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PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 1982-1983

Adequacy of the Conference facilities of the Economic Commission for Africa at Addis Ababa

Report of the Secretary-General

INTRODUCTION

1. At its thirty-sixth session, by resolution 36/176 of 17 December 1981, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to undertake a study of the adequacy of the conference facilities at the headquarters of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) in Addis Ababa. This report is submitted in response to that resolution. Summaries of the background and recent developments regarding proposals to expand the conference facilities of ECA at Addis Ababa are given in the Secretary-General's recent report to the Economic and Social Council (E/1982/111), together with an outline of some deficiencies of the present facilities.
2. The Secretary-General has concluded that the construction of additional conference facilities is required. This need, which was foreseen more than a decade ago, has now become acute because of the substantial increase in the number and size of meetings sponsored by ECA. 1/ In this regard the Secretary-General has consulted with the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) in accordance with the procedures outlined in paragraphs 13 and 14 of the report of ACABQ (A/36/643) on the report of the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) on building construction procedures of the United Nations organizations (A/36/297). The ACABQ report had indicated that the Advisory Committee should be informed "immediately after the Secretary-General has determined that there is a need for new construction or for major alteration of existing premises. The identification of this need would have to be justified to the Committee which would provide guidance as necessary in the formulation of options" (A/36/643, para. 14).

(d) Language services. Documents control, revision, editing, translating, etc. would be located in the new conference complex, so that the present space occupied by the above services could then be repartitioned for office space;

(e) Other support facilities. The conference facilities would include space for lockers for manual workers, maintenance of electronic and conference-service equipment, security personnel to provide adequate security coverage of the conference and space for press and mass media activities.

16. The conference-support facilities outlined above now occupy approximately 1,250 square meters of space but would require a total of over 2,700 square meters in the new conference building.

PROPOSALS

Long-term action

17. In order to move toward a solution of ECA long-term needs for conference facilities, the Secretary-General proposes that the General Assembly authorize an architectural and engineering study for the new construction and modifications to the existing buildings. While time, cost and various other factors rule out an international architectural design competition for this project, other recommendations of JIU would be implemented, including the retention of independent cost and construction management consultants. The Secretary-General estimates that an appropriation of \$500,000 would be required to carry out the study.

Short-term action

18. It is extremely unlikely that the new facilities described above would actually be available for use in less than five years under normal procedures. If an international design competition were required an additional two years might be needed. Various alternatives will be explored in an effort to accelerate the completion of the new facilities but it is still considered improbable that they could be ready for use before January 1987. Moreover, the existing facilities in Africa Hall would not be remodelled until the new facilities are available. Naturally these existing facilities would be out of service for 12 to 18 months during the remodelling and only upon completion of the remodelling would the full complement of conference facilities required become available, possibly as late as 1989 or 1990.

19. Thus, even with the authorization of an architectural and engineering study ECA will still have an acute short-term problem regarding conference facilities for the next four to six years. Proposals to deal with this aspect of the problem are outlined below.

20. Various possibilities for ad hoc improvements exist, some of which are more desirable or economical than others.

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remodelling of areas in the present Conference Building; however, because of the nature of this space, it remains to be seen whether it could satisfactorily accommodate small conference rooms.

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(a) Temporary conversion of the lounge on the ground floor of the cafeteria building. This is already done on occasion on an ad hoc basis for large conferences but requires a more controlled approach and some semi-permanent installations to be more practical. As this space is also used for the receptions which frequently accompany such conferences, the booths are dismantled again in the evening. Temporary partitions are required to separate the meeting room from the cafeteria traffic, and purchase of additional simultaneous interpretation equipment and booths would enable ECA to avoid the repeated erection and dismantling of this equipment;

(b) Temporary conversion of space now occupied by the bookshop, gift shop and music club on the ground floor of the Africa Hall. These spaces have windows but would require some mechanical ventilation. Columns would limit possible seating layouts;

(c) Temporary conversion of the existing rotunda of the ground floor of Africa Hall. The principal problem here would be ventilation and congestion.

21. At this point the most practical measures appear to be (in order of preference).

(a) For the interim the lounge on the ground floor of the cafeteria building would be converted to a meeting room with interpretation in three languages. The reception/lounge function would be relocated to the present cafeteria or to the rotunda of the ground floor of Africa Hall;

(b) Other areas in the present conference building would be converted to several small sub-committee rooms. The existing functions displaced would be relocated or temporarily suspended;

(c) Use of government conference halls, or meeting room facilities in local hotels pending the completion of new conference facilities in Addis Ababa;

(d) The United Nations facilities in Nairobi which will become available in mid-1984 would be utilized when possible for those meetings which cannot be accommodated in Addis Ababa.

22. ECA will need several sets of portable simultaneous interpretation equipment for temporary installations, either at ECA headquarters, at local meeting rooms or in other cities. In addition, a certain amount of furniture specifically for temporary conference use at ECA should be purchased.

23. The Secretary-General is of the opinion that measures (a), (b) and (c) in paragraph 21 would assist in alleviating the difficulties in organizing conferences at ECA for the next few years and the costs of each is indicated in the table below.

Table 2

<u>Proposed measures</u>		<u>United States dollars</u>
(a) and (b)	Alterations	60 000
	Furniture	15 000
	Portable simultaneous interpretation equipment (two sets each, 80 to 100 stations)	175 000
(c)	Third set of portable simultaneous interpretation equipment for use at government or hotel facilities	85 000
	Use of government or hotel facilities - rental of premises	- a/
(d)	Use of United Nations facilities in Nairobi	- b/
		<u>335 000</u>

a/ See paragraph 24.

b/ The Nairobi facilities are not available until mid-1984, consequently no costing is indicated.

24. An appropriation is not requested for the rental of government or hotel facilities since it is not yet known to what extent these facilities would be utilized. The Secretary-General, however, estimates that the rental costs, if any, in 1983 will be absorbed and that in the light of experience gained during the year he will be in a position to estimate costs and put forward a proposal to the Assembly at its thirty-eighth session for use of government or hotel facilities, as well as possible usage of the facilities in Nairobi.

SUMMARY

25. Consequently, should the General Assembly approve the architectural and engineering study, an appropriation of \$500,000 is requested in section 32, and the results of the study would be ready for review by the General Assembly at its thirty-eighth session. Additionally, if the General Assembly were to approve the alterations required in order to increase facilities available in the interim

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before construction is completed, as well as the purchase of furniture and simultaneous interpretation equipment, additional appropriations of \$275,000 and of \$60,000 would be required under sections 13 and 32 respectively. Total appropriations required under section 32 would, therefore, be \$560,000 and under section 13 \$275,000.

Notes

1/ E/1982/11, paras. 2 and 3; A/C.5/1265, para. 17.
