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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 59th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. ABRASZEWSKI (Poland)

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

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Administrative and financial implications of the draft resolution submitted by the Special Political Committee in document A/SPC/37/L.15 concerning agenda item 67

Office accommodation at Headquarters

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The meeting was called to order at 11.05 a.m.

ORGANIZATION OF WORK

1. The CHAIRMAN said the President of the General Assembly had told him at a recent meeting that he was determined to bring the current session of the General Assembly to a conclusion on Tuesday 21 December. The members of the Committee should therefore plan to finish their work by 19 December at the latest.

AGENDA ITEM 103: PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 1982-1983 (continued)

2. Mr. FORAN (Controller), replying to a request for information under rule 154 of the rules of procedure which the United Kingdom representative had made at the close of the Committee's 58th meeting, said that the General Assembly had approved additional net appropriations of \$6,721,200, derived from expenditures of \$7,804,100 less income of \$1,082,900. In addition, the Fifth Committee had taken note of conference-servicing requirements in a number of documents containing revised estimates and the statements of financial implications which it had considered. Those conference-servicing requirements had been estimated at full cost, and the actual requirements would, as in the past, be put forward later in a final paper.

Administrative and financial implications of the draft resolutions in documents A/37/L.17 and Corr.1, A/37/L.18, A/37/L.19, A/37/L.21, A/37/L.22, A/37/L.23 and A/37/L.28 concerning agenda item 33 (A/C.5/37/70)

3. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions), presenting orally the report of the Advisory Committee, said that that Committee had accepted the proposals contained in document A/C.5/37/70, subject to a few reservations. In paragraph 13 (a) it was proposed to upgrade the post of the Secretary of the Special Committee against Apartheid to the D-1 level, which would be a reclassification of a P-5 post. It was normal procedure for the Advisory Committee not to endorse such a proposal until it had been approved by the Classification Section of the Office of Personnel Services. At the time that ACABQ had considered the document, it had been informed that the Classification Section had not yet given its approval. The representative of the Secretary-General should, therefore, inform the Fifth Committee of the status of the proposal to reclassify the P-5 post at the D-1 level.

4. As the expenditure in 1982 had revealed, when a programme of work was as heavy as that indicated in document A/C.5/37/70, it was not always possible to spend the entire amount allocated for the purpose. Some of the savings had been applied in the requests now before the Committee, as was stated in paragraph 29 of the Secretary-General's statement. The Advisory Committee nevertheless felt that additional appropriations totalling \$668,300 (\$546,300 under section 3A.3 of the programme budget for the biennium 1982-1983; \$89,400 under section 3D; and \$32,600 under section 28) should be sufficient to cover the programme of work outlined in the Secretary-General's statement. That amount would be supplemented, of course with what had already been approved at the thirty-sixth session. Related conference-servicing requirements, which would be considered in the context of the consolidated statement of conference-servicing costs, were estimated at \$833,100.

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5. Mr. BEGIN (Director, Budget Division), referring to the reclassification of the post of the Secretary of the Special Committee against Apartheid as proposed in paragraph 13 (a) of document A/C.5/37/70, said that the Classification Section of the Office of Personnel Services sometimes completed its classification procedures fairly rapidly but that in the present case certain additional inquiries had proved necessary after the initial review. As a result, he was not yet able to report the final status of the post in question. Under the circumstances, the Secretariat would like the question to be deferred until the next session.

6. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) said that if the Committee decided to follow the suggestion of the representative of the Secretary-General, \$7,000 would have to be deleted from section 3D, reducing the total additional appropriation requested under that section to \$82,400. Moreover, the appropriation for staff assessment under section 3I would be reduced from \$11,400 to \$7,300, to be offset by an equivalent amount under income section I.

7. Mr. OKEYO (Kenya) asked whether the Director of the Budget Division could foresee, based on his experience in the past with such requests, whether it was more probable that the Classification Section would confirm the reclassification proposed in paragraph 13 (a) of document A/C.5/37/70 or reject it.

8. Mr. ZINIEL (Ghana) said it was his understanding that a justification for the reclassification of the post in question had already been made. If so, why was it necessary to wait until the following year to take the question up again, as the Director of the Budget Division had suggested? ACABQ seemed to have no difficulty with the reclassification, depending on the outcome of the deliberations of the Classification Section.

9. Mr. BEGIN (Director, Budget Division) said that, since the Classification Section was not yet ready to announce a decision on the reclassification in question, there was nothing he could add to make the situation clearer.

10. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) said that the Fifth Committee was faced with a peculiar situation. The Secretary-General had submitted a document proposing the reclassification of a post, yet from the information provided to ACABQ and the statement just made by the Director of the Budget Division it would appear that the proposal to reclassify that post was provisional. The Secretariat had informed the Fifth Committee that it had not yet determined whether the post should be reclassified at the D-1 level because the process for coming to that determination was still continuing. That being the case, it would place the Director of the Budget Division in a somewhat awkward position if he attempted to predict the outcome of the process.

11. His own feeling was that a number of delegations in the Committee, wanted the post to be reclassified. He would, however, recommend that since no definitive proposal had been submitted by the Secretariat, an amount of \$7,000 should be deleted from the estimate of the Secretary-General. The Committee could decide that if the reclassification was confirmed between sessions of the General Assembly, the additional \$7,000 required should be absorbed.

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12. Mr. ZINIEL (Ghana) observed that he had been merely seeking clarification on what he thought had been a general impression in the Committee and that he would be guided by the wisdom of the Chairman of ACABQ and by the fact that action could only be taken on the basis of adequate information.

13. Mr. OKEYO (Kenya) said that his delegation favoured the suggestion made by the Chairman of ACABQ whereby the Secretary-General would be requested to absorb the \$7,000 in question, and he was prepared to make a formal proposal along those lines. Nevertheless, he felt compelled to observe that the situation was indeed peculiar in that a proposal made by the Secretary-General in writing to ACABQ and the Fifth Committee had been treated as a provisional proposal by the Office of Personnel Services.

14. Mr. MOUNGUEN (United Republic of Cameroon) said that it was not the first time the Committee had been witness to such manoeuvring. Fortunately, ACABQ had found a solution, and the Fifth Committee should act on its recommendation.

15. Mr. BANGURA (Sierra Leone) asked whether the Secretary of the Special Committee against Apartheid would be in any way hampered in his functions by the delay. Apartheid must not be given a breathing space. The question was very important to his delegation and to others which had chosen not to join in the debate.

16. Mr. KELLER (United States of America) said that not only had the United States spoken out repeatedly and vigorously against apartheid but that its actions, both public and private, had proved its commitment to the elimination of that abhorrent practice.

17. It was the firm belief of his delegation, however, that tossing vast sums of money into the coffers of the Special Committee against Apartheid and the Centre against Apartheid would do nothing to hasten the demise of apartheid. The money allocated to those two bodies was being spent on missions, giving some the opportunity to visit countries they might not otherwise visit, was providing employment for a few people, although not those who suffered under apartheid, and was being used for publicity, which might make a few people aware of apartheid, although that was highly doubtful. In short, there was virtually no reason to hope that an additional \$668,300, exclusive of conference-servicing costs would help the poor people who suffered under apartheid, any more than would the over \$1 million allocated to the Special Committee against Apartheid in the current programme budget or the over \$3 million allocated to the Centre against Apartheid. The bodies in the United Nations responsible for fighting apartheid were provided with more than ample resources for their task. It should be feasible for them to undertake the activities approved in the draft resolutions under consideration without exceeding the amount already appropriated. The United States delegation therefore requested that a vote should be taken on the approval of the financial implications. The United States would vote against such approval, on the grounds that additional appropriations would accomplish nothing and would merely cause the assessments of Member States to be increased, and that it was not appropriate for the travel of representatives of so-called national liberation movements to be funded from the resources of the United Nations.

18. The CHAIRMAN proposed that, in the light of the recommendations of the Advisory Committee, the Fifth Committee should inform the General Assembly that, should it adopt the draft resolutions in documents A/37/L.17 and Corr.1, L.18, L.19, L.21, L.22, L.23 and L.28, additional appropriations totalling \$661,300 would be required under the programme budget for the biennium 1982-1983, to be apportioned in the following way: \$546,300 under section 3A.3, \$82,400 under section 3D and \$32,600 under section 28. An additional appropriation of \$7,300 would be required under section 31, (Staff assessment) which would be offset by an increase of the same amount in the estimates of income under income section 1 (Income from staff assessment). Conference-servicing requirements had been estimated, on a full-cost basis, at \$833,100.

19. The Chairman's proposal was adopted by 89 votes to 7, with 4 abstentions.

20. Mr. PEDERSEN (Canada) said that his country's firm opposition to apartheid was well known. Canada had abstained in the vote on financial grounds. There was a lack of financial control over the items of expenditure referred to in paragraph 3 of document A/C.5/37/70. Although some aspects of the work of the Special Committee against Apartheid deserved support, its programme as a whole was too ambitious and not sufficiently selective, and, therefore, the amounts requested were not fully justified. The special allocation of \$400,000, referred to in paragraph 15, should be subject to close control, while activities relating to the oil embargo should not be financed from the regular budget.

21. Mr. MURRAY (United Kingdom) said that although his country was opposed to the system of apartheid, it had voted against the recommendations on budgetary grounds. Had there been separate votes on the various draft resolutions, his delegation would have abstained on draft resolutions A/37/L.21 and L.23, and would have voted against draft resolutions A/37/L.17 and L.28. The last-mentioned, in particular, placed an unnecessary burden on the regular budget by providing for activities already entrusted under the Charter to the Security Council.

22. Mr. BARTLETT (Jamaica) said that, had his delegation been present during the vote, it would have voted in favour of the Chairman's proposal.

23. Mr. SAGRERA (Spain) said that his country's position on apartheid was well known. Had there been a separate vote on each of the various draft resolutions, his delegation would have abstained on draft resolution A/37/L.17 and would have voted against draft resolution A/37/L.19 and in favour of draft resolutions A/37/L.18, L.21, L.22, L.23 and L.28.

24. Miss NIPATAKUSOL (Thailand) said that her delegation had voted in favour of the proposal, although it had reservations concerning paragraphs 4 and 10 of draft resolution A/37/L.17, and the ninth preambular paragraph of draft resolution A/37/L.19, which referred to certain countries with which Thailand maintained diplomatic relations.

25. Mr. YOACHAM (Chile) said that his delegation had voted in favour of the proposal. Had there been separate votes, it would have abstained on draft resolution A/37/L.22, and would not have participated in the votes on draft resolutions A/37/L.17, L.19 and L.28.

26. Mr. CROM (Netherlands) said that his country's opposition to apartheid was well known. His delegation had voted against the proposal on budgetary grounds.

27. Mr. HOLBORN (Federal Republic of Germany) said that his delegation's view of apartheid was familiar to all. It had voted against the proposal on financial grounds. Had there been separate votes, his delegation would have abstained on draft resolutions A/37/L.18, L.21 and L.23.

28. Mr. GEBRU (Ethiopia) welcomed the decision taken by the Fifth Committee in view of the need to implement General Assembly resolutions on the question of apartheid. His delegation hoped that the post of the Secretary of the Special Committee would be reclassified as soon as possible, to enable him to have access to senior government officials.

29. Mr. GOH (Singapore) said that although his delegation had voted in favour of the proposal, it had reservations concerning draft resolutions A/37/L.17, L.18 and L.19, especially the selective mention of countries.

Administrative and financial implications of the draft resolution submitted by the Special Political Committee in document A/SPC/37/L.15 concerning agenda item 67 (A/C.5/37/83)

30. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions), presenting orally the report of the Advisory Committee, said that the Secretary-General had estimated that \$697,700 would be required to implement the activities arising from the draft resolution. Of that amount, \$590,100 would fall under section 27, and \$107,600 under section 28.

31. The Advisory Committee was recommending acceptance of the Secretary-General's estimates under section 27. With regard to section 28, it had noted that most of the amount requested would be needed for consultants and common services. The Committee considered section 28 large enough to absorb some of those costs, and had thus recommended an amount of \$50,000, most of which should be used to hire consultants. An amount of \$64,600 would be required under section 31, which would be offset by an increase of the same amount under income section 1.

32. Mr. KELLER (United States of America) said that his Government supported the view that effectively publicizing the activities of the United Nations was an integral part of such activities, but had reservations concerning their content. His delegation had played an active role in the formulation of draft resolution A/SPC/37/L.15, and had sought to obtain estimates of the costs involved. Regrettably, at no stage of the proceedings of the Committee on Information had those requests for information met with a response, and now delegations had just a few minutes in which to consider the figures given. Such a state of affairs was not acceptable.

(Mr. Keller, United States of America)

33. His delegation had voted against the draft resolution in the Special Political Committee, and had already expressed its opposition to additional appropriations under agenda item 67. Given the size of the budget of the Department of Public Information (DPI), which had many low-priority items, it seemed that it should be possible to absorb the costs of implementing the draft resolution under the Department's existing budget. His delegation requested that a vote should be taken on the administrative and financial implications.

34. Mr. SHAHANKARI (Jordan) said that the statement submitted by the Secretary-General in document A/C.5/37/83 did not deal with paragraph 25 of the draft resolution, concerning the enlargement of the Middle East and Arabic Unit. His delegation wished to know whether the provisions of the paragraph would be implemented without any additional appropriations being made.

35. Mr. NKOUNKOU (Congo) said it was regrettable that the United States delegation had requested a vote. There was a definite need to establish information infrastructures in developing countries, and it should be noted that the recommendations of the Committee on Information had been adopted by consensus in that Committee. If the Fifth Committee failed to approve the administrative and financial implications, that would have a deleterious effect on the working of certain units of the Secretariat. His delegation would therefore vote in favour of their approval.

36. Mr. LAHLOU (Morocco) said that under the compromise which had emerged in the Committee on Information the United Nations would work to consolidate information services and would supply DPI with the necessary resources. The requests for appropriations to implement draft resolution A/SPC/37/L.15 were modest, and should be approved by the Fifth Committee. The expansion of the Middle East and Arabic Unit was also important. It should be borne in mind that the Unit was responsible for both television and radio programmes.

37. Mr. MANSOURI (Syrian Arab Republic) said that the functions of the Middle East and Arabic Unit should be enhanced and the Unit enlarged, since it produced television and radio programmes for the Arabic-speaking countries. The Secretary-General, in his statement (A/C.5/37/83), seemed to have overlooked the provisions of paragraph 25 of the draft resolution, presumably not deliberately. His delegation wished to know whether the lack of any specific reference to the Unit meant that sufficient resources were already available elsewhere in the Department and could be redeployed.

38. Mr. ALBORNOZ (Ecuador) said that consensus had been reached in the Committee on Information and in the Special Political Committee on the provisions of the draft resolution, but the United States delegation, concerned solely with budgetary matters, had requested a vote in the Fifth Committee. The provisions of the draft resolution were in the interests of the developing countries, whose inhabitants comprised the largest single group of peoples represented at the United Nations. It was, in any event, clear that some of the activities proposed could be funded from appropriations made at the thirty-sixth session.

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39. Mr. GARRIDO (Philippines) said that his delegation was in favour of approving the administrative and financial implications of the draft resolution.
40. Mr. FONTAINE ORTIZ (Cuba) said that the development of information systems in developing countries was essential, as was the provision of adequate resources to DPI so that it could implement the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly. The establishment of regional information centres in developing countries was a means of expanding their information capacities. His delegation would vote in favour of the administrative and financial implications of the draft resolution, and regretted that a vote had been requested.
41. Mrs. ESPINOSA de LOPEZ (Colombia) said that her delegation endorsed the remarks made by the representative of Ecuador and hoped that there would be no need for a vote.
42. Mr. AKASHI (Under-Secretary-General for Public Information), referring to draft resolution A/SPC/37/L.15, assured the representatives of Jordan, Morocco and the Syrian Arab Republic that he regarded paragraph 25 as a very important provision. That provision was being considered with the utmost seriousness in the context of regionalization, on which a study was to be undertaken in accordance with paragraph 27 of the recommendations of the Committee on Information. He looked forward to considering, in the near future and at forthcoming meetings of the Committee on Information, some concrete ways of implementing paragraph 25 of the draft resolution.
43. Mr. OKEYO (Kenya) said that, as a member of the Committee on Information, his delegation attached great importance to questions relating to information. The ideas that had emerged so far and the intentions manifested in draft resolution A/SPC/37/L.15 would be a new step towards understanding the complexity of information systems in the context of the international community. His delegation unhesitatingly supported approval of the administrative and financial implications of draft resolution A/SPC/37/L.15.
44. Mr. GRODSKY (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics), speaking in explanation of vote before the vote, said that his delegation attached great importance to the information activities of the United Nations; however, it believed that DPI had sufficient resources for implementing the programmes entrusted to it by the General Assembly. His delegation had always opposed the approval of additional appropriations during the budget period because it believed that such action constituted a violation of budgetary discipline, obscured the need for economy in the use of resources and led to unjustified increases in budgetary allocations. It therefore believed that new programmes arising during the budget period should be financed through the reallocation of resources, taking into account the priorities of Member States. Accordingly, his delegation would abstain in the vote.
45. The CHAIRMAN proposed that, in the light of the recommendations of the Advisory Committee, the Fifth Committee should inform the General Assembly that, should it adopt draft resolution A/SPC/37/L.15, additional appropriations totalling \$640,100 would be required under the programme budget for the biennium 1982-1983,

(The Chairman)

to be apportioned in the following way: \$590,100 under section 27 and \$50,000 under section 28. An additional appropriation of \$64,600 would also be required under section 31 (Staff assessment), which would be offset by an increase of the same amount in the estimates of income under income section 1 (Income from staff assessment).

46. The Chairman's proposal was adopted by 80 votes to 1, with 22 abstentions.

47. Mr. AMNEUS (Sweden), speaking in explanation of vote after the vote, said that his delegation had abstained because it believed that in the current financial and budgetary situation the resources already appropriated to public information activities over the past few years should be sufficient to allow any additional activities to be carried out.

48. Mr. HOLBORN (Federal Republic of Germany) said that his delegation had voted in favour of the proposal even though it shared the budgetary reservations expressed by some delegations. Its vote had been influenced by the efforts to strengthen information services in Vienna so as to keep the German-speaking people of Europe fully informed about the activities of the United Nations; it was very important for the United Nations to provide German language services in Europe.

49. Mrs. de HEDERVARY (Belgium) said that Belgium had abstained in the vote; it believed that the limits of reallocation of resources within DPI were far from reached.

50. Mr. MURRAY (United Kingdom) said that during the consideration of item 67 in the Special Political Committee his delegation had repeatedly expressed concern about the financial implications of the proposals made even though it had been able to join in the consensus on draft resolution A/SPC/37/L.15. The Committee was now being asked to approve estimates totalling \$640,100, although it had been given no information on the programme implications of the draft resolution. Furthermore, it had been determined that existing resources could not be used to cover the proposed activities. In those circumstances his delegation had abstained in the vote.

51. Mr. TAKASU (Japan) said that his delegation had voted in favour of the draft resolution because it attached great importance to the strengthening of public information activities, which were an indispensable tool for promoting greater understanding and wider support of the United Nations. It was fully aware of the serious efforts of DPI to accommodate new activities as far as possible within existing resources. Nevertheless, its positive vote should not be interpreted as an endorsement of all aspects of the report of the Secretary-General (A/C.5/37/83); it hoped that DPI would continue to make every effort to carry out its activities within existing resources.

52. Mr. PEDERSEN (Canada) said that his delegation had abstained in the vote, primarily because it believed that there was no need for a study on the acquisition of a United Nations satellite; moreover, the Joint Inspection Unit had concluded that the acquisition of a satellite would be neither cost-effective nor in the best interests of the Organization.

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53. Mr. EL SAFTY (Egypt) and Mr. ZINIEL (Ghana) said that if they had been present during the vote they would have voted in favour of the Chairman's proposal.

Office accommodation at Headquarters (A/37/7/Add.12); (A/C.5/37/48)

54. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) said that the Secretary-General was requesting a total of \$6,919,300 for various items connected with office accommodation at Headquarters. The bulk of the requested items related to the rental of office space in the second UNDC building. There were also estimates of expenditure relating to support services; paragraph 24 of the Secretary-General's report (A/C.5/37/48) indicated the number of staff that would be required.

55. The Advisory Committee, in its report (A/37/7/Add.12), provided detailed information about the Secretary-General's request and set forth its recommendations, including recommendations on the additional staff being requested. The Advisory Committee recommended a reduction of \$1,578,200 in the Secretary-General's estimates; thus, the additional appropriation required under section 28 D would amount to \$5,341,100. An additional appropriation of \$37,200 would arise under section 31, to be offset by an increase in the same amount in the estimate of income under income section 1. It was also necessary to take into account the expected increase in income from the rental of premises, estimated at \$200,000. The income indicated under income section 2 (General income) would have to be revised upwards accordingly.

56. Mr. KELLER (United States of America) said that the overcrowding of existing Secretariat facilities was the end result of General Assembly decisions taken over several years. His delegation and many others had consistently opposed programme growth. As a result of the excesses of previous General Assembly decisions, however, the Committee was faced with a very practical problem with a very costly solution.

57. The options were limited. There was no doubt that the current situation at Headquarters was untenable; for the past several years, as the bureaucracy had grown, available office space had become increasingly short. A number of years previously decisions had been taken allowing the rental of office space outside the Headquarters site, even though such space was very expensive in New York. Over the next few days the Committee would approve the creation of additional posts; such decisions were too often viewed in isolation, but each of them added to the problem of providing additional office space.

58. Programme growth was a very real problem; because of the creation of new departments and expansion of existing departments and the ever-present phenomenon of "grade gallop", 300,000 square feet of space were required outside the Headquarters site. Given the current increase in the number of Secretariat staff at all United Nations locations, the problem of office accommodation could not be solved by the approval of the proposals before the Committee. Unless there was restraint at every stage of the programme approval process, the Committee would be faced by further requests for additional office space.

(Mr. Keller, United States of America)

59. Expansion was taking place at virtually every United Nations site; the expansion project at Headquarters, the construction of new conference facilities at Nairobi and proposals for the expansion of United Nations facilities at Addis Ababa and Santiago were just a few examples of the physical realities of excessive programme growth.

60. The uncontrollable physical expansion of the office facilities of the Secretariat resulted from the expansion of the international bureaucracy itself. At a time when taxpayers were receiving fewer services from their Governments such growth was impossible to justify. Thus his delegation was not in a position to support the Secretary-General's proposals.

61. Mr. GRODSKY (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that his delegation had difficulties with the report of the Secretary-General on office accommodation at Headquarters (A/C.5/37/48). It was not clear why in 1981 the question had arisen of renting an additional 200,000 square feet of office space for the United Nations and 100,000 square feet for UNDP, even though UNDP had decided not to use that space. The report of the Secretary-General contained no information to justify the need for substantial additional expenditure on the rental of office space. His delegation requested further information in writing from the Secretariat to show what the situation was about office accommodation. It wished to know, in particular, how much office space existed at Headquarters, how many square feet were being used by each department, centre and section, how much additional accommodation each would have after the new rented accommodation was made available to the United Nations, and whether any of the new space would be unused. Such information would help States gain a clearer idea of the situation in respect of office accommodation.

62. His delegation wondered why it was necessary to vacate rented office space ahead of time so as to move to UNDC II, even though UNDC II was considerably more expensive. The Secretary-General's report attempted to show the advantages to the Organization of such a move, but his delegation felt that further study was needed to show whether the administrative advantages would really offset the considerable additional expenditure of renting office space in UNDC II. Thus in the light of those considerations and in the expectation of receiving further information from the Secretariat his delegation would be unable to support the proposals before the Committee.

The meeting rose at 1.15 p.m.