



FIFTH COMMITTEE
15th meeting
held on
Monday, 24 October 1983
at 10.30 a.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 15th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. KUYAMA (Japan)

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

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The meeting was called to order at 10.50 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 109: PROPOSED PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 1984-1985 (continued) (A/38/3, 6 and 7; A/C.5/38/6 and Corr.1, and A/C.5/38/7; A/C.5/38/SR.7)

AGENDA ITEM 110: PROGRAMME PLANNING (continued)

- (a) REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE FOR PROGRAMME AND CO-ORDINATION (continued) (A/38/38)
- (b) REPORTS OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (continued) (A/38/133 and Corr.1; A/C.5/38/6 and Corr.1)

General debate (continued)

1. Mr. BOUSHEV (Bulgaria) said that his delegation supported the strategic guidelines for the elaboration of programmes outlined by the Secretary-General in the foreword and introduction to the proposed programme budget. For the first time, the programme proposals had been based on the medium-term plan for the period 1984-1989, as adopted by the General Assembly in resolution 37/234. Thus, short-term programming was being carried out within the context of a longer-term plan. It was regrettable, however, that longer-term planning was inadequately reflected in the termination of obsolete and ineffective programmes, and was not reflected at all in specific proposals for budgetary restraint, especially with regard to staff distribution.
2. As far as the "real" rate of budget growth and the necessity of providing adequate resources for all programmes were concerned, there was still the inertia of past practices. An extrapolation of the financial and staff resources necessary for the period 1989-1990 yielded some very disturbing figures. In the view of his delegation, a consistent programmatic approach should necessarily include preliminary estimates of the financial and staff resources needed for long-term programmes.
3. The Secretary-General's proposals for the redeployment of resources posed some problems. As could be seen from annex XI to the introduction to the proposed programme budget, the share of terminated programmes was insignificant compared with the overall level of activities. Moreover, the terminations affected part IV alone ("Economic, social and humanitarian activities") and, what was more, the only regional activities. At the same time, in all budget sections the terminations affected only subsection C, ("Programmes of activities"), while subsections A, ("Policy-making organs") and B, ("Executive direction and management") remained untouched, except in the case of section 13. Logic required that the termination of programmes should entail a reduction in resources or their redeployment to programmes of higher priority. Regrettably, the terminations had not led to any saving or to the release of resources. The dynamics of programmes should be reflected in the dynamics of expended resources and not in unlimited growth. In that connection, serious consideration should be given to the idea of a "ceiling" suggested by several delegations.

(Mr. Boushev, Bulgaria)

4. Turning to the question of the "real" growth of the budget, he said two distinct groups of data were used in estimating expenditure for every item of the budget. It was no surprise, therefore, that very different results were obtained according to the group of data used. The first group included the sum of the previous biennial appropriations and additional amounts reflecting the revaluation of the resource base and inflation. The total obtained represented the proposed appropriation for each section of the budget. On that basis, the budget for the biennium 1984-1985 would total \$1.6 billion, or nearly \$133 million more than the previous budget. That figure clearly reflected real growth, even if it was caused by inflation. In any event, the fact that that increase of \$133 million was equal to the contributions of nearly three fourths of all Member States could not be disregarded. On the basis of the second group of figures, however, "real" growth was \$9.8 million rather than \$133 million. That group of data took into account the revalued non-recurrent items and new posts under the United Nations regular budget, instead of the inflation-related revaluation.

5. Such a dual procedure was unacceptable to his delegation. On the one hand, inflation-related growth placed a very real burden, in the form of extra costs, on all Member States, the majority of which bore no responsibility for the currency instability of some of them. On the other hand, it was said that the inflated revaluations were not real, and they were replaced by other increased estimates which, for unknown reasons, had not been included in the first group of estimates. While understanding the legitimate desire of the Secretary-General to define the ideal growth of the budget by excluding the extraneous factor of inflation, his delegation failed to understand why he should deny the reality of inflationary growth and why additional expenditures, relating to established posts, had been left out of account in evaluating that growth.

6. In addition, as could be seen from annex I to the introduction, the rate of inflation-related revaluations varied from 2.2 per cent to 36 per cent, whereas, according to annex IV the basic activities of the United Nations were carried out in countries where the anticipated rate of inflation was no higher than 10 per cent. He asked whether the discrepancy was the result of different rates of local inflation.

7. With regard to non-recurrent items, the table appearing in annex III showed that there had been 140 non-recurrent items totalling \$66 million for the biennium 1982-1983. For the biennium 1984-1985, 13 such items had been retained and 29 new ones had been added, at a total cost of \$14 million. While that was a significant reduction, the recurrent character of some of the items remained inexplicable. Whatever they were called, such expenditures should be taken into account in determining the real growth of the budget.

8. With regard to the creation and conversion of posts, the tables in annex V (a) and (b) showed that, in the preceding biennium, 69 posts had been created and 216 temporary posts had been converted into established ones, and that it was proposed to convert 199 more temporary posts into established ones for the biennium 1984-1985. That practice entailed extra costs, accentuated the imbalance in the

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(Mr. Boushev, Bulgaria)

geographical distribution of posts and did nothing to enhance the effectiveness of the Secretariat since it relied on the hiring of new staff members rather than on the Organization's internal resources.

9. Mr. RESHETNYAK (Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic) said that, despite the considerable preparatory work which had been done, the proposed programme budget had been drawn up for the most part without a careful review of existing programmes and a critical assessment of their importance, relevance, effectiveness and usefulness. For example, annex IX to the introduction contained no specific data on the number of posts that had been abolished or the total amount of resources released as a result.

10. Despite its stated intentions, the Secretariat continued to follow a policy of increasing the number of staff. As in previous years, staff increases were not linked to an expansion of programme activities but rather to increases in the General Service area. The practice of increasing the staff of the Secretariat each year must be stopped, and new needs should be met by improving the organization of work and redeployment. The current staffing level was sufficient to enable the Organization to carry out all the tasks assigned to it.

11. His delegation shared the view of the Advisory Committee with regard to the proposed reclassifications, to the effect that it was not clear that the level of responsibility of the posts involved had increased sufficiently to justify reclassification in all cases in 1984-1985. His delegation could likewise not support the inclusion in the regular budget of 30 posts financed from extrabudgetary resources or the conversion of temporary posts into established ones.

12. The Secretariat calculated the so-called "real" growth of the Organization's expenses at 0.7 per cent. In arriving at that figure, the Secretariat had not taken into account "non-recurring" expenses. A perusal of annex III to the introduction to the proposed programme budget, which contained figures for such expenses, showed that many of them had in fact been carried over from the preceding biennium and that they totalled approximately \$13 million. Taking those expenses into account, the real rate of growth of the budget was well in excess of 0.7 per cent. Furthermore, the additional appropriations which would be requested by the Secretariat before the end of the current session and in the next two years were not reflected in that calculation. His delegation's position of principle was that the budget for 1984-1985 should not exceed in dollar terms the level of the budget for the current biennium.

13. There was no justification for making all Member States support the recovery of costs relating to operations in the Congo and the Middle East, or the bonds issued by the United Nations, as was suggested in section 30 of the budget. As the operations had been undertaken by a certain number of States without the assent of the Security Council and in violation of the Charter, his country refused to bear the consequences or have any part in their funding.

(Mr. Reshetnyak, Ukrainian SSR)

14. His delegation felt that many of the comments in the reports of the Advisory Committee and SPC were apt, and could provide opportunities for budgetary savings. In general, it hoped that the Fifth Committee's discussions would lead to improvements in the work of all Secretariat services.

15. Mr. FERM (Sweden) said that on the whole he supported the approach taken by the Secretary-General in limiting real budgetary growth, although he could have wished some sections of the proposed programme budget to be better served in financial terms. He hoped that the question of growth would not dominate discussions of the budget proposals. Real growth was difficult to define and measure. Not only was the rather complicated method of calculating the difference between two budgets on the basis of three quantifiable factors - revalued base, resource growth and inflation - difficult to grasp in detail but, in addition, estimates of inflation and exchange rate projections had a major impact on the calculations.

16. In recent years, a substantial portion of total expenditure eventually incurred over the budgetary biennium had not been taken into account in initial estimates. There was a widening gap between growth as initially forecast and actual growth resulting from requests for additional appropriations and the financial implications of later decisions. Thus, the real rate of growth in the revised estimates for 1982-1983 would probably have increased by almost five percentage points over the initial figure while, in previous bienniums, the gap had been between two and three percentage points.

17. A further point was that the format of summary tables made the clear identification of medium- and long-term trends in expenditure patterns difficult, and was hardly conducive to ready comparisons. He emphasized the need to standardize the format for the presentation of such information.

18. While encouraging progress had been made in the definition of priorities, the results in the elimination of obsolete, ineffective or marginal programmes were less satisfactory. Some programme elements had been deleted in nine budget sections, all in the economic and social sectors, and his delegation urged the Secretary-General to continue his efforts in that direction. He also stressed the importance of programme monitoring and evaluation and supported the notion of establishing, within the Secretariat, a unit to centralize the responsibility and resources for evaluation.

19. On the subject of strengthening the United Nations, he believed that the current budget was large enough to allow the Organization to carry out the mandates assigned to it by member States. More than minor adjustments in the level of resources, the determining factor at the current stage was improvements in efficiency. The simultaneous application of a policy of budgetary austerity and administrative rationalization was essential, as were stricter procedures for establishing priorities.

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(Mr. Ferm, Sweden)

20. While the existence of the Programme Planning and Budgeting Board allowed budget forecasts as a whole to be considered in depth, the improvement was counter-balanced by delays in the publication of documentation. One weakness of the current system was that, apart from the Secretary-General himself, no member of the Board had the authority to pronounce himself on the totality of issues under discussion. Another way of strengthening the effectiveness of the Organization would be for Member States and the Secretary-General to define together the essential functions of the United Nations for the decades to come so as to prevent a dissipation of efforts and preserve the unity of the Secretariat.

21. In connection with the moratorium on organizational changes and programme, budget and personnel regulations requested by the Secretary-General, his Government believed that the Secretary-General, as the chief administrative officer of the Organization in accordance with the Charter, had the authority to undertake the reforms required by the General Assembly's policy decisions. As regards the work of the high-level advisory group on administrative reform, any changes should make allowance for the considerable progress made in recent years on the basis of resolution 32/197 towards the introduction of an integrated programme planning, budgeting, monitoring and evaluation system, and should help to reduce the current fragmentation of authority.

22. His delegation, like the Advisory Committee, believed that the Secretary-General should pay special attention to the presentation of extrabudgetary resources in the preparation of the proposed programme budget for 1986-1987. His Government had always been accommodating where the transfer to the regular budget of posts previously financed from extrabudgetary funds was concerned; it would keep a flexible attitude, but that did not imply that it did not distinguish between the two kinds of funding.

23. The extrabudgetary resources put at the Secretary-General's disposal in the form of voluntary contributions amounted to considerable sums, and larger sums still were contributed by Governments to support the activities of other bodies in the United Nations system. Seen in a broader perspective, however, all such contributions, including voluntary contributions, amounted to no more than a small fraction of what Member States spend on other things, and the division of the financial burden among the membership differed markedly from that indicated in the scale of assessments. Thus, in 1982, all assessed and voluntary contributions to the United Nations system (not including IMF, the World Bank and affiliated agencies) amounted to almost \$4 billion, which was roughly equivalent to what his Government had spent on health care in 1979. Similarly, a medium-sized industrial concern such as the Swedish Volvo Group had had a turnover of some \$12 billion in 1982 and currently employed more than 70,000 people, by comparison with the approximately 50,000 civil servants employed throughout the United Nations system. Finally, all the contributions made to the United Nations system amounted to approximately 0.65 per cent of world military expenditure, which stood at more than \$600 billion.

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(Mr. Fern, Sweden)

24. His delegation had drawn up statistics on all categories of contributions, assessed and voluntary, to the United Nations system. They showed that a small group of industrialized countries were the major financial supporters of the system, but also that the contributions of a number of developing countries represented, for them, a fairly substantial burden, bearing in mind their capacity to pay. There were several small and medium-sized industrial countries and a number of oil-exporting countries among the 15 top donors, with contributions ranging from \$36 to \$6 per capita. The contribution per capita of the United States was \$4.36, and the Soviet Union came 65th, with a contribution of \$0.49 per capita in 1982.

25. Mrs. KNEZEVIC (Yugoslavia) remarked with satisfaction that the presentation of the Organization's proposed programme budget had improved considerably. The very principle of programme budgeting required, budgetary questions proper and the issues of programme planning, monitoring and evaluation to be considered together, for they were interdependent. Her delegation agreed with the Secretary-General that there was no automatic correlation between an organization's efficiency and the size of its budget, but rejected the idea, put forward during the twenty-third session of the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination, that the programme aspects of the budget should be defined essentially as a function of financial considerations. In fact, the overriding concern should be to encourage and undertake activities in accordance with the needs of the international community and, in particular, the developing countries. Further efforts were also needed to increase significantly the share of expenditure allocated to substantive activities as opposed to support costs. The administrative reforms which the Secretary-General proposed to introduce in 1984 should take account of that fact.

26. Her delegation believed that all due attention should be paid to moves to rationalize the functioning of the United Nations system through administrative restructuring, priority setting, the elimination of obsolete, marginal or ineffective activities, an increase in the capacity of evaluation systems and services, and, finally, functional integration, with the eventual aim of enhancing the efficiency of the United Nations and imparting new impetus to operational activities and the multilateral co-operation so vital to the developing countries.

27. The intergovernmental bodies concerned should resolve to define without delay the criteria for selecting programme elements priorities. It appeared from the proposed programme budget that the relative priorities of some elements had been established in a somewhat arbitrary and incoherent manner.

28. Finally, her delegation called for the greatest caution in the implementation of Economic and Social Council resolution 1983/49 on methods and procedures for the provision of statement of programme implications to the General Assembly.

29. Mr. TOMMO MONTHE (United Republic of Cameroon) said that the current international situation required greater action on the part of the United Nations. The analysis given in the foreword which the Secretary-General had had the happy idea of adding to the proposed programme budget provided useful information, and

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(Mr. Tommo Monthe, United Republic
of Cameroon)

deserved to be expanded on future occasions. It would be useful for the foreword to provide a summary of the budgetary measures taken by different bodies in the system response to the world situation. Additionally, like the introduction, to which it should be conceptually related, the foreword should indicate the effects of the programme budget on the problems which it was the Organization's task to solve.

30. He was glad that the Secretariat had abandoned the principle of zero growth and the imposition of an arbitrary budget ceiling, both of which had been rejected by a large number of Member States. The Secretary-General had simply directed programme managers to exercise "maximum restraint" in their budgetary requests. In following that instruction, however, programme managers had been unable to strengthen some activities in progress or to launch some others, and the result was a growth rate of 0.7 per cent (with the reductions proposed by the Advisory Committee) which was accounted for essentially by increasing staff costs. The Secretary-General should indicate exactly what he meant by "maximum restraint" and give assurances that the notion would not eventually give rise to another ceiling.

31. All Member States, in particular the Group of 77 and some delegations from the developing countries, had given ample proof of their wish to improve the efficiency with which the Organization's resources were managed. But the Organization could not be asked, as certain delegations were doing, to finance all new activities by redeploying existing resources and reassigning priorities. The scope of those two techniques was strictly limited: developments in the international situation made new activities necessary and the redeployment of human resources ran up against the fact that staff members were recruited for specific posts. Thus the gap between initial estimates in previous budgets and the revised amounts should be perceived not as a sign of laxity but a result of the fluidity of the world situation. Additionally, relative priorities should be established with discernment: the fact that under the pressures of the moment, new activities were added to existing ones did not necessarily mean that the old ones had diminished in importance. The provisions of resolution 37/234 governing relative priorities should generally be applied with flexibility and due regard for efficiency and rigorous management.

32. At its twenty-third session, CPC had discussed two major questions: the integration of the programme planning, budgeting, monitoring and evaluation functions in the Secretariat and the methods, procedures and timetable followed in the preparation of the proposed programme budget. Regarding the latter issue, the Secretary-General should take the necessary steps to prevent any recurrence of the delay that had occurred in 1983 in the publication of budgetary documents, which had caused CPC and the Advisory Committee considerable inconvenience.

33. The integration of the programme planning, budgeting, monitoring and evaluation functions had involved a number of steps described in document A/C.5/38/6 and Corr.1, and the related recommendations of CPC appeared in paragraphs 411-415 of its report (A/38/38, Part II). The regulations governing Programme Planning had been adopted by the General Assembly by consensus

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(resolution 37/234). The draft rules submitted by the Secretary-General for the application of the Regulations had been forwarded to CPC which, in paragraphs 151-170 of its report (A/38/38, Part I), made a number of proposals that seemed acceptable in so far as they corresponded to the spirit of the resolution. It would be up to the Secretary-General to take steps to ensure the efficacy of the Programme Planning and Budgeting Board which he had set up. The central evaluation unit established at the request of the General Assembly was an instrument for improving the management of activities proposed by Member States, which alone had the power to terminate them.

34. The methods and procedures for the provision of statements of programme implications to the General Assembly had been the subject of lively controversy within CPC (A/38/38 part I, paras. 198-202 and Part II, para. 6). In addition to the difficulties indicated by CPC, such statements became a problem in that they gave rise to deep-seated disagreements on the methods to be followed and the objectives sought. Caution was therefore required, as the Chairman of the Advisory Committee had recommended at the seventh meeting of the Committee, and as the Under-Secretary-General for Administration and Management had requested as long ago as 16 December 1982. Only after a discussion could recommendations on the subject be made to the Secretary-General.

35. He endorsed the recommendations made by CPC in paragraphs 424 and 425 of its report (Part II) on joint meetings of CPC and the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination. In addition to the courses of action proposed, it would be useful for the Economic and Social Council at its organizational session in 1984 to consider measures it might take to facilitate representation of States members of CPC at a high level of expertise and to ensure the continuity of such representation, as called for in section VI, paragraph 46, of the annex to resolution 32/197, and to extend the relevant provisions of resolution 31/93 to the States members of CPC.

36. His delegation firmly opposed the adoption of any method or principles that might immutably fix the activities of an organization whose vocation was to serve the higher interests of the international community at large and whose budget was, all in all, modest in relation to its objectives and the means of some of its Members - and, as had already been pointed out, well below levels of expenditure on items alien, sometimes even contrary, to the welfare of mankind.

37. The Fifth Committee should grant the Secretary-General's request to be given enough time to review the Secretariat's administration and management. His concern was, indeed, in keeping with the mandate conferred upon him by Articles 97 and 100 of the Charter. Moreover, the important resolutions adopted in recent years on the subjects of administrative and financial management and on planning required an overall, coherent implementation strategy. It was to be hoped that during his elaboration of proposals for reform, the Secretary-General would take account of the views expressed by all Member States, as required by the Charter.

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38. Mr. JAGUARIBE (Brazil) said that the resources requested in the proposed programme budget added up to a respectable sum, although \$800,000,000 was only one-thousandth of the amount devoted yearly to armaments. The rate of growth of the budget seemed modest in relation to the growing gulf between the developing and developed countries, the increasing threats to international peace and security, and the requirements of economic and social co-operation.

39. Everybody agreed on the principle of efficiency, which should always apply to the use of the Organization's resources. There was still ample room for improvement in that area, and his delegation was fully prepared to co-operate with the Secretary-General. In that connection it viewed with interest the proposal for a moratorium on organizational questions and the establishment of a high-level advisory group on the administrative reform of the Secretariat.

40. Economy should not be an aim in itself. The concept of efficiency merely expressed a relationship between ends and means. From that point of view, reducing the Organization's resources at a time when it was confronted with increasingly complex and urgent tasks could deny it the means of achieving its goals and thus of being efficient. Accordingly, his delegation would like to see a case-by-case study made of the various activities and sectors of each programme in order to identify those that were obsolete, marginal or ineffective and survived only because of bureaucratic inertia. That case-by-case study should be based on the need to achieve the objectives set by the Charter.

41. The contributions to the regular budget should not be looked at in absolute terms. The contributions of the developing countries, which had difficulty in securing foreign currency and must finance their development efforts, were generally speaking a heavy burden for them. In any event, the Organization was not a financial enterprise which had to report to its shareholders but a political body, a society of nations whose Secretary-General had properly recalled that he alone was responsible for the principles by which the preparation of his budget had been guided.

42. His delegation had believed from the outset that a statement of the programme implications of draft resolutions would be a useful means of improving the Organization's efficiency. The examination of those implications should not be regarded as a purely suppressive activity. That would compromise the results of the negotiations of which every draft resolution was the outcome by introducing extraneous and unrelated matters.

43. Mr. PELLETIER (Canada) said that the proposed programme budget constituted an important step forward, both because of its moderation and because of the desire for efficiency evident in the establishment of an order of priorities and the institution of evaluation and monitoring machinery. The budget was, however an invitation to reflect, as the Secretary-General had done, on the need to sustain the political will that would make it possible to attain the goals of the United Nations. The system could well suffer an institutional paralysis either because Member States refused to have recourse to the United Nations to settle their disputes, or because they withdrew their financial support from authorized

(Mr. Pelletier, Canada)

programmes on the ground that they disapproved of them, or because extrabudgetary funds for development declined, as was currently the case.

44. From that point of view, it might be asked whether the budget was in fact designed to attain the basic objectives of the United Nations or whether it displayed an ever more marked drift towards the periphery of international action. When things went wrong and the United Nations had setbacks, it was sometimes used as a scapegoat, but that was a case of mistaken identity, since the United Nations was the sum of its Member States and, if its performance was poor, they were all responsible. There was a strong temptation to use the Organization as a screen for the failures of its Members and their lack of political will. Clearly, there should be a more positive attitude towards the role and work of an institution that was the only one of its kind in the world.

45. The budget also demonstrated what the United Nations was not and what it would not do. For example, there was a broad range of issues and problems which Member States had chosen to institutionalize because solutions were not readily available. That approach tended to perpetuate the status quo, which could lead subsequently to further conflict. By consenting to the institutionalization of too many global problems, Member States were becoming part of the problem rather than part of the solution.

46. His delegation was not opposed to new programmes and the launching of new activities. Nevertheless, in the light of the budgetary restraint which was the rule at the national and the international level, any programme growth must be based on a reordering of priorities and a better use of existing resources. The question of priorities was a difficult one to settle, and States Members would always have different opinions on evaluation machinery, the number of bodies, multilateral programmes, even the philosophical conception of the budget itself. What was most important, however, was that they should engage seriously and responsibly in the budget process and respect the decisions jointly arrived at.

47. The Programme Planning and Budgeting Board had accomplished a formidable task in reconciling the requests of programme managers, the wishes of Member States and the goals of the United Nations itself. Furthermore, the Secretariat had openly recognized some of its shortcomings and proposed remedial action. As far as any further integration of the budgeting and programming process was concerned, the Committee should await the report of the high-level group set up by the Secretary-General to study the question. As matters stood, his delegation believed that the budget document was well prepared and, as modified by ACABQ and CPC, deserved the Committee's strong support. Moreover, the Secretary-General had given instructions that no staff member should campaign with a view to securing approval for resources or administrative structures other than those he had himself proposed.

48. The current approach to programme priorities was a good beginning, taking into account as it did the wishes and needs of Member States, the priorities of the Organization and economic constraints. If any new programmes were proposed during the budget period, it would be necessary to ensure that they were merged into the

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(Mr. Pelletier, Canada)

overall programme budget. That implied the continual weeding out of obsolete and marginal activities. The Secretary-General would submit a statement of the programme and budgetary implications of any new proposals, and the Main Committees ought to review those implications against the background of priorities of the sectors for which they were responsible. The statement of implications could also indicate any lower-priority activities which could, if necessary, be eliminated. The point was particularly important because the new activities added at the thirty-sixth and thirty-seventh sessions of the General Assembly had raised the original real growth rate of the budget for the preceding biennium by 4.6 per cent.

49. Regarding the question of redeployment, he said that his delegation had been surprised to find that the Secretary-General had requested the creation of 211 new posts. In addition, the estimate for experts and consultants was \$15.7 million, which raised the question whether the United Nations was hiring the right people to perform its work or merely filling geographical quotas, a question made more pertinent by the fact that 78 per cent of the budget went on personnel costs. The Secretary-General explained part of the growth in regular budget expenditure by the decline in extrabudgetary financing. Canada believed that if a voluntarily funded programme did not receive the necessary support, it should be terminated, save in a few cases, such as the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees.

50. As far as reclassification was concerned, some proposals were justified in very flimsy terms, suggesting that they were intended rather to promote individual officials than to strengthen the department concerned. As for travel funds, the appropriations requested for travel to meetings were 17 per cent higher than in the previous biennium and, in the case of staff travel on official business, 13 per cent higher. Some departmental travel budgets appeared to be inflated. Instead of revaluing the resource base, it would have been preferable to justify the entire new request in very specific programme terms.

51. Substantial sums were being spent on the introduction of new technologies, in particular word processing. As the Chairman of the Advisory Committee had pointed out, the equipment acquisition programme was very poorly co-ordinated, and his delegation would like to be sure that the best possible use was made of the available funds.

52. Evaluation and monitoring were essential to a dynamic organization, but they should be the responsibility of both programme managers and quasi-independent evaluation units, such as JIU. As recommendations were adopted for decentralizing United Nations activities, so the capacity for evaluation should be strengthened at all United Nations offices as well as at Headquarters. Evaluation and monitoring posed a more general problem as well, as they involved political judgement. Although some United Nations outputs were easily measured, others, such as the sub-programme "Service for international peace and security", were not directly quantifiable. It should be remembered that the budget was the means of financing a system for managing information and implementing the decisions of member States. Thus, the Department for Disarmament Affairs simply provided meetings services for Member States; it did not itself engaged in "disarming".

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(Mr. Pelletier, Canada)

53. The mere adoption of the programme budget was not enough. It must be used as a means of mobilizing the political will of Member States to effect peaceful change and development. The United Nations could not be satisfied to sanctify the status quo. Rather, it must serve as the avenue and the opportunity for the sharing among nations of ideas and experiences, of problems and resources. Indeed, the philosophy of sharing permeated the entire programme budget.

54. Mr. SINGH (India) said that under the present circumstances it was imperative that the United Nations should be strengthened in order to meet its objectives. Unfortunately, the means available to the Organization were grossly inadequate in relation to actual needs. However, since it was difficult to discuss the rate of growth or level of the budget, it was better to focus on achieving programme delivery in accordance with the strategy of the medium-term plan and the decisions of intergovernmental bodies. When constraints were placed on overall resources, administrative expenditures should be curbed even further so as not to hamper substantive activities. It could not be denied that a relationship existed between the implementation of a programme and the level of resources allocated for it; as demands for the strengthening of United Nations activities increased, there would be a commensurate increase in the amount of resources required for them.

55. There existed in some quarters a superficial and simplistic perception that the countries which made the largest contributions to the regular budget were the ones that pressed for economies, while the remaining majority continued to call for new programmes and activities. His delegation, however, believed that the strengthening of the substantive activities of the Organization should be achieved, not by means of massive budget growth, but by obtaining better results through more efficient methods. To view the programme budget in a purely economic perspective would entail the sacrificing of certain targets and a reduction in the Organization's effectiveness. Furthermore, while the Organization's scale of assessments might be far from perfect, it was the result of serious study and negotiations and reflected, in as appropriate a manner as possible, a country's capacity to pay. It followed that the payment of its contributions was as onerous for a small country as for a Member State whose rate of assessment was higher, and that they were equally concerned about efficiency.

56. The Secretary-General had stated that the setting of priorities had become part and parcel of the programme-budgeting exercise. Nevertheless, he had stressed that the current system should be improved, as it suffered from a number of shortcomings. That was well enough, but the Secretary-General should work to extend the setting of priorities to sectors not yet covered. While the highest-priority programme elements, as set out in the budget proposals and in keeping with General Assembly decisions must have first claim to resources, that did not necessarily signify that low-priority ones were useless and should be regarded as marginal, obsolete or ineffective. They were the result of legislative mandates and were included in the medium-term plan, and thus could not be curtailed or terminated except by intergovernmental decision. There were many possible reasons for an activity's ineffectiveness: administrative problems, insufficient resources, external factors, etc. Improving the effectiveness of an activity did

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(Mr. Singh, India)

not mean eliminating it, which would be the easiest solution. Intergovernmental bodies must be kept informed of all aspects of the activities concerned and would subsequently consider what decision to take.

57. With regard to evaluation, he noted that it had been necessary from time to time to modify and improve the working of various administrative bodies of the Secretariat. Such evaluation ought to be aimed at improving a system in order to maximize its output rather than at dismantling it or rendering it ineffective by denying it the necessary resources.

58. Additional activities to be financed under the budget were the result of decisions taken by intergovernmental bodies and as such must be implemented by the Secretariat. It had been said that the resources needed for that purpose should be found within a fixed level, involving redeployment if necessary. It would be unreasonable, irrational and even unhealthy to think that the termination of so-called low-priority activities would always yield the additional amount required. Such a procedure would also prejudge decisions which might be taken by the General Assembly.

59. In that context, it should be noted that redeployment had been carried out in the past without appropriate intergovernmental review. At its twenty-third session, CPC had not reached a decision with regard to the report of the Secretary-General on the methods and procedures to be used to provide the General Assembly with the programme as well as the budgetary implications of the draft resolutions submitted to the Assembly. Because of the complexity of the issues involved, his delegation firmly believed that the submission of such consolidated statements should be deferred until a clearer picture of their contents emerged. Rushing into that labyrinth would only create further confusion, to the detriment of the work of the Organization.

60. Likewise, the question of transferring posts financed from extrabudgetary resources to the regular budget must not give rise to questions of principle. All such transfers must be examined and decisions made on a case-by-case basis.

61. According to the introduction to the proposed programme budget, social and economic activities showed a rate of real growth of 1.2 per cent. However, if that growth rate was considered in the light of the number of extrabudgetary posts which were transferred to the budget in that vital sector, it would in all probability turn out to be negative. Furthermore, the drop in voluntary contributions in the same sector was regrettable.

62. A rational approach must be taken towards the use of experts and consultants in the United Nations. Those specialists were required under certain circumstances, but no effort must be spared to recruit them from developing countries. That would lead to savings without sacrificing efficiency. Nationals of developed countries should be hired only when the requisite specialized personnel were not available in developing countries.

(Mr. Singh, India)

63. The Secretary-General had requested a moratorium on proposals for organizational changes so that he might have time to initiate the needed reforms. That request deserved support, but the Fifth Committee should be informed of the composition of the high-level advisory group which the Secretary-General had established for that purpose. The recommendations of that group should, if possible, be implemented without delay or be drawn to the attention of the General Assembly at its thirty-ninth session where appropriate.

64. The very late issuance of the budget documents had led to an unfortunate situation: CPC, the Advisory Committee and the Economic and Social Council had all been prevented from considering the proposed budget in accordance with their work schedules. It was therefore reassuring that the Secretary-General had undertaken to ensure that such delays would not recur.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.