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PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 1988-1989

REVISED ESTIMATES

Addendum

PART IV (2)

Implementation of recommendation 29 of the Group of High-level Intergovernmental Experts to Review the Efficiency of the Administrative and Financial Functioning of the United Nations concerning the functions of the Office of Secretariat Services for Economic and Social Matters

Report of the Secretary-General

Recommendation 29 of the Group of High-level Intergovernmental Experts to Review the Efficiency of the Administrative and Financial Functioning of the United Nations, 1/ as endorsed by the General Assembly in its resolution 41/213, stated that:

"Keeping in mind the need to avoid duplication, the functions of the Office of Secretariat Services for Economic and Social Matters should be reassigned to the Department of Conference Services for technical servicing activities (such as the editing of documents) and to the Department of International Economic and Social Affairs for substantive, servicing and co-ordination matters."

* A/43/50.

2. In his progress report on the implementation of General Assembly resolution 41/213 2/ and its update 3/ the Secretary-General made known his decision that the functions of the Office of Secretariat Services for Economic and Social Matters (sect. 8 of the programme budget) relating to the technical secretariat servicing of intergovernmental and related meetings and special conferences were instead to be assigned to the Office of the Under-Secretary-General for Political and General Assembly Affairs and Secretariat Services (sect. 1.B.3). Following discussion of the matter at the forty-second session of the General Assembly, and pursuant to General Assembly resolution 42/211 (para. 10 (e)), the Secretary-General has conducted a review of that decision.

3. It is first worth noting that the provision of technical secretariat services on an integrated basis for the Economic and Social Council, the Second Committee and other intergovernmental bodies has long been carried out by a distinct unit in the Secretariat. Prior to the adoption of General Assembly resolution 32/197 of 20 December 1977 on the restructuring of the economic and social sectors of the United Nations, this function had been organizationally located within the then Department of Economic and Social Affairs and provided by an Economic and Social Council secretariat. In accordance with the provisions of the above-mentioned resolution, the function was deliberately separated from the substantive department with a view to ensuring that members of the intergovernmental bodies concerned would have first call on the services of the office concerned and that the office could play a strictly impartial role bearing in mind the sensitive nature of its work. The resource capacity of the Secretariat to provide these services was also markedly enhanced. As a result, the new office which was established, the Office of Secretariat Services, was able to broaden and intensify its servicing of intergovernmental bodies in the economic and social fields. In addition, the Office of Secretariat Services was designated to assume a number of inter-agency functions previously carried out by an Office for Inter-Agency Affairs which had been abolished in line with the intent of General Assembly resolution 32/197.

4. Recommendation 25(3) of the Report of the Group of High-level Intergovernmental Experts called, inter alia, for the authority of the Director-General for Development and International Economic Co-operation to be enhanced as regards co-ordination within the United Nations system in the field of development and international economic co-operation. Pursuant to that recommendation, the Secretary-General decided to transfer the inter-agency responsibilities of the Office of Secretariat Services to the Director-General's Office 4/ and, in particular, to designate the Assistant Secretary-General in that Office to assume those responsibilities. This has facilitated the decision not to fill the post of Assistant Secretary-General previously attached to the Office of Secretariat Services. It has also allowed the resulting, streamlined unit to concentrate on its main task, namely the provision of integrated technical services for the Economic and Social Council as well as other intergovernmental bodies.

5. The term technical secretariat services, as referred to in General Assembly resolution 32/197, has to be distinguished from the term conference services as it is applied to the Department of Conference Services. As defined in paragraph 61 (e) of the annex to General Assembly resolution 32/197 the function of providing technical secretariat services:

"... includes organizing and co-ordinating the provision by the Secretariat units concerned of substantive support services, particularly documentation, as required by the above-mentioned bodies [the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination, the Economic and Social Council, the General Assembly, ad hoc conferences and intersecretariat co-ordination machinery], ensuring that the substantive units concerned are informed of relevant developments in the work of these bodies, including resolutions and decisions adopted by them, and ensuring that these bodies are kept informed of action being taken in response to their decisions by the Secretariat units concerned;"

6. In contrast, conference-servicing includes planning the use of meeting facilities, providing interpretation and other meeting room services and scheduling and producing relevant documentation and meeting records. Within the Department of Conference Services, documentation and records processing comprises the functions of documents control, editorial control, verbatim reporting, précis-writing, reference, translation, typing/word processing, reproduction and distribution.

7. The provision of technical secretariat services, documents planning, forecasting and monitoring and editorial control, as performed by the Office of Secretariat Services for Economic and Social Matters (now the Division of Economic and Social Council Affairs and Secretariat Services), has included the following activities:

(a) Ensuring that the substantive inputs to intergovernmental and intersecretariat meetings are translated into effective, coherent and orderly proceedings, responsive to legislative authority or other appropriate mandates;

(b) Ensuring that meetings are organized in a manner that will assist participants in carrying out their work effectively and expeditiously;

(c) Arranging with the Department of Conference Services schedules of meetings with regard to requirements for meeting rooms, interpretation and records and the processing of documentation;

(d) Dispatching notifications of meetings to all participants;

(e) Assisting the Chair in planning and organizing the work and conducting the proceedings;

(f) Ensuring the availability of material required from various sources for meetings;

(g) Preparing or assisting in the preparation, drafting and arranging for the issuance of provisional agendas, including annotations and reports;

(h) Informing substantive units of relevant developments at the intergovernmental level, including resolutions and decisions adopted;

(i) Ensuring that intergovernmental bodies are informed of actions taken within the United Nations system in response to the decision of these bodies.

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8. All these activities are closely interrelated and require regular contact with the intergovernmental body, meeting or conference concerned. Familiarity with the rules of procedure and, in particular, established practices, is of critical importance. This also applies to the editing function. Editors in the field of technical servicing edit documents in the language of submission. In doing so, they ensure consistency with established practice, relevance to the work of the organ concerned and legislative mandate, before documents are submitted for processing. In addition, the editors' section establishes a calendar of documentation and plans the flow of documents in accordance with the programme of work of the various meetings. The Secretary-General has no doubt that integrating meetings servicing, editing and documentation planning and forecasting in this fashion is a sound managerial and administrative arrangement which has stood the test of time.

9. With regard to the question of situating the former Office of Secretariat Services, it should be stressed that the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council are procedurally interconnected and, as far as technical or meeting servicing is concerned, their requirements, and consequently the type of arrangements that have to be made by the Secretariat, are similar. In addition to sessions of the Economic and Social Council and meetings of its related bodies, the former Office of Secretariat Services for Economic and Social Matters provided technical secretariat services to the Second and Third Committees of the General Assembly, as well as to the subsidiary machinery of the General Assembly and to special conferences concerned with economic and social matters. It had also already been assisting the Office of the Under-Secretary-General for Political and General Assembly Affairs in the formulation of the provisional agenda of the General Assembly in respect of economic and social matters and in all relevant organizational aspects, including recommendations for the allocation of items. Since the Division of General Assembly Affairs has traditionally provided similar technical services in an integrated manner in its field of competence, the decision to locate the former Office of Secretariat Services in the Office of the Under-Secretary-General for Political and General Assembly Affairs should be seen as a practical administrative and organizational arrangement in the context of a more streamlined secretariat. Separating the technical servicing function and the editorial function in either area would markedly diminish the Secretariat's capacity to provide concerted technical secretariat support to intergovernmental bodies. While editorial functions are also performed in the Department of Conference Services and in other departments and offices, 5/ it was concluded that the integrated technical secretariat services provided by the former Office of Secretariat Services and the Division for General Assembly Affairs were clearly similar to each other as can be seen in the relevant functions of the two Offices. 6/ Furthermore, the timing of the sessions of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council allows, as required, for the utilization of resources, in particular experienced committee secretaries, editors and their support staff, in a more flexible and effective way.

10. With regard to the other provision of recommendation 29 relating to the Department of International Economic and Social Affairs, it has to be pointed out that the former Office of Secretariat Services was never involved in substantive services either as a separate entity or a distinct unit within the former

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Department of Economic and Social Affairs. In fact, paragraph 62 of the annex to General Assembly resolution 32/197 requires that the provision of technical secretariat services, as defined in paragraph 61 (e) of that annex, should be treated as a distinct function in a separate organizational entity. Moreover, a number of intergovernmental bodies for which the former Office of Secretariat Services provided technical secretariat services do not fall under the substantive responsibilities of the Department of International Economic and Social Affairs. This is particularly relevant given the reorganization of the economic and social area and the transfer of activities in the social field to the United Nations Office at Vienna.

11. In sum, it is the view of the Secretary-General that consolidating the responsibility for technical secretariat services for the sessions of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council and its related meetings in the Office of the Under-Secretary-General for Political and General Assembly Affairs and Secretariat Services ensures that the intergovernmental bodies and meetings are efficiently serviced and the various substantive units in the Secretariat concerned kept fully informed of relevant developments. The redesignated Division of Economic and Social Council Affairs and Secretariat Services will continue to function as a distinct unit and will continue to provide technical secretariat services in the established, impartial manner to the intergovernmental bodies concerned. This arrangement also provides the flexibility required to implement other recommendations of the Group of High-level Intergovernmental Experts, in particular those relating to the more effective use of staff resources and to streamlining and enhancing the support services for the intergovernmental machinery. Taking into consideration the entire body of recommendations of the Group as well as the provisions of General Assembly resolution 32/197 on the restructuring of the economic and social sectors of the United Nations system, the goal of avoiding duplication and of ensuring effective servicing of the intergovernmental meetings and conferences concerned can best be achieved by consolidating the related technical servicing functions in one office as the Secretary-General has done.

12. The expanded functions and responsibilities of the Office have been set out in the programme budget for the biennium 1988-1989 7/ as amended in paragraphs 6 and 7 of the update of the progress report of the Secretary-General on implementation of General Assembly resolution 42/213. 3/ Post reductions proposed in response to recommendation 15 of the Group of High-level Intergovernmental Experts and facilitated by streamlining of the combined office, are indicated in the attached tables. The distribution of these post reductions will, of course, be subject to later adjustments in the light of the conclusions of the Special Commission of the Economic and Social Council on the In-depth Study of the United Nations Intergovernmental Structure and Functions in the Economic and Social Fields.

REGULAR BUDGET POST REQUIREMENTS, 1988-1989

Section 1.B.3: Office of the Under-Secretary-General for Political and General Assembly Affairs and Secretariat Services (including the Division of General Assembly Affairs, the Division of Economic and Social Council Affairs and Secretariat Services and the Division for Palestinian Rights)

Category	Established posts			Temporary posts			Total posts		
	Initial January 1988 level	Proposed adjustment	Target December 1989 level	Initial January 1988 level	Proposed adjustment	Target December 1989 level	Initial January 1988 level	Proposed adjustment	Target December 1989 level
Professional & above									
USG	1	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	-
ASG a/	1	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	1
D-2	2	-	2	-	-	-	2	-	2
D-1	2	-	2	1	-	1	3	-	3
P-5	6	(2)	4	1	-	1	7	(2)	5
P-4	9	(1)	8	2	-	2	11	(1)	10
P-3	8	(1)	7	8	(1)	7	16	(2)	14
P-2	3	-	3	-	-	-	3	-	3
Total	32	(4)	28	12	(1)	11	44	(5)	39
General Service									
Principal	4	-	4	-	-	-	4	-	4
Other	21	(2)	19	8	(1)	7	29	(3)	26
Total	25	(2)	23	8	(1)	7	33	(3)	30
Grand total	57	(6)	51	20	(2)	18	77	(8)	69

a/ Vacant post frozen pending decision on post reductions at the USG/ASG levels.

Section I.B.3: Office of the Under-Secretary-General for Political and General Assembly Affairs and Secretariat Services (including the Division of General Assembly Affairs)

Category	Established posts			Temporary posts			Total posts		
	Initial January 1988 level	Proposed adjustment	Target December 1989 level	Initial January 1988 level	Proposed adjustment	Target December 1989 level	Initial January 1988 level	Proposed adjustment	Target December 1989 level
Professional & above									
USG	1	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	1
ASG	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
D-2	1	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	1
D-1	1	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	1
P-5	2	-	2	-	-	-	2	-	2
P-4	3	-	3	-	-	-	3	-	3
P-3	2	-	2	1	-	1	3	-	3
P-2	2	-	2	-	-	-	2	-	2
Total	12	-	12	1	-	1	13	-	13
General Service									
Principal	2	-	2	-	-	-	2	-	2
Other	6	-	6	-	-	-	6	-	6
Total	8	-	8	-	-	-	8	-	8
Grand total	20	-	20	1	-	1	21	-	21

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Section 1.B.3: Division of Economic and Social Council Affairs and Secretariat Services

Category	Established posts		
	Initial January 1988 level	Proposed adjustment	Target December 1989 level
Profes- sional & above			
USG	-	-	-
ASG ^{a/}	1	-	1
D-2	1	-	1
D-1	1	-	1
P-5	4	(2)	2
P-4	6	(1)	5
P-3	6	(1)	5
P-2	1	-	1
Total	20	(4)	16
General Service			
Principal	2	-	2
Other	15	(2)	13
Total	17	(2)	15
Grand total	37	(6)	31

^{a/} Vacant post frozen pending decision on post reductions at the USG/ASG levels.

Section 1.B.4: Division for Palestinian Rights

Category	Temporary posts		
	Initial January 1988 level	Proposed adjustment	Target December 1989 level
Profes- sional & above			
USG	-	-	-
ASG	-	-	-
D-2	-	-	-
D-1	1	-	1
P-5	1	-	1
P-4	2	-	2
P-3	7	(1)	6
P-2	-	-	-
Total	11	(1)	10
General Service			
Principal	-	-	-
Other	8	(1)	7
Total	8	(1)	7
Grand total	19	(2)	17

Notes

1/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-first Session, Supplement No. 49 (A/41/49).

2/ A/42/234.

3/ A/C.5/42/2/Rev.1.

4/ See A/42/234, para. 30 (b).

5/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-second Session, Supplement No. 7 (A/42/7), para. 29.25.

6/ See ST/SGB/Organization/Section F/Rev.2 and ST/SGB/163.

7/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-second Session, Supplement No. 6 (A/42/6), sect. 1, paras. 1.73-1.97.
