



SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 19th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. OKEYO (Kenya)

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

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1988-1989 (continued)

Revised estimates - chapter I

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The meeting was called to order at 10.30 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 115: PROGRAMME PLANNING (A/43/6 and Corr.1, A/43/16 and Corr.1 (Part I) and Add.1 and A/43/16 (Part II) and Add.1, A/43/124 and Add.1, A/43/179, A/43/326 and Corr.1 and Add.1, A/43/329 and Add.1, A/43/626 and A/43/651 and Add.1)

1. Mr. RIPERT (Director-General for Development and International Economic Co-operation and Chairman of the Programme Planning and Budgeting Board) said that the proposed revisions to the medium-term plan for the period 1984-1989 (A/43/6 and Corr.1) had been considered by the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination at its twenty-eighth session and had been subject to many modifications (A/43/16 (Part I)). The conclusions of the Advisory Committee for Administrative and Budgetary Questions were contained in document A/43/626.

2. In the case of the draft introduction to the medium-term plan for the period beginning in 1992 (A/43/329), in keeping with General Assembly resolution 41/213 the document was being submitted to Member States for the first time before the detailed drafting of the medium-term plan began. That was part of a process of consultation which had begun with the circulation, in 1987, of document A/42/512 and took into account the views expressed by Member States on several occasions. With regard to the plan itself, the Secretariat hoped to have the advice of delegations on a number of issues. First, it was recommended that the structure of the plan should be simplified. It should be emphasized that such a simplified structure did not in any way imply any reduction in the programmes and role of the Organization but rather the contrary. The conclusions and recommendations of CPC on the matter were contained in paragraph 72 of the report on its resumed twenty-eighth session (A/43/16 (Part II)). On that basis, the Programme Planning and Budgeting Board had discussed a revised list of proposals for major programmes in the medium-term plan and other relevant programmes. The Secretariat was ready to circulate the new list. In that connection, he stressed that it was urgent for the Fifth Committee to reach conclusions on the structure of the plan in order to enable the Secretariat to start the process of consultations with the intergovernmental bodies very early in 1989. Secondly, he drew the attention of delegations to section III of the draft introduction, on priorities. It was very important that Member States should reach agreement on that subject, for even if the current financial crisis was overcome, the Organization's resources would always be finite.

3. Turning to the calendar for consultations on the medium-term plan (A/43/329/Add.1), he noted that the Secretary-General attached particular importance to the setting of priorities among subprogrammes by the sectoral, functional and regional intergovernmental bodies within their spheres of competence.

4. The medium-term plan could not foresee the future but it must provide the United Nations with the capacity to adjust its activities to changing circumstances. Moreover, it was essential that Member States should be consulted throughout its implementation.

5. Mr. MURRAY (Chairman of the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination), introducing the report of CPC on the work of its twenty-eighth session, said that the first session of the recently enlarged CPC had been successful. In seven weeks, the Committee had held 70 formal meetings and probably an equal number of informal meetings. That was indicative of the dedication of the delegates participating in the session, but it also constituted a problem that would need to be addressed in the near future. A look at the provisional agenda for the twenty-ninth session would show that the work-load was not about to ease.

6. The revisions to the medium-term plan had been the most time-consuming exercise during the Committee's session, and the results of that exercise were reflected in paragraphs 100 to 141 of part I of the report (A/43/16). Paragraphs 103 to 106 contained general conclusions and recommendations for facilitating future work in that area.

7. The revisions recommended by CPC reflected a collective desire to see the medium-term plan become the overall strategy of a dynamic Organization rather than simply the extension for a further two years of an existing plan. Thus, in paragraph 119, CPC recommended a new subprogramme on the effects of the foreign debt on development. In paragraph 121 it sought to reflect the most recent resolutions of the General Assembly on the environment. In respect of chapter 16, the Committee had also taken into account the deliberations of the Trade and Development Board. Similarly, paragraph 117 contained recommendations on chapter 7, international drug control. All those revisions had been considered necessary not only for the transitional period but in order to set a policy framework for the next plan cycle.

8. The Committee's comments on the preparation of the next medium-term plan appeared in paragraphs 36 to 73 of part II of the report. In the current report, the section headed "Discussion" had been made more extensive to take into account the recommendations in paragraphs 67 and 72.

9. In its consideration of the draft introduction to the medium-term plan, CPC had sought to determine whether it reflected the priorities of Member States. That question was discussed in paragraphs 48 to 50 of the report. Paragraphs 51 to 63 contained a study of the new structure proposed for the medium-term plan. In that connection, the Committee had concluded that the information available was not sufficient for a substantive decision on the proposal. It had therefore recommended that the General Assembly should consider the matter at its forty-third session. That recommendation was particularly important for the future preparation of the medium-term plan.

10. In compliance with resolution 41/213, the Committee recommended in paragraph 70 of the report approval of the calendar of consultations.

11. Regarding the duration of the next medium-term plan, the Committee recommended in paragraph 71 that it should cover the period 1992 to 1997.

12. The CPC conclusions and recommendations had been arrived at following intensive consultations and had been endorsed by the Economic and Social Council at its last resumed session (decision 1988/184).

(Mr. Murray)

13. The CPC's consideration of the programme performance of the United Nations for the period 1986-1987 was reflected in paragraphs 14 to 28 of part I of its report. The Committee's conclusions and recommendations in paragraphs 22 to 25 and 27 could be particularly significant for future work in respect of the efficiency of the Organization.

14. Paragraphs 142 to 144 contained conclusions and recommendations on matters relating to co-ordination. Those recommendations were particularly relevant because in general the reports on cross-organizational programme analysis lacked adequate analytical content. The CPC had however welcomed with satisfaction the note by the Secretary-General on follow-up to the cross-organizational programme analysis on economic and social research and policy analysis in the United Nations system, on the grounds that, despite its flaws, it could be used as a model for future reports of the same kind. The CPC, for its part, while agreeing that there should be a cross-organizational programme analysis of industrial development in 1990, had also agreed that human resources development should be the subject of such an analysis in the near future.

15. In considering the annual overview report of the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination, CPC had noted the improvements already made in the report and those proposed for the future.

16. In that connection, and also in respect of the joint ACC/CPC meetings, he recalled that in 1988 the Economic and Social Council had adopted resolutions 1988/62, 1988/64 and 1988/77 and decision 1988/184 which were relevant to the work of CPC.

17. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions), introducing the Advisory Committee's report on the item under consideration (A/43/626), said that the Advisory Committee had endeavoured to present its views and recommendations, some of which were of a structural nature, as concisely as possible, so as not to duplicate in any way the deliberations and recommendations of the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination (CPC).

18. The Advisory Committee had concluded that the existing arrangement for revising the medium-term plan was unsatisfactory (paras. 5 and 6 of the report) and recommended that the Secretary-General should submit to the Advisory Committee, and to CPC, proposals on the best way of handling revisions to future medium-term plans and that those proposals should be considered in conjunction with the review and approval of the next medium-term plan, which would start in 1992.

19. The Advisory Committee had discussed at length the question of the calendar of consultations on the medium-term plan for the period starting in 1992 (paras. 8-17 of the report) and its first conclusion was that the calendar of consultations was perhaps too complex and required streamlining. The Advisory Committee suggested a number of areas in which streamlining might be achieved. For example, with regard to procedures for obtaining the views of legislative bodies not scheduled to meet during the period in which consultations on the medium-term plan were to be held, the Advisory Committee doubted the effectiveness of the approach proposed by the

(Mr. Mselle)

Secretariat, i.e. to conduct consultations by correspondence with members of bodies concerned (paras. 11 and 12 of the report). He recalled in that connection that, of the entire membership of the United Nations, only 11 States had replied to the Secretariat's request to submit their views in writing on the draft introduction to the medium-term plan. The Advisory Committee therefore recommended that consideration be given to the possibility of ascertaining the views of the bodies in question at their last meeting before the consultations were normally scheduled to be held.

20. The Advisory Committee was ready to be consulted on certain draft chapters of the medium-term plan (para. 13 of the report), on the understanding that that procedure should not inhibit the Committee's review of the proposed medium-term plan itself. The Committee also concluded that the procedures for prior consultations with the specialized agencies, as provided for in the proposed calendar, should also be streamlined (para. 16). Subject to its observations and the modifications which would be entailed by its recommendations in paragraphs 12 and 16 of the report, the Advisory Committee did not object to adoption of the proposed calendar of consultations.

21. As to the Advisory Committee's views on the preparation of the next medium-term plan, he drew the Fifth Committee's attention to paragraph 25 of the report, which dealt with the intended coverage of the plan, and to paragraph 23, which contained the Committee's views on the proposal to regroup the 148 existing programmes into about 40 programmes. The Advisory Committee took the view that, while efforts to streamline the medium-term plan should be encouraged, Member States should be reassured that streamlining did not mean reducing approved programmes.

22. Mr. MARTIN AEGORO (Chairman, Joint Inspection Unit), introducing the report of JIU entitled "Reporting on the performance and results of United Nations programmes" (A/43/124), said that the considerable progress made by the Secretariat over the past 10 years in programme planning and budgeting had had little repercussion on programme monitoring and evaluation. Noting, from reports on evaluation produced by JIU in 1981, that the Secretariat lagged behind other institutions in the design, installation and use of evaluation machinery, the General Assembly in resolution 36/228 had requested the Secretary-General to strengthen evaluation units and systems and specify their tasks and responsibilities. In its 1985 reports, JIU had found that the United Nations was lagging still further behind the other organizations in the system. Certainly the Secretary-General had promised to find permanent solutions in order to strengthen evaluation staff, but in his most recent report on the subject, in 1986, he had agreed that little if any progress had been made.

23. The most recent JIU study had taken as its point of departure the discussions in the Fifth Committee in 1985 on programme planning and budgeting. The Secretariat had at that time agreed to produce clearer and more analytical reports on programme performance and results. The biennial programme performance reports issued since 1980 did no more than list thousands of programme outputs; the in-depth evaluations, though they were useful, covered only one programme or

(Mr. Martohadinegoro)

part of a programme each year; and the system of self-evaluation, on which the Secretariat had issued guidelines in 1986, provided for no substantive reporting, programme by programme, on results achieved, progress made and problems encountered. Meanwhile, the General Assembly, the Fifth Committee and various other bodies had continued to call for the monitoring and evaluation machinery to be strengthened (resolution 40/240) and evaluation to be better integrated into the programme planning system (1987 report of CPC and resolution 42/215). The current JIU report concluded that the full evaluation system called for by the General Assembly in resolution 36/228 and subsequent resolutions would probably never be created.

24. In recommendation 2, the report urged that evaluation activities should be stepped up at least in the largest administrative units of the Secretariat, that the Central Evaluation Unit should be adequately staffed, that programme managers should receive appropriate training in the operation of the self-evaluation system, and that the Central Monitoring Unit should be slightly strengthened. In recommendation 3, it suggested regular in-depth reports to intergovernmental bodies on selected administrative support or conference services which consumed a large portion of the regular budget. Recommendation 4 dealt with efforts to improve the integration of financial and programme performance data.

25. He stressed the need to give particular support to recommendation 1, which was concerned with improving on current programme performance reports. Those reports, based on lists of outputs, would be replaced by reports containing one-page narrative summaries for each subprogramme and describing progress, achievements and problems in relation to the objectives stated in the medium-term plan and the programme budget. The new reports would be submitted concurrently with the biennial proposed programme budgets so that the competent bodies could have before them at the same time, and in the same format, information on past performance, present proposals and implications for the future. The apparatus necessary for producing such reports was already in place, in the shape of the self-evaluation system and the data-collection procedures used for the current reports. All that was needed was a decision to merge the two.

26. In conclusion, he reaffirmed that the United Nations had the means (guidelines, reporting procedures etc.) to establish orderly evaluation reporting; the General Assembly should insist on the system's being set up, for otherwise the programme planning system would remain incomplete, and the improvements which the Fifth Committee had so strongly urged in 1985 might not come about for years.

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 (Part I) and Add.1 and (Part II) 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

27. Mr. GUPTA (India), on the subject of staff cuts, pointed out that the General Assembly had in resolution 41/213 directed that the percentages referred to in

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(Mr. Gupta, India)

recommendation 15 of the Group of 18 should be regarded as targets in the formulation of the plans to be submitted by the Secretary-General, who had been requested to implement the recommendation with flexibility in order to avoid any adverse impact on programmes. The effects of staff cuts were of cardinal importance to his delegation. It was pleased to note that both the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination and the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions had decided that 100 posts needed to be restored to the Department of Conference Services in view of the special nature of its operations. The two bodies differed only in that, whereas the Advisory Committee recommended that the restoration of the posts should be partly offset by a reduction of 50 posts in other sectors, and that the remaining 50 should be paid for through savings, CPC recommended that the 100 posts in question should be regarded as additional ones.

28. The report of the Advisory Committee (A/43/551) gave no indication as to the effects of its recommendations on programmes. According to the addendum, the Advisory Committee had been informed that the Secretary-General could not submit proposals for post reductions beyond those envisaged in the report on revised estimates, nor comment on the other two elements of the offsetting mechanism suggested by ACABQ.

29. His delegation would, therefore, like to know what effect the recommended 50-post cut would have on various programmes, in particular the activities of services with small numbers of staff. In the absence of precise information, he would be unable to support the Advisory Committee's recommendation.

30. Ms. OLDFELT (Sweden) said that, in discussions on the question of reforms and the resultant revised estimates, the distinction between reforms and savings must be kept in mind. The objective of the reform process was to make the United Nations more efficient, and that was the purpose of resolution 41/213; cutting expenditures was not, in itself, a means of doing so. As it considered the revised estimates, therefore, the Fifth Committee should be mindful of the need to prevent cuts in staff from adversely affecting programmes, particularly in areas of vital importance to the success of multilateral efforts in disarmament and peace-keeping, the promotion of human rights, the fight against drug abuse and trafficking, the advancement of women and the protection of the environment. Her delegation was also troubled by the possibly harmful effects of the cuts on Secretariat services with small numbers of staff, thinking in particular of the Department of Disarmament Affairs, whose terms of reference were likely to be expanded in the years to come. Within the framework of the reform process, the United Nations must be provided with enough resources to play the central role which rightfully belonged to it. Her delegation believed that the Secretary-General had satisfactorily carried out the reform mandate given to him by the General Assembly.

31. Mr. BOUR (France) said that CPC had proposed that post reductions in the Department of Conference Services should be limited to 10 per cent, which the Advisory Committee had accepted, noting that that would entail the restoration of 100 posts at a cost of \$12,893,900 for the biennium. As the Secretariat had indicated that it was unable for the time being to determine the precise extent to

(Mr. Bour, France)

which it would be possible to absorb that amount under section 29 or other sections, the Advisory Committee had recommended that the Secretariat should consider the matter and report to the Fifth Committee in 1989.

32. His delegation agreed with the Advisory Committee, particularly since the amount in question represented a relatively small percentage of the overall budget. Further, in view of the continuing uncertainty, particularly with regard to vacancy rates and savings on exchange rates since the beginning of the year, it should not be difficult to absorb that amount. It should thus be possible to restore the 100 posts without exceeding the overall budget total. His delegation did not see why the Advisory Committee was proposing a reduction of \$3 million under section 29; the appropriation required to fund the 100 posts should be restored under that section.

33. Mr. GREGG (Australia) said that the Advisory Committee had made laudable attempts to impose some discipline on the Secretariat in applying recommendation 15 of the Group of 18. His delegation was therefore concerned that the Secretariat had not fully implemented the recommendation, and viewed the manner in which post reductions had been effected as unacceptable. The reductions had not been determined on the basis of clearly defined priorities or accepted professional standards, but had been the subject of internal conflict and "horse trading". It was clear that the Under-Secretary-General for Conference Services and Special Assignments had been quicker than his colleagues, which was little consolation to other parts of the Secretariat or to Member States. The fact that the Department of Conference Services was requesting exemption from the full staff reductions identified in the post-by-post review created serious difficulties for his delegation, which recognized the direct link between the number of conferences and the volume of services required, but had not been presented with any detailed evidence to convince it of the validity of the Department's claim. In the absence of such evidence, his delegation would continue to believe that recommendation 15 should be fully implemented. It seemed unfair that other areas of the Secretariat should be penalized in order to subsidize one very large department, with over 2,500 staff and an appropriation in excess of \$330 million.

34. While being prepared to accept the Advisory Committee's recommendation as a short-term measure, his delegation thought that the Fifth Committee should also envisage a long-term solution. To that end it needed much more detailed information on work-loads and productivity levels before it could accept the Secretariat's unsubstantiated claim that any further reduction in resources would have an adverse impact on programmes.

35. His delegation noted that the Advisory Committee had been informed that it was not possible to quantify precisely the effect on programmes of the offsetting post reductions. If the Secretary-General could not produce convincing evidence to support his claim, the Fifth Committee should not be so naive as to allow itself to be manipulated into putting Secretariat interests above those of Member States. As the representative of Ghana had remarked at an earlier meeting, an Organization's capacity to deliver programmes was improved by cutting fat and wastage, not the opposite.

36. The CHAIRMAN asked representatives to refrain from criticizing Secretariat officials who were not present and could not defend themselves.

37. Mr. MUDHO (Kenya) agreed with the Indian and Swedish delegations on the need to avoid post reductions that would jeopardize certain programmes and suggested that the Secretary-General should examine those services which had been subjected to major reductions. The restoration of 100 posts to the Department of Conference Services should not be at the expense of other Secretariat services.

38. Mr. KINCHEN (United Kingdom) said that the provisions of chapter I of the revised estimates should facilitate implementation of recommendation 15 of the Group of 18. In effect, two alternatives had been put forward, differing only in the extent of the reduction proposed for the Department of Conference Services. Those alternatives had already been considered in detail by CPC and ACABQ, which had endorsed a reduction of around 10 per cent rather than 14 per cent for the Department of Conference Services, and an overall reduction of 12.1 per cent rather than 13.02 per cent. In so doing both bodies had accepted the judgement of the Secretary-General, who, in chapter I, paragraphs 25 and 26, of the revised estimates, noted that without a decision by intergovernmental bodies to reduce programmed activity, a cut of more than 10 per cent would cause grave disruption in the provision of conference services and would require a substantial reduction in the number of conferences and meetings. Speaking on behalf of the member States of the European Community, the representative of Greece had said that the Twelve were not seeking to reopen the question of the staffing table of the Department of Conference Services, a position endorsed by the United Kingdom delegation, but it was regrettable that the Committee still did not have a complete picture of the Department's activities and resources, and that no intergovernmental organ had had an opportunity to examine a detailed statistical justification for a level of post reductions that was substantially lower than average and, indeed, lower than the existing vacancy rate. If the level of demand remained stable, including from those bodies which were serviced on an "as available" basis, it was hard to see why the allocation for temporary assistance under section 29 of the budget should be regarded as sacrosanct, when adoption of the CPC and ACABQ recommendations would give the Department authority to recruit more staff.

39. Like CPC, his delegation considered conference services to be one of the principal areas where further reductions should be made in the process of implementing General Assembly resolution 41/213 as a whole. It would certainly not be realistic to expect full implementation of the resolution by the end of 1989, but it was important to continue to make vigorous efforts to that end during the coming year and into the next budgetary biennium, efforts which should apply at least as much to the Department of Conference Services as to any other unit of the Secretariat. His delegation would welcome further detailed scrutiny of the Department's activities and work-load, but accepted the Secretary-General's judgement as to the posts which could not properly be cut at the current stage, as well as his judgement on the posts which could be cut.

40. In paragraph 5 of the addendum to its report (A/43/651/Add.1), the Advisory Committee proposed a procedure which accorded with the assumptions underlying the current biennial budget adopted by the General Assembly in 1988 and which amounted

(Mr. Kinchen, United Kingdom)

to an act of faith in the implementation of the provisions of resolution 41/213 regarding staffing levels. His delegation had been pleased to be able to join, for the first time in many years, in voting for that act of faith in the United Nations and its future. The Organization's unanimous commitment to the reform process, including the post review, had been the key element in influencing his country's change of attitude.

41. With regard to the statement of programme budget implications arising from the report of CPC (A/43/16 (Part I)/Add.1), his delegation believed that even if the post reduction exercise remained unfinished at the end of 1989, it was extremely important to respect the existing budget appropriation and to absorb additional costs within it. That would not necessarily rule out the introduction of innovations such as those suggested in chapter I, paragraphs 27 and 29, of the revised estimates, relating to information and an incentive programme for staff mobility.

42. As for the inter-agency joint services referred to in paragraph 16 of the report on the revised estimates, his delegation noted that consultations would be conducted through ACC on the subject of the Secretariat posts servicing ICSC and the Joint Inspection Unit and that any reduction would be reported in the context of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1990-1991. That undertaking appeared to be consistent with the request by ACABQ that the additional 50 regular budget posts recommended for abolition need not necessarily be identified immediately but should be identified in the proposed programme budget for the next biennium. With regard to the liaison offices mentioned in paragraph 22, his delegation recalled the terms of recommendation 33 of the Group of 18 concerning the consolidation in a single office of support activities for the permanent liaison offices in New York of various Secretariat entities, which had not been the subject of any further comment either in the recommendations of the Fifth Committee or in any resolution. It would be useful to know whether there had been any new developments in that connection since the report on the revised estimates had been issued.

43. His delegation wished, notwithstanding its observations, to express the conviction that the Secretary-General and the entire Secretariat were doing all they could conscientiously to fulfil the mandate entrusted to them and believed that they deserved the Committee's full support during that critical stage.

44. Ms. FRIESSNIGG (Austria), endorsing the concerns expressed by the Secretary-General, said that she concurred with the recommendation of CPC that conference-servicing posts should be reduced by only 10 per cent. The abolition of 50 additional posts in other areas, as recommended by the Advisory Committee to offset the restoration of 100 posts under section 29, must of course not lead to any adverse impact on programme delivery. If that were to be the case, the Secretary-General should be given more room in which to manoeuvre within the overall level of approved budget appropriations. Her delegation looked forward to receiving the Secretary-General's report indicating post reductions arranged by budget section and by grade level.

(Mr. Friessnigg, Austria)

45. Her delegation fully concurred with the view of CPC to the effect that recommendation 15 of the Group of 18 should be implemented with flexibility in order to avoid negative impact on programmes and on the structure and composition of the Secretariat. Account should be taken of the priorities set by Member States and of the specific requirements of smaller offices. That consideration applied in particular to the United Nations Office at Vienna, which had always suffered from a low staffing level and now had to take on new responsibilities in the area of social affairs. The proposed post reductions would affect the functioning of the Office, as her delegation had emphasized during the course of discussions in CPC. It was of the utmost importance that the Office should be provided with all the resources it needed in order to perform its important task and that the recommendation made by CPC in paragraph 37 of its report should be applied in full.

46. Mr. MONTHE (Cameroon) noted that the Advisory Committee and the Secretariat held different views as to the possibility of offsetting the restoration of 100 posts under budget section 29 by a reduction of 50 posts in other areas of the Secretariat. If, as the Secretary-General asserted, it was impossible to know at the present stage which posts could be eliminated, the Advisory Committee should at least indicate in which areas they might be found. Such information was indispensable both in order to guide the Secretary-General and in order to reassure Member States: the latter might, justifiably, fear repercussions from those further reductions - which, according to the Advisory Committee, would affect both General Service and Professional posts - on programmes or the geographical distribution of staff. In any event, it would be wrong once again to reduce the staffing levels of the regional commissions, which had, as noted by CPC, already suffered enough as a result of retrenchment measures. The Secretariat, which claimed not to be able to embark on such reductions without an adverse effect on programmes, could at least indicate which areas of activity would be involved. The Fifth Committee could not provide guidance to the Secretary-General without first obtaining clarifications from both the Advisory Committee and the Secretariat. In particular, the Secretariat should specify whether the statement of revised estimates under consideration by the Committee reflected the current situation or whether new reform measures had been taken since it had been drawn up.

47. Mr. TETTAMANTI (Argentina) recognized that recommendation 15 of the Group of 18 was one of the most difficult to implement. It should nevertheless not be forgotten, as other delegations had emphasized, that the basic objective was not simply to reduce expenditure but to increase the effectiveness of the Secretariat.

48. The representative of the United Kingdom had rightly pointed out that CPC accepted the Secretary-General's proposal relating to conference services because of the warning that a staff reduction of over 10 per cent would cause disruption to the services concerned. It was for that reason that his country had joined in the consensus. Nevertheless, CPC was aware that the overall reduction rate would be lower than that indicated in the Secretary-General's initial proposal. A new element had since emerged: the Advisory Committee was proposing to restore 100 posts while eliminating another 50 in other areas. As had been pointed out by the representative of Cameroon, the Fifth Committee must know in what area those reductions would be likely to be carried out. The question was all the more

(Mr. Tettamanti, Argentina)

important given that any new retrenchment measure would, according to the Secretary-General, have an adverse effect on programme delivery. Recommendation 15 stated that such a development should be avoided and CPC, in paragraph 37 of its report, had already warned of the possible repercussions of reductions in certain areas. Nothing would be achieved if the programme of the Department of Conference Services were maintained to the detriment of other activities. His delegation nevertheless remained convinced that the Committee could reach a decision which would reconcile the three desired objectives: to stay within the overall level of budget appropriations for the biennium, to implement recommendation 15 and to avoid any negative effect on programmes.

49. Mr. LADJOUZI (Algeria), noting that discussions had focused on recommendation 15, recalled that the other recommendations of the Group of 18 were just as important, whether they called, for example, for measures to ensure that nationals of developing countries were duly represented at senior levels or urged that the services of Under-Secretaries-General and Assistant Secretaries-General should not be extended beyond 10 years. The Secretary-General's first two progress reports did not address those other recommendations. He wondered whether any details would be provided on that subject during the third year of the reform process.

50. The information on implementation of recommendation 15 was not complete. The Secretariat did not state what its intentions were with respect to posts at the Under-Secretary-General and Assistant Secretary-General levels, which were supposed to be subject to a 25 per cent reduction. It might also be asked exactly what plans had been drawn up by the Secretary-General for the implementation of recommendation 15. Two years had already passed since the beginning of the reforms; the Secretariat had therefore had ample time to determine its staffing requirements. However, it had not produced any study on the subject and went no further than to provide figures. For lack of information, CPC had not been able to judge what impact the reductions might have on programmes. That, indeed, was a very important aspect of recommendation 15, which called for a 15 per cent reduction in the number of staff while avoiding any negative effects on the implementation of programmes. The Fifth Committee would have to judge for itself on the basis of the clarifications provided by the Secretariat.

51. Similarly, with regard to reductions of conference-servicing staff, CPC had been obliged to choose between two sets of figures without knowing how they had been arrived at. One of the reasons invoked to justify a rate of no more than 10 per cent was the need to respect the principle of equal treatment for all the Organization's official languages, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 42/207 C. That argument was not very convincing. The figures provided should in fact be supported by an internal study showing the staffing requirements of the Department of Conference Services. China and Cameroon had raised some very pertinent questions in that regard. Indeed, the Committee could hardly approve the Secretary-General's plans without knowing exactly where the proposed cuts would be carried out.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.