

UNITED NATIONS  
GENERAL  
ASSEMBLY



Distr.  
GENERAL

A/C.5/1681  
22 September 1975

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

Thirtieth session  
FIFTH COMMITTEE  
Agenda item 96

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

Use of experts and consultants in the United Nations

Report of the Secretary-General

1. During the twenty-ninth session of the General Assembly, the Fifth Committee considered reports submitted by the Joint Inspection Unit (A/9112 and Corr.1), the Secretary-General (A/9112/Add.1 and A/C.5/1611) and the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (A/9112/Add.2) on the use by the United Nations of experts and consultants.

2. The decision taken by the Fifth Committee by consensus at its 1642nd meeting, 1/ as endorsed by the General Assembly at its 2325th plenary meeting, was to the following effect:

(a) That the recommendations of the Joint Inspection Unit, as modified by the related comments and observations of the Advisory Committee, should be taken fully into account in the preparation and implementation of the comprehensive system for the management of the use of outside expertise which the Secretary-General had undertaken to issue in the form of codified administrative instructions applicable to all departments and offices of the Secretariat;

(b) That these instructions should include in particular:

- (i) The requirement that experts and consultants should be recruited only from highly qualified candidates in the specific field in question;
- (ii) The criterion that outside expertise should be resorted to primarily for specific assignments and only for services for

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1/ A/9960, para. 30.

which provision cannot be found within the established staff of the Secretariat for lack of specialized knowledge and/or expertise; and

- (iii) The principle that experts and consultants should be appointed from a wider and more representative number of countries than before and that these should include a large number from the developing countries;

(c) That the Secretary-General should ensure that expenditure for consultant services was maintained within the approved appropriations for this purpose during the biennium 1974-1975 and that no supplementary estimates were presented;

(d) That in future biennial programme budget proposals the estimates under this heading should be prepared with determined restraint, with a view to achieving reductions in the appropriations requested for this purpose;

(e) That in the use of consultant services priority should be given to programmes more directly related to economic and social development; and

(f) That the Secretary-General should present to the General Assembly at its thirtieth session a follow-up report on the implementation of the new system.

3. A preliminary draft of a comprehensive administrative instruction on the use of outside expertise and professional services was completed earlier in 1975. This exercise involved careful definition of the subject-matter, the establishment of general principles and conditions, and the elaboration of improved procedures for the formulation of projects, the selection and engagement of the required outside personnel, the evaluation and certification of the services rendered and the maintenance of comprehensive records, including the compilation by the Office of Financial Services of data on expenditures incurred and by the Office of Personnel of information covering all other characteristics of the engagements entered into. In the interest of arriving at a clearly understood and workable system time was allowed for scrutiny of its various conceptual, administrative and legal aspects by key staff throughout the Secretariat who in practice would be responsible for its implementation, as well as for analysis and evaluation of the views expressed. A final draft is currently in an advanced stage of preparation and it is expected that the instructions will be promulgated on 1 January 1976.

4. In the meanwhile care has been taken to proceed with the selectivity and restraint requested by the General Assembly. In the first progress report on the programme budget for the biennium 1974-1975 the estimates for consultants and experts were maintained at the level of the original appropriations despite the decrease in real value at a number of office locations as a result of variations in the rate of currency exchange and inflation since the initial estimates were calculated early in 1973. The same position will be reflected in the final revised estimates for the current biennium which will be presented to the General Assembly at its current session. In monetary terms, the total amount

of \$6,655,000 requested under this heading by the Secretary-General under the various sections of his proposed programme budget for the biennium 1976-1977 is only \$129,000 less than the total appropriation of \$6,784,000 for the current financial period, a reduction which would seem insignificant in itself. However, in terms of the actual volume of outside services which could be obtained for the residual amount, a very substantial limitation is involved. In fact, just to maintain the purchasing value of the 1974-1975 appropriation an increase of some \$1.1 million would have been required to compensate for the further impact of inflation which, it has been assumed, will occur during the next two years.

5. This implicit reduction in the reliance on outside expertise has been welcomed by the Advisory Committee in paragraph 66 of the preface to its first report on the proposed programme budget and a minor reduction of only \$141,000, 2/ or some 2 per cent of the total credits requested by the Secretary-General, has been proposed. At the same time the Committee has suggested quite rightly that, before entering into commitments even at this reduced level, it would still be necessary to ensure that all the recently restated criteria governing the use of experts or consultants in particular cases will be met. Indeed, stricter scrutiny and control of the nature, purpose and effectiveness of all such engagements to be entered into in the future will be the main intent of the impending new administrative instruction.

6. In conclusion, the Secretary-General wishes to draw attention to the fact that the proposed distribution of credits under this heading during the next biennium will reflect the expressed desire of the General Assembly that priority be given to programmes more directly related to economic and social development. Thus, the total appropriation recommended by the Advisory Committee would be allocated among the main parts of the programme budget as follows:

	<u>Dollars</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
(a) Over-all policy-making, direction and co-ordination	176,000	2.7
(b) Political and Security Council affairs; peace-keeping activities	167,000	2.6
(c) Political affairs, trusteeship and decolonization	56,000	0.8
(d) Economic, social and humanitarian activities	5,651,000	86.8
(e) Legal activities	104,000	1.6
(f) Common services	360,000	5.5
	<u>6,514,000</u>	<u>100.0</u>

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2/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Thirtieth Session, Supplement No. 8 (A/10008).