. At the same meeting, the Committee adopted draft resolution A/C.5/36/L.31/Rev.1, as orally revised, without objection (see para. 13, draft resolution B).

III. RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE FIFTH COMMITTEE

13. The Fifth Committee recommends to the General Assembly the adoption of the following draft resolutions:

Programme planning

A

The General Assembly,

Recalling its resolution 32/197 of 20 December 1977 on the restructuring of the economic and social sectors of the United Nations system,

Recalling also its resolutions 34/224 and 34/225 of 20 December 1979 relating, respectively, to medium-term planning in the United Nations and to identification of activities that have been completed or are obsolete, of marginal usefulness or ineffective,

Recalling further its resolution 34/164 of 17 December 1979, and in particular paragraphs 2, 3 and 6 thereof, in which it approved the glossary of evaluation terms and the guidelines for internal evaluation systems of the United Nations organizations and urged the Joint Inspection Unit to continue its efforts in the area of evaluation, both internal and external,

Recalling Economic and Social Council resolution 2008 (LX) of 14 May 1976, in which the Council requested the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination to recommend an order of priorities among United Nations programmes as defined in the medium-term plan,

Recalling also its resolution 35/9 of 3 November 1980, in which it requested the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination to determine new criteria and methods to be employed in setting programme priorities,

Having considered in detail the report of the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination on the work of its twenty-first session 2/ and the reports of the Secretary-General 3/ and the Joint Inspection Unit 4/ on the setting of priorities, identification of obsolete activities, and evaluation,

2/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Thirty-sixth Session, Supplement No. 38 (A/36/38).

3/ A/C.5/36/1.

4/ A/36/171 and Add.1, A/36/181 and A/36/182.

Noting Economic and Social Council decision 1981/180 of 23 July 1981 in which the Council approved the conclusions and recommendations contained in the report of the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination,

Considering that determination of priorities between programmes, identification of obsolete activities, and evaluation should be fully integrated into the general process of planning, programming and management,

I

Over-all conclusions and recommendations

1. Notes with satisfaction the conclusions and recommendations contained in the above-mentioned reports of the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination, 2/ the Joint Inspection Unit 4/ and the Secretary-General; 3/

2. Endorses the conclusions and recommendations set forth in the report of the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination concerning an order of priorities among programmes 5/ and, in particular:

(a) Requests the Secretary-General to present to the General Assembly at its thirty-seventh session, through the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination at its twenty-second session, proposals enabling it to adopt the official rules and regulations governing programme planning, the programming aspects of the budget, the monitoring of implementation and the methods of evaluation, such proposals to take into account all decisions so far taken with respect to planning, programming and evaluation;

(b) Urges that the monitoring of the implementation of programme commitments should be entrusted to a central unit within the Secretariat, noting that, as the work of this unit should include determination of actual programme delivery and a role in the making of decisions that involves their possible modification; that work should be defined in the context of the above-mentioned official rules and regulations, bearing in mind the comments and suggestions made in the reports of the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination 6/ and the Joint Inspection Unit 7/ and by delegations in the Fifth Committee; 8/

5/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Thirty-sixth Session, Supplement No. 38 (A/36/38), chap. VII.

6/ Ibid., para. 466.

7/ A/36/171, paras. 86-89.

8/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Thirty-sixth Session, Fifth Committee, 27th, 30th, 33rd to 37th and 65th meetings (A/C.5/36/SR.27, 30, 33-37 and 65).

(c) Decides that the length of the sessions of the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination should depend on its programme of work and on problems of scheduling, and emphasizes in this connexion the need to grant the Committee, for its session in 1982, sufficient time to enable it to make a complete and detailed examination of the draft medium-term plan for 1984-1989;

(d) Reaffirms the need for close co-ordination between the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination and the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions and, for this purpose requests the Advisory Committee to study the statements submitted by the Secretary-General on the financial and administrative implications of the decisions taken by the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination, as adopted by the Economic and Social Council, 9/ and to include its recommendations, for consideration by the General Assembly, together with the decisions themselves, in a separate chapter of its report or in an addendum to it;

3. Recommends that the different organizations concerned should increase the effectiveness of their evaluation system and take the necessary steps to implement the recommendations contained in the reports of the Joint Inspection Unit, 10/ and in particular those concerning self-evaluation and the integration of evaluation in the planning and management process;

4. Requests the Secretary-General to improve the evaluation services of the United Nations in accordance with the recommendations made in the reports of the Joint Inspection Unit;

II

Order of priority between programmes

Decides to adopt the measures and guidelines set out below for the determination of an order of priority among programmes:

1. The principal purpose of establishing priorities among programmes that form an integral part of the general planning and management process is to rationalize and order the activities and provide a guide for the preparation of the programme budget.

2. The order of priority should be established as follows:

(a) At the highest level it should be established by as precise an indication as possible of the problems and of the over-all orientation and trends deriving from authoritative instruments such as the Charter of the United Nations, the International Development Strategy for the Third United

9/ Economic and Social Council decision 1981/180 of 23 July 1981.

10/ A/36/181 and A/36/182.

Nations Development Decade 11/ and the resolutions on the new international economic order. The introduction to the medium-term programme should, accordingly, analyse the trends that reflect the over-all priorities.

(b) At the subprogramme level in the proposed medium-term programme or the proposed programme budget it should be established by a decision of the General Assembly to accept, curtail, reformulate or reject subprogrammes on the basis of the implementation of the budget and of programmes, the detailed evaluation reports and the recommendations of the competent intergovernmental bodies, it being understood that the priorities established at the subprogramme level should contribute to the achievement of the over-all priorities determined at the highest level.

3. Without prejudice to arrangements and procedures now in force and to the specific character of the common services, the establishment of an order of priority should apply to all the substantive activities of the Organization and to the common services and serve as a guide for the allocation of all its budgetary and extrabudgetary resources. For that purpose the decisions on priorities should be brought to the attention of Member States and the governing boards of the voluntary funds.

4. The establishment of an order of priority should be based principally on the importance of the objective to Member States, the Organization's capacity to achieve it, and the real effectiveness and usefulness of the results.

5. The timetable and the procedures for the introduction of the new system for setting priorities extend over a period of two and a half years, as indicated in the report of the Secretary-General. 12/

6. A report on the operation of this new system for setting priorities should be submitted to the General Assembly at its thirty-ninth session, through the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination. This critical report should reveal the difficulties encountered, make suggestions for dealing with them, and indicate whether further changes must be made in structures and procedures including, inter alia, those proposed by the Joint Inspection Unit 13/ and by delegations during the debate on priorities in the Fifth Committee at the thirty-sixth session. 8/

11/ General Assembly resolution 35/56.

12/ A/C.5/36/1, para. 58, table 7.

13/ A/36/171.

III

Activities that have been completed or are obsolete,
of marginal usefulness or ineffective

1. Reaffirms the need to integrate the identification of activities that are completed, obsolete, of marginal usefulness or ineffective in the general process of planning, programming, budgeting evaluation and management;
2. Requests the Secretary-General to continue to provide the General Assembly, in the context of the preparation of the programme budget and through the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination, with a list of the activities considered obsolete, of marginal usefulness or ineffective, in order to facilitate decision making;
3. Requests the Secretary-General to continue his efforts to achieve a better application of General Assembly resolutions 3534 (XXX) of 17 December 1975, 31/93 of 14 December 1976, 32/201 of 21 December 1977, 33/204 of 29 January 1979, 34/225 of 20 December 1979 and 35/209 of 17 December 1980, concerning activities that have been completed, or are obsolete, of marginal usefulness or ineffective and for this purpose requests him to continue to refine further, if necessary, the criteria for the determination of these activities.

B

The General Assembly,

Confirming its continued support for the development of evaluation systems and evaluation units within each agency,

Emphasizing support for the reports of the Joint Inspection Unit on evaluation in the United Nations system, 14/

Encouraging all agencies to co-operate with the Joint Inspection Unit in assuring their own evaluation capacity, in order to make evaluation an integral part of the agency's programming and development process,

1. Requests the Secretary-General to strengthen the United Nations evaluation systems and evaluation units by:

(a) Specifying the responsibilities and tasks of the United Nations evaluation units;

(b) Preparing for the General Assembly precise evaluation plans linked to the medium-term planning process and the budget cycle;

14/ A/36/181 and A/36/182.

(c) Developing guidelines for the planning and design of programmes and projects to make them more susceptible to evaluation;

(d) Designing and issuing basic standards for the conduct, content and process of evaluation and assuring that the quality of the evaluation products is continually assessed;

(e) Taking appropriate measures to ensure that evaluation findings shall be promptly and systematically utilized in the management decision-making process and that follow-up evaluation findings and recommendations shall be carried out;

2. Requests the Secretary-General to report to the General Assembly at its thirty-eighth session, through the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination, on the implementation of paragraph 1 above.
