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*Official Records**

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70th meeting
held on
Sunday, 18 December 1983
at 11 a.m.
New York

# SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 70th 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 11.45 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 109: PROPOSED PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 1984-1985 (continued)

Programme, administrative and financial implications of draft resolution A/38/L.49 concerning agenda item 34 (A/C.5/38/105)

1. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) said that draft resolution A/38/L.49 would request the Secretary-General to prepare, with the assistance of competent experts, a comprehensive study regarding the negative short-term and long-term consequences of the strategic alliance between Israel and the United States. In paragraph 2 of the Secretary-General's report (A/C.5/38/105), he informed the General Assembly that he was not in a position to ascertain the costs involved or the manner in which the request would be implemented. He would seek the concurrence of the Advisory Committee to commit the necessary funds after he had determined the manner in which the study would be carried out and how much would be required. The adoption of the draft resolution in plenary meeting would not, therefore, require immediate appropriations.

2. Mr. KELLER (United States of America) said that his delegation opposed both the point of view expressed in the draft resolution and its financial aspects. It was an open-ended commitment under which funds would, if necessary, be drawn from resources set aside for unforeseen and extraordinary expenses. His delegation therefore called for a vote on the proposal to make a recommendation to the General Assembly with regard to the draft resolution.

3. Mr. ELIASHIV (Israel) said that his delegation firmly opposed draft resolution A/38/L.49 and its administrative and financial implications. It would take the opportunity to explain its opposition in the plenary Assembly. The pre-conceived and one-sided study envisaged in the draft resolution was another attempt to manipulate United Nations resources in order to advance propaganda and political warfare against Israel. His delegation would therefore vote against the making of any recommendation to the General Assembly.

4. The CHAIRMAN proposed that, on the basis of the recommendations of the Advisory Committee, the Committee should inform the General Assembly that, should it adopt draft resolution A/38/L.49, no additional appropriations would be required at present under the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1984-1985.

5. The proposal was adopted by 59 votes to 17, with 2 absentions.

6. Mr. MOJTAHED (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that, if his delegation had been present during the voting, it would have voted in favour of the proposal.

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Conditions of service and compensation for officials other than Secretariat officials (continued) (A/38/7/Add.23; A/C.5/38/27)

7. The CHAIRMAN recalled that, at its 67th meeting, the Committee had decided to request the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions to consider the proposals on post-retirement benefits for members of the International Court of Justice, and, if possible, the question of education grants for all officials covered by the Secretary-General's report (A/C.5/38/27). He invited the Chairman of the Advisory Committee to introduce the latter's report, contained in document A/38/7/Add.23.

8. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) said that, pursuant to the request of the Fifth Committee at its 67th meeting, the Advisory Committee had considered the proposals in the Secretary-General's report concerning post-retirement benefits for members of the International Court of Justice.

9. On the basis of the information contained in the report of the Secretary-General and additional detailed oral information given to the Advisory Committee by the Under-Secretary-General for Administration and Management, the Advisory Committee had decided to recommend acceptance of the proposals made in the report. It recommended the adoption of the amendments to the Pension Scheme Regulations of the Court proposed in annex II to the Secretary-General's report (A/C.5/38/27).

10. Mr. GIDLEY (United States of America) said that his delegation would like to know whether the recommendations of the Advisory Committee did in fact concur with the requests of the Secretary-General with regard to the pension of a surviving spouse, contained in paragraph 98, and with regard to the child's benefit, contained in paragraph 102.

11. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) said that that was indeed the case.

12. Mr. GIDLEY (United States of America) said his delegation believed that those two items would create a precedent of setting members of the Court apart by providing them with benefits greater than those enjoyed by officials serving with the Secretariat. There was a possibility that the latter would at a later stage demand equal treatment. For that reason, his delegation requested a vote on the Committee's recommendation to the General Assembly.

13. It was his delegation's understanding that the allowances requested by the Secretary-General for the judges of the Court in document A/C.5/38/27, paragraph 110, particularly the pensions of surviving spouses and the child's benefit, were in fact of greater magnitude that those of the common system. His delegation would appreciate a statement as to whether or not that was the case.

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14. Mr. RUEDAS (Under-Secretary-General for Administration and Management) said that the Pension scheme for the members of the International Court of Justice was completely different from the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund. It had begun before UNJSPF and had had a different development. Although the risks covered were the same, as was normal in any pension scheme, the modes, modalities, amounts and timing were different. It was therefore hazardous to undertake direct comparisons.

15. With regard to the disability pension, his understanding of the proposal was different from that of the representative of the United States. The common system disability arrangements were based on the amount that would have been due if the appointment of the disabled person had continued until its normal expiration date. The current system for the Court provided for a disability benefit based on accumulated service. One intention of the proposal was to bring the Court's system a little more in line with UNJSPF by basing it on prospective service rather than on past service.

16. The amounts indicated in paragraph 110 of the Secretary-General's report were to be understood in the light of paragraph 111. The amounts of $14,000, $45,000 and $4,500 were assumptions based on situations which might or might not arise and, for that reason, no appropriations were being requested in respect of the proposal at present.

17. The CHAIRMAN proposed that, on the basis of the recommendations of the Advisory Committee, the Fifth Committee should recommend to the General Assembly that it should approve the proposals of the Secretary-General with regard to post-retirement benefits for the members of the International Court of Justice and that it should decide to amend the Pension Scheme Regulations of the Court in accordance with the proposals contained in annex II to the Secretary-General's report. In that regard, he would propose that the decision should be reflected in the Committee's report in the form of a draft resolution in the format normally followed by the Assembly for the amendment of the Regulations. The direct financial implications would be $63,500, but no appropriation was required at the present stage.

18. The proposal was adopted by 64 votes to 1, with 17 abstentions.

19. The CHAIRMAN said that, if there was no objection, he would take it that the Committee decided to recommend to the General Assembly that it should defer to its thirty-ninth session consideration of those recommendations of the Secretary-General in his report with regard to which no action had been taken at the current session.

20. It was so decided.

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Revised estimates under expenditure sections 18, 19 and 28N and income sections 1 and 2 (Common services at the United Nations accommodation, Nairobi) (A/38/7/Add.22 and Add.22/Corr.1; A/C.5/38/35)

United Nations accommodation at Nairobi (A/38/7/Add.22 and Add.22/Corr.1; A/C.5/38/36)

21. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) said that the report of the Advisory Committee (A/38/7/Add.22 and Add.22/Corr.1) covered two reports of the Secretary-General. The progress report on United Nations accommodation at Nairobi (A/C.5/38/36) dealt with construction that had been taking place over a number of years. As could be seen from paragraphs 2 to 5 of the report of the Advisory Committee, the information available indicated that construction would be completed and buildings occupied by mid-1984. The Advisory Committee gave information on the cost of the project and recommended that the General Assembly should take note of the progress report.

22. The remainder of the document, beginning with paragraph 6, dealt with the report of the Secretary-General on common services at the United Nations accommodation, Nairobi (A/C.5/38/35). The Secretary-General had proposed that a United Nations Common Services Unit (UNCS) should be established in Nairobi with effect from 1 July 1984 under a new subsection N of section 28 of the programme budget. Following agreement among all parties concerned, the Secretary-General proposed to entrust to UNCS what was referred to as "common services" to be provided to all tenants, including UNEP and Habitat, and "joint services", which would be provided to UNEP and Habitat only.

23. In paragraphs 7 to 9 of its report, the Advisory Committee examined the broad financial consequences of those proposals. The table in paragraph 9 contained budgetary information on the net effect on regular budget and UNEP and Habitat extrabudgetary funds. As could be seen from that table, a number of posts would be redeployed to UNCS from extrabudgetary funds. Because the Unit would be performing services on behalf of UNEP, Habitat and other agencies, income would be derived from those clients, the effects of which were indicated in the section of the table dealing with income. According to the Secretary-General, there would be net additional costs under the regular budget of $109,500, a decrease of $445,500 under UNEP and an increase of $168,100 under Habitat. That increase under Habitat was caused largely by the fact that, up to the present, Habitat had been occupying space free of rent.

24. In paragraphs 10 to 15, the Advisory Committee examined the question of joint services to be provided to UNEP and Habitat. It had reached the conclusion that the proposal of the Secretary-General should be deferred for the time being. The Advisory Committee had found that not all the services that should have been entrusted to UNCS under the heading of joint services had actually been transferred and that some of them had been split. The Advisory Committee believed that that kind of splitting might lead to additional rather than reduced expenditure. It believed that the ultimate objective of setting up common services or joint services should always be to achieve the optimum use of available resources and to

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increase productivity and efficiency. Judged by those criteria, the proposals of the Secretary-General under joint services left much to be desired. The Advisory Committee therefore recommended, in paragraph 13 of its report, that the phasing of the implementation of the recommendations on joint services should be considered carefully and that they should remain for the time being where they were. It believed that, over a number of years, the experience gained in operating those services would grow and it would be determined which of them could be transferred to the new Unit. No fixed date was therefore proposed by the Advisory Committee for the transfer of those joint services. In making that recommendation, the Advisory Committee hoped, as stated in paragraph 13 of its report, that all parties concerned would continue to review the question with a view to determining whether some of the proposed joint services might be entrusted to UNCS. If, in spite of the recommendations of the Advisory Committee, the Executive Directors of UNEP and Habitat and the relevant authorities at Headquarters were to agree in 1984 or 1985 that some of those elements not recommended for transfer should nevertheless be transferred, then the Advisory Committee would not stand in the way. It was concerned that a convincing case should be made that if those matters were handled by UNCS it would lead to greater efficiency, less cost and the avoidance of duplication. The budgetary consequences of the Advisory Committee's recommendation were stated at the end of paragraph 13 and in paragraphs 14 and 15 of its report.

25. Paragraphs 16 to 18 of the Advisory Committee's report dealt with the Secretary-General's proposals concerning the common services performed by UNCS on behalf of all tenants. The Advisory Committee was recommending that the Secretary-General's proposal that the services in question should be entrusted to UNCS should be adopted. The staffing and budgetary implications were dealt with in paragraphs 16 and 17 of the Advisory Committee's report. In paragraph 17 the Advisory Committee recommended that the Secretary-General should, in consultation with the staff, consider an arrangement whereby those who benefited from local transportation provided at the expense of the United Nations should make some contribution towards its cost.

26. The Office of the Chief of UNCS was dealt with in paragraphs 19 and 20 of the Advisory Committee's report.

27. Paragraphs 21 to 31 of the report concerned estimates of income. In paragraph 29, the Advisory Committee was putting forward a number of proposals concerning the Secretary-General's proposals on the rates to be charged to users of United Nations facilities at Nairobi. The Advisory Committee suggested that the Secretariat should inform the General Assembly of the outcome of implementation of the guidelines it was providing.

28. Paragraph 32 of the report contained a summary of the budgetary recommendations made by the Advisory Committee.

29. Mr. KHALEVINSKY (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that the Advisory Committee's report in document A/38/7/Add.22 and Add.2/Corr.1 contained a number of interesting proposals, which should be given due consideration. He noted that the

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report of the Secretary-General in document A/C.5/38/35 dealt with the important question of the consolidation of a number of services in order to effect savings and improve efficiency. Unfortunately, however, the consolidation of some services did not in fact result in savings. Moreover, he noted a tendency in the Secretary-General's report to propose that posts should be financed out of the regular budget rather than from extrabudgetary resources, which meant that there would actually be an increase in the number of regular budget posts. Should the proposals made in the report of the Secretary-General be put to a vote, his delegation would be unable to support them.

30. Mr. RAFFRAY (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) said that the reports of the Secretary-General in documents A/C.5/38/35 and A/C.5/38/36 were of particular concern to UNESCO, which, however, had unfortunately not been consulted at any point during their preparation. UNESCO had serious reservations with regard to the amortization figures referred to in those reports and believed that its rent at Nairobi should be based only on amortization of the old buildings that it was agreeing to occupy. The portion payable by UNESCO should be $27.50 per square metre per annum. Furthermore, UNESCO was not satisfied with the proposed distribution of overhead costs for the common services, since it was calculated on the basis of the number of square metres occupied. The overhead costs in question should be calculated on the basis of the extent to which the services in question were actually used, particularly where switchboard operations and local transportation were concerned.

31. Mr. GIDLEY (United States of America) said that his delegation wished to commend the Advisory Committee for the work it had carried out. However, it was extremely disturbing to note the proposed office-space deficit referred to in annex I to the report of the Secretary-General in document A/C.5/38/36. He would appreciate further details on the reasons for that deficit. In the light of the statements made in paragraph 28 of the Advisory Committee's report, his delegation would also be interested in knowing why the occupancy rate of UNEP was so much lower than that of the other tenants, as indicated in paragraph 67 of the report in document A/C.5/38/35.

32. Mr. OKEYO (Kenya) said that his delegation supported the proposals concerning common services at Nairobi put forward by the Advisory Committee, even though it would have preferred a different approach, particularly to the question of joint services. Furthermore, his delegation was particularly concerned to note the Advisory Committee's recommendation in paragraph 20 of its report that the post of Chief of UNCS should be established at the P-5 level, since it was proposed in paragraph 49 of the Secretary-General's report (A/C.5/38/35) that the chief officer of UNCS should be at the D-1 level. It was important, in the interest of the smooth functioning of the common services, that the Chief of UNCS should have sufficient authority, and the post entailed a high level of responsibility. His delegation therefore believed that the Secretary-General's proposal that the post should be established at the D-1 level should be adopted.

33. Mr. LAHLOU (Morocco) said that, in general, his delegation welcomed the proposals put forward in the reports of the Secretary-General and the Advisory Committee. It believed that the proposed consolidation of services would result in savings and that the experiment could serve as an example elsewhere. It was to be hoped that the problems experienced in the area of conference services, particularly regarding documentation, could be solved as a result of implementation of the proposals concerning common services.

34. His delegation agreed with the representative of Kenya that the post of Chief of UNCS should be established at the D-1 level.

35. Mr. RUEDAS (Under-Secretary-General for Administration and Management) said he wished to reply to two questions put by the representative of the United States. Firstly, the fact that a lower rate was used to assess the service charges for UNEP extrabudgetary activities, as indicated in paragraph 67 of document A/C.5/38/35, was fully explained in paragraph 64 of the same document. The original UNEP facility at Nairobi had been financed in part by a contribution from the Environment Fund currently valued at $804,500. Subject to the approval of the General Assembly, the Secretary-General intended to repay the Environment Fund by exempting it from amortization charges for the first four and a half years that UNEP occupied the new facilities, by which time the Fund would have benefited in an amount equal to the estimated value of its surrendered property.

36. With regard to the office-space deficit, which had also been the subject of some concern, he drew attention to document A/C.5/38/36, paragraph 10, which did in fact indicate an increase of 183 square metres in the office-space deficit. While that increase was not extremely significant, amounting to roughly 13 or 14 offices, consultations were under way to reassess office-space requirements, and it was believed that further negotiations could result in a reduction of those requirements.

37. Mr. DITZ (Austria) asked for further clarification regarding the nature of the post of chief officer of UNCS. Since a job description had presumably been issued for that post, it seemed quite likely that the duties were commensurate with the level assigned to the post. He therefore wished to know whether the Advisory Committee's recommendation, in paragraph 20 of its report justified a downgrading of the post, and, if so, whether the job description for it might not require subsequent modification.

38. Mr. RUEDAS (Under-Secretary-General for Administration and Management) said the Secretariat had believed that the most adequate way of ensuring an effective system of common services for UNEP and UNCHS was through the establishment of a D-1 post for the chief officer. Moreover, sucn a decision was in keeping with precedents established at large United Nations offices such as those at Vienna and Geneva, where heads of services having responsibilty for buildings management and procurement were appointed at the D-1 level.

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39. Mr. KHALEVINSKY (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said he believed that the Advisory Committee's recommendation to downgrade the post to the P-5 level was justified. The Advisory Committee emphasized in its report that during the transitional period the Chief of UNCS would not have a full work-load. Establishing the post at the P-5 level would not prejudice its possible upgrading to D-1 when UNCS was fully operational, at which time, the Fifth Committee could reconsider the question. Some delegations had cited the psychological aspects of the question and suggested that it was more appropriate for a "Chief" to occupy a D-1 post; however, in the view of his delegation, the chief of a unit should be regarded as such regardless of the level of the post he occupied.

40. Mr. HOUNGAVOU (Benin) said the Under-Secretary-General for Administration and Management had clearly indicated that establishing the post of Chief of UNCS at the P-5 level would create an unusual situation, since the incumbent would be treated differently from those occupying similar posts in other branches of the system. He therefore agreed that the Secretary-General's revised estimates for that post should be retained.

41. The CHAIRMAN proposed that, on the basis of the recommendation of the Advisory Committee, the Fifth Committee should recommend to the General Assembly that it should take note of the report of the Secretary-General contained in document A/C.5/38/36.

42. It was so decided.

43. The CHAIRMAN noted that, with regard to the Secretary-General's report in document A/C.5/38/35, the representative of Kenya had proposed that the Committee should approve the Secretary-General's request for a D-1 post for the Chief of the United Nations Common Services Unit. That would entail restoration of the $6,800 recommended for reduction by the Advisory Committee in paragraph 20 of its report as well as of an amount of $3,900 for staff assessment under section 31. He invited the Committee to vote on that proposal.

44. Mr. EL SAFTY (Egypt), speaking in explanation of vote before the vote, said that his delegation would vote in favour of the Kenyan proposal. It was quite clear from the remarks of the Under-Secretary-General for Administration and Management that in all other similar situations the officials concerned occupied D-1 posts. The United Nations Common Services Unit at Nairobi should not be subject to different treatment.

45. The Kenyan proposal was adopted by 63 votes to 26, with 1 abstention.

46. The CHAIRMAN proposed that, in the light of the decision just taken and on the basis of the recommendation of the Advisory Committee, the Fifth Committee should approve additional appropriations as follows: under section 18, a reduction of $447,400; under section 19, a reduction of $479,300; under section 28N, an increase of $2,331,800. He further proposed that the Committee should approve an increase in the estimates of income under income section 2 (General income) of $1,295,600,

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as well as an additional appropriation of $254,500 under section 31, to be offset by an increase in the same amount under income section 1.

47. It was so decided.

48. The CHAIRMAN proposed that the Fifth Committee should also recommend to the General Assembly that it should take note of the reports of the Secretary-General and of the Advisory Committee on the subject and endorse the recommendations of the Advisory Committee as contained in its report.

49. It was so decided.

Revised estimates under sections 28 I, General Services, Geneva, 29B, Conference Services Division, Geneva, and 32, Construction, alteration, improvement and major maintenance of premises

Technological innovations in the production of the publications and documentation of the United Nations (A/C.5/38/79)

50. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) said that in document A/C.5/38/79 the Secretary-General recommended that word-processing equipment should be introduced in the Conference Services Division at Geneva, in view of the positive experience with such equipment at Headquarters. The system would be introduced first in the English, French and Spanish units at Geneva in accordance with a three-phase plan that would entail the recruitment of a co-ordinator, site preparation and the simultaneous installation of equipment in all three units. A temporary P-4 post was requested to accommodate the co-ordinator, whose functions were described in paragraph 9 of the Secretary-General's report, at a cost of $132,100 for 1984-1985. The cost of site preparation for the equipment was estimated at $649,500. Information regarding the equipment to be purchased was provided in paragraphs 9 to 11: the New York and Geneva systems would be compatible, but the Geneva system would also benefit from recent technological developments. The total cost of the equipment and related software and technical items was $1,009,000, as broken down in paragraph 12 of the Secretary-General's report. Additional amounts of $37,000 and $90,000 would be required for installation costs and furniture. Maintenance costs (listed in paragraph 15 of the report) were estimated at $234,000 for the biennium, with an additional $104,000 required for supplies.

51. The total cost of the aforementioned elements was estimated at $2,255,600. However, the Secretary-General intended to meet the cost of the equipment and installation charges ($1,046,000) and maintenance costs ($234,000) from within existing resources. Thus, of a total estimate of $2,255,600, the Secretary-General would absorb $1,280,000. Additional appropriations totalling $975,600 were therefore sought, comprising $194,000 under section 28I, $132,100 under section 29B and $649,500 under section 32. An additional amount of $26,800 would be required under section 31 (Staff assessment), to be offset by a similar amount under income section 1. The Advisory Committee recommended approval of the Secretary-General's request.

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52. Mr. KELLER (United States of America) said that the Secretary-General was to be commended for his efforts to modernize further the operations of the United Nations Office at Geneva and for undertaking to absorb a substantial portion of the cost of that operation. However, the request for additional appropriations amounting to nearly $1 million was regrettable. His delegation would have preferred that savings should be effected either by extending the introduction of word-processing over a longer period of time or by a greater absorption of costs on the part of the Secretary-General. Consequently, it could not support the request for an additional appropriation of $975,600.

53. Mr. HERIJANTO (Indonesia) said that his delegation welcomed any measure to enhance the publications and documentation capacity of the United Nations, including the introduction of word processing at Geneva. He noted that paragraph 18 of the Secretary-General's statement (A/C.5/38/79) indicated that increases in productivity comparable to those recorded at Headquarters were expected as a result of the introduction of word processing at Geneva; yet, the Committee had observed in its discussion on the pattern of conferences that there were still delays in the issue of documents at Headquarters. He sought clarification with regard to that point.

54. Mr. LAHLOU (Morocco) said that his delegation also welcomed the introduction of modern equipment for conference servicing. The experience at Headquarters had been conclusive, and the situation with regard to documentation for the General Assembly had improved considerably. However, he noted that word processing would be introduced initially for three languages only; care should be taken to avoid any imbalance in the treatment of the other language services, which must not be left to work with outmoded methods and technology. Subject to those observations, his delegation could support the Advisory Committee's recommendations.

55. Mr. ZIDOUEMBA (Upper Volta) said that his delegation welcomed any improvement in working conditions in the Secretariat, especially in the sensitive area of documentation. However, technical innovation should not be at the expense of staff members, and he requested an explanation with regard to the abolition of 12 posts referred to in paragraph 2 of the Secretary-General's report.

56. Mr. FORAN (Controller) assured the Committee that the 12 posts in question were temporary and that no staff member would be terminated as a result of the introduction of word processing. However, once the new system was operational, the Organization would not have to rely to the same extent on temporary assistance during heavy meeting periods.

57. The recommendations of the Advisory Committee for additional appropriations of $194,000 under section 28I, $132,100 under section 29B, $26,800 under section 31 and $649,500 under section 32, and for an additional estimate of $26,800 under income section 1, for the biennium 1984-1985 were approved by 74 votes to 1, with 8 abstentions.

58. Mr. EL SAFTY (Egypt) said that his delegation had abstained from voting because, while it had no objection to the introduction of technical innovations, it could not accept that they should benefit only some languages at the expense of others.

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<u>Adequacy of the conference facilities of the Economic Commission for Africa at Addis Ababa</u> (A/C.5/38/82)

59. <u>Mr. MSELLE</u> (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) pointed out that the Secretary-General's report (A/C.5/38/82), had become available only on 12 December 1983 when the Advisory Committee had been deeply involved in the consideration of a large number of other reports, including many statements of administrative and financial implications in respect of which reports of the Fifth Committee were required in the plenary Assembly before action could be taken on the reports of other Main Committees. It had therefore not been possible for the Advisory Committee to give the Secretary-General's report the detailed consideration which it believed was necessary in view of the magnitude of the expenditure envisaged. The Advisory Committee was therefore recommending that consideration of the report should be deferred to the thirty-ninth session, at which time it would be able to examine the proposal in greater detail. However, it was also recommending that the Assembly should approve an additional appropriation of $320,700 under section 32 of the programme budget for the programme of minor alterations and improvements and ongoing maintenance projects at the Economic Commission for Africa.

60. <u>Mr. TOMMO MONTHE</u> (United Republic of Cameroon) said that his copy of the Secretary-General's report was dated 7 December, not 12 December. However, the question was why the report had been issued too late for the Advisory Committee to study it in detail.

61. <u>Mr. MSELLE</u> (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) said that, as he understood it, 7 December was the date on which the document had been submitted for processing and not the date on which it had become available to delegations and to the Advisory Committee. He had noted on his own copy that it had reached his desk on 12 December at 10 a.m.

62. <u>Mr. FORAN</u> (Controller) said that the report before the Committee was based on the findings of a team of consultants selected jointly by ECA and Headquarters. The consultants had not been able to complete their work until mid-November. The three weeks between mid-November and 7 December had been spent in very intensive consultations involving the Office of General Services, ECA and the Budget Division, with the aim of refining the technical proposals submitted by the consultants, some of which had had to be verified and redone, and preparing the related cost estimates so that a report could be submitted at the thirty-eighth session. He did not believe that the task could have been completed in any shorter time. The delay was primarily the result of the technical problems faced by the consultants.

63. <u>Mr. TOMMO MONTHE</u> (United Republic of Cameroon) said that the explanations provided by the Controller were not convincing. The Secretary-General had surely been aware that he had to report to the General Assembly on the subject of the thirty-eighth session, and he wondered whether the problem had really stemmed from the late submission of the consultants' findings or from the relations between Headquarters and ECA.

64. Mr. NKOUNKOU (Congo) said that he too was sceptical about the technical problems which the Controller had said were responsible for the delay. The Secretariat should have set an appropriate time-limit for the submission of the consultants' report bearing in mind the dates of the General Assembly session, but apparently it had not done so.

65. Mr. HOUNGAVOU (Benin) said that a report on the subject of the conference facilities of ECA had been requested by the General Assembly in 1982. He could not, therefore, see how the so-called technical nature of the consultants' report could justify such a delay. He requested details of the contract concluded with the consultants and the date set for submission of their report.

66. Mr. FORAN (Controller) said that the Secretary-General had of course been aware that he had to report to the General Assembly at the thirty-eighth session. Every effort had been made to finish his report in time for consideration at the current session. Since neither he (Mr. Foran) nor his Office had been involved in the technical side of the study, he was not in a position to give any additional information on the technical difficulties which had delayed the submission of the consultants' report. However, the Secretariat had been in close contact with the competent ECA officials and, once the consultants' report had been submitted, they had been able to finalize the document now before the Committee in only three weeks. There had been no areas of conflict between ECA and Headquarters. The consultations between the two had been concerned mainly with refining the details included in the consultants' report so that the Secretary-General's report could be as comprehensive as possible.

67. Mr. TOMMO MONTHE (United Republic of Cameroon) said that he took note of the non-statement of the representative of the Secretary-General on the reasons for the delay. There were no extraordinary technical difficulties involved in studying the construction of some conference rooms at Addis Ababa which would justify the kind of delay that had occurred. While stressing its dissatisfaction at that delay, his delegation was prepared to support the provisional recommendation of the Advisory Committee in a spirit of co-operation, so as not to hold up the work of the Fifth Committee.

68. Mr. AREGA (Ethiopia) said that his Government attached great importance to the question and shared the regret expressed by previous speakers at the delay in submitting the report. The Controller's explanations were not satisfactory. He therefore proposed that the Secretary-General should provide further clarifications with regard to the matter in a future report to the General Assembly.

69. The recommendation of the Advisory Committee for an additional appropriation of $320,700 under section 32 of the programme budget for the biennium 1984-1985 was approved.

70. The CHAIRMAN proposed that, on the basis of the recommendations of the Advisory Committee, the Fifth Committee should recommend to the General Assembly that it should defer to its thirty-ninth session consideration of the other proposals contained in the report of the Secretary-General (A/C.5/38/82) and that

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it should request the Secretary-General to submit an updated report on the matter at the thirty-ninth session, as proposed by the representative of Ethiopia.

71. It was so decided.

72. Mr. NKOUNKOU (Congo) said that his delegation had noted the failings of the Secretariat with respect to the report on which the Committee had just taken a decision.

The meeting rose at 2.05 p.m.