

United Nations
**GENERAL
ASSEMBLY**

THIRTY-SEVENTH SESSION

*Official Records**



FIFTH COMMITTEE
13th meeting
held on
Friday, 15 October 1982
at 10.30 a.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 13th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. ABRASZEWSKI (Poland)

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

CONTENTS

STATEMENT BY THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

AGENDA ITEM 110: SCALE OF ASSESSMENTS FOR THE APPORTIONMENT OF THE EXPENSES OF
THE ORGANIZATION: 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)

ORGANIZATION OF WORK

* This record is subject to correction. Corrections should be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned *within one week of the date of publication* to the Chief of the Official Records Editing Section, room A-3550, 866 United Nations Plaza (Alcoa Building), and incorporated in a copy of the record.

Corrections will be issued after the end of the session, in a separate fascicle for each Committee.

Distr. GENERAL
A/C.5/37/SR.13
20 October 1982

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

The meeting was called to order at 10:40 a.m.

STATEMENT BY THE SECRETARY GENERAL

1. The SECRETARY-GENERAL said that he was pleased to have a second opportunity in the first year of his term of office to address the Fifth Committee, whose work he considered to be of fundamental importance to the functioning of the Secretariat and indeed of the entire Organization. Earlier in the year, just over two months after taking office, he had had occasion to provide the members of the Fifth Committee with an outline of his thinking in matters of administration and to share with them his thoughts on the nature of the relationship between the Committee and the Secretary-General. He had indicated then that, in view of the common responsibility, he thought it essential that they and he should speak to each other frequently, frankly and openly. It was his wish, as he had then stated, to forge a real partnership between the Fifth Committee and the Secretary-General: it remained his goal to maintain a true, open and continuing dialogue with the Committee.
2. It was in the light of those circumstances that he wished to address the Committee. It was well known that it was not traditional for the Secretary-General to appear before the Fifth Committee in non-budget years, but he wished to pursue the dialogue started in March and to fulfil the commitment he had made to maintaining regular contact.
3. The list of agenda items allocated to the Fifth Committee clearly showed the wide scope of its activities and the importance to the Organization of its deliberations and decisions. Two of the items that had engaged the Committee's attention over the preceding three weeks were very revealing in that regard. On the one hand, an attempt was being made to reach agreement on the manner in which Member States were to contribute in future to meeting the expenses of the Organization. On the other hand, the Committee had scrutinized the way in which resources contributed in the past had been utilized. Between those two extremes, the Committee would, at the current session, consider all the intermediate stages of the administrative process.
4. As a relatively "new" Secretary-General, he wished to evaluate the state of the Secretariat and make some general points that he considered relevant.
5. He wished to say, first of all, with firmness and conviction, that he considered the Secretariat to be one of the most capable and dedicated civil services in the world. He therefore wished to pay tribute once again to the staff of the Organization, valiant men and women from all corners of the globe, who were united in the service of a common cause.
6. Without wishing to detract from that assessment, he was also obliged to say that, as a body, the Secretariat suffered from some of the symptoms which afflicted other bureaucracies and, consequently, required remedies for those ills - corrective actions to remove obstacles to the achievement of greater efficiency.

/...

(The Secretary-General)

7. It was not that he envisaged a radical change in the policy governing the administration of the Secretariat. After all, that policy had developed over the years and, on the whole, had stood the test of time. In any event, however, it would be necessary to have the courage and vision to adapt that policy to changing circumstances. He did not believe in change as an end in itself but, on the other hand, if changes had to be made, they must be made without procrastination and with determination.

8. The Secretariat would be as competent as the officials it was composed of. Consequently, he was resolved to take every measure which could help to improve the quality of the Secretariat until it achieved the high standards set in the Charter. No one could doubt that the principle of securing the highest standards of efficiency, competence and integrity enshrined in the Charter was not only fully compatible with the need for the broadest possible geographical representation but was also inseparable from that need. In that regard, one of the continuing concerns of the Fifth Committee had been the equitable geographical distribution of the staff. In the reports that the Committee will shortly be considering, he trusted that members would discern clear and steady progress towards that goal.

9. The statistics showed an encouraging trend that gave reason to believe that the existing guidelines established by the Assembly would bring the Secretariat closer to the goal of improved geographical distribution. For that purpose, the Office of Personnel Services, acting as a focal point and in full co-operation with the Secretariat as a whole, was developing a "medium term recruitment plan" for the three-year period 1983-1985. The target he planned to achieve was to bring the number of staff from unrepresented or under-represented countries within desirable ranges by 1985 at the latest. Needless to say, in order to reach that target, he would require not only concerted efforts on the part of the entire Secretariat but the very close co-operation of Member States.

10. Progress was also being made, although more slowly than was desirable, in the recruitment of women, since the proportion of female staff amounted to only 22.2 per cent, as against the target of 25 per cent set by the General Assembly for the end of 1982.

11. Next to recruitment, urgent attention must be paid to what had been called personnel administration: the concepts of career, types of appointment and career development. The International Civil Service Commission and the Joint Inspection Unit had reported on those questions in documents which would be before the Committee for consideration. Although the views and positions in those reports differed somewhat on specific points, he was pleased to note that there was a convergence of views on many others, such as the planned approach to career development and the use of occupational groups for that purpose. He fully concurred in the general consensus, reflected in the reports he had mentioned, that recruitment, while a necessary instrument for achieving improved geographical distribution was also crucial to the further improvement of the quality of the Secretariat staff. He would therefore like to see the further development and refinement of competitive methods of selection and their application to an even

/...

(The Secretary-General)

wider extent; he also believed that the systematic application of the concept of occupational groups in the Secretariat's human resources planning was necessary. In perfecting methods of competitive selection, the Secretariat would also make a reassessment of methods currently used in competitive examinations governing the movement of staff from the General Service to the Professional category.

12. As in the case of recruitment, he had asked the Office of Personnel Services to develop a three-year plan of action for the implementation of the personnel policy reforms which had already been adopted by the Assembly after mature consideration. It was also necessary to give urgent attention to the functioning of the existing appeals machinery, so that the considerable backlog of cases could be reviewed and resolved.

13. If the Secretariat staff were to discharge their functions properly, it was essential that they should be guaranteed an environment free from threat or danger to the security of their person and their families. He wished to stress his concern for the protection and safety of international civil servants. In that connection, he expressed his appreciation for the genuine concern shown by the Committee in ensuring respect for the privileges and immunities of international officials, as reflected at the preceding session in General Assembly resolution 36/232. Pursuant to that resolution a report would be submitted to the Assembly reflecting the current situation in that area, particularly with regard to the cases of arrest or detention of staff members of the United Nations family organizations.

14. In his first statement to the Fifth Committee, he had emphasized the importance he attached to relations with the staff in general and the need for effective and competent representation of the staff in their relations with the Administration. In line with that approach, a comprehensive review had recently been undertaken of the relevant provisions of the Staff Regulations and Rules and, as a result it was proposed to revise those provisions in order to reflect fully the current realities of staff-management relations. Amendments to article VIII of the Staff Regulations would be submitted to the Committee in due course.

15. As he had indicated earlier, the guidelines already adopted by the General Assembly on personnel questions enabled the Secretariat to act and obtain the desired results. It now depended on the Secretariat; and he undertook to mobilize it for that purpose. One was therefore prompted to ask whether it might be appropriate to delay the issuance of new guidelines by the Assembly so as to enable the Secretariat to pursue the course agreed upon by all.

16. For his part, he would pursue with all dedication the objective of a highly motivated staff of the highest quality within a context of maximum efficiency. Preparations for the 1984-1985 programme budget proposals had already been begun and in that regard he would require that all possible avenues of redeployment of available resources should be explored before requesting additional resources. Members would no doubt agree as to the need for a thorough analysis of existing and foreseen vacancies and the related need to study staff utilization.

/...

(The Secretary-General)

17. With regard to conditions of service, the Organization - together with the other agencies in the common system - benefited from the advice of the International Civil Service Commission, on the one hand, and the Joint Staff Pension Board, on the other.

18. At the current session the Committee would be considering the reports of those two bodies. They were complex reports and contained numerous recommendations. The Committee would have before it his views or, in the case of matters affecting the entire common system, the collective views of the executive heads of the organizations. One such collective point of view would relate to the important question of the remuneration of staff in the Professional category. He was referring to that issue at the current stage to emphasize his commitment, not only to demanding the best efforts of the staff as a means of achieving a more efficient Secretariat, but, at the same time, to doing all in his power to secure fair and equitable conditions of service.

19. In that regard, he wished to refer to two issues, perhaps of minor importance, but which were of concern to a significant segment of the staff. One was the question of day-care centres, already considered by the Committee at earlier sessions, without any definite conclusions being reached. Because that was a social issue to which he attached importance, he had established a task force within the Secretariat to advise him how best to proceed and, after its recommendations, he would shortly submit a special report for the Committee's consideration.

20. The second was the question of General Service salaries in Geneva, where a dual scale still existed for staff members performing basically the same work - a situation which continued to constitute an irritant in staff-management relations there.

21. During his first meeting with the Committee, he had had occasion to refer to the manner in which work in the United Nations was planned, programmed, budgeted and evaluated. That was a topic which the Committee would be considering under agenda item 104, "Programme planning".

22. Since last meeting with the Committee he had given careful thought to those questions and had taken measures to promote enhanced co-ordination and co-operation between the units of the Secretariat responsible for programming and budgeting.

23. He had thus established a Programme Planning and Budgeting Board which functioned under his Chairmanship or, in his absence, under that of the Director-General for Development and International Economic Co-operation. The Board had already held several meetings and the results achieved were in his view, promising. On the Board's recommendation, he had recently approved the establishment of a Central Monitoring Unit, which would function under the direction of, and be responsible to, the Board. He intended to review thoroughly the experience gained before deciding on any further steps or structural reforms, as he considered it necessary to accumulate more experience with the arrangements in existence.

/...

(The Secretary-General)

24. At the current session the Fifth Committee would receive the report of the Committee of Governmental Experts to Evaluate the Present Structure of the Secretariat in the Administrative, Finance and Personnel Areas, established by the General Assembly at its thirty-fifth session. A few months ago he had occasion to present his views to that Committee on the various issues it had itself identified in its interim report, the preceding year, as requiring further study. Since his views on the subject were clear and were on record, they required no further elaboration. He looked forward with great interest to the report of that Committee and would, if necessary, submit to the Fifth Committee his comments thereon, as requested by the General Assembly.

25. There were two financial items on the Fifth Committee's agenda which were of paramount importance to the Organization. The first had come to be known as the financial emergency of the Organization. In that respect he stressed his concern at the fact that the accumulated liabilities of the Organization continued to increase at an alarming pace, while the problem of delays in the payment of contributions by Governments was by no means resolved. Those factors resulted in the continuation of a most unhealthy financial situation. The second item was that relating to the scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations. He knew full well that the determination of the course of action to be followed was strictly a political decision to be taken by Governments.

26. He appealed to all Member States to undertake to settle that issue in the interests of the Organization. The scale of assessments was the very foundation for the financing of the activities of the Organization, and it was therefore of the greatest importance that an equitable solution, commanding universal agreement, should be found. Of course, he stood ready to provide whatever assistance the Committee might require in that regard.

27. In conclusion, he wished the Committee success in its deliberations and pledged his full co-operation and support, and that of his colleagues in the Secretariat, in order to facilitate its work to the greatest possible extent.

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

28. Mr. FALL OULD MAALOU (Mauritania) said that he did not underestimate the difficulties involved in increasing the fairness and equity of the scale of assessments. He was not convinced, however, that the Committee on Contributions had taken duly into account some of the essential provisions of resolution 36/231 A, in particular the need to assess the real capacity to pay of Member States and the need to avoid excessive variations in individual rates of assessment between two successive scales. As a result, the proposed new scale of assessments provided for large increases or decreases in the assessments of some States. That highlighted the need for more refined economic indicators than per capita income. The failure of the Committee to take into account the special situation of countries whose incomes depended heavily on one or a few products had resulted in a

/...

(Mr. Fall Ould Maaloum, Mauritania)

heavy additional burden for some developing countries, while the assessments of some industrial countries had been substantially reduced. That had accentuated the existing gap between the developed and the developing countries, a key factor which the General Assembly had requested the Committee on Contributions to take specifically into account in seeking to mitigate the burden of the developing countries. Thus, much of what the Assembly had asked the Committee on Contributions to do remained undone.

29. The General Assembly should, in the circumstances, renew its confidence in the Committee on Contributions while instructing it to pursue its efforts to implement the provisions of resolutions 34/6 B and 36/231 A. The length of the Committee's session should be increased so that it would have enough time to perform its task satisfactorily. In addition, the membership of the Committee should be increased to enhance its effectiveness and provide for more equitable geographical representation. The Committee's work would be greatly facilitated if all Member States would provide it with more complete data on their national income.

30. Mr. EZDEMBAT (Mongolia) said that the proposed new scale of assessments was fair and reflected the current state of economic affairs in the world. The Committee on Contributions had faithfully carried out its mandate under General Assembly resolutions 34/6 B and 36/231 A. An important feature of the new scale was that it took into account the interests of the developing countries, as evidenced by the fact that 93 States had been assessed at a rate of 0.3 per cent or lower.

31. Some delegations had argued that inflation should be taken into account in the calculation of the scale of assessments. In the view of his delegation, however, inflation was the result of the economic policies of individual Governments and it was unfair to shift the burden of inflation to other States.

32. His delegation would support the adoption of the proposed new scale of assessments and oppose any attempt to revise the recommendations of the Committee on Contributions.

33. Mr. HICKEY (Australia) regretted that, after three decades of hard work, the Assembly seemed as far away as ever from a workable formula for establishing a scale of assessments. Unless the current impasse was resolved, the Organization might find itself bankrupt. The crisis in the multilateral approach to solving world problems referred to by the Secretary-General, which reflected the crisis of confidence in the United Nations itself, was nowhere more evident than in the Fifth Committee and in the debate on the scale of assessments. There was a disturbing reluctance among Member States to take the fundamental decisions required in order to keep the United Nations functioning.

34. The Australian delegation realized that the Committee on Contributions was an imperfect instrument. He stressed, however, that the contributions mechanism was not designed as a means of redistributing wealth but was simply a procedural means of determining the financial obligations of Member States. It was in the

/...

(Mr. Hickey, Australia)

development programmes, which were substantially funded by voluntary contributions, that the real process of assistance took place, and that was where the developing countries should be seeking justice and equity. He noted in that connection that Australia's contributions to UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA and the like had risen annually.

35. Under the new scale recommended, the assessment of the OECD member countries was increased from 71.81 to 73.60 per cent. There was also a marginal increase in the developing countries' share, with the OPEC group expected to pay most of it and the assessments of the other developing countries remaining fairly static. China's assessment was reduced, as was the assessment for the USSR and eastern Europe, which declined from 16.97 to 15.18 per cent.

36. Several points emerged from those figures. The OECD countries were bearing a massive share of the budget. Even though they were the richest, a situation which 24 countries paid for nearly three fourths of the budget was inherently flawed, and came dangerously close to taxation without adequate representation. If the developing countries felt that they too were being asked to shoulder too great a burden, they should look for redress to the socialist group, whose contributions had been consistently reduced.

37. China was a special case: it had paid over the scale for many years, and it was entirely appropriate that its assessment should have been reduced in the last few years from 5.50 per cent to 0.81 per cent. Nevertheless, there were certain consequences. In 1979, China had shed the percentage points which it had previously accepted and which had gone essentially to the relief of developed countries. As a gesture of generosity at the time, it had not insisted on a similar distribution of excess points to developing countries but had agreed to retain them temporarily. Under the new scale, it would be assessed nearer to its machine scale. The points it had agreed to absorb in 1979 were to be distributed, but not, as would have been the case in 1979, to the developing countries alone. Instead, they were distributed across the membership as a whole. In a sense, the OECD was having to pay twice. Its member countries had picked up their share of China's excess points in 1979 and would pick up the major share of the remaining excess points under the recommended scale.

38. The work of the Committee on Contributions was acknowledged to be sensitive, complex and difficult. Though not all delegations were happy with the result, it was probably as good as could be obtained. The Australian delegation saw no merit in establishing another working group when the Fifth Committee already had a body of experts whose work should not be impugned even if some countries found themselves penalized by the new scales.

39. The difficulties encountered by the Committee on Contributions at its last session owed much to the adoption by the Fifth Committee of resolution 36/231 A, despite the strong resistance of the major contributors, including Australia. The resolution had narrowed the scope of the Committee on Contributions to exercise independent judgement, and had forced it to factor new abstractions, many of which were not measurable, into its calculations. Nor had the Committee been helped by the failure of many States to provide accurate statistical and other information.

/...

(Mr. Hickey, Australia)

40. No system could satisfy the claims of every country or group of countries. Inadequate and unrealistic statistics, fluctuations in currency exchanges, inflation rates and so on, would always render whatever formula was used imperfect. The Australian expert on the Committee on Contributions, though disappointed by its failure to achieve more, had nevertheless concluded that it had done as much as it could. The Australian Government was also disposed to accept the new scale, while acknowledging its imperfections.

41. The Brazilian representative, who was also an expert member of the Committee on Contributions, had commented during the current discussion on the Australian assessment. The fact was that because of a gross statistical error on the part of the Secretariat, Australia had been penalized and over-assessed in the current scale. The Committee on Contributions, recognizing the error, had offered an arrangement in the new scale that would partly offset the earlier disadvantage and, although it would not compensate to the full for the error, Australia was prepared to accept that solution.

42. The Brazilian representative had also raised the question of retroactivity. The problem involved, however, was not one of a new principle applied retroactively, but the erroneous application of a principle that had remained constant; the mistake had been freely acknowledged by the Secretariat and the Fifth Committee. What had been proposed for Australia was not mitigation. Indeed, in the much reduced mitigation process in which the Committee had been able to engage, Australia had been one of the very few countries to absorb points.

43. Australia was convinced that the guiding principle in drawing up the scale of assessments must be capacity to pay. Every departure from that principle with respect to one State led to a distortion in respect of others and every distortion in the scale as whole led to even greater distortion at the time of the next scale. Special cases and situations should be the exception rather than the rule and should be taken into account very sparingly, in fairness to the membership as a whole. In the short term, the Fifth Committee had no alternative but to accept the scale recommended to it. For the future, however, it should formulate terms of reference that would restore objectivity to the calculations, thereby facilitating the work both of the Committee on Contributions and of the General Assembly.

44. Mr. MEZUI-MEZE (Gabon) said that at its thirty-sixth session the General Assembly had requested the Committee on Contributions to take steps to submit at the current session a detailed study that would give a clearer picture of the capacity of Member States to pay based on a number of criteria. The scale that the Committee had recommended would result in an increase in the overall share paid by the developing countries. Gabon's contribution was already increasing steadily as a result of too much importance being attached in determining assessments to such criteria as per capita national income and oil production, at the expense of other more characteristic features of the real state of affairs. In the circumstances, the delegation of Gabon was reluctant to approve the Committee's recommendations and felt they should be reviewed as part of a new study aimed at making the level of contributions more acceptable.

/...

45. Mr. MIYAKANA (Japan) said that his delegation shared the concern that had been expressed about the way the debate was proceeding. Although the report of the Committee on Contributions reflected a sincere effort to work out a fair scale of assessments in accordance with resolution 36/231 A within the limited time afforded, opinion in the Fifth Committee was sharply divided on its recommendations. Some of the delegations which had voted for the resolution expressed strong opposition to the proposed new scale, although it had been worked out largely in accordance with the guidelines set out in the resolution.

46. The Japanese delegation was increasingly convinced that the problem confronting the Fifth Committee stemmed largely from the process whereby resolution 36/231 A had been formulated and adopted. Japan had voted against the resolution on several grounds. First, the General Assembly should have confined itself to policy instead of laying down rigid guidelines. The criticism that the Committee on Contributions had failed to carry out its mandate under resolution 36/231 A was largely the result of those rigid guidelines. Secondly, the method of calculating the scale of assessments on the sole basis of national income and population statistics was neither comprehensive nor fair, and should be supplemented by alternative methods of assessing real capacity to pay. Furthermore, there should be guidelines for the collection and presentation of statistics by Member States. Those factors had been incorporated in the resolution but the Committee on Contributions had been unable to deal with them in the time available. Thirdly, in respect of measures for avoiding excessive variations in successive scales, operative paragraph 4 (c) of the resolution referred only to increases in individual rates, although the Japanese delegation had stressed the need to retain the concept of both negative and positive variations. Fourthly, it had been pointed out during the discussion of the scale at the thirty-sixth session that the proposed revision of the low per capita income formula would largely benefit the middle-income countries, a prediction that was borne out in the current report of the Committee on Contributions. Lastly, the Japanese delegation had felt it was essential that every effort should be made to reach a decision by consensus. That advice had not been heeded, and the recourse to voting in the Fifth Committee was one of the underlying reasons for the failure of the Committee on Contributions to make unanimous recommendations at its most recent session.

47. On the question whether the current system of determining assessment and the proposed new scale for 1983-1985 accurately reflected Member States' real ability to pay, he said that, from the beginning the expenses of the Organization had been broadly apportioned according to the principle of capacity to pay. There were, however, considerable shortcomings in the system of calculating that capacity on the basis of the national income data submitted by Governments. The Japanese delegation had consistently held that assessments should be based on the comprehensive capacity of a nation to pay, taking into account not only national income, which merely reflected the flow of income, but other economic and social indicators, such as accumulated wealth, real ability to contribute to the United Nations. In countries whose economies had grown rapidly over a short period, such as Japan, the flow of income had also increased rapidly and under the current system the use of national income statistics had resulted in an extremely sharp rise in the rate of assessment. In the last 10 years, Japan's assessment had

(Mr. Miyakana, Japan)

nearly tripled, going from 3.78 per cent to 9.58 per cent. Such countries, however, generally had insufficient accumulated wealth and were forced to allocate a larger portion of their national income to social capital formation and improvement of the infrastructure than the more firmly established developed countries. It was inequitable, therefore, that the rate of increase in national income should be the sole determinant of real capacity to pay. The extension of the base period, although it had helped to reflect that capacity more adequately, could not serve as a substitute for a system which based the calculation of capacity to pay on both national income and accumulated wealth. The Japanese delegation welcomed the Committee's efforts to study alternative methods but was disappointed with the progress made so far in that regard. It hoped that the Committee would continue to study the matter in depth at its next session, so that at least some progress would be made towards establishing a better and more equitable method of measuring real capacity to pay.

48. The Japanese delegation had been consistently in favour of restricting excessive variations, both positive and negative, between successive scales, a concept which had been articulated in successive General Assembly resolutions, including the preamble of resolution 36/231 A. Because operative paragraph 4 (c) of the resolution was, as a result of inconsistency, limited to excessive increases between scales, many countries had been given excessive reductions, with the result that the overall balance of the scale was disturbed. The centrally planned economies were to receive most of the benefits resulting from an increased burden that was to be shared by the OECD countries and the oil-producing countries. Furthermore, the mitigation process was intended to cushion the substantial shift of the burden to countries above the low per capita income limit. If the General Assembly had acted appropriately, the overall balance of the scale would have been more equitable and acceptable. It was important, therefore, to maintain the concept of restricting excessive variations, both positive and negative.

49. As far as the effect of the low per capita income formula was concerned, he noted that, according to paragraph 24 of the report, countries with a per capita income below \$2,100 benefited from a shift of 9.50 per cent away from them. Thus, reasonable attention had been paid to the interest of developing countries. As the table in paragraph 24 showed, many middle income countries were among the primary beneficiaries. Also, since the method of calculating the formula had been revised so that reductions awarded to countries below the limit were compensated by additions to the national income figures of countries above the limit, those below the income limit enjoyed a dual benefit. Paragraph 37 of the report showed that the proposed new scale would increase the assessment of the Group of 77 as a whole by 0.85 per cent, but most of that increase came from the increased burden on the oil-producing countries. Moreover, it was offset by substantial reductions for many developing countries, so that the total increase for non-oil-producing developing countries was only 0.17 per cent.

50. The striking and constant decline of the share to be borne by the centrally planned economies was a matter of continuing concern to the Japanese delegation. The inherent difficulty of comparing the national income of market economy

/...

(Mr. Miyakana, Japan)

countries with that of countries with centrally planned economies tended to cause inequities in the assessments. The Secretary-General should continue his study of the comparability of the two systems of national accounts and should provide additional suggestions to help the Committee on Contributions to devise a methodology for the collection of comparable data and a more acceptable and equitable formula for comparing the two systems.

51. The Japanese delegation also shared the concern about the further decline in the proposed share to be borne by the permanent members of the Security Council. The privileges accorded to those permanent members should be accompanied by obligations. The General Assembly should consider providing guidelines to the Committee on Contributions that would ensure that their obligations corresponded to their privileges or alternatively, it should consider introducing a second ceiling on rates of assessment for States which did not enjoy such privileges.

52. The increase of 0.75 per cent in Japan's proposed assessment was excessive. Even so, there had been some criticism of the mitigation accorded, although it was justifiable and reasonable. In restricting variations in individual rates of assessment, it was important to take into account the effects that sudden changes in the scale of assessments might have on Member States. Given the prevailing budgetary constraints, large increases, together with the sharp decrease in the rates of assessment for certain groups of countries, might have serious implications for voluntary contributions.

53. In conclusion, he said that the Fifth Committee should as far as possible respect the results of the work done by the Committee on Contributions. However, the proposed scale needed many improvements if the financial burden was to be more equitably shared. The Japanese delegation also felt that the Fifth Committee should continue to rely on the expert advice of the Committee on Contributions in view of the complexity of the work involved. It was important to leave the work of formulating the scale to the Committee. Japan could therefore not agree to the suggestion that the Fifth Committee, through a working group or informal consultations, should negotiate individual rates of assessment and make detailed adjustments. It could also not support the proposal to expand the membership of the Committee on Contributions. The difficulties encountered by the Committee in agreeing on an acceptable scale lay not in its size or its membership but in the nature of the problem.

54. Mr. MEMMI (Tunisia) congratulated the Chairman of the Committee on Contributions and its members on their successful accomplishment of a difficult task. Although there were some inadequacies in the proposed scale which should be corrected, it ought to prove acceptable to most developing and developed countries. It was unfortunate that in some cases the absence of accurate and verifiable information had made the Committee's work more difficult.

55. The mandate of the Committee on Contributions had been laid down in General Assembly resolution 36/231 A which outlined certain criteria and principles on which the new scale of assessment was to be based. That resolution had been put

/...

(Mr. Memmi, Tunisia)

forward by the Group of 77 after protracted discussion and lengthy negotiations with other groups of countries. It had been adopted over the opposition of the Western countries and the socialist States. Some delegations felt now that the work of the experts on the Committee on Contributions had been unduly restricted by the provisions of that resolution. Others were unable to accept the proposed increase in the assessment of the OPEC countries, or the decline in the share of the socialist countries.

56. The results of the proposed new scale were set out in paragraph 37 of the Committee's report. A total of 93 Member States, as against 89 Members in 1979, were assessed at or below 0.03 per cent. The assessment of the Group of 77 had increased since the last scale to 9.82 per cent, largely owing to the increase in the assessment of the OPEC countries. The assessment of the OECD countries had increased to 73.60 per cent. Only the centrally planned economies, and China, whose assessment was reduced to 0.81 per cent, benefited from a decline.

57. The increased expenses of the Organization were the result of its expanding activities, many of them forced upon it by the deterioration of the world economy. The Committee on Contributions had carried out the mandate it had been given to the best of its ability and deserved commendation. The scale recommended should be accepted, subject to a few minor changes made in accordance with the provisions of operative paragraph 4 (c) of resolution 36/231 A. That review should be undertaken by the Committee on Contributions itself, with the assistance of any other experts it wished to invite, rather than a working group of the Fifth Committee. The Fifth Committee should however recommend the continuation of the study referred to in operative paragraph 3 of the resolution. A thorough study on alternative methods could help the Committee on Contributions to minimize any inequities in the scale of assessments for the next period, 1986-1988. The Tunisian delegation would be ready to co-operate in any proposal to have the recommended scale adopted by consensus.

58. Mr. AL-SALMANI (Oman) said that the world economic situation was deteriorating steadily and the economies of the developing countries were continuing to decline as a result of the restrictions placed on their trade by the developed countries and refusals to transfer technology. Although the economies of the developed countries were continuing to develop rapidly, the developing countries were being held back. Despite the collective conviction of Member States that a means must be found of assisting the developing countries, the Committee on Contributions had not taken their needs into consideration in calculating the proposed new scale of assessments. Increases in the per capita national income of developing countries did not necessarily indicate increased capacity to pay: many of them were expending large amounts on social improvements and infrastructure. It was essential, therefore, for additional parameters to be used in the calculations.

59. The arguments of those States which rejected the proposed new scale of assessments were well-founded. It was unreasonable that the assessments of the developing countries should have been increased while those of certain industrialized countries had been reduced. One of the aims of the developing

/...

(Mr. Al-Salmāni, Oman)

countries was to attain self-sufficiency. Oman in particular was doing all that it could to achieve self-reliant development. It had always paid its contribution to the regular budget, and at the same time it had made large voluntary contributions to the various United Nations development programmes because it believed in their importance. The proposals of the Committee on Contributions were contrary to the provisions of General Assembly resolution 36/231 A, and were therefore not acceptable.

60. The delegation of Oman was in favour of the proposal to set up an open-ended working group to help the Committee on Contributions carry out its task more effectively, and was ready to co-operate in arriving at a solution which would be satisfactory to the majority of Member States.

61. Mr. de BURGOS-CABAL (Brazil) said that the Soviet representative had raised some doubts and objections as to the validity of the facts that he (Mr. de Burgos-Cabal) had mentioned in his previous statement on this scale of assessments. He would be more than happy to remove the former and refute the latter once he had obtained a copy of the Soviet statement. Until that time, he wished to reserve his right of reply. He also wished to reserve the right to reply to the excessive language used by the Australian delegation in responding to his analysis of the sharp reduction in Australia's assessed contribution.

62. Mr. PAPENDORP (United States of America), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that in a statement made at the previous meeting of the Committee, the Soviet representative had made certain highly intemperate remarks in connection with the statement made by the United States delegation on 8 October 1982, and had alluded personally to the member of the delegation who had delivered that statement.

63. The nature of the Soviet representative's remarks allowed the Fifth Committee to judge for itself who was and who was not politicizing the discussion on the scale of assessments. His own reaction to the diatribe was to say that "what you do speaks so loudly that I cannot hear what you say". He would leave it to the two and a half million Afghan refugees who had fled from the Soviet occupation of their country to endorse the Soviet delegation's description of Soviet foreign policy as "peace-loving". He would leave it to the peoples of Eastern Europe, living cheek by jowl with Soviet conventional military hardware and occupation forces thinly disguised as "allies", and the peoples of Western Europe within range of the SS-20 missile, to comment on who was in what arms race. And he would leave it to the information provided by the Committee on Contributions itself, in document A/36/11, to allow members of the Fifth Committee the opportunity to judge who was and who was not "underpaying" assessments to the United Nations.

64. In his speech to the General Assembly at the second special session devoted to disarmament, President Reagan had proposed an initiative to improve reporting on military expenditures as a step towards the goal of disarmament. With such an improvement, the emptiness of the Soviet representative's remarks concerning his country's arms expenditures would be clearer. For the moment, unfortunately, the Soviet situation could be seen only as if through a glass, darkly. Accepting,

/...

(Mr. Papendorp, United States)

however, the Soviet delegation's probably unintentional compliment about the United States knowledge of the Soviet economy, he directed attention to the data published by the United States Arms Control and Disarmament Agency (ACDA) in a report on world military expenditures and arms transfers, 1970-1979.

65. One delegation had already suggested that the scale of assessments should perhaps be based on military expenditures rather than national income data. He did not necessarily wish to endorse that idea, but pointed out that, by ACDA's calculations, the Soviet Union accounted for 31.96 per cent of worldwide expenditure on defence, compared with 21.54 per cent for the United States. Those figures contrasted markedly with the almost exactly inverse relationship between the two countries' respective shares of global gross domestic product - 11.80 per cent for the Soviet Union, and 22.80 per cent for the United States - or even the total proposed assessments of 12.02 per cent for the three Soviet Republics against the United States share of 25 per cent.

66. As to the military, the United States was currently spending less on defence as a percentage of its gross national product than at any time since immediately before the North Korean invasion. Its total defence expenditure had amounted to 5.5 per cent of GNP for the fiscal year 1981, as opposed to some 8 per cent in the 1950s and 1960s. Over the same period, as far as could be determined, the Soviet Union had consistently spent well over 10 per cent of its GNP on defence. Soviet outlays on strategic offensive weapons had been nearly double those of the United States over the past decade, and the Soviet Union had twice as many personnel under arms as the United States.

67. The Soviet representative had made some highly contentious and transparent remarks about the General Assembly resolution which determined that it was not in the interests of the United Nations for it to be too dependent financially on any one Member State. It had been suggested that the Soviet Union was bearing more than its share because of the ceiling placed on rates of assessment, and the Soviet representative had even had the gall to claim that his country was "overpaying" contributions to the Organization. The situation was, in fact, quite different. Of the contributions to the regular budget that the United Nations actually received in 1980, United States payments had amounted to 29.34 per cent; when assessed contributions to peace-keeping operations were added, the United States had paid 31.42 per cent of the total assessment. Neither the Fifth Committee nor the General Assembly nor the International Court of Justice was fooled by the contention of the Soviet Union and its bloc that assessed peace-keeping costs were not subject to Articles 17 and 19 of the Charter. It was the long-standing refusal by the Soviet bloc to pay such assessments that had brought about the financial emergency, to which the Secretary-General had just referred. Where operational activities in the economic, social and humanitarian fields were concerned, the myth of Soviet "overpaying" had even less validity. Voluntary contributions by the United States to the United Nations system in 1980 had amounted to almost \$500,000 million, or 23.32 per cent of the 2.3 billion dollar total. Voluntary contributions by the three Soviet Republics had totally a paltry 10 million dollars and, as the recipient countries knew only too well, were made largely in roubles, a non-convertible currency that was hardly usable outside the USSR.

/...

(Mr. Papendorp, United States)

68. During his offensive remarks about the "black days of United Nations history", the Soviet representative had spoken of "mechanical majorities" supposedly wielded by the United States - a term which those participating in those majorities would reject as resolutely as did the United States delegation. He (Mr. Papendorp) therefore felt no qualms about using the term "Soviet bloc" again, although one delegation had assured him that no such thing existed in the United Nations. Verification of 264 recorded votes in the General Assembly and its Main Committees during the thirty-sixth session had shown that votes by Bulgaria, the German Democratic Republic, Mongolia, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland, Viet Nam, Afghanistan and Cuba had been identical to the Soviet vote in an astonishing 97.3 per cent of cases.

69. In such remarks, the Soviet representative was once again indulging in that peculiar totalitarian inversion of reality whereby a "peace-loving" State accounted for nearly one third of world military expenditure, the paltry Soviet contribution to the United Nations became "overpaying", and the leader of the only automatic voting bloc in the United Nations could accuse others of "mechanical majorities". The facts were precisely the opposite.

70. Mr. GRODSKY (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that the statement by the United States representative had once again been full of deliberately misleading statements about the Soviet Union and the countries of the socialist community, and had touched upon numerous subjects that had nothing to do with the Fifth Committee's programme of work. Such statements by representatives of the United States were now to be heard, of course, in most of the Main Committees of the General Assembly, but the attempt to discuss missiles and disarmament in the Fifth Committee should reveal to other Committee members just how strange the United States delegation's thought processes were. Questions relating to missiles and disarmament belonged to the First Committee, whose members would discuss them knowledgeably and objectively.

71. The United States representative had produced a number of figures relating to the contributions by both the United States and the Soviet Union to the United Nations. Members of the Fifth Committee did not need the United States delegation to tell them those figures - they were readily available in many an official United Nations document. Members should recognize, however, that aid to developing countries could be provided not only through international organizations, but also on a bilateral basis; and as the Soviet representative in the Second Committee had recently stated, the foreign assistance to developing countries supplied by the Soviet Union during the period 1975-1980 amounted to some \$30 billion, or 1 per cent of Soviet GDP. It would be interesting to learn what percentage of United States GDP had been spent on foreign aid over the same period. It should also be borne in mind that transnational corporations based in the United States derived hundreds of times more profit from investments in developing countries than the United States Government gave back in the form of aid.

72. As for the costs of United Nations peace-keeping operations, his delegation's position was clear. Those operations were the result of Israeli aggression against

/...

(Mr. Grodsky, USSR)

Lebanon, and the aggressor should bear the costs. One must wonder, moreover, why the Israelis engaged in such aggression: was it because they had the political and material support of the United States?

73. The Fifth Committee's task was to deal expeditiously with the items on its agenda. Distractions of any kind were unlikely to help it in that task, or to create a proper atmosphere for work. He therefore called on members to ignore attempts to disrupt the Committee's proceedings, and to concentrate on the problems they were required to deal with.

74. Mr. PAPENDORP (United States of America) said that his delegation was indeed interested in making rapid progress on the Committee's programme of work. Many of the matters raised by the Soviet representative would be discussed in the appropriate committees during the current session. But as for the general content of the Soviet representative's remarks, he could only say that Soviet actions spoke louder than Soviet words.

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) REPORT 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)

75. Mr. YAKOVLENKO (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that his delegation was prepared to co-operate fully with the newly appointed Under-Secretary-General for Conference Services in efforts to improve the conference servicing of United Nations bodies while at the same time reducing the Organization's expenditure on that activity.

76. His delegation welcomed the new activity in the Committee on Conferences, but noted that the Committee had still avoided considering such cardinal problems as the possibility of introducing a system of quotas, to apply to scheduled meetings and documentation, which would make it possible to limit the proliferation of meetings and documents in the United Nations without prejudice to the Organization's most important tasks. Among other questions not dealt with by the Committee was the question of work standards for various categories of staff employed in the Department of Conference Services; that and a number of other problems were of pressing importance and afforded scope for economies in the Organization's outlays on conference servicing.

/...

(Mr. Yakovlenko, USSR)

77. Turning to the guidelines on Secretariat organization for United Nations special conferences, set forth by the Committee in chapter XI of its report (A/37/32), he commented that the organizations of the United Nations system should have the obligation to contribute to the substantive preparations for a special conference, not merely "the opportunity" as was suggested in paragraph 4 of the guidelines. Furthermore, the detailed cost and servicing estimates referred to in paragraph 9 should always be discussed with a potential host Government prior to the issuance and acceptance of a formal invitation. Before accepting an invitation, the General Assembly had to know to what extent the United Nations would be reimbursed by the host State. The recommendation would give the Government concerned an opportunity to clarify its obligations and assess its ability to comply with them in good time. Since, however, there had been cases where a State had been obliged for various reasons to retract its invitation, it had to be stressed that such additional expenses as the United Nations had already incurred before the invitation was withdrawn, including visits to the potential host country by planning and review missions, must be reimbursed by the country concerned regardless of the eventual venue of a conference.

78. Paragraph 14 of the same guidelines referred to the need for "career development of staff" to serve as secretaries for special conferences. His delegation could not understand why that point had been included. It would not agree to any special privileges for such staff; and if that was not the intention, there was no need for the guideline. In paragraph 15 it was stated that the Director-General for Development and International Economic Co-operation might "also" set up a steering committee for conferences dealing with economic and social matters. Establishing that committee in addition to the Conference Management Committee referred to in paragraph 1 of the guidelines would be a duplication of effort. If that was not the effect, paragraph 15 should be worded less ambiguously.

79. In general, the adoption of the guidelines - taking into account the comments he had just made - would be a useful step. The committees referred to in the guidelines, however, must be set up with the staff available and the resources approved by the General Assembly for each given conference. Once established, the committees should immediately define the most effective means of preparing for and conducting conferences on the most economic basis. In that connection, he stressed the importance of paragraph 11 of the guidelines.

80. The Committee's recommendations on a more even distribution of meetings between General Assembly sessions and on documentation generally seemed useful. In that connection, however, he drew attention to paragraph 22 of the report and the statement that "it might be timely to conduct a comprehensive review covering all United Nations bodies". It seemed to his delegation that without the active participation of those bodies tangible results were hardly likely to be achieved. There was another side to the question, too: wastage of the meeting-time allocated to different bodies. The Committee on Conferences was right, when setting the number of meetings that each body could hold, to apply a 20-per-cent correction for the possible underutilization of resources. That, however, was insufficient: a

/...

(Mr. Yakovlenko, USSR)

number of bodies consistently underutilized up to 30 per cent of the resources allocated to them. Obviously, it would be useful for United Nations bodies at the beginning of their sessions to consider their use of conference resources and decide on specific steps for improving the way in which their meetings were organized, and, possibly, reducing the number of meetings they held.

81. Control and limitation of documentation remained a pressing concern. The series of recommendations made by the Committee on Conferences and the Joint Inspection Unit deserved serious attention and, if implemented consistently, could be expected to yield positive results. He agreed, for example, that previous recommendations limiting the number of bodies entitled to summary record coverage should continue to be followed, and that the quality of the reports issued must be improved. The 32-page limit, it must be pointed out, was fairly elastic in that the Secretariat could amplify documents almost without limit by attaching annexes to them. The report of the Committee on Conferences unfortunately failed to mention that possibility.

82. A number of factors suggested that the Secretariat was rather indecisively pursuing measures to limit the volume of documentation issued, and was not adhering properly to General Assembly resolution 36/117 A. The note by the Secretariat on the results of the introduction of the 32-page rule for reports of subsidiary bodies of the General Assembly and Economic and Social Council gave only a formal listing of the size of each report issued in 1980 and 1981 and failed to supply the necessary analytical discussion, conclusions and proposals.

83. His delegation could not agree with the conclusion of the Committee on Conferences in paragraph 51 of its report. It considered that the regular publication of a one- or two-page summary on compliance with the 32-page rule would help to reduce the size of reports, whereas silence on the matter would encourage unduly long ones.

84. His delegation welcomed the Secretary-General's decision to reduce the maximum page limit for all action-oriented documentation emanating from the Secretariat from 32 to 24 pages. Although it might not lead directly to a 25-per-cent decrease in the volume of United Nations documentation, it would certainly have a major effect. Administrative controls alone could not, however, yield the desired results where the limitation of documentation was concerned. The Secretariat should begin to standardize all the documents it issued, using the latest advances in computer science and word processing. If, following a review of the documents issued in recent years on a variety of subjects, models could be developed for future documents, together with clear recommendations on the arrangement of internal sections and the number of pages for each section and the document as a whole, not only would the problem of limiting the size of each document be solved, but at the same time document quality would be enhanced and the process of document compilation would become significantly easier and faster. Such a standardization process would, moreover, make it easier in future to introduce computer-based document processing and storage systems within the United Nations.

/...

(Mr. Yakovlenko, USSR)

85. The timely submission of documents was of extreme importance. In its report, JIU pointed out that the late submission of documents required an increase in overtime work. Special attention should also be paid to the number of documents distributed within the Secretariat, which had shown a consistent upward trend over the past three years.

86. His delegation attached particular importance to the wider use of contractual translation and printing. Because of the economy of contractual arrangements, the General Assembly had invited the Secretary-General to make wider use of that method in order to limit spending on the production of documents. The Committee on Conferences, unfortunately, had provided no information on the specific steps taken in that regard; accordingly he requested the Secretariat to issue a document stating what volume of material had been submitted for contractual translation and printing, first in 1981, and, second, for that portion of 1982 for which statistics were available.

87. The Committee on Conferences should continue to concentrate its efforts on ensuring unswerving adherence to the recommendations approved by the General Assembly. The costs of United Nations meetings and conferences in 1983 should not exceed the budgetary resources earmarked for that purpose by the General Assembly. Any additional meetings and conferences should be financed from reductions in the number of United Nations bodies and the number and length of their sessions. His delegation intended to submit specific proposals for inclusion in a draft resolution on the subject at a later stage.

ORGANIZATION OF WORK

88. The CHAIRMAN announced the Committee's meeting schedule for the following week, and said that he hoped also to be able to take up item 105, the Financial emergency of the United Nations. He had been informed that no report on the item was required from ACABQ; the report of the Secretary-General, however, was not yet available. He therefore urged the Secretariat to issue the relevant documents as quickly as possible, so that the Committee would be able to take up item 105 if time permitted.

The meeting rose at 1.20 p.m.