



SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 10th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. ABRASZEWSKI (Poland)

later: Mr. KUYAMA (Japan)

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

CONTENTS

AGENDA ITEM 110: SCALE OF ASSESSMENTS FOR THE APPORTIONMENT OF THE EXPENSES OF THE UNITED NATIONS: REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON CONTRIBUTIONS (continued)

AGENDA ITEM 108: PATTERN OF CONFERENCES (continued)

(a) REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON CONFERENCES

(b) REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

AGENDA ITEM 109: CONTROL AND LIMITATION OF DOCUMENTATION (continued)

AGENDA ITEM 8: ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA AND ORGANIZATION OF WORK (continued)

(b) SUBSIDIARY ORGANS OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

AGENDA ITEM 12: REPORT OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL (continued)

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The meeting was called to order at 10:30 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 110: SCALE OF ASSESSMENTS FOR THE APPORTIONMENT OF THE EXPENSES OF THE UNITED NATIONS: REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON CONTRIBUTIONS (continued) (A/37/11, A/37/461 and Add.1)

1. Mr. ROY (India) recalled that the preceding year, after two months of bargaining between groups, the Fifth Committee had laid down new parameters in paragraph 4 of resolution 36/231 A for the Committee on Contributions to follow. Since the Committee on Contributions had shown that it had indeed followed the instructions set out in that resolution, the Fifth Committee must accept the scale of assessments which it had produced.
2. There was, of course, paragraph 1 of resolution 36/231 A. The Committee on Contributions had reported in the past on its efforts to quantify the concepts embodied in that paragraph. Some of them, the provision relating to the least developed countries for example, were obviously being implemented, whereas others seemed to have received less attention. It was his delegation's understanding that, in the absence of quantifiable data which could be fed into the machine scale, such qualitative factors were used in the mitigation process.
3. In the circumstances, his delegation saw little point in further debate. It was understandable that, in considering the scale of assessments, the Fifth Committee should enter into a substantive debate instead of considering only financial implications. However, the scale of assessments could not correct defects in the international economy. It was, after all, supposed to reflect current economic realities.
4. There was a parallel between the way in which ACABQ modified figures produced by the Budget Division and the preparation of a scale of assessments by the Committee on Contributions on the basis of the work done by the Statistical Office. Seen in that light, the various courses of action suggested during the discussion in the Fifth Committee could not be adopted. The only alternative was either to accept or reject the proposed scale. The Committee on Contributions had done an extremely difficult job as well as could be expected and his delegation was prepared to accept the scale of assessments that it had produced.
5. He urged members to refrain from citing statistics to illustrate their points of view. Exactly the same sets of figures had been used so far to support diametrically opposed points of view.
6. He also urged Member States to co-operate to the fullest extent with the Committee on Contributions in its task of collecting uniform and comparable data for the preparation of acceptable scales of assessment. The Committee on Contributions needed a reasonable period of time if its study of alternative methods to assess the real capacity to pay of Member States was to produce acceptable results. He was confident, for his part, that, when the Committee on Contributions calculated the next scale of assessments, it would be in a position to incorporate all the parameters laid down in resolution 36/231 A.

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7. Mr. AL-SHARHAN (United Arab Emirates) said that the developing countries were facing difficult economic conditions and that the situation of many was becoming increasingly precarious. Although his country's income was derived primarily from the export of one commodity, oil, it endeavoured in its pricing policy to help other third world countries. The Committee on Contributions had failed to take into account a whole range of economic problems besetting the developing countries. The scale of assessments which it had proposed would increase the assessment of the developing countries as a group by 10 per cent, while the countries with centrally-planned economies would pay some 10 per cent less and the industrialized countries only about 2 per cent more. Despite the provisions of paragraph 4 (c) of General Assembly resolution 36/231 A, which stipulated that efforts should be made to limit the increase of individual rates of assessment to a reasonable level, under the proposed new scale his country's rate of assessment would be some 90 per cent higher than under the previous scale. Accordingly, his delegation could not support the proposals of the Committee on Contributions and favoured the establishment of a working group to deal with the matter. It also favoured expanding the membership of the Committee on Contributions in order to ensure that the interests of all countries were represented.

8. Mr. RANGEL (Venezuela) said that his delegation was aware of the financial difficulties which the United Nations was facing and of its ever-growing responsibilities, which required additional resources. At the same time it noted the existence of profound frustration among most Members of the United Nations, especially the developing countries, over the fact that the interests of some Powers took precedence over the common interest, thereby rendering the Organization incapable of taking decisions on vital problems bearing on international peace and security. That frustration was caused partly by the lack of progress in the North-South dialogue, especially with respect to the launching of the global negotiations to restructure international economic relations. There was, in addition, a severe world economic crisis, which hit the economies of the developing countries especially hard.

9. Against that gloomy background, the Committee on Contributions was proposing a scale of assessments which provided for large increases in the rates of assessment of some developing countries that were adversely affected by the international economic situation. Given the difficulties it had faced and the lack of agreement among its members, the Committee on Contributions should have put forward various proposals on the scale of assessments and left it to the membership of the General Assembly at large to adopt whichever it considered to be the fairest and most balanced among them.

10. He noted with regret that the study on the methodology for calculating the scale of assessments had been deferred. As a result, the scale proposed for 1983-1985 was not in keeping with current economic conditions in many developing countries, including his own. There seemed to be a tendency to penalize some developing countries, including those that exported oil with unjustifiable increases in their rates of assessment. Paragraph 4 (c) of General Assembly resolution 36/231 A, which required that efforts be made to limit increases in individual

(Mr. Rangel, Venezuela)

rates of assessment between scales to a reasonable level, has not been complied with. His country's rate of assessment had been increased by 16 per cent, which meant that, at a time when it was forced to make cut-backs in the national budget, its contribution would be increased by some \$500,000.

11. In evaluating capacity to pay, the Committee on Contributions had not given impartial or balanced consideration to the special circumstances of individual developing countries experiencing declining revenues and increased indebtedness. The Committee had likewise failed to take into account paragraph 1 (d) of resolution 36/231 A, which reaffirmed that consideration should be given to the particular situation of Member States whose earnings depended heavily on one or a few products. As a result, the proposed scale was arbitrary and unjustified.

12. He noted that six of the countries which had presented supplementary data to the Committee on Contributions had obtained a reduction in their rates of assessment. That raised a number of questions about access to the Committee and its objectivity. He wished to know what supplementary data had been submitted, what countries were entitled to submit such data and whether some privilege enjoyed by members of the Committee on Contributions was involved.

13. The proposed scale of assessments should therefore be revised so that it was more in keeping with the principles of fairness and justice and the provisions of General Assembly resolution 36/231 A. His delegation would prefer to freeze the rates of assessment at their current levels and instruct the Committee on Contributions to spend more time at its next session devising a methodology for calculating the scale of assessments and to present a new proposal for the period 1984-1986 taking into account the provisions of resolution 36/231 A and other relevant resolutions. In identifying alternative methods for assessing capacity to pay, the Committee on Contributions must also take into account social and economic indicators, the need to use recent estimates of national income, the impact on a country's assessment of domestic inflation and exchange rate variations, and the effects of the increase in per capita income on taxable income.

14. Mr. GOH (Singapore) said that his delegation understood the colossal task faced by the Committee on Contributions in seeking an improved method for assessing the real capacity of Member States to pay. It also accepted the fact that, as a developing country achieved economic progress, it should be prepared to bear a greater share of the financial burden of the Organization. It questioned, however, the validity of increasing the assessments of developing countries without due consideration for the special circumstances which they faced. Developing countries such as his own had not yet reached the level of economic maturity of developed countries or acquired the capability for self-generating growth.

15. His delegation shared the disappointment of other delegations at the lack of understanding shown by the Committee on Contributions towards some developing countries, whose assessments had been based on an over-optimistic picture of their economies. National income should not be the only measure of capacity to pay.

(Mr. Goh, Singapore)

Other statistical measurements or combinations thereof, for example, net worth or wealth, should be used as well. The merits of the wealth criterion were obvious in the case of his country. As a small island State with limited land and natural resources, Singapore was heavily dependent on foreign markets, capital and technology. Foreign investment accounted for about three quarters of total fixed assets in the manufacturing sector and the country ran a large trade deficit. Local entrepreneurship and local investment in manufacturing were not sophisticated and substantial enough to ensure self-sustained growth. Such circumstances clearly invalidated the use of national income as the sole factor for determining capacity to pay. National income as used by the Committee on Contributions was calculated on a residential basis and was therefore not a true reflection of the income of Singaporeans. Singapore's share of the United Nations budget had been distorted as a result of: (a) the appreciation of its currency against the United States dollar when its income statistics had been converted, (b) a high rate of inflation, which had artificially raised the country's nominal national income, and (c) the use of national income data which were not a true reflection of the income of Singaporeans. In assessing his country's capacity to pay, account had to be taken of its special nature and characteristics.

16. His country accepted the principle of collective responsibility for the expenses of the Organization apportioned on the basis of capacity to pay. However, increasing his country's assessment solely on the basis of its gross national product would be unrealistic. As a matter of principle, therefore, his delegation was unable to agree to the proposed scale of assessments and regretted that no opportunity had been offered by the Committee on Contributions to those countries affected by proposed increases to seek clarification or make submissions against such increases.

17. Mr. TOMASZEWSKI (Poland) said that his delegation fully appreciated the difficulty and complexity of the task entrusted to the Committee on Contributions. Although in the past it had criticized some of the Committee's decisions, it was grateful for the dedicated service it had rendered to the Organization and its Member States. The position and authority of the Committee should be strengthened and it should be provided with all the means necessary for the proper discharge of its functions.

18. The comprehensive introduction of the Committee's report (A/37/11) by its Chairman had added greatly to the understanding of the circumstances in which the Committee had conducted its work.

19. The discussion of the report in the Fifth Committee appeared to be dominated by an attempt to balance the defence of particular national interests against genuine concern about the Organization's financial position. Fears had been expressed that deep disagreement over the proposed scale of assessments might create a situation in which Member States would abstain from paying their contributions or withhold them in part. The further weakening of the Organization's financial position that would result could disrupt its work entirely and thus endanger projects and activities that were of vital interest to the

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(Mr. Tomaszewski, Poland)

developing countries, as well as other countries, including Poland. With all its deficiencies, the United Nations was still a vital instrument for maintaining international peace and promoting international co-operation, and all its Members would suffer seriously from its financial collapse.

20. Turning to the specific subjects covered by the report, he noted that the Committee had complied with the General Assembly's request in resolution 36/231 A to the best of its ability within the time allotted to it. The report was a genuine effort to apply the guidelines laid down in that resolution, as well as in resolution 34/6 B, which called for a study in depth of a number of important and complicated topics with a view to increasing the fairness and equity of the scale of assessments.

21. The basis on which the proposed scale of assessments for 1983-1985 had been calculated was General Assembly resolution 36/231 A, adopted on the initiative of the developing countries and first introduced in the Fifth Committee by the representative of Algeria on behalf of the Group of 77. Poland had participated in the debate on the resolution and, although it had had reservations concerning the extension of the statistical base period, had supported it as an important step towards improving the fairness of the scale of assessments.

22. Since the scale of assessments had been produced on the basis of the guidelines fixed by the General Assembly, any rejection or undermining of the work of the Committee on Contributions would be inconsistent, tantamount to a negation of principles that had been mutually agreed upon only a year before.

23. The study of alternative methods to assess the real capacity of Member States to pay, as called for in operative paragraph 3 of resolution 36/231 A, had not been adequately carried out, and the Polish delegation was prepared to discuss new or supplementary guidance to be given to the Committee with a view to preventing anomalous assessments resulting from the use of estimates of national income alone. Such a study was of vital interest to Poland, which was also adversely affected by the insufficient reflection in its contribution of a number of the factors listed in paragraph 1 of the resolution, particularly subparagraphs (c), (d) and (e). Poland was genuinely interested in a meaningful study of alternative methods and urged the Committee on Contributions to work more vigorously and effectively to that end. Such a study should also take into account the views expressed in the Fifth Committee in favour of a periodic revision of the low-income allowance formula, in order to preserve its fundamental purpose of mitigating the assessment of low-income and middle-income countries.

24. The length of the statistical base period used to establish the scale continued to be of concern to Poland. On a previous occasion, the Committee on Contributions had stressed the need to strike a balance between the requirements of stability and continuity and the importance of maintaining the closest possible relationship with current economic realities. Poland was in favour of a five-year base period, which would avoid sharp variations in assessments while at the same time reflecting current economic realities. That reflection was usually inadequate

(Mr. Tomaszewski, Poland)

because any scale of assessments must be based on statistical data for three or four years back. For example, the scale for the triennium 1980-1982 had been drawn up on the basis of data ending in 1977. The longer the base period, the less faithfully the scale of assessments would reflect current economic realities.

25. Pending a thorough study of alternative methods, which would contain a set of criteria that would supplement the data on national income, the Polish delegation strongly advocated following an orderly procedure. The Fifth Committee had always followed such a procedure in respect of the scale of assessments, and the scale for 1983-1985 proposed by the Committee on Contributions should therefore be approved.

26. As stated in paragraph 29 of the report (A/37/11), the question of the Polish assessment had finally been satisfactorily resolved. After thoroughly examining all the arguments, the Committee had decided to apply the rate of exchange of 33.20 zlotych to the United States dollar to the national income data for Poland from 1972 onward.

27. Two factors had been involved in the substantial lowering of Poland's assessment for 1983-1985. One was the partial or staggered acceptance of Poland's claim regarding the rate of exchange. In the past, an arbitrary application of the exchange rate to the conversion of the statistical data had resulted in a massive over-assessment. Poland was making no retroactive claim for the revision or lowering of past contributions; it merely requested that henceforward justice should be applied. The second factor contributing to the reduction was the impact of Poland's recent deep economic and financial difficulties. The facts and figures of the state of the Polish economy would be made available to any interested delegation. He would note merely that many of the socio-economic and financial problems currently being experienced by Poland were a reflection of the problems faced by developing countries. At the previous session of the General Assembly, a number of delegations had voiced support for the arguments then advanced by Poland and urged the Committee on Contributions to take them fully into account. He emphasized again that Poland could not and would not accept any attempt to extend the present unfair scale of assessments beyond 1982.

28. Mr. PLUSHKO (Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic) said that while he could understand the feelings of the delegations which complained about their countries' assessed contributions under the new scale of assessments recommended by the Committee on Contributions, he could not agree with their arguments, which consisted more of emotional appeals than of sound, hard reasoning. The Committee had drawn up the scale on the basis of objective statistical data on Member States' national income, guided by the fundamental principle of capacity to pay and respecting, as far as possible, the recommendations made by the General Assembly in resolution 36/231 A. It was clear that the Committee had not adopted a purely mechanistic approach to its task. The individual circumstances of a number of countries had been studied and, in the majority of cases, allowance had been made for them in the new scale. The Committee had also endeavoured to avoid sharp and unjustified variations in individual countries' assessments between successive scales. To require the Committee to observe strict numerical limitations as to the

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(Mr. Plushko, Ukrainian SSR)

maximum permissible variation in assessment between two scales, however, would simply make its task more difficult, while at the same time entailing a departure from the basic principle of calculating countries' assessments in accordance with changing economic conditions.

29. A number of delegations had called for the Committee to continue its study of additional socio-economic indicators that might be used in the calculation of the scale of assessments. His delegation felt that attempts to conflate different indicators made little sense; in any case, the indicators currently in use - national income and per capita income at current prices - adequately reflected economic and social conditions.

30. It still seemed unlikely that general agreement on what was meant by "national wealth" would be reached within the foreseeable future, even before one considered such problems as calculating such an indicator for every State Member of the Organization every year.

31. His delegation could not agree to any deviation from the practice of calculating the scale of assessments on the basis of national income at current prices. That method most nearly satisfied the requirement of assessing States in accordance with their capacity to pay, reflecting nations' actual production and consumption and the trade and financial transactions between them as conducted on the basis of current exchange rates, which were ultimately, after allowance for other factors, set by Governments.

32. It was unreasonable to compare countries' contributions in 1946 with their current assessments. States were developing, and their national income was growing. It was natural for the assessed contributions of many of them to have increased, as his own country's had. Some countries were all too eager to vote in favour of new programmes that would swell the budget, but when it came to apportioning the expenses of the Organization they immediately found rather dubious reasons why others should shoulder the burden. His delegation had always argued for a reduction in the Organization's spending and slower budget growth. If all delegations had adopted the same position, their countries would now have much smaller contributions to pay. But if the majority voted for a bigger budget, they must be prepared to pay their share of the expenses of the Organization. His delegation would vote in favour of the proposed scale of assessments.

33. In concluding, he commented that it was a tradition in the Fifth Committee for delegations to confine themselves to the substance of the administrative and financial issues submitted to it. He was, therefore, taken aback at the attempt by certain delegations to politicize the debate on the scale of assessments. It was hardly necessary to point out that politicization of the debate was not constructive, nor was it conducive to the business-like and friendly climate that should prevail.



34. Mr. KRISTIANSEN (Denmark), speaking on behalf of the members of the European Community, said that the Community's 10 member States currently contributed more than a quarter of the United Nations regular budget. They were still fully committed to the ideals and objectives of the United Nations, and like other States, they regarded the payment of their share of the expenses of the Organization as a practical means of demonstrating that commitment. They were, however, concerned that the financial obligations of membership should be equitably apportioned. They had therefore studied the report of the Committee on Contributions with care, and listened with interest to the delegations which had spoken so far.

35. Opinion on the report had been divided. Whether they supported the adoption of the new scale or opposed it, in almost all cases delegations had found the report unsatisfactory in some respects. The 10 States members of the Community regretted that they too found the report generally unsatisfactory and its implications a matter of serious concern. That view was in no way a criticism of the Committee on Contributions. The difficulty lay not in the way in which the Committee had carried out its work but in the instructions it had been given in resolution 36/231 A. The Committee could not hope to satisfy all Member States; the most that it could expect to achieve was a grudging consensus by the Fifth Committee that the burden was as far as possible equitably shared. As the diverse reactions to the report had shown, the task was far from easy.

36. It should be remembered that the Committee on Contributions had been created because the General Assembly felt that the task of equitable apportionment was so complex and technical that the General Assembly itself, and even the Fifth Committee, had neither the time nor the competence to deal with it. The Committee's original terms of reference stated that it should be given discretion to consider all data relevant to capacity to pay, in particular estimates of national income, and all other pertinent factors in arriving at its recommendations.

37. General Assembly resolution 36/231 A had been adopted despite the strong opposition of the Western countries, which together contributed more than 70 per cent of the United Nations regular budget. It laid down criteria and parameters for reviewing the scale for the period 1983-1985 which these countries felt were a breach of the principle of relative capacity to pay. Their opposition was the result, first, of their belief that the Committee's recommendations should be reached on an independent and a non-partisan basis, using verifiable and comparable statistical data. Secondly, they opposed the laying down of criteria and parameters for the Committee on Contributions on which the Committee had not first given its own expert advice. Thirdly, they believed that any lengthening of the statistical base period, which would produce statistics progressively less representative of the current economic position of Member States, constituted a further breach of the principle of relative capacity to pay. Lastly, they firmly held that any modification of the low per capita income allowance formula should aim at reducing the burden on the low-income countries rather than the middle-income countries.

(Mr. Kristiansen, Denmark)

38. During the debate prior to the adoption of resolution 36/231 A, the representative of the United Kingdom, as spokesman for the European Community, had drawn the General Assembly's attention to the grave danger that would confront the United Nations if dissension were to persist on that crucial issue. The current report of the Committee on Contributions confirmed the misgivings expressed by the members of the European Community at the thirty-sixth session. The report's shortcomings were the result of the Committee's unsatisfactory mandate, which had been at once too rigid in some respects and too wide-ranging and extensive in others. The States of the Community regretted that shortage of time had prevented the Committee from carrying out the full study called for in operative paragraph 3 of resolution 36/231 A. In their view, the study was a necessary tool for the General Assembly in considering any adjustment in the current method of assessing Member States.

39. It had been suggested that a working group of the Fifth Committee should be set up to review the findings of the Committee on Contributions and to consider the expansion of that Committee. The States of the Community believed that the Committee on Contributions, and only that Committee, should be responsible for making recommendations on the scale of assessments. There was no reason to think that a working group of the Fifth Committee would be any more successful than the Committee on Contributions. As far as enlarging the Committee was concerned, the ten States believed the membership should be strengthened rather than broadened. For example, some of the findings of the current report demonstrated very large changes in assessments. The implication was that the statistical data available to the Committee, or the analysis of that data, required further study. They suggested, therefore, that the members of the Committee on Contributions should be accompanied in their deliberations by statistical experts of their own choice.

40. The States of the Community fully appreciated the difficulties faced by the Committee on Contributions in preparing its report. Its complex task had been made still more complicated by the instructions in General Assembly resolution 36/231 A. It had been unable to complete all the work asked of it, and such findings as it had reached fell well short of unanimity. In the view of the 10 States, that was not a sound basis on which to take decisions that were central to the financial operation of the United Nations.

41. Mr. GERRU (Ethiopia) expressed his delegation's appreciation of the work performed by the Committee on Contributions. The Committee had to a large extent surmounted the difficulties in the collection and compilation of data and the problem of converting data so as to make them comparable. Short of recommending across-the-board reductions, it was virtually impossible for the Committee to satisfy all Member States completely.

42. All the Members of the United Nations were currently experiencing economic difficulties but the degree of those difficulties varied. In general, the scale of assessments recommended reflected the enormous difficulties faced by the developing countries and, in the view of the Ethiopian delegation, was sufficiently fair to be accepted. The proposal to continue the existing scale would be tantamount to an

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(Mr. Gerru, Ethiopia)

indefinite postponement of any improvement. Accordingly, the Ethiopian delegation was in favour of adopting the Committee's recommendations as set forth in its report (A/37/11).

43. Ms. CASTILLO (Dominican Republic) said that her delegation endorsed the views that had been expressed regarding the desirability of reviewing the scale of assessments in order to make it more equitable.

44. In connexion with the report of the Committee on Contributions, her delegation requested that the Dominican Republic's assessment of 0.03 should be reduced to 0.01, in view of the economic crisis currently being experienced by the country as a result of the high cost of energy and of finished goods imported from developed countries, the protectionist tariffs applied by those countries, and the low prices being paid on the international market for the Dominican Republic's main commodity exports. Her country's deficit and constant balance-of-payments difficulties, together with the low prices it received for its export products, had affected its capacity to pay, and had again forced the Dominican Government to ask the National Congress to pass austerity measures, including a reduction in wages, an increase in working hours, and the temporary prohibition of a wide range of imports, and to request a postponement in the payment of its energy bill under the San José Agreement, sponsored by the Governments of Mexico and Venezuela.

45. In addition to the reduction in its assessment from 0.03 to 0.01, the Dominican Republic wished to pay its contribution to the United Nations in its national currency.

46. International trade had an essential role to play in the economic growth of nations, in particular developing countries, and the expansion of such trade should be based on an equitable international economic order wherein all countries would profit instead of only a few at the others' expense. In fact, the economic situation was so precarious that the Dominican Republic had been obliged to withdraw from the world sugar market.

AGENDA ITEM 108: PATTERN OF CONFERENCES (continued) (A/37/32, A/37/112 and Add.1, A/C.5/37/2, A/C.5/37/7 and Corr.1, A/C.5/37/11)

(a) REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON CONFERENCES

(b) REPORTS OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

AGENDA ITEM 109: CONTROL AND LIMITATION OF DOCUMENTATION (continued) (A/36/167 and Add.1 and 2, A/37/32, chap. V, A/C.5/37/11)

AGENDA ITEM 8: ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA AND ORGANIZATION OF WORK (continued)

(b) SUBSIDIARY ORGANS OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

AGENDA ITEM 12: REPORT OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL (continued) (A/37/3, chap. III, sect. A and chap. IX, sects. C and H)

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47. Mr. DITZ (Austria) said that the Secretariat, under pressure to produce an enormous volume of reports, meeting records and other documents, could no longer ensure that those documents were clear, precise and action-oriented, while Member States found it almost impossible to read and study all the documents they received. The funds now spent on documents for one session of the General Assembly amounted to almost \$30 million - a figure States should compare with their annual contributions to the budget of the United Nations.

48. Since most documents resulted from the work of, or requests by, intergovernmental bodies, the cause of the current malaise undoubtedly lay with delegations; imposing page limits on documents, although useful, would not suffice. Neither the Committee on Conferences nor the Fifth Committee could solve the problem alone. Delegation members in the substantive committees, and their respective foreign ministries, had to be made aware of the gravity of the situation. It would be easier to convince them if the arguments centred upon two factors: the cost of producing the documents for a single General Assembly session; and the various rules on documentation that had been established by the Assembly.

49. There was no lack of rules on United Nations documents, but it was difficult to keep them all at one's fingertips. His delegation welcomed the fact that the Committee on Conferences had compiled and updated the regulations concerning meeting records, and suggested that that Committee, supported by the Secretariat, should also undertake the review and codification of decisions by the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly pertaining to all other types of documents, while the Secretariat should review and compile all its administrative rules and regulations on documentation and issue them in a format - such as that of the Financial Regulations and Rules or the Staff Rules - that was easy to consult. During the codification process the Secretariat should pay particular attention to reviewing and, if necessary, streamlining its clearing procedures, since the lack of clearly defined clearing procedures might be one reason its continuing inability to make pre-session documentation available in good time.

50. The Fifth Committee should set an example by discussing the control and limitation of documentation only every second year. The Committee on Conferences could keep the issue permanently under consideration, but a fully fledged "documentation debate" in the Fifth Committee seemed to his delegation a self-defeating, document-generating exercise.

51. The clustering of sessions of bodies each requiring a large volume of documents caused serious overloading in the document-processing facilities in New York and Geneva. To overcome that difficulty, meetings should be distributed more evenly among the conference centres in New York, Geneva and Vienna; it was in the Organization's interest to use the potential of the Vienna International Centre to the full, and the establishment of UNIDO as a specialized agency provided an opportunity to set up an organizational structure designed for optimum efficiency in the provision of conference services. An initiative by the Secretary-General in that regard would be welcome.

(Mr. Ditz, Austria)

52. His country had hosted a number of special conferences over the past ten years, including the Conference on Science and Technology for Development, the World Assembly on Aging and UNISPACE 82. During UNISPACE 82, translation and interpretation services had been provided from New York by satellite link; the Secretary-General of the Conference had described the experiment as a pioneering demonstration of remote interpretation and translation. The exceptional nature of the demonstrations warranted a detailed evaluation report, which his delegation hoped to receive from the Department of Conference Services in due course. It hoped also that future special conferences would use the advanced technology that had been applied for the first time in Vienna as a matter of routine, and felt it would be most welcome if the Secretariat, in drawing up its evaluation reports, could take account of Austria's experience and views.

53. UNISPACE 82 had been the first special conference to be organized in accordance with the guidelines for special conferences adopted by the General Assembly at its thirty-sixth session. The success of the Conference and the excellent co-operation between the Secretariat units concerned and the host Government proved that flexible guidelines, not rigid rules, were needed with respect to the organization and conduct of major special conferences. The guidelines recommended by the Committee on Conferences fulfilled those requirements, and his delegation supported them in principle. In the light of Austria's experience, however, he would propose certain amendments to them at a later stage.

54. Mr. Kuyama (Japan) took the Chair.

55. Mr. YOACHAM (Chile) said that during the past year, the Committee on Conferences, in accordance with the terms of reference laid down by the General Assembly, had concerned itself with the programming of United Nations conferences and with working out an appropriate calendar.

56. The Chilean delegation regretted that once again there had been departures from the approved calendar, with the result that logistical problems had arisen as well as additional expense. In order to avoid changes, either in date or in venue, the bodies concerned should plan their operations more carefully so that once the Committee on Conferences had made its recommendations they did not need to be altered. Such improved and more timely planning, in addition to reducing administrative work and the budgets of the conferences themselves, might show that some of them were unnecessary.

57. Documentation had long been a source of problems. Although the Secretariat's efforts had resulted in more timely distribution, much still remained to be done. He emphasized that, in addition to being timely, documentation must be made available in all the official languages of the United Nations.

58. The report of the Committee on Conferences (A/37/32) recommended the adoption of a series of measures to limit the number and length of reports. Recommendation 6 was particularly noteworthy, and in that connexion the Chilean

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(Mr. Yoacham, Chile)

delegation considered that not only were the efforts of the Secretariat important but also the support that Member States could give by ensuring that their reports and documents were governed by the same recommendations as those for United Nations bodies.

59. The adoption of the Committee's recommendations would undoubtedly be beneficial. The Chilean delegation had already endorsed the report in the Committee on Conferences and would do so again in the Fifth Committee.

60. Mr. SHAHANKARI (Jordan) said that his delegation found the recommendations in chapter XI of the report of the Committee on Conferences (A/37/32) generally acceptable, and intended to support the draft resolution proposed. It expressed its appreciation to the Chairman and members of the Committee for the remarkable work they had accomplished.

61. A number of ways of controlling the cost of conference activities and reducing the administrative burden on the Secretariat had already been mentioned in the debate. First, documentation should be kept to the minimum, wherever possible. The Committee on Conferences should also see to it that the number of conferences entitled to summary and verbatim records was limited. In his delegation's view, that would further enhance the effectiveness of those conferences and contribute to the successful and speedy completion of their work. In that regard, the Secretary-General's suggestion of a maximum length of 24 pages (A/37/32, annex I) should be strictly implemented. Secondly, more attention should be paid to the preparation of conferences. There should be a scale of priorities which would take into account the degree of urgency and importance of each conference, so that as many countries as possible could participate in and benefit from them. Lastly, the preparatory stages for conferences should be clearly and carefully defined and organized in order to ensure the smooth running and successful outcome of each conference and to allow for the wide participation of all interested parties and organs of the United Nations and other international organizations.

62. Mr. Abraszewski (Poland) resumed the Chair.

63. Mr. KUYAMA (Japan) said that only marginal progress could be made on the problem of proliferating documentation unless it was considered in conjunction with the proliferation of meetings and conferences in the United Nations system. His delegation welcomed, however, the Secretary-General's personal interest in dealing with the problem of documentation in the United Nations, and the initiatives that the Secretary-General had taken in that regard.

64. It had repeatedly been pointed out that the high concentration of meetings during certain parts of the year was one cause of the chronic delays in the availability of documentation. There seemed to be little merit in such a concentration of activity; in addition to the delays, it resulted in a need for temporary assistance, which was expensive, and left delegations with little time to prepare for meetings properly. It was high time that the Committee on Conferences looked at the problem and took appropriate action.

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(Mr. Kuyama, Japan)

65. His delegation felt that the guidelines recommended by the Committee on Conferences for the Secretariat organization for special conferences contained many useful points; in particular, it hoped that the Secretariat-level Conference Management Committee would prove effective.

66. The Committee on Conferences reported (A/37/32, para. 66) that action had been taken on the proposals contained in the report by the Secretary-General on the special review of the ongoing work programme of the United Nations (A/36/658). His delegation agreed, however, with the Committee's caution that the gap between policy and practice was wide. At its twenty-second session, the Committee on Programme and Co-ordination had considered the indicative biennial estimates of resources associated with the activities listed in annex II to document A/36/658. The estimate for the Department of Conference Services was approximately \$7.5 million, of which \$6 million was for personnel-related costs other than costs for established posts, and the remaining \$1.5 million for other costs. Since the Committee on Conferences had not endorsed all the proposals made by the Secretary-General in document A/36/658, he wished to know what proportion of the estimates submitted to CPC related to the proposals that had been endorsed.

67. His delegation had taken note of the comment in paragraph 69 of the report of the Committee on Conferences, and would examine the question of the modernization programme in the context of the Secretary-General's budget proposals for the coming biennium. It had also noted paragraph 84 of the report, concerning the procedure for inscription on the list of speakers for the general debate of the General Assembly.

The meeting rose at 12.45 p.m.