



SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 32nd MEETING

Chairman: Mr. ABRASZEWSKI (Poland)

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

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The meeting was called to order at 11 a.m.

TRIBUTE TO THE MEMORY OF HIS EXCELLENCY MR. LEONID ILYICH BREZHNEV, PRESIDENT OF THE PRESIDUM OF THE SUPREME SOVIET OF THE UNION OF SOVIET SOCIALIST REPUBLICS AND GENERAL SECRETARY OF THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF THE SOVIET UNION

1. The CHAIRMAN expressed the grief of the members of the Fifth Committee on the death of the Mr. Brezhnev.
2. Mr. BOUSHEV (Bulgaria), speaking on behalf of the Eastern European States, expressed his sorrow.
3. Mr. FONTAINE ORTIZ (Cuba), speaking on behalf of the non-aligned States, expressed his condolences to the Soviet Union.
4. Mr. ZINIEL (Ghana), speaking on behalf of the African States, paid tribute to the memory of Mr. Brezhnev.
5. Mr. MURRAY (United Kingdom), speaking on behalf of the Western European and other States, expressed his sympathy with the peoples of the Soviet Union.
6. Mr. LAHLOU (Morocco), speaking on behalf of the Arab States, commiserated with the peoples of the Soviet Union.
7. Mr. MORENO-SALCEDO (Philippines), speaking on behalf of the Asian States, lamented the death of Mr. Brezhnev.
8. Mr. CAPPAGLI (Argentina), speaking on behalf of the Latin American States, expressed his condolences to the Government of the Soviet Union.
9. Mr. PAPENDORP (United States of America) paid tribute to the memory of Mr. Brezhnev. His Government looked forward to improving its relations with the Soviet Union and to co-operating with its new leadership.
10. Mr. KUDRYAVTSEV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics), speaking on behalf of the delegations of the Byelorussian SSR and the Ukrainian SSR in addition to his own, said that the Soviet Union was gratified by the condolences expressed by members of the Committee. His Government would continue the domestic and foreign policies initiated by Mr. Brezhnev.
11. On the proposal of the Chairman, the members of the Committee observed a minute of silence in tribute to the memory of His Excellency Mr. Leonid Ilyich Brezhnev, President of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.

AGENDA ITEM 107: JOINT INSPECTION UNIT: REPORTS OF THE JOINT INSPECTION UNIT  
(continued) (A/37/34, A/37/103; A/C.5/37/28)

12. Mr. MAYCOCK (Barbados) said it appeared from the Secretary-General's report on the implementation of the recommendations of the Joint Inspection Unit submitted at

(Mr. Maycock, Barbados)

the thirty-sixth session that the Secretariat had difficulty in determining when it had a clear legislative mandate to act on the recommendations of JIU. In an effort to end that apparent difficulty, his and other delegations had co-sponsored General Assembly decision 36/454, which requested the Secretary-General to indicate which JIU recommendations should be implemented.

13. Despite the adoption of that decision, his delegation had been disappointed by the current report of the Secretary-General (A/C.5/37/28). It seemed to concentrate, not on explaining why certain recommendations had not been implemented, but on creating the impression that solutions had already been found to many of the problems which the JIU recommendations sought to resolve. A cynic might conclude that deliberate attempts were being made to avoid enlightening potential readers. For example, paragraph 6 of the report described certain recommendations, but failed to state whether they had been implemented. Similarly, paragraph 7 referred to a review by ECLA of its administrative practices and to an AMS survey of the ECLA office in Port of Spain. Yet it was not clear whether the ECLA study went beyond the recommendations of the AMS survey, nor to what extent those recommendations had been implemented. In addition, it was difficult to reconcile paragraph 7 with the objectives stated in paragraph 1. It was not clear which recommendations had not been implemented, or why they had not.

14. It was unfortunate that none of the comments of the Secretary-General on the reports of the Joint Inspection Unit appeared to contain the summary requested in paragraph (b) of decision 36/454. The sponsors of that decision had hoped to provide a vehicle by which the Fifth Committee might take firm decisions on the basis of definite recommendations from the Secretary-General. His delegation would be grateful to learn whether the decision had merely been overlooked or whether there was some inherent difficulty in meeting its provisions.

15. His delegation attached great importance to the work of JIU, and supported the Secretary-General in his efforts to implement the JIU recommendations which were designed to improve the efficient use of the resources available to the United Nations. That support could best be given when it was clear where and when it was most needed.

16. Mr. JONES (Sierra Leone) said that the proper management of human resources was of vital importance to the success of any organization, particularly one as large as the United Nations Secretariat, which dealt with complex problems.

17. The question of equitable geographical distribution was a thorny issue. Not every Member State might wish practical expression to be given to the concept of universality in the recruitment of Secretariat staff. The Joint Inspection Unit had made a number of recommendations to improve the geographical distribution of the staff, the most important of which was strict application of that principle in the constituent entities of the Organization. His delegation agreed with the Secretary-General that flexibility was necessary in applying the principle, and that efficiency should not be sacrificed. However, efforts should be made to bring all unrepresented and under-represented countries within their desirable ranges within the near future.

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(Mr. Jones, Sierra Leone)

18. According to the Assistant Secretary-General for Personnel Services, the proportion of Member States that were within their desirable ranges had increased from 33 per cent to 57 per cent over the past four years. However, that increase was due to revision of the system of desirable ranges. His delegation thus looked forward to completion of the medium-term plan, under which unrepresented and under-represented States should attain their desirable ranges by the end of 1985. In that connection, vacancy announcements should be issued simultaneously for internal and external candidates so that internal candidates would not enjoy an advantage.

19. The Secretariat was to be congratulated on its efforts in trying to achieve the target of 25 per cent for posts filled by women. It was to be hoped that that target could be reached by 1983. Account should, of course, be taken of the criteria of efficiency, competence and integrity. The question of a child-care centre should be taken seriously, since it was of direct relevance to the recruitment of women.

20. His delegation viewed with alarm the increase in appropriations for the services of consultants. There was clearly a need for more effective control of such expenditure and for permanent staff members to tackle some of those assignments. The use of consultants had increased by more than 16 times over the past 20 years, compared with a sevenfold increase in the size of the regular budget.

21. It was clear from the JIU report on the Economic Commission for Africa (A/37/119) that the Commission had management problems resulting from its restructuring responsibilities. Without the necessary authority and resources ECA could not fully assume its role of team leader. The Commission was expected, in co-operation with the Organization of African Unity, to play a cardinal role in implementing the Lagos Plan of Action, and thus the need for adequate financial resources could not be over-emphasized. The new approaches to regional programming and management of inter-country projects should be encouraged.

22. His delegation appreciated that the complex problems raised in the reports of the Joint Inspection Unit could not be solved over-night, but with continued co-operation by all concerned just solutions could be found.

AGENDA ITEM 111: PERSONNEL QUESTIONS (continued) (A/36/407 and Add.1, A/36/432 and Add.1 and Add.2; A/37/30, annex I, A/37/143, A/37/378 and Add.1, A/37/469 and Add.1, A/37/528 and Add.1; A/C.5/37/5, A/C.5/37/6 and Corr.1, A/C.5/37/24, A/C.5/37/26, A/C.5/37/34)

(a) COMPOSITION OF THE SECRETARIAT: REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

(b) RESPECT FOR THE PRIVILEGES AND IMMUNITIES OF OFFICIALS OF THE UNITED NATIONS AND THE SPECIALIZED AGENCIES AND RELATED ORGANIZATIONS: REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

(c) OTHER PERSONNEL QUESTIONS

23. Mrs. CHENG Youshu (China) said that the achievements of the United Nations were inseparable from the quality and efforts of its staff. Her delegation had

(Mrs. CHENG Youshu, China)

noted efforts to bring about reforms in the Organization's personnel policies, especially the progress made in implementing General Assembly decision 36/455. The Committee had been told of the plans of the Office of Personnel Services in that respect, and had before it the reports of ICSC and JIU. Although some of the measures involved had only begun to be applied in limited areas, and although some of the recommendations did not yet seem ripe for implementation, efforts along the lines described would, if continued in earnest, definitely promote the welfare and career development of staff members.

24. With the implementation of resolution 35/210, some improvement had been made in the geographical distribution of posts. The number of unrepresented and under-represented countries had decreased over the past year, and the number of women had been brought closer to the target of 25 per cent of staff in posts subject to geographical distribution. In that context, methods such as recruitment missions and the selection of the best of the eligible candidates were both effective and feasible. Her delegation hoped that, provided that the quality of recruits could be sustained, faster progress in those areas could be made, so as to strengthen the international character of United Nations bodies and implement the principle that people from all Member States should work jointly to promote the Organization's objectives.

25. The concept of "desirable ranges" had undergone a long process of evolution since its inception in 1948. In recent years, the weight given to assessed contribution had decreased somewhat, while the importance of their membership and population factors had increased. That was entirely reasonable. Her delegation still recognized the validity of the three factors determining desirable ranges, and was aware of the need to set aside a considerable number of posts for the Secretary-General to fill at his discretion. It nevertheless considered that there should be consultations on the calculation of the desirable range. The General Assembly had decided at its thirty-fifth session (resolution 35/210, section II, para. 2) that 10 out of every additional 100 posts, should be added to the population factor in future. Her delegation wished to learn of any progress that had been made in that respect. It also felt that it would be reasonable, in setting desirable ranges, to give due consideration to the population situation of countries with large populations but relatively low assessed contributions.

26. Mr. BARTLETT (Jamaica) congratulated the Secretary-General on his policy of maintaining a dialogue with the Fifth Committee. In statements to the Fifth Committee, the Secretary-General had given prominence to the principle of the independence of the Secretariat. His delegation was pleased to see that the staff unions and associations of the United Nations Secretariat had also confirmed the vital importance of the independence of the international civil service, to which his delegation attached the greatest importance.

27. His delegation had been distressed to learn from the Secretary-General and the representatives of the staff that instances of detention, arrest, imprisonment or even the death or disappearance of staff members continued to occur. He congratulated the Secretary-General on his innovation of sending a letter to Permanent Representatives on United Nations Day, highlighting the importance of the security and safety of United Nations staff. He also sympathized fully with the

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(Mr. Bartlett, Jamaica)

comments made by one of the staff representatives on the subject of safety of staff members. His delegation appealed to all Members of the United Nations to comply with General Assembly resolution 36/232.

28. His delegation had supported the proposal to allow representatives of the staff unions access to the Fifth Committee, and had listened intently to the statement by the representative of the staff unions at the 26th meeting of the Committee. He applauded the Secretary-General's policy of maintaining a constant, clear and frank exchange with staff representatives - not in order to inform them of decisions already taken, but to share concerns and proposals leading to a more effective use of the Organization's human resources. It was to be regretted that a situation had developed which had led staff members and their leaders to express their impatience the previous week, but he had been very impressed by the Secretary-General's prompt response and moves to solve many of the problems brought to the Committee's attention by the staff. In particular, his delegation had taken careful note of the recommendations made by the Secretary-General in his statement to the Committee at its 29th meeting. The Committee should give particular attention to the Secretary-General's proposals for alternatives to the examination process in the context of competitive methods of selection, and for an increase to 50 per cent in the quota of P-1 and P-2 posts allocated for internal promotion through competitive methods.

29. The Secretariat derived a great proportion of its strength from an efficient General Service staff with high morale. The strong possibility of promotion could contribute greatly to enhancing staff morale and, thus, to high efficiency and productivity. No staff member should be locked into any one grade or category of grades. A staff member who demonstrated the ability to carry out the duties of a higher post should be given every opportunity to compete with other applicants for a vacancy at a higher level.

30. The policy regarding the mandatory age of retirement established in General Assembly resolutions 33/143 and 35/210 should continue in effect, with the agreed exceptions for certain categories of General Service staff. He was pleased to see that that policy was strongly supported by the staff. He welcomed the steps taken to increase the recruitment of women to United Nations organizations; although the overall target of 25 per cent by the end of 1982 would not be realized, he was encouraged by the fact that the proportion had increased to 22.2 per cent generally, and to over 31 per cent at Headquarters. Efforts should continue to be made to ensure that the overall target of 25 per cent was achieved. It was important to employ women not only in an adequate proportion of the posts but also in senior positions, and to give them adequate opportunities for career development.

31. Another matter which needed special attention was the provision of child-care facilities. His delegation had noted with satisfaction the Secretary-General's reference to day-care centres and the recommendations on the subject by both JIU and ACC. It hoped that progress on the matter could be accelerated, since the establishment of child-care facilities would be of great assistance to mothers who were already working in the Organization, and would help to attract suitably qualified and experienced women to join the United Nations.

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(Mr. Bartlett, Jamaica)

32. To maximize the efficiency of the Secretariat and improve staff morale, it was necessary for the Fifth Committee, the Secretary-General and the Assistant Secretary-General for Personnel Services to continue to be responsive to the views and interests of the staff, and for the staff, individually and through their representatives, to co-operate with and understand the positions of the Secretary-General, the Assistant Secretary-General for Personnel Services and the representatives of Member States.

AGENDA ITEM 110: SCALE OF ASSESSMENTS FOR THE APPORTIONMENT OF THE EXPENSES OF THE UNITED NATIONS: REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON CONTRIBUTIONS (continued) (A/37/11; A/C.5/37/L.20/Rev.1, L.21 and L.23)

33. The CHAIRMAN said that uncertainty about the financial solvency of the United Nations was being expressed in many quarters. The Committee's difficulties in reaching agreement on the scale of assessments were causing concern, both to the Secretary-General and to the President of the General Assembly. He pledged to do all he could to avoid the financial collapse of the Organization during his chairmanship, but warned all delegations that compromise was desperately needed.

34. The Committee had before it the recommendation of the Committee on Contributions, contained in paragraph 65 of its report (A/37/11), two draft resolutions, contained in documents A/C.5/37/L.20/Rev.1 and L.21, respectively; and a draft decision (A/C.5/37/L.23) that had resulted from efforts to find a compromise by exploring the possibility of modifying the proposed scale of assessments. He suggested that, without prejudice to any delegation's position of principle on the matter, the Committee might tacitly agree to take up the draft decision in document A/C.5/37/L.23.

35. Mr. de BURGOS-CABAL (Brazil) asked whether it would be in order for him to introduce draft resolution A/C.5/37/L.20/Rev.1 on the understanding that no discussion or decision on its provisions would take place for the time being.

36. The CHAIRMAN said that he would apply the rules of procedure. If the representative of Brazil wished to introduce a draft resolution, he was at liberty to do so.

37. Mr. PINIES (Spain) pointed out that, under rule 131 of the rules of procedure, the Committee should, unless it decided otherwise, vote on proposals in the order in which they had been submitted. He wondered how, in that case, the Committee could take up draft decision A/C.5/37/L.23.

38. The CHAIRMAN said that the Committee had not yet, in his view, reached the stage where rule 131 would apply.

39. Mr. LAHLOU (Morocco) asked whether it would be in order for him to introduce the procedural motion contained in document A/C.5/37/L.23.

40. Mr. PINIES (Spain), speaking on a point of order, objected to the description of the draft decision contained in document A/C.5/37/L.23 as a "procedural motion". Any proposal not listed in rule 119 of the rules of procedure as procedural must be deemed substantive.

41. Mr. KRISTIANSEN (Denmark), speaking on behalf of the 10 member countries of the European Economic Community, requested that the Committee should defer its consideration of the item in order to give the delegations of those countries time to consult within their missions and, if necessary, with their home authorities. He drew attention to rule 120 of the rules of procedure, which required that proposals should be circulated to all delegations not later than the day preceding the meeting at which they were discussed. The draft decision in document A/C.5/37/L.23, although presented by the sponsors as a procedural motion, raised many substantive questions which required careful consideration by members.

42. Mr. MOLteni (Argentina) speaking on a point of order, noted that document A/C.5/37/L.23 was dated 10 November and that hence the 24-hour rule seemed to have been complied with. He requested clarification of the situation.

43. Mr. DUQUE (Secretary of the Committee) said that 10 November was the date on which the document had been sent to the Department of Conference Services for processing. It had been circulated to delegations only that morning.

44. The CHAIRMAN said that it had never been his intention to suggest that the three proposals before the Committee differed in their relative importance. He was prepared to accede to the request of the representative of Denmark and apply the 24-hour rule but believed that it would be in the interests of the Committee to allow the representative of Morocco to introduce the draft decision in document A/C.5/37/L.23 at the current meeting. He invited the representative of Morocco to do so.

45. Mr. LAHLOU (Morocco), introducing the draft decision in document A/C.5/37/L.23 on behalf of the sponsors which now included Oman, said that the draft decision contained a procedural proposal aimed at avoiding an irreparable split in the Committee on so serious an issue as the next scale of assessments. The aim of the sponsors was to conciliate and to bridge the gap between opposing views so that the Committee would eventually be able to take a responsible and balanced decision which safeguarded the interests of all. Everyone was aware of the need to promote concessions in order to alleviate the difficulties on all sides. When the Committee on Contributions had completed its work in July, the new element of concession, which would have changed its recommendations, had not existed. The draft decision would have the General Assembly request the Committee on Contributions to meet again as soon as possible to take all new elements into account and to report back to the General Assembly before 3 December. The sponsors of the draft decision hoped that the new proposals of the Committee on Contributions would be less controversial, fairer and more equitable than those contained in its report. He appealed to the members of the Fifth Committee to recognize the urgency and priority of the draft decision.

46. Mr. de BURGOS-CABAL (Brazil), introducing draft resolution A/C.5/37/L.20/Rev.1 on behalf of the sponsors, said that Article 17 of the Charter stipulated that the expenses of the Organization should be apportioned among its Members and General Assembly resolution 14 (I) provided that that should be done on a just and equitable basis through the evaluation of the capacity to pay of each Member State measured in terms of per capita national income. It had been noted over the years



(Mr. de Burgos-Cabal, Brazil)

that calculations based on per capita national income alone resulted in anomalous assessments that were incompatible with the general principles of justice and equity. National income was an adequate indicator of the capacity to pay of countries with a stable population and consistent economic performance but was grossly inadequate for the developing countries, whose population and economies were by definition highly unstable. Beginning in 1963, the General Assembly had repeatedly requested the Committee on Contributions to develop additional indicators which would better reflect the real capacity to pay of Member States. So far the Committee on Contributions had been unable to do so. The reasons for that failure included the inadequate length of the Committee's sessions, the lack of more sophisticated technical assistance and the difficulties experienced in comparing statistics submitted by countries with centrally planned economies with those for the market-economy countries.

47. With a view to remedying those defects, a number of countries had submitted draft resolution A/C.5/37/L.20, which would have retained the current scale of assessments for an additional three years. However, in a spirit of compromise, they had revised the draft resolution to keep the scale of assessments in force only until the Committee on Contributions was able to carry out the tasks assigned to it in General Assembly resolution 36/231 A. Thus, the time during which the existing scale would remain in force would depend on the Committee on Contributions and how it utilized the means put at its disposal by the draft resolution.

48. The sponsors of the draft resolution did not wish the draft resolution to be discussed until a later stage.

49. Mr. HEMMINGS (Australia) said that he would not comment in detail on the points raised by the representative of Brazil, since they had been exhaustively debated in the Committee's earlier discussion of the item. His delegation viewed with concern the overall thrust of draft resolution A/C.5/37/L.20/Rev.1 and considered that, since it had just been formally introduced, the Committee should have an opportunity to consider an alternative. He therefore wished to introduce draft resolution A/C.5/37/L.21, sponsored by his delegation.

50. The Australian draft resolution recognized that a range of opinions existed but drew the conclusion that, notwithstanding objections from some quarters, the General Assembly should accept the scale of assessments recommended by the Committee on Contributions for three years. That provision was of paramount importance if the process of calculating the scale of assessments was not to degenerate into a political exercise in the future, with unfortunate consequences for the Organization as a whole.

51. Draft resolution A/C.5/37/L.21 affirmed that it was the responsibility of the Committee on Contributions to draw up the scale of assessments, and thereby preserved the Committee's integrity. The adoption of the draft resolution would free the Committee on Contributions to carry out the important work outstanding from its previous session and would enable it to draw on outside technical advice, if necessary, to complete the study requested in General Assembly resolution 36/231 A.

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(Mr. Hemmings, Australia)

52. His delegation likewise did not wish its draft resolution to be formally discussed until a later stage.

53. Mr. MURRAY (United Kingdom) observed that the three proposals before the Committee might have financial implications and asked whether the Secretariat could inform the Committee whether they could be absorbed within existing resources or, if not, what the additional costs would be.

54. Mr. TOMMO MONTHE (United Republic of Cameroon) urged that members should bear in mind the time factor in connection with draft decision A/C.5/37/L.23. If the Committee deferred a decision on the three proposals for several weeks and then adopted draft decision A/C.5/37/L.23, it might be physically impossible for the Committee on Contributions to carry out the task which would be assigned to it.

55. He appealed to members to bear in mind also that the aim was to provide a sound financial basis for the Organization, and that was possible only if a consensus could be achieved.

56. Mr. GARRIDO (Philippines) suggested that the Chairman of the Committee on Contributions should be asked whether it was feasible for the Committee to carry out the request contained in draft decision A/C.5/37/L.23.

57. The CHAIRMAN said that the Secretariat was studying the financial implications of the three proposals and would report to the Committee at a later meeting. In organizing the Committee's consideration of the item, he would, certainly bear in mind the crucial time constraints.

The meeting rose at 12.55 p.m.