



SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 21st MEETING

Chairman: Mr. OKEYO (Kenya)

later: Mr. ARASTOU (Islamic Republic of Iran)

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

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The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 120: SCALE OF ASSESSMENTS FOR THE APPORTIONMENT OF THE EXPENSES OF THE UNITED NATIONS (continued) (A/43/11 and Corr.1)

1. Mr. ALI (Chairman of the Committee on Contributions) said that the statements of representatives of Member States during the debate on the scale of assessments had for the most part focused on four topics: the proposed scale, the methodology employed, the statistical data used and the mitigation process.

2. He noted with satisfaction that, overall, the proposed scale had been the subject of a consensus and many representatives had recommended its adoption. Those who were dissatisfied most frequently noted the continuing trend of increasing rates of assessment for OPEC and the member countries of the Group of 77 and decreasing rates for the countries with centrally planned economies and the members of OECD, which appeared to be at odds with economic realities and thus the principle of capacity to pay. However, it was not possible to judge a given scale on the basis of the evolution of the assessments of groups of Member States. The existing system of apportioning the expenses of the Organization was based on the relative capacity to pay of individual Member States. In a zero-sum context, any increase on one side was inevitably accompanied by a decrease on the other. The relative share of each Member State was determined on the basis of its assessable income as a percentage of the total assessable income of all Member States and computed on the basis of data provided by the States themselves. As some representatives had noted, the rates of two thirds of the Member States remained unchanged from the current scale, for two reasons: the relative stability of their assessable incomes and the built-in restrictions in the current methodology. The top 10 contributors would continue to finance well over three-quarters of the Organization's expenses and their total contribution would even be slightly higher than under the current scale. Undeniably, some Member States whose rates would increase faced special problems related to external debt, the deterioration of their terms of trade, the obligation to obtain convertible currencies, the depletion of non-renewable resources or exchange rates. Unfortunately, lack of objective criteria and statistical data made it difficult to quantify real capacity to pay. Therefore, as long as the methodology used was based on relative capacity to pay, determined on the basis of national per capita income, various Member States would continue to be the victims of relative inequities which the Committee on Contributions would strive, as it had in the past, to reduce as much as possible.

3. In his view, the methodology used was an amalgam of philosophical, technical and political considerations. Despite periodic revisions, it had enjoyed remarkable continuity, which was either a sign of its basic solidity or an indication of the dearth of viable alternatives. He recalled the various alternative methods that had been examined by the Committee over the years (A/38/11 and A/41/11) and rejected by the General Assembly. In recent years, some delegations had proposed less radical modifications of the methodology, among them the use of social and economic indicators (see A/38/11 and A/39/11). They too had been rejected by the General Assembly. Proposals had also been made for taking

(Mr. Ali)

into account external debt and exchange rate problems. Those innovations invariably encountered two basic problems: on the one hand, the lack of data, and on the other, the fact that the results were often unacceptable. The first obstacle could be overcome with time in the case of external debt data, for example, but that was impossible for most social indicators. The second obstacle could be overcome in certain cases by a willingness to think in terms of long-term rather than short-term acceptability.

4. Taking the idea of long-term change and the elimination or reduction of the mitigation procedure, the Committee on Contributions might, for example, develop proposals for a revised methodology to be implemented in three or four stages over a 10-year period. Simultaneously, it might devise a new set of limits on the variations from scale to scale so as to achieve a painless shift to a revised methodology. A time-frame of 10 years would also give the Statistical Office an opportunity to develop the necessary statistics to support the revised methodology. The revision would take into account discussions in the Fifth Committee and in the Committee on Contributions. More fundamental changes might also be considered, such as the replacement of the national income concept, as currently defined, by the concept of "sustainable income" which would take into account such elements as the depletion of natural resources or the repayment of external debt. The World Commission on Environment and Development was currently discussing the possibility of using that concept as a tool for assessing socio-economic development.

5. There had been no criticism of some aspects of the existing methodology, for example, the principle of capacity to pay, and no one had objected to the fact there would be no increase in the assessments of the least developed countries. In the case of the ceiling and floor rates, some representatives had pointed out that the issue was political rather than technical. On the other hand, opinions had been divided on the 10-year base period, the majority being in favour of it, while others advocated its reduction or weighting. When the base period was shorter, current capacity to pay was more realistically indicated; with a longer base period, changes in assessment rates were more gradual. A number of representatives had spoken in favour of adjusting the upper limit of the low per capita income allowance formula and the General Assembly might wish to instruct the Committee on Contributions to adjust the limit again.

6. In response to a question from the representative of Algeria regarding adjustment for external debt, he explained that the lack of data in 1985 had forced the Committee to apply an ad hoc method. For the proposed scale, as a result of work done by the International Monetary Fund the Committee had had access to more systematic data for a larger number of countries.

7. In reply to the representative of Egypt, who had referred to paragraph 58 of the Committee's report (A/43/11), he said that the data was converted at the exchange rates in effect during the period to which the data related. Hence, in order to convert national income expressed in local currency into United States dollars, the Statistical Office had used the exchange rates applicable between 1977

(Mr. Ali)

and 1986. The contribution of Member States was assessed at a rate which could be very different, as the exchange rate applied was the one in effect at the time of payment. It should be noted in that connection that the World Bank and UNDP currently used the price-adjusted rates of exchange (PARE) methodology.

8. He fully agreed with those delegations which believed that application of the scheme to avoid excessive variations of individual rates of assessment between successive scales led to departures from the principle of relative capacity to pay. The Committee also fully recognized that the scheme negated in part the effect of external debt adjustment. It had had a cushioning effect, none the less, as demonstrated by the increases in Saudi Arabia's rate over the past few years. The General Assembly had adopted the current scheme after consideration of three different options (described in documents A/39/11 and A/40/11). In accordance with General Assembly resolution 42/208, the Committee on Contributions had reviewed the existing limits and decided not to change them.

9. The time required to collect and process data was such that the Committee had to rely on data that were 18 months old. It should be noted, however, that both the quality of the data and the rate of response to the Statistical Office questionnaire had been steadily improving. Moreover, the adjustments made to data on the Net Material Product of countries with centrally planned economies were increasingly precise. That was a result of the interest shown by those countries in the system of national accounts (SNA), which the Committee used to define national income. The Statistical Office was actively involved in the process and was organizing a meeting, to be held in the Soviet Union in 1989, on ways and means of adapting SNA to the systems of countries with centrally planned economies.

10. The Committee fully shared in the feeling of dissatisfaction with the mitigation process which, in fact, constituted a violation of the principle of the capacity to pay. If the methodology used to establish the scale were ideal, it would objectively reflect the economic situations of Member States and provide a realistic measure of their capacity to pay. There would then no longer be any need for mitigation. Unfortunately, that was not the case and the mitigation process was necessary so that the machine scale, established in accordance with the guidelines laid down by the General Assembly in resolution 42/208, more accurately reflected economic realities. There was hope, however, that it would diminish in importance as the methodology was improved. The information contained in annex II to the Committee's report had made it possible to identify clearly the criteria applied in the mitigation process, which were, by definition, flexible.

AGENDA ITEMS 49 AND 114: REVIEW OF THE EFFICIENCY OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE AND FINANCIAL FUNCTIONING OF THE UNITED NATIONS, AND PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 1988-1989 (continued) (A/43/16 and Corr.1 (Part I) and Add.1, A/43/286 and Corr.1, A/43/651 and Add.1; A/C.5/43/1/Rev.1 and Rev.1/Add.1)

Revised estimates - chapter I (continued)

11. Mr. COSTELLO (Australia), speaking on a point of order, referred to a remark made by the Chairman on 28 October. His delegation had the greatest respect for the Chairman, and Kenya and Australia maintained excellent relations. The Australian delegation fully supported the Chairman, whose role was to conduct the debates in accordance with the rules of procedure of the General Assembly. His delegation in no way sought to contest the Chairman's remarks, but rather to clarify how it had understood them. The Australian statement which had prompted those remarks might have been misunderstood as a personal attack on Mr. Wyzner, when it had been meant as a wry tribute to his mastery of bureaucratic skills. In recent months, another senior member of the Secretariat had been the object of personal criticism during the Committee's debates. Should that recur, there was no doubt that the Chairman would intervene, as he had on 28 October. Furthermore, Mr. Wyzner himself had felt that it was important to come before the Committee and passionately defend his department. For that reason, if for no other, his delegation had no qualms about bringing up the question.

12. The main point was that, whatever the virtues of the Secretariat - and they were considerable - it must conform to the guidelines laid down by Member States. As that was a normal procedure of every responsible organization, there was nothing offensive about such a view. His delegation was therefore confident that the Chairman had not intended to inhibit in any way the right of any representative to raise any issue which he believed the Committee should take up in the discharge of the mandate conferred upon it by the Charter. More than a right, it was indeed a duty.

13. Mr. MICHALSKI (United States of America), referring to the implementation of recommendation 15 of the Group of High-level Intergovernmental Experts (Group of 18), said that the number of posts to be abolished was an absolute, whereas the distribution of the actual cuts might vary as the effects of the reorganization became apparent. The Secretary-General therefore had a reasonable degree of flexibility, which he should use to ensure that small units were not subjected to disproportionate reductions.

14. The Committee for Programme and Co-ordination (CPC) had recommended acceptance of the Secretary-General's revised estimates for the Department of Conference Services (DCS), but without prejudice to the full implementation of recommendation 15. Member States expected that after the initial phase the Secretary-General would draw up a list of additional posts to be eliminated so that the 15 per cent target figure could be met. His delegation strongly supported the ACABQ proposal that the 100 posts restored to DCS should be offset by the elimination of 50 posts from other services. The Secretariat claimed that it could not eliminate 50 posts - i.e., less than 0.5 per cent of its staff - without

(Mr. Michalski, United States)

"programme disruption". However, since it had given no specific indication of what "programme disruption" would entail, there was reason to doubt that it would actually occur. As at 31 August 1988, the vacancy rate in DCS was 11.3 per cent for Professional staff and 12.5 per cent for General Service staff without any obvious disruption in servicing. Staffing levels should not, in any case, be established on the basis of work-loads at "peak" periods. Moreover, another look should be taken at work-load standards, particularly in the support services, because United Nations standards might well have sunk to below average. Finally, technological advances were another means of realizing savings.

15. The implementation of recommendation 15 had thus far been affected by the political pressures of a bureaucracy and those of an international organization which had to deal with the wishes of its Member States. The Member States acknowledged that the Secretary-General's task had not been easy, but that did not mean that they did not expect recommendation 15 to be fully implemented.

16. Mr. GOMEZ (Controller), answering questions raised during the general debate, reminded the Committee that the Secretary-General had submitted his plans for the implementation of resolution 41/213 in document A/42/234, in April 1987. The document had been discussed by CPC, ACABQ and the Fifth Committee, leading to the adoption by the General Assembly of resolution 42/211. The General Assembly's adoption of the programme budget for 1988-1989 had also been of fundamental importance in that context.

17. Immediately after the adoption of resolution 41/213, the Department of Administration and Management, under the guidance of the Programme Planning and Budgeting Board (PPBB), had set in train the process of implementing recommendation 15 of the Group of 18. It had begun consultations with programme managers and, in March 1987, PPBB had issued recommendations calling for the establishment of a Post Review Group to receive submissions by departments and relate them to overall needs. The Group, comprising staff from all sectors of the Organization, had begun work on 29 June 1987. On 3 February 1988, after seven months of intensive study, it had submitted its report to the Secretary-General and PPBB, which had decided to have it circulated immediately to all programme managers so that they could make their views known.

18. PPBB had met in February and March 1988 to consider the report of the Group in the light of additional information and comments from programme managers. The Chairman of the Group had attended the meetings, and the Chairperson of the Staff Union had addressed the Board. The Group and PPBB had based their analysis, inter alia, on information on programme implementation for the period from 1984 to the first semester of 1987 and, in some cases, on information about work-loads. Estimating the work-load for 1990-1991 had been a somewhat theoretical exercise, inasmuch as the programme had not yet been finalized, but programme managers with their experience had helped to temper that problem.

(Mr. Gomez)

19. The exercise had required considerable efforts from the entire Secretariat which, at the same time, had been having to cope with a difficult financial situation. Member States had also taken part; the dialogue at the intergovernmental level was still going on, for example, on the revitalization of the Economic and Social Council and the study of United Nations intergovernmental machinery in the economic and social sectors.

20. Turning to the documents before the Committee, he said that document A/C.5/43/1/Rev.1 dealt basically with the implementation of recommendations 5, 15, 19, 25, 29 and 37 of the Group of 18, the others being covered in document A/43/286. Paragraph 14 of A/C.5/43/1/Rev.1 listed the factors which the Secretary-General had taken into account in implementing recommendation 15. The tables on pages 22 to 51 showed the number of posts proposed for abolition. As for the 25 per cent target set for Under-Secretary-General and Assistant Secretary-General posts, the table on page 10 showed that 14, 11 of them currently vacant, were targeted for abolition.

21. The Secretary-General agreed with the Chairman of ACABQ that the 15 per cent reduction rate proposed by the Group of 18 was not a scientifically arrived-at figure, but a target to be achieved over a certain period while abiding by certain parameters (no adverse impact on programmes, the maintenance of geographical balance within the Secretariat, etc.). His proposed target was that given in paragraph 15 of document A/C.5/43/1/Rev.1: an overall cut of 13.02 per cent from a base of 11,255 posts. To arrive at that figure, he had had to take account of the effect of the planned reductions on a programme budget whose size and content would not be defined till much later. His position was that a reduction of that order would inevitably have repercussions and, as mandated by the relevant regulations, Member States would have to define their priorities clearly so that the Secretariat could amend programmes intended for execution in 1990-1991 to prevent any adverse impact. In addition to the question of priorities, the other provisions of resolution 41/213 would also have to be fully implemented. The proposed programme budget for the biennium 1990-1991 would take account of the reviews of the liaison offices and the joint inter-agency machinery, among others, which had not been completed when the Secretary-General established his target, if the General Assembly accepted the Advisory Committee's recommendations on the subject.

22. The Secretary-General had indicated that, in order to arrive at a reduction of 13.02 per cent, even larger cuts would have to be made in the services with the largest numbers of staff, meaning the Department of Conference Services and the Department of Administration and Management. Those two Departments were dealt with in paragraphs 25 to 27 of document A/C.5/43/1/Rev.1. He took the fact that 100 posts were to be restored to the Department of Conference Services to mean that Member States were not currently in a position to reduce the demand for conference services. As for the suggestion that the costs should be offset by further reductions in other departments, the Secretary-General would not be in a position to go beyond what he had already proposed, pending the findings of the reviews still in progress.

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23. In reply to a question from the representative of Cameroon, he said that the information made available since the second progress report could be found in documents A/C.5/43/1/Rev.1, A/C.5/43/16 and A/43/659. Two further reports would shortly be submitted to the Committee, one on the administration of justice and the other on the improvement of the information systems for administration and management. Those reports all showed that the reform process was moving ahead, and that the Secretary-General was doing all he could to implement the resolutions of the General Assembly.

24. In the case of the economic and social sector, the Secretary-General had not taken any final decision beyond those recorded in the document before the Committee, although a number of options were under study. The deliberations between Governments on the restructuring of the intergovernmental machinery, including the Economic and Social Council, would be taken into account.

25. Mr. RIESCO (Director, Staff Administration and Training Division) responded to questions from the Japanese representative concerning the implementation of the recommendations of the Group of 18 relating to the staff.

26. Regarding recommendation 42, he said that a first edition of the Personnel Manual had been issued. The Secretariat would supplement it as the resources became available.

27. Improvements in the performance evaluation system (recommendation 50) were still under study. A task force had been set up within the Secretariat to consider the matter, and its findings had been discussed with staff representatives, but no agreement had yet been reached on specific changes.

28. On the subject of criteria and methods for evaluating candidates for positions in the Secretariat (recommendation 43), paragraphs 33 to 37 of document A/43/659 described the results of a study of ways to realign the internal and external examinations. The principal conclusion was that both types of examination should follow the same format.

29. Commenting on staff mobility (recommendation 49), he said that a comprehensive staff rotation scheme was still under study. As indicated in document A/43/659, paragraph 38, the vacancy management and staff redeployment programme had increased staff mobility. Further, the Secretary-General had approved specific measures to that end, including incentives to encourage transfer or assignment to duty stations with high vacancy rates, in particular the regional commissions. In that connection, he noted, in reply to the representative of Uganda, that in December 1987 ECA had had a vacancy rate of 24.8 per cent. By the end of August 1988 the rate had declined to 20.8 per cent. If account was taken of posts for which recruitment was currently under way, the rate was only 19 per cent. The vacancy situation was expected to improve further by the end of the year.

30. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) said that he had thought at first that he could answer the question put at the 19th meeting, on 28 October, by the Representative of Cameroon. However, following its meeting on the matter on the same day, the Advisory Committee had reached the conclusion that, in view of its own opinion stated in documents A/43/651 and Add.1 and the position of the Secretary-General, it did not wish to indicate which sectors might provide the 50 additional posts recommended for elimination as a means of offsetting the restoration of 100 posts in the Department of Conference Services. That was a prerogative of the Secretary-General. Of course, the Advisory Committee would comply with any decision of the Fifth Committee requesting it to give a list of the sectors in which further reductions would be possible. He recalled that the Advisory Committee had predicated its recommendations on the assumption that "if the General Assembly wishes to maintain the overall level of the budget at that adopted at its forty-second session, it must offset increases in section 29 with corresponding reductions elsewhere" (A/43/651, para. 20).

31. For the moment, the Secretary-General had neither rejected nor embraced the Advisory Committee's recommendation. He had simply said that a number of studies were still being carried out (inter-agency-funded machinery, liaison functions, etc.) and that it was therefore impossible at the present stage to indicate where the 50 additional posts could be eliminated. If the Advisory Committee's recommendation was accepted, the Secretary-General would make the consequential changes in proposed budget for the biennium 1990-1991, taking due account of the result of the studies, the views of CPC as to which administrative units had suffered most in the initial proposals, and the views of the Fifth Committee.

32. When the Committee had adopted the proposed budget in 1987, only one delegation had voted against and only three had abstained. It was to be hoped that the spirit of compromise which had made that remarkable outcome possible would produce a similar agreement on the proposals in question. He read out the recommendation made by CPC in paragraph 36 of the first part of its report and stressed that, although he was not offering an interpretation of the recommendation, it was impossible to adopt one part of it and disregard the others. It seemed that the approach taken by the Advisory Committee in that connection was consistent with the views expressed by the members of the Fifth Committee. The Fifth Committee should examine the ACABQ recommendations in the spirit in which they had been formulated. As always in such cases, it was for the Fifth Committee to decide whether to approve, reject or modify them.

33. Mr. MONTHE (Cameroon) said that the explanations provided by the Chairman of the Advisory Committee and the Controller were difficult to follow. One thing was certain: the Secretary-General categorically affirmed that the elimination of 50 additional posts would have an adverse impact on programmes, without being able to say exactly how. The Secretary-General added that he would take account in his future decisions of those sectors in which the initial reductions had been considered excessive. He also proposed to take account of the views of Member States. However, each time the Secretariat made use of that formulation it placed itself in a difficult situation, particularly when the views of Member States were contradictory.

(Mr. Monthe, Cameroon)

34. The replies given by the Office of Human Resources Management also left much to be desired. The Office had not specified whether the measures envisaged would have repercussions on the composition of the Secretariat - which would run counter to General Assembly resolution 41 213 - and if so, what would have to be done to rectify the situation.

35. Under these circumstances, the most prudent way to proceed would, perhaps, be for the Secretariat to provide a list of sectors in which reductions had already been deemed excessive. The Fifth Committee could then officially recommend that no further reductions should be made in the staffing of the units concerned. The Secretariat would then indicate what its plans were and what policy it intended to follow if those plans would have an adverse impact. In the absence of such an approach, the Committee could not take a decision that would amount to giving the Secretary-General a blank cheque. He trusted that the remaining ambiguities would be clarified in the course of the Committee's work.

36. Mr. LADJOUZI (Algeria) said that CPC, the Advisory Committee and the Fifth Committee had already stated their positions on the reform process. Accordingly the reminder given by the Controller did not create any difficulties. But the Secretariat had still not indicated what the programmatic implications would be of its two proposals for reductions (13.02 per cent and 12.1 per cent). It was only with such information that Member States could take a decision both on the Secretary-General's proposals and on the Advisory Committee's recommendation to eliminate 50 additional posts to offset the restoration of 100 posts in the Department of Conference Services.

37. Further, the Secretariat had still not replied to Algeria's question relating to the implementation of recommendations 47 and 54 of the Group of 18.

38. Mr. GUPTA (India) asked for a copy of the Controller's statement to be distributed to members of the Committee at the end of the debate. As the representatives of Cameroon and Algeria had emphasized, delegations expected a more detailed explanation of the impact on programmes of the proposed staff reductions, and, unless the Advisory Committee and the Secretariat provided such information, they would be left to take the final decision on their own. So that a decision could be taken by consensus, in the spirit which had characterized the Committee's work in recent years, his delegation proposed the holding of informal consultations on the items under consideration.

39. Ms. ZHANG Xian (China) said that she fully understood the motives underlying the questions put by various delegations. When called upon to take a decision on a recommendation, Member States were entitled to know what the implications would be. That said, she also understood the position of the Chairman of the Advisory Committee, who wished to respect both the prerogatives of the Secretary-General and the point of view of the majority of members of the Committee.

40. Mr. FONTAINE-ORTIZ (Cuba) said that the basic problem posed by the implementation of recommendation 15 was political and admitted of only two solutions: either the Committee accepted the proposed recommendations knowing in advance that they would have an adverse impact on programmes, or it refused to. That being the case, many delegations, including his own, declined to opt for the first solution without knowing which sectors of activity would be affected. While it was true that it was difficult for the Secretariat to give a precise answer, it should take account of the remarks addressed to it, including those made by the representatives of Cameroun, Algeria and India.

41. Recalling the comments made by the Fifth Committee in paragraph 55 of its report to the General Assembly on the recommendations of the Group of 18 (A/41/795), he joined with the representative of Algeria in requesting information on the implementation of recommendation 47, and also requested additional information on the implementation of recommendation 46, which related, *inter alia*, to the number of women from developing countries, or the symbol of the document in which that information could be found. He was ready to participate in negotiations on the recommendations under consideration and invited the Committee to deal with the problem frankly for what it was, namely a political issue.

42. Mr. INOMATA (Japan) said that his delegation was gratified that a first draft personnel manual had been submitted to the officials responsible for personnel matters, and hoped that it would also be made available to the members of the Fifth Committee. Pursuant to recommendation 42 of the Group of 18, the manual, in its final version, would also apply to other organizations in the United Nations system. It was thus important to ensure transparency. With respect to the recruitment of staff members, the question put by his delegation did not relate only to competitive examinations, but also to the criteria for the selection of candidates. In that connection, the Group of 18 had specified in recommendation 43, paragraph 2, that selection should be based on objective methods and clear criteria. From the indications given by the Secretariat, it seemed that new criteria had been developed for internal promotions and the evaluation of staff members. In view of those considerations, his delegation would like to have further information on the way in which the second part of recommendation 43 was being implemented. Finally he wished to receive precise figures relating to staff mobility, since the Secretary-General's successive reports on the matter indicated only a number, than a significant number, of reassignments (A/43/286, para. 78; A/43/659, para. 38).

43. Mr. MAUS (Mexico), speaking with reference to the implementation of recommendation 15, said that his delegation had consistently emphasized the importance of taking into consideration the political factor in order to reach a solution which would make the Organization more effective without jeopardizing its main objectives. The Secretary-General himself, in the revised estimates, stressed the need to display flexibility in applying that recommendation and was aware that the 15 per cent target formulated by the Group of 18 was purely indicative. In resolution 42/211, moreover, the General Assembly had reaffirmed that flexibility was essential in order to avoid any adverse effect on the programmes or the structure and composition of the Secretariat. It was therefore regrettable that

(Mr. Maus, Mexico)

the Secretariat had been unable to indicate clearly the impact which the planned reductions would have on the programmes. Without that information, the Fifth Committee and the General Assembly would have to rely on guesswork. His delegation therefore supported the principle of informal consultations proposed by the Indian delegation, on the understanding that the participants in those consultations would have access to precise information regarding any repercussions of the proposed reductions.

44. Mr. JEMAIL (Tunisia) said that, in the interests of efficiency, the Secretariat should do its best to distribute all the documents, including the detailed replies to the questions put by delegations, in order to facilitate the substantive debate on the question of post reductions. In his delegation's opinion, the recommendations of the Group of 18 formed a single package and it was important not to single out recommendation 15. Many other recommendations also required implementation in full. Therefore, as the representative of Algeria had stated, it would be of interest to learn how recommendation 54 concerning the length of service of Under-Secretaries-General and Assistant Secretaries-General was being applied. In any event, the Fifth Committee would not be able to decide on the Advisory Committee's recommendations until it knew which departments and programmes were targeted by the proposed additional reductions. He mentioned the case of the Department of Public Information, where the current retrenchment plan would reduce from 14 to 7 persons the number of staff in an administrative unit concerned with information relating to such high-priority questions as Palestine, Namibia and apartheid.

45. He would point out that the Department of Conference Services was doing its best to discharge its numerous responsibilities in the area of conferences. It was therefore necessary to exercise a great deal of prudence when reducing post in that Department.

46. Mr. ETUKET (Uganda) observed that the Member States and the Secretariat were agreed that the post reductions must not have an adverse effect on programmes and that the figure of 15 per cent proposed by the Group of 18 was not the result of any rigorous analysis of requirements. It had been stated that the overall reduction of 12.1 per cent recommended by CPC (taking into account a 10 per cent reduction for conference services in New York and Geneva) would definitely have an adverse effect on the programmes. It was therefore obvious, surely, that the reduction of 13.02 per cent originally proposed by the Secretariat would have an even greater impact. As a number of delegations had stated, the Fifth Committee might be well advised to take account of political as well as technical considerations when taking decisions on the subject.

47. In his reply, the Controller had stated that the results of some of the reviews under way would be reflected in the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1990-1991. His delegation would like to know whether that was true also of the reviews concerning the economic and social sectors. Moreover, while he welcomed the fact that the vacancy rate at ECA had been reduced from 22.1 per cent

(Mr. Etuket, Uganda)

to 19 per cent, it was apparent from table 1 of document A/C.5/43/1/Add.1 that those rates were still very high compared with other regional commissions. The efforts to be taken by the Secretary-General in that area must therefore be monitored and, if necessary, further measures must be adopted.

48. Mr. Arastou (Islamic Republic of Iran) took the Chair.

49. Mr. GOMEZ (Assistant Secretary-General for Programme Planning, Budget and Finance, Controller) assured the Committee that his detailed replies would be communicated to members in document form. Replying to the question of the Ugandan representative, he said that the findings of all the reviews under way, including the study of the intergovernmental structure in the economic and social fields, the work on draft resolution E/1988/L.45 concerning the revitalization of the Economic and Social Council and the studies mentioned in the Advisory Committee's recommendations, would indeed be reflected in the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1990-1991.

50. The Chairman of the Advisory Committee had provided an excellent summary of the Secretary-General's position with respect to retrenchment. The Secretary-General had proposed the elimination of approximately 1,400 posts, or 13.02 per cent of the total establishment, by 1 January 1990. CPC and the Advisory Committee, which found the reduction excessive, were both proposing the restoration of 100 posts for conference services in New York and Geneva, and the Advisory Committee was further proposing that the restoration should be partially offset by a reduction of 50 additional posts in other sectors. The Secretary-General maintained that, since the Member States had not completed their study of the intergovernmental structure in the economic and social fields and their work on draft resolution E/1988/L.45 and the various studies requested by the Advisory Committee were still under way, he was in no position to determine where the 50 additional posts should be eliminated. It had taken 18 months of hard work to establish, in consultation with the departmental managers and bearing in mind the many directives and caveats formulated by Member States, the retrenchment plan currently proposed. It was simply not possible for the Secretariat to redo all that work in one week. He could, however, state which would be the additional reductions in the context of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1990-1991, provided that the Member States specifically asked him to do so. Given that the Member States themselves had not completed their work on the rationalization of the calendar of conferences and meetings, it was imperative that the Secretary-General should have sufficient time to determine which other posts could be eliminated, and on the basis of what criteria, so that those proposals, carefully pondered, could be the subject of a consensus.

51. Mr. LADJOUZI (Algeria) agreed with the Controller that the Secretary-General should be given sufficient time to identify 50 additional posts whose abolition would not adversely affect other departments equally as important as the Department of Conference Services. But the Controller had not answered the main question, namely, whether or not the overall reduction of 12.01 per cent recommended by CPC would affect the activities. It was vital that the Secretariat should dispel all doubts on that point once and for all.

(Mr. Ladjouai, Algeria)

52. As far as the economic and social areas were concerned, it must be emphasized that recommendations 8 and 25 of the Group of 18 were aimed not so much at a reduction of personnel as at a rationalization of activities. For that reason, and because of the need to preserve the balance between the economic and social sector and the political sector, it would be helpful to know the planned reduction percentages in each of those two sectors and also the reductions to which the restructuring of the political sector had already given rise.

53. Mr. MUDHO (Kenya) said that it was not for the Member States to determine what reductions should be made. The Secretary-General should formulate proposals in the context of the informal consultations which would be held on the subject, and the determining criterion should be that none of the reductions proposed was to have an adverse effect on the programmes.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.