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PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 1976-1977

Proposed changes in the level of certain posts  
in the top echelon of the Secretariat

Report of the Secretary-General

1. The Secretary-General proposes the reclassification of the posts listed hereunder in the top echelon of the Secretariat:

(a) The posts of Executive Secretary of the five regional commissions (ECE, ESCAP, ECLA, ECA and ECWA) to be reclassified from the level of Assistant-Secretary-General to that of Under-Secretary-General;

(b) The post of Assistant-Secretary-General, Office of Public Information, to be reclassified to the level of Under-Secretary-General;

(c) The post of Deputy High Commissioner for Refugees to be reclassified from the D-2 level to that of Assistant-Secretary-General.

2. The additional costs involved, 1/ if the foregoing proposals are approved, are as follows:

Section 6 (ECE)	-	\$7,600
Section 7 (ESCAP)	-	\$5,900
Section 8 (ECLA)	-	\$5,300
Section 9 (ECA)	-	\$6,200
Section 10 (ECWA)	-	\$6,900

1/ Including additional salary and post adjustment, representation allowance and pension contribution, and assuming that the General Assembly approves the recommendations of the International Civil Service Commission.

Section 16 (UNHCR)	-	\$10,600
Section 21 (OPI)	-	\$6,600
Section 25 - Staff assessment	-	\$36,100
Income section 1 - Staff assessment	-	\$36,100
Total net additional cost	-	\$49,100

### 3. Executive secretaries of the regional commissions

In its report on the decentralization of United Nations economic, social and related activities and the strengthening of the regional commissions, 2/ the Joint Inspection Unit noted that the Economic and Social Council, in its resolution 1896 (LVII) of August 1974 (para. 3), had called for increased responsibility for the regional commissions, including the delegation to them of the appropriate functions of an executing agency. The Inspectors went on to state that

"the increased responsibilities that should devolve on the commissions as a result of recent legislative decisions and of the decentralization measures they recommend require a re-examination of the commissions' internal organizational structures, with particular emphasis being placed on the strengthening of their programming and operations management units and on the tightening of co-ordination between all offices generally. These increased responsibilities also raise the issue of the status of the commissions' executive heads. Prior to the reorganization of the higher echelons of the Secretariat, the executive secretaries, as Under-Secretaries, were at the second level of senior officials; they are now at the third level. The Inspectors are aware of the various considerations which motivated this change. They believe, however, that in the light of the commissions' enhanced responsibilities, as mentioned above, and of the specific functions and responsibilities of the executive secretaries in this connexion, the question of the upgrading of the post of executive secretary needs to be examined without delay." 3/

4. The Inspectors included among their formal recommendations arising from this report the following:

"Recommendation 28 - The Secretary-General is invited to study as a matter of urgency the question of the upgrading of the post of executive secretary of the commissions and to report thereon to the General Assembly." 4/

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2/ E/5607 (15 January 1975).

3/ E/5607, paras. 242-244.

4/ E/5607, p. 129.

5. The Secretary-General, in his comments on the report of the Inspectors, agreed that there was a need to decentralize many substantive and administrative responsibilities to the regional commission level. In particular, he agreed that the commissions should play a more active role in identification, initiation and formulation of regional and subregional programmes and projects funded from extrabudgetary resources and that, as a consequence, the commissions should have an appropriate share of UNDP overhead funds related to their assumption of additional responsibility for substantive and administrative back-stopping. The Secretary-General also stated 5/ that he was "prepared to review the level of the posts held by the executive secretaries".

6. In his report to the Economic and Social Council on regional structures of the United Nations system, 6/ as well as in a note to the Council containing his comments and those of the Administrator of UNDP on the same subject, 7/ the Secretary-General has reported on developments which have taken place subsequently with respect to the implementation of the recommendations contained in the report of the Inspectors.

7. Annex I of document A/5727/Add.2 outlines the actions which have already been taken, or are in process, for the purpose of vesting increased responsibility in the commissions, including delegated authority to act as executing agency with respect to regional and subregional programmes in cases where such delegation is requested by the countries concerned and recommended by the Administrator of UNDP. 8/ Extensive reorganization and strengthening of the commissions' internal structures has been undertaken. Within each region there has taken place a considerable decentralization and delegation of authority to subregional offices. Increasing operational responsibility is being progressively assumed by the commissions. Joint divisions with FAO, UNIDO and other bodies have been established. The UNDATs have been made the responsibility of the regional commissions in the three regions where these teams exist. Each of the regional commissions has also established a direct policy co-ordination unit for the purpose of ensuring more effective co-ordination of effort among the various organizational units within the commission itself and also with respect to the related activities of other bodies.

8. Finally, the Secretary-General has taken note of the thrust of the recommendations contained in the report of the Group of Experts on the Restructuring of the Economic and Social Sectors of the United Nations System, 9/ which concur in the necessity of strengthening and adding to the responsibilities of the regional commissions with respect to:

- (a) Fact-finding, evaluation and analysis;
- (b) Integrated policy-making at the regional level;

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5/ E/5607/Add.1, of 20 January 1975, para. 43.

6/ E/5801, of 28 May 1976.

7/ E/5727/Add.2, of 22 June 1976.

8/ See Economic and Social Council resolution 1952 (LIX), of 23 July 1975, preamble and para. 5; also E/5801, paras. 37 and 43-48.

9/ E/AC.62/9, para. 163.

(c) Policy-guidance and co-ordination of regional operational activities.

These recommendations have received favourable attention in the discussions which have taken place in the meetings of the Ad Hoc Committee which have been held to date. While the Committee has not yet reported, it would appear to be safe to assume that it will endorse the view, put forward with almost complete unanimity in the reports already referred to, that the regional commissions should be given substantially increased responsibilities for promoting all aspects of economic and social development, and for monitoring and carrying out regional, subregional and even national projects within their respective geographical areas.

9. This being the case, the Secretary-General considers that he is now justified in formally proposing an increase in the level of the posts of Executive Secretary of the regional commissions to reflect and conform to these significantly greater responsibilities. The Secretary-General refrained from putting forward any recommendation on this matter a year ago because he considered that it would be advisable to wait and see to what extent the frequently expressed recommendations to place greater responsibilities on the regional commissions (and, consequently, on the executive secretaries) were working out in practice. He considers that sufficient progress has now been made, and sufficient indications of the future trend evidenced, to justify at this time a firm recommendation that the level of the posts of Executive Secretary of the regional commissions be raised from that of Assistant Secretary-General to Under-Secretary-General, with effect from 1 January 1977.

10. Assistant Secretary-General, Office of Public Information

The original organization of the Secretariat called for the establishment of eight top-level posts, the incumbents of which were directly responsible to the Secretary-General. One of these was the head of the Department of Public Information. All senior posts carried, at that time, the title of Assistant Secretary-General, second only in rank and responsibility to the Secretary-General himself. In the reorganization proposed by the Secretary-General in 1954 (A/2731), the post of head of the Department of Public Information was retained at the top level, the title being changed to Under-Secretary. This arrangement continued until 1967; but in the intervening years, the Department was converted to the Office of Public Information and placed under the over-all supervision of one of the Under-Secretaries-General for Special Political Affairs. In the next reorganization, proposed late in 1967 (A/C.5/1128), the level of the post of head of the Office of Public Information was reduced to Assistant Secretary-General.

11. Since 1972, the Office of Public Information has continued to operate under the direction of an Assistant Secretary-General, who has, however, reported and been directly responsible to the Secretary-General for all aspects of the work of his Office. The workload of the Office has greatly increased in the intervening years since the level of the post was reduced to that of Assistant Secretary-General in 1967. The membership of the United Nations has increased from 123 to 147 and continues to grow. The number of United Nations information centres has, in the same period, gone up from 50 to 56; and the staff of the Office has increased

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correspondingly from 501 to 616. There has been a marked expansion in the variety and diversity of the programmes carried on under United Nations auspices for which supporting information services must be provided. The Office, in addition to its normal responsibilities carries responsibility for the Centre for Economic and Social Information and for supplying information support to the increasing number of conferences which the Secretariat of the United Nations is required to organize. Because of these greatly increased responsibilities, the Secretary-General considers that the time has come to restore the Office of Information Services to its original status as a Department and to restore the level of head of the Department to that of Under-Secretary-General, effective 1 January 1977.

12. Deputy High Commissioner for Refugees

At the twenty-eighth session of the General Assembly in 1973, the Secretary-General proposed the upgrading of a number of D-2 posts to the Assistant Secretary-General level. Among these was the post of Deputy High Commissioner for Refugees. The Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions did not, at that time, support, nor did the Fifth Committee or General Assembly approve, the Secretary-General's recommendations. Since that time, two of the former recommendations made by the Secretary-General relating to UNIDO and UNCTAD in 1973 have been approved. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees has now repeated his recommendation that the post of his Deputy be raised to the level of Assistant Secretary-General, and the Secretary-General strongly endorses and supports this proposal.

13. In support of this recommendation, it must be noted that both in the areas of protecting refugees and in the financing and implementation of assistance programmes, the High Commissioner must rely entirely on the goodwill and support of Governments and organizations, since his entire programme, except for administrative support services, is financed from voluntary contributions. It is therefore essential that the High Commissioner himself spend considerable periods of time away from Headquarters not only to acquaint himself with activities in the field and to make certain that they are achieving their objectives but also in order to convince Governments and private organizations of the need for their full support of the High Commissioner's programme and for the requisite financial contributions. Because the nature of the problems facing UNHCR is normally politically delicate, the High Commissioner is furthermore frequently required to visit Governments both of countries of origin and of countries of asylum and make representations to assure that the interests and, indeed, the lives of refugees are safeguarded. During these frequent and, at times, protracted absences of the High Commissioner, the Deputy High Commissioner is fully in charge of UNHCR activities and deals with the political and administrative problems facing the Office.

14. Moreover, the Deputy High Commissioner has, at all times, an important co-ordination and supervisory role in respect of the two main functional divisions of the Office of UNHCR, i.e., the Protection Division and Assistance Division, each of which is headed by a Director at the D-2 level.

15. Since the Deputy High Commissioner has the responsibility of co-ordinating

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and supervising the work of these two divisions, whose Directors are also at the D-2 level, and since, in addition, he is frequently called upon in the absence of the High Commissioner to be responsible for the activities of the entire Office and, in that capacity, to conduct high-level negotiations on difficult and sensitive matters with governmental and other representatives, it is only fitting that the difference in the level of his responsibilities, compared to those of his subordinates, be recognized by converting the level of the post of Deputy High Commissioner of Refugees from the D-2 to the Assistant Secretary-General level, effective 1 January 1977.

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