



UNITED NATIONS
GENERAL
ASSEMBLY



Distr.
GENERAL

A/10008/Add.21
10 December 1975

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

Thirtieth session
Agenda items 60 and 96

FOOD PROBLEMS

PROPOSED PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 1976-1977
AND MEDIUM-TERM PLAN FOR THE PERIOD 1976-1979

Revised estimates for section 1, Offices of the
Secretary-General - The World Food Council

Twenty-second report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and
Budgetary Questions to the General Assembly at its thirtieth session

1. The Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions has considered the Secretary-General's revised estimates for the World Food Council under section 1 of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1976-1977 (A/C.5/1723). The Secretary-General estimates that the total costs of this programme would amount to \$1,441,400 under the regular budget, in addition to \$779,000 in extrabudgetary resources, of which \$600,000 would come from FAO and \$179,000 from IBRD. The preparation of these budget estimates followed the decisions of the World Food Council at its first session, which took place from 23 to 27 June 1975.
2. The Advisory Committee recalls that, when the General Assembly decided to establish the World Food Council as an organ of the United Nations, it requested the Secretary-General, in consultation with the Director-General of FAO, to take immediate action to set up a secretariat for the Council (resolution 3348 (XXIX)). The General Assembly also decided that the first session of the Council would be held before July 1975. In his statement on administrative and financial implications (A/C.5/1664), the Secretary-General estimated the financial implications of convening the first session at \$62,000 and stated that the staff and other resources which would be required would be determined after completing the necessary consultations. The amount of \$62,000 was duly appropriated by the General Assembly.

3. In May 1975, the Secretary-General informed the Advisory Committee that, based on the conclusion of the consultations referred to above, he was proposing the establishment of what he described as a minimum interim secretariat with 10 Professional and 10 General Service posts under the authority of an Executive Director, to be financed as follows: the post of Executive Director, four Professional and six General Service posts by the United Nations; four Professional (including one Deputy Executive Director) and four General Service posts by FAO; and two Professional posts (including one Deputy Executive Director) by IBRD. The Secretary-General indicated that FAO had also agreed to provide all necessary office space, furniture and supplies during 1975. The Secretary-General estimated that the related cost of the interim secretariat to be met from the regular budget would be \$277,600 for the biennium 1974-1975. The Advisory Committee accordingly concurred in the Secretary-General's request to enter into commitments under section 2 in the amount of \$277,600 under the terms of resolution 3196 (XXVIII) on unforeseen and extraordinary expenses for the biennium 1974-1975. The Committee deferred consideration of the Secretary-General's proposal to have the post of Executive Director established at the Under-Secretary-General level and recommended that he resubmit that proposal after the World Food Council had met and defined more clearly the activities to be undertaken by the proposed secretariat. In September 1975, the Advisory Committee considered the latter question and concluded that the appropriate level for the post of Executive Director was Assistant Secretary-General.

4. The Secretary-General has included in his initial programme budget proposals for the biennium 1976-1977 a provisional amount of \$62,000, corresponding to the appropriation for 1974-1975. 1/

5. With regard to the revised estimates for the World Food Council (A/C.5/1723), the Advisory Committee was informed by the representatives of the Secretary-General that the draft agreement on the administrative and financial arrangements which govern the participation of FAO in the World Food Council programme had not yet been formalized and that the \$600,000 included in the budget estimates as part of FAO's contribution to the operation of the World Food Council in 1976-1977 had not yet been confirmed. This amount represents 27 per cent of the total estimated costs of the programme from all sources of funds. It was indicated to the Committee that \$507,000 of the \$600,000 to be contributed by FAO would be used to pay the salaries and common staff costs of the four Professional and four General Service staff members on loan by FAO to the Council secretariat. The balance includes \$50,000 in travel costs and \$43,000 for conference servicing.

1/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Thirtieth Session, Supplement No. 6 (A/10006), vol. I, table 1-4 and paras. 1.36 and 1.37.

6. The Advisory Committee examined the Secretary-General's estimates in the light of the programme of action as determined by the World Food Council at its first session 2/ and supplementary information provided by the Secretary-General's representatives. The Committee notes in particular that the Council agreed that:

(a) Its secretariat "... should be small and of high professional competence and that it should draw fully on the expertise of other agencies, especially FAO"; 3/

(b) Its secretariat "... should not undertake major research efforts on its own. For such studies it should rely upon the bodies responsible for the subjects ..."; 4/

(c) "... that longer-term guidelines for the secretariat's programme of work could be laid down only after the Council itself had defined its functions and mode of operation more clearly in the light of the report of the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Rules of Procedure." 5/

The Secretary-General stated (A/C.5/1723, para. 4) that the task of the Ad Hoc Working Group referred to in subparagraph (c) above would not be completed before early in 1976.

7. In the revised programme budget of the World Food Council for the next biennium, the Secretary-General proposes an increase in the number of the Council secretariat staff financed under the regular budget of the United Nations. The number and level of posts to be provided by FAO and IBRD would remain the same for the next biennium. The Secretary-General requests the addition of four Professional and four General Service posts (A/C.5/1723, paras. 10 and 11), as follows:

- 2 P-5 posts for senior economists;
- 1 P-4 post for an information officer;
- 1 P-4 post for a liaison officer in New York;
- 1 General Service post for a registry clerk;
- 1 General Service post for an administrative assistant;
- 2 General Service posts for secretaries.

8. The Advisory Committee recommends acceptance of the addition of one P-5 post for a senior economist. It sees no justification for the second P-5 post for a senior economist, especially in view of the information provided by the Secretary-General's representatives that one of the two senior staff to be provided by

2/ Ibid., Supplement No. 19 (A/10019), chap. V.

3/ Ibid., para. 64.

4/ Ibid., para. 65.

5/ Ibid., para. 71.

IBRD in 1975 would be made available to the Council's secretariat in 1976. The Advisory Committee is of the opinion that the level of information services to be required should be carried out within resources available to the Office of Public Information. Accordingly, the Advisory Committee does not concur in the Secretary-General's request for one P-4 post for an information officer. With respect to the P-4 post requested for a liaison officer in New York, the Advisory Committee is not convinced that this request is warranted at this stage of operations. The Committee has no objection to the addition of one out of the four General Service posts requested, namely, the General Service post for a registry clerk. The Committee's recommendation not to approve one P-5, two P-4 and three General Service posts would result in a total reduction of \$173,000 in salaries and common staff costs net of staff assessment.

9. The Secretary-General's estimates for the World Food Council for the next biennium include \$408,400 for temporary assistance for meetings (table 1-1). The Advisory Committee was informed that this amount would cover the cost of processing documentation for all four sessions of the World Food Council to be held during 1976-1977 and the costs of interpretation and temporary assistance for meetings for one of the four sessions. It is expected that FAO in turn would meet the costs of interpretation and temporary assistance for meetings of the other three sessions.

10. Information provided to the Advisory Committee by the Secretary-General's representatives on the estimated expenditure for temporary assistance for meetings shows a total of \$402,900 and not \$408,400, as indicated in table 1-1. The breakdown is as follows:

(a) \$47,500 for interpretation and temporary assistance for one session out of four;

(b) \$252,800 for processing documentation for the four sessions at \$63,200 per session;

(c) \$42,000 for the meeting of the Ad Hoc Working Group on Rules of Procedure scheduled to be held in February 1976;

(d) \$60,600 for inflation cost to be added to the total of (a), (b) and (c) at the rate of 9 per cent in 1976 and 8 per cent in 1977.

11. The information provided under (a) and (b) above does not differentiate between the expenses of the four sessions of the World Food Council to be held in 1976 and 1977. The Advisory Committee was informed, however, that the four sessions would consist of one preparatory session of five days and one ministerial session of two days per year; it is assumed that four meetings will be held every day and that there will be five working languages (Arabic, English, French, Russian and Spanish).

12. The Advisory Committee inquired into the cost of Arabic language services. While no detailed figures were provided to the Committee, the order of magnitude would seem to be \$10,000 for interpretation and \$14,000 for documentation

/...

per meeting, or a total of some \$66,000 for the United Nations. The Committee notes in this connexion that Arabic was not an official and working language of the Council at its first session, but that the Council's report to the General Assembly contains a recommendation that the World Food Council be authorized to adopt Arabic as an official and working language of the Council, beginning at the second session. 6/ At its 1706th meeting on 27 November 1975, the Second Committee recommended that the General Assembly take note of the report of the Council (A/10394, para. 10). But, as no statement of the financial implications of the Council's recommendation was before the Second Committee as required under rule 153 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly 7/ it is a moot point whether the recommendation has in fact been approved. In the circumstances, the Advisory Committee recommends that the Fifth Committee may wish to include a recommendation on this point in its own report to the General Assembly.

13. The Committee notes that a costing exercise which equates the requirements of a preparatory session and a ministerial session tends to overstate the total costs. The Committee is also of the opinion that the volume of documentation assumed for each session has been overestimated (200 pages of pre-session, 100 pages in-session and 50 pages post-session), especially in view of the agreement in the Council that only a few problems should be put on the agenda of any Council session, that reporting should be concise, and that it was essential to follow a selective approach. 8/

14. On the basis of the above observations, the Advisory Committee recommends that the Secretary-General's estimates for temporary assistance for meetings under the regular budget be reduced by \$102,900, that is from \$402,900 (as corrected from \$408,400 in table 1-1) to \$300,000.

15. Table 1-1 of the revised estimates indicates that the funds allocated for travel of representatives and other official travel under the regular budget for 1976-1977 total \$153,000. This is in addition to the \$75,000 for travel on official business from extrabudgetary resources. Thus, the total allocations for travel under the World Food Council programme amount to \$228,000 or 10.2 per cent of the over-all estimates.

16. The travel funds in question are allocated separately between the United Nations, FAO and IBRD as follows:

(a) Under the regular budget: \$117,700 is provided for travel of staff and \$35,000 for travel of the President of the Council;

(b) Under extrabudgetary resources: \$50,000 for travel of staff on loan from FAO, and \$25,000 for travel of staff on loan from IBRD.

6/ Ibid., para. 25.

7/ A statement of such implications was submitted to the Council (ibid., para. 24), but the amount involved is not stated in the Council's report.

8/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Thirtieth Session, Supplement No. 19 (A/10019), paras. 67, 68 and 71.

17. The Advisory Committee cautions against excessive travel. It recommends that such travel should be related to the needs of the programme of the World Food Council and its secretariat. It urges that the Secretary-General take measures to ensure strict economy and the most efficient management of travel funds under the programme. The Committee is also of the opinion that all travel funds should be administered as a unit for the sake of better management and co-ordination.

18. On the basis of the foregoing and bearing in mind the Committee's recommendations on the number of new posts (para. 8 above) and General Assembly resolution 3048 (XXVII) on the use of travel funds, the Advisory Committee recommends that the Secretary-General's estimates for travel under the regular budget be reduced by \$26,000, that is, from \$153,000 to \$127,000.

19. On the basis of its conclusions in paragraphs 8, 14 and 18 above, the Advisory Committee recommends a reduction of \$307,000 for section 1, Offices of the Secretary-General - World Food Council. Hence the Committee recommends an estimate of \$1,134,000 for this programme. Inasmuch as \$62,000 is already included in the estimates for section 1 approved by the Fifth Committee in first reading, the additional requirements amount to \$1,072,000, net of staff assessment.
