



SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 58th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. BRODODININGRAT (Indonesia)

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

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The meeting was called to order at 10.50 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 100: PROPOSED PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIAL 1982-1983 (continued)

Establishment of an Information Systems Unit in the Department of International Economic and Social Affairs (continued) (A/36/7/Add.7; A/C.5/36/6 and 7)

1. Mr. HANSEN (Assistant Secretary-General for Programme Planning and Co-ordination), replying to questions raised at the 47th meeting, said that the Information Systems Unit of the Department of International Economic and Social Affairs could obtain a much larger proportion of the informal reports from field projects which were not currently included in the Development Information System. Once consultants and project staff were aware of the System and its purpose, they would ensure that the results of their work were disseminated through it.
2. Most of the points made in the evaluation report (A/C.5/36/7, annex) were positive, and much of the criticism contained therein was constructive and would help to improve the System. However, as the Canadian delegation had rightly pointed out, some of the critical comments made had not taken account of the purpose of the System, which was to ensure that information on the substantive work of the Organization in carrying out economic and social development activities was readily available to programme planners and those working in the field, so as to avoid any duplication of programmes. In addition, the evaluator's fear that a small data base might do more harm than good, in that it might suggest to users that little work on a particular subject had been carried out, was unfounded.
3. If the data base of the Development Information System was enlarged, the expected increased demand for searches could be handled by the present staff, since searches would take no longer. The backlog to which the evaluator referred had occurred because of the arrival of a large number of search requests following the issue of the first Development Information Abstracts in 1981.
4. Interest in co-operation between the information systems of the regional commissions had been strengthened by the establishment of information systems in ECA and ESCAP, and by ECWA's decision to establish a regional development information system. ECLA already had a system compatible with the Information Systems Unit. The systems had to be compatible in order to facilitate exchanges of computerized information. One of the most important components was the indexing language used to retrieve information. As stated in chapter IV of document A/C.5/36/6, the four regional commissions concerned had decided to use the same indexing language, although the language had not been updated since 1978 and no unit was responsible for its over-all management; moreover, each organization was adding its own new indexing terms. A meeting had therefore been held in June 1981, the results of which were outlined in paragraphs 45 to 47 of document A/C.5/36/6. The Information Systems Unit had also been requested by the regional commissions to act as a focal point for the exchange of computer tapes. At a subsequent meeting of information experts in November 1981 a common worksheet and cataloguing manual had been devised. The Unit had been entrusted with

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(Mr. Hansen)

maintenance of that manual and of a central institution name file. Accordingly, the future functions of the Unit would be to backstop the work of co-ordinating additions and changes to the indexing language, to computerize such additions and changes, to produce a photocomposition tape for the printing of a new edition of the indexing language in English, French and Spanish, to merge the relevant data bases of the regional commissions according to the format agreed at the November meeting, to make the merged data base available for use in the Development Information System in New York, and to maintain a register of suggested changes to the cataloguing manual.

6. It was difficult to determine whether resources could be transferred to the Development Information System from other information systems with a lower priority since the relevant report of the Secretary-General was not before the Committee. A large majority of the users of the System had found it extremely useful. The Department of Technical Co-operation for Development was one of the main users of the System and had contributed to its financing, but was understandably reluctant to commit itself to playing a more direct role in managing the system in view of the latter's uncertain future.

Revised estimates resulting from decisions of the Economic and Social Council at its first and second regular sessions, 1981 (A/36/7/Add.10; A/C.5/36/33 and Corr.1)

7. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) said that the Secretary-General's revised estimates for conference-servicing costs attributable to certain resolutions and decisions of the Economic And Social Council at its first and second regular sessions of 1981 amounted to \$5,251,700, of which \$3,269,100 was for 1982. Those amounts would appear in the consolidated statement. The additional resources needed to finance the activities called for by the decisions and resolutions of the Council amounted to \$298,100 gross, or \$285,500 net of staff assessment.

8. The Advisory Committee recommended acceptance of the Secretary-General's requests for additional resources, with the exception of the estimate of \$54,900 for temporary assistance referred to in paragraphs 10 and 12 of its eleventh report (A/36/7/Add.10). The Advisory Committee thus recommended approval of \$14,700 under section 1, \$11,300 under section 4 and \$202,900 under section 23. There would be no additional requirements under section 31 (Staff assessment).

9. Mr. AMNEUS (Sweden) said that his delegation was extremely interested in the human rights activities of the United Nations. There was an apparent inconsistency in the allocation of resources to the Division of Human Rights. The Advisory Committee, in paragraph 10 of document A/36/7/Add.10, was recommending deletion of \$21,100 for temporary assistance to replace regular staff assigned to the Special Rapporteur because it felt that that amount should be met from the resources for general temporary assistance already approved by the Fifth Committee in first reading. ACABQ was also recommending deletion of \$33,800 for temporary assistance for the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances (Para. 12).

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(Mr. Amneus, Sweden)

10. During the Fifth Committee's debate on section 23 of the budget, one delegation had sought a specific assurance that temporary staff would not be used to service the Working Group. A representative of the Secretariat had stated that requests for additional permanent staff to handle such sensitive questions had been rejected, and that it was hard to provide an undertaking that all fact-finding missions would be carried out by permanent staff members. His delegation appreciated the concern of some countries over the issue, but it was difficult to see how the Division of Human Rights could discharge its mandate if its requests for additional permanent staff were denied and if temporary assistance funds could not be used. His delegation wished to know exactly how, in the light of ACABQ's recommendations, the Division would implement its mandate.

11. Mr. ZINIEL (Ghana) said that his delegation was also concerned over the apparent inconsistency in the Advisory Committee's recommendations. It might be prudent to use permanent staff members for such sensitive questions, but it should be recognized that the Secretariat was understaffed, as implied by ACABQ itself in paragraph 10 of its report. His delegation wished to know whether the Division would be able to function effectively if the Advisory Committee's recommendations were adopted.

12. Mr. CULLEN (Argentina) said that his delegation had reservations over the inclusion of some \$197,000 for temporary assistance in section 23. Since such staff might be used for politically sensitive tasks which should be carried out by permanent staff members, it was surprised at the Secretary-General's requests. Argentina was firmly opposed to the hiring of temporary staff under such circumstances, and supported the recommendation of ACABQ to delete the sums involved.

13. Mr. GALLEGOS (Chile) said that his delegation was also surprised at the request for additional temporary assistance for the Division of Human Rights, which was proof of the Division's intention to continue to use temporary staff to deal with certain politically sensitive questions despite criticism of that practice in the Fifth Committee. Although his delegation was concerned that the Division of Human Rights might use for that purpose funds already appropriated for other activities, it would support the Advisory Committee's recommendation.

14. Mr. VAN BOVEN (Director of the Division of Human Rights) said that he would endeavour to shed further light on a rather complex matter, namely the use of resources for special procedures which the Division of Human Rights had been asked to carry out within the framework of the human rights programme. In recent years, the Secretary-General had been requested to provide services for a number of fact-finding committees, groups and special rapporteurs dealing with the human rights situation in specific countries. At the current time, fact-finding missions were investigating the situation in seven countries, confidential procedures had been initiated with respect to another three, and a working group had been established to deal with the question of disappeared persons. Those activities, which were labour-intensive and time-consuming, were not considered a regular part of the programme of the Division of Human Rights because the relevant mandates were

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subject to periodic renewal and hence they were regarded as non-recurrent. Over the years the Division of Human Rights had been able to redeploy a number of Professional posts to such activities but, recognizing that the problem required a structural solution, it had also requested additional posts, which had not been granted owing to the current policy of budgetary stringency. He assured members that every effort would be made to redeploy the permanent staff of the Division to such activities, but the Division's capacity in that respect was not unlimited.

15. It had been stated in the Committee that any temporary assistance needed to carry out such work should be financed from the resources requested in the proposed budget. However, that was technically very difficult because the activities were not regarded as part of the Division's regular programme. The resources requested for temporary assistance under section 23 of the programme budget related primarily to other activities, such as the Decade for Action to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination and the preparation of certain publications. In fact, only six work-months at the P-3 level and six General Service work-months had been provided under section 23 for urgent needs in the area of fact-finding and special procedures. The special procedures which the Division had been asked to carry out required much more than that and, as long as no additional permanent staff were granted to the Division, the Secretary-General would have no alternative than to request temporary assistance when special mandates were renewed.

16. Mr. FRANSEN (Denmark) proposed the restoration of the amount of \$54,900 for temporary assistance to replace regular staff of the Division of Human Rights assigned to the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Chile and to service the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances.

17. Mr. PAPENDORP (United States of America) requested a vote on the Danish proposal.

18. The CHAIRMAN invited delegations which wished to do so to explain their votes before the vote. Adoption of the Danish proposal would also entail an additional appropriation of \$12,600 under section 31 (Staff assessment), to be offset by an equal amount under income section 1 (Income from staff assessment).

19. Mr. PAL (India) said that, despite his delegation's commitment to human rights, it did not believe that lavishing funds on the Division of Human Rights would do much to promote the enjoyment of such rights throughout the world. Whereas funding for most activities in the economic and social sectors had stagnated or even decreased in recent years, the resources allocated for human rights had risen by some 72 per cent. He therefore believed that adequate funds were available to absorb the marginal increase in the work-load of the Division of Human Rights. His delegation considered the Advisory Committee's recommendations to be sound and would not be able to support the Danish proposal.

20. Mr. ZINIEL (Ghana) said that his delegation always endeavoured to support the Advisory Committee's recommendations because of its high esteem for that body's technical competence and objectivity. However, he found the explanations provided by the Director of the Division of Human Rights convincing and would vote in favour of the Danish proposal.

21. Mr. CULLEN (Argentina) said that the explanations given by the Director of the Division of Human Rights had not changed his delegation's view. He firmly supported the Advisory Committee's recommendation and would vote against the restoration of the amount requested for temporary assistance.

22. Mr. BROCHARD (France) said that his delegation, too, usually supported the Advisory Committee's recommendations. However, it found the explanation provided by the Director of Human Rights to be compelling and would therefore vote in favour of the Danish proposal.

23. Mr. ABRASZEWSKI (Poland) said that his delegation shared the views put forward by the representative of India. It had faith in the wisdom and competence of the Advisory Committee, which had recommended a very minor cut in the revised estimates. He gathered from what the Director of the Division of Human Rights had said that the adoption of the Advisory Committee's recommendation would not create an insoluble problem for the Division. His delegation was therefore not in a position to support the Danish proposal and would welcome clarifications from the Division of Human Rights regarding its ability to absorb the cost of the temporary assistance requested.

24. Mr. GEBRE-MEDHIN (Ethiopia), Mr. EL HOUDERI (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya), Mr. BUNC (Yugoslavia), Mr. GEPP (Brazil) and Mr. KUYAMA (Japan) said that their delegations supported the Advisory Committee's recommendation. They would therefore vote against the Danish proposal.

25. Mr. PAPEMDORP (United States of America) said that his country's dedication to the cause of human rights was well known and his decision to vote against the Danish proposal had been made on purely budgetary grounds. His delegation very much regretted that the Advisory Committee was once again under attack for recommending a modest reduction in the Secretary-General's request.

26. Mr. PEDERSEN (Canada) said that his delegation would support the Advisory Committee's recommendation since it believed that the Division of Human Rights had sufficient resources to carry out its programme.

27. Mr. HAND (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland), speaking on a point of order, said that his delegation was without instructions on a matter which was obviously important to a great many delegations. He requested that the Committee defer a vote on the matter until a subsequent meeting.

28. The CHAIRMAN said that the voting process had already commenced and he was unfortunately unable to accede to the request of the United Kingdom representative.

29. Ms. CONWAY (Ireland) said that her delegation had great respect for the wisdom and insight of the Advisory Committee. However, in view of the circumstances and having heard the explanation given by the Director of the Division of Human Rights, it felt obliged to support the Danish proposal.

30. Mr. BANGURA (Sierra Leone) said that his delegation, too, had no instructions and would have to abstain in the vote. It would set forth its position in plenary meeting after it had consulted its Government.
31. Mr. RALLIS (Greece) said that, as a rule, the Greek delegation supported the Advisory Committee's recommendations. However, in view of the importance of the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances, it would support the Danish proposal.
32. Mr. FALL OULD MAALOUM (Mauritania) said that his delegation's position on human rights was well known. It could not support the Danish proposal on solely budgetary grounds since it believed that the amount requested could be absorbed.
33. The Danish proposal was adopted by 29 votes to 24, with 40 abstentions.
34. Mr. LAHLOU (Morocco) said that his delegation's vote had been determined solely by budgetary considerations. His delegation's position with regard to the substantive issue of human rights was well known.
35. Mrs. MOTSOASELE (Lesotho) and Mr. BASSOLE (Upper Volta) said that their delegations had abstained in the vote and would state their positions on the matter when it was taken up subsequently in plenary meeting.
36. Mr. AKAKPO (Togo) and Mr. YOUNIS (Iraq) said that their delegations had not participated in the vote owing to a lack of instructions; they would explain their positions in plenary meeting.
37. Mr. LÖSCHNER (Federal Republic of Germany) said that his delegation had voted in favour of the Danish proposal. It wished, however, to reaffirm its esteem for the wisdom and experience of the Advisory Committee. Had budgetary considerations been the determining factor, his delegation would have voted against the proposal.
38. Mr. HICKEY (Australia) said that the price of safeguarding human rights was high and his delegation did not begrudge the additional appropriation. Accordingly, it had voted in favour of the Danish proposal.
39. Mr. HAND (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland) said that his delegation had voted without instructions on the apparent merits of the case, even though in so doing it was departing from its usual support of the Advisory Committee's recommendations. That vote did not, however, mean that his delegation was altering its over-all position on the budget or wavering in its support for the Advisory Committee.
40. Mr. NAGAGGA (Uganda) said that, having regard solely to the great importance of the human rights issue, his delegation had voted in favour of the Danish proposal. It nevertheless continued to have the highest respect for the Advisory Committee.

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41. Mrs. LISBOA (Venezuela) said that her delegation had voted to restore the amount in question because the latter was insignificant in comparison with the objective of the activities it was intended to finance.
42. Mr. EL SAFTY (Egypt) said that his delegation had not participated in the voting because the substantive issue was still under consideration in the Third Committee. It would set forth its position on the matter in plenary meeting.
43. Mr. BETTINI (Italy) said that his delegation normally supported the Advisory Committee's recommendation but that, in view of the political importance of the work of the Division of Human Rights, it had voted in favour of the Danish proposal.
44. Mr. ALPER (Turkey) and Mr. PADUA (Philippines) said that their delegations had voted against the Danish proposal on purely budgetary grounds.
45. The CHAIRMAN suggested that, having regard to the decision just taken on the Danish proposal and in the light of the Advisory Committee's recommendations in document A/36/7/Add.10, the Committee should approve in first reading appropriations of \$14,700 under section 1 of the proposed programme for the biennium 1982-1983, \$11,300 under section 4, and \$257,800 under section 23. He further suggested that the Committee should approve an additional appropriation of \$12,600 under section 31 (Staff assessment), to be offset by an increase in the same amount under income section 1 (Income from staff assessment).
46. It was so decided.
47. Mr. PAPENDORP (United States of America) said that, had a vote been taken on the revised estimates as a whole, his delegation would have abstained on account of its support for the Secretary-General's efforts to achieve a zero-growth budget. New and expanded programmes should be financed from resources already included in the proposed budget and the resources released through the abolition of obsolete, marginal and ineffective programmes. The Secretariat could and should do a great deal more to absorb the costs estimated in document A/C.5/36/33; his delegation expected the related conference-servicing costs to be absorbed as well.
48. Mr. PEREZ (Chile) said that his delegation did not recognize the competence of the Special Rapporteur appointed to investigate the human rights situation in his country. The appointment of such an official was highly discriminatory, and not in keeping with the Organization's professed claim to seek universal respect for human rights. The total cost of renewing the Special Rapporteur's mandate, moreover, would run into the hundreds of thousands of dollars. Had the revised estimates been put to a vote, his delegation would have voted against them.

Revised estimates under section 27, Public information: Development Forum
(A/C.5/36/52)

49. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) said that the Advisory Committee had no objection to the appropriation of \$400,000 requested by the Secretary-General under section 27 of the proposed programme budget for an annual subvention of Development Forum.

50. Ms. MUSTONEM (Finland), speaking also on behalf of the delegations of Denmark, Norway and Sweden, said that Development Forum was the only regular United Nations publication in the economic and social field. Its role as an important means of disseminating the objectives of the new international economic order had been affirmed in General Assembly resolution 34/182. The Nordic delegations had at the thirty-fifth session supported an appropriation of \$200,000 as an interim measure to stabilize the periodical's financial situation, while emphasizing the need for a long-term solution to facilitate its continued publication. At the same time, they had welcomed the plan for a long-term solution put forward by the Joint United Nations Information Committee. Regrettably, the recommendation now being made by the Secretary-General in document A/C.5/36/52 was not based on that plan.

51. The Nordic delegations were ready to accept the Secretary-General's recommendation so as to ensure the continuation of Development Forum for the coming two years. They were, however, concerned that the estimated contributions from organizations, as indicated in table 1 of the Secretary-General's report, were tending to decrease in relation to the total estimates, while the proportion to be covered by income from subscriptions to the business edition, advertising and other sources was increasing. That trend was not in accordance with the proposals by the Joint United Nations Information Committee. Moreover, one could not be certain that the estimates for advertising and other income, as described in paragraphs 6 and 7 of the report, would prove accurate. Development Forum should not be a money-maker: no subscription should be charged for the general edition. Development Forum was a tool for information and dialogue on issues of world-wide concern, a point which should be emphasized when future plans on the financing of the periodical were drawn up.

52. Mr. BOUZARBIA (Algeria) expressed strong support for the position taken by the Advisory Committee.

53. The recommendation of the Advisory Committee for an additional appropriation of \$400,000 under section 27 of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1982-1983 was approved without a vote.

54. Mrs. HOUSHOLDER (United States of America) announced that, had the revised estimates been put to the vote, her delegation would have opposed them on budgetary grounds.

AGENDA ITEM 102: FINANCIAL EMERGENCY OF THE UNITED NATIONS (continued) (A/36/701; A/C.5/36/28 and Corr.1 and 2; A/C.5/36/L.17)

55. Mr. WILLIAMS (Panama), introducing draft resolution A/C.5/36/L.17, said that the financial difficulties of the United Nations were rooted in the political perceptions of Member States. The representative of Pakistan had previously provided a clear description of the political and economic causes of the financial emergency. The draft resolution was intended to lay the foundations for a solution to the problem. It would enable the Organization to continue its important work of maintaining international peace and security and at the same time ensure that none of the provisions of the Charter was violated. The sponsors were convinced that the General Assembly must rapidly find a solution to the

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(Mr. Williams, Panama)

Organization's cash flow problem, which otherwise threatened to paralyse the Organization and prevent it from providing the international community with the necessary services. They hoped that the draft resolution would be adopted by consensus.

56. Mr. EL HOUDERI (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) said that he was fully in agreement with the analysis of the financial emergency provided by the Secretary-General in his report (A/C.5/36/28). The Organization's present difficulties were the symptoms of a deep-rooted problem. The deficit was attributable to the withholding by certain States of their assessed contributions for peace-keeping operations, and to late payment of contributions to the regular budget. The Working Capital Fund, established by the General Assembly in 1946 and raised to its current level in 1963, had been intended to allow the Organization to overcome temporary cash flow difficulties, but, with the growth of the regular budget in recent years, it now had insufficient resources to cover even one twelfth of the Organization's annual expenditure. It had, of course, to be borne in mind that some Member States faced extreme difficulties in obtaining the currency with which to pay their obligations to the Organization. Nevertheless, the data provided in the Secretary-General's report made it clear that the resultant delays in payment of contributions could be foreseen.

57. The Working Capital Fund must be increased to a level of \$100 million as an absolute minimum, and should preferably be restored to a level equal to four months of net disbursements. His delegation sympathized, however, with the reservations expressed by the Advisory Committee in paragraph 7 of its report (A/36/701) over some of the options put forward by the Secretary-General for dealing with the financial emergency. Borrowings in the open market, borrowing from Member States and the issuing of long-term bonds, while they might help the Organization over its short-term difficulties, would have adverse long-term effects. His delegation agreed with the Advisory Committee that Member States should be asked to pay their assessed contributions on time; on the other hand, it could not support the idea of charging interest on payments to the Organization that were overdue.

58. As for contributions to peace-keeping operations, his delegation's position was well known to all. It had never participated in any decision on such operations. It did not believe that "peace-keeping" forces were an effective solution to the difficulties of a people whose country had been taken away from them and who were widely dispersed, or that they should be financed through assessed contributions levied on Member States. It considered that the only way to settle the problem of the Palestinian people was to grant them their full rights, and that the Zionist entity should be prepared to accept all the financial consequences of its actions.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.