



FIFTH COMMITTEE  
59th meeting  
held on  
Thursday, 8 December 1983  
at 10.30 a.m.  
New York

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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 28th MEETING [59th 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 10.55 a.m.

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

Evaluation of the performance and utility of the Information Systems Unit of the Department of International Economic and Social Affairs (A/C.5/38/1)

1. The CHAIRMAN drew the attention of the Committee to document A/C.5/38/1 containing the report of the Advisory Committee for the Co-ordination of Information Systems (ACCIS) on the evaluation of the performance and utility of the Information Systems Unit of the Department of International Economic and Social Affairs.
2. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) said that the report by the Advisory Committee for the Co-ordination of Information Systems (ACCIS) endorsed the conclusions and recommendations contained in a report prepared by a consultant for ACCIS. The consultant's report, and assessment and review of the programme of the Information Systems Unit (ISU) of DIESA, gave a generally positive evaluation of the performance and utility of ISU. The consultant recommended, inter alia, the establishment of ISU as a distinct and identifiable unit within the Dag Hammarskjöld Library with identifiable budgetary support.
3. In document E/AC.51/1983/6 the Secretary-General had reported to CPC on the work of ISU and had concluded that arrangements had been made to enable it to serve as a focal point for the expansion, merging and distribution of the development-related data bases of the regional commissions in accordance with General Assembly resolution 36/237. That report, however, did not describe the institutional arrangements or make proposals about them. Paragraphs 114 to 116 of the report of the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination (A/38/38, Part I) contained the conclusions and recommendations of CPC on the establishment of an information systems unit in DIESA. CPC suggested that the Information Systems Unit should be given an institutional base in which to locate its activities and accordingly proposed that the integration of the Unit within the Dag Hammarskjöld Library should be examined by the Secretary-General and that the Secretary-General should report to CPC.
4. In considering the report of ACCIS, the Advisory Committee had noted that no proposals had been made by the Secretary-General on the institutional arrangements or budget of ISU. The cost of the Unit had been absorbed from the resources proposed for the 1982-1983 programme budget in accordance with General Assembly resolution 36/237. The Advisory Committee therefore recommended that the General Assembly should take note of the report of ACCIS and decide that the financial arrangements which had applied to the Unit for the biennium 1982-1983 should be continued for the biennium 1984-1985.
5. Mr. EMENYI (Nigeria) stressed the great importance of the work of ISU to third-world countries. ISU gave developing countries access to valuable information which they would not otherwise have. His delegation, therefore, favoured the continuation of the Unit and supported the recommendations of ACCIS.

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6. Mr. KELLER (United States of America) said that his delegation generally supported the recommendations contained in the report of ACCIS. He firmly supported the idea that, in order to be effective, ISU must be incorporated into an existing body which provided information. His Government supported the establishment of ISU as a distinct and identifiable administrative unit within the Dag Hammarskjöld Library on the understanding that that task would be carried out on the basis of existing resources. The question of the identification of ISU as a specific programme in the Library's programme and budget should be left to the good judgement of the management of the Library. Nevertheless, as experience was gained, certain features and services provided by ISU could be combined with the Library's normal operations in order to save resources. The recommendations concerning the data-base merger programme and the Macrothesaurus project were also very sound. It was hoped that the Committee would endorse the recommendations of ACCIS (A/C.5/38/1, para. 4) and the recommendations of CPC (A/38/38, Part I, para. 116).
7. Mr. PEDERSEN (Canada) expressed satisfaction at the excellent report submitted by ACCIS. His delegation supported the establishment of ISU as a distinct and identifiable administrative unit within the Dag Hammarskjöld Library. The management of the United Nations would be in the best position to carry out that task. The continuation of the data-base merger programme was important because it ensured a wider dissemination of literature. It was gratifying to note that ISU had carried out its very useful work with a rather small staff. His delegation strongly favoured the approval of the conclusions and recommendations of ACCIS.
8. Miss ARCHINI (Italy) noted with satisfaction the high level of productivity of ISU, which had carried out its work without the allocation of additional resources. The Unit was of great importance to both developing countries and industrialized countries. It was hoped that the transfer of ISU to the Dag Hammarskjöld Library would in no way impair its effectiveness. The productivity record of ISU demonstrated that a United Nations body could operate effectively with limited resources. Her delegation supported the conclusions and recommendations contained in the report of ACCIS.
9. Mr. van HELLENBERG HUBAR (Netherlands) said that he agreed that the work of ISU was valuable, particularly to developing countries. His delegation supported the recommendations contained in the report of ACCIS and expressed the hope that ISU could continue to work as effectively as it had in the past.
10. Mr. KHALEVINSKY (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that the question of the identification of ISU as a specific programme in the Library's programme and budget should be considered by the management of the Library.
11. The CHAIRMAN said that, if there was no objection, he would take it that the Committee wished to endorse the conclusions and recommendations contained in paragraphs 114 to 116 of the report of the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination (A/38/38, Part I).
12. It was so decided.

13. The CHAIRMAN proposed that, on the basis of the recommendation of the Advisory Committee, the Committee should recommend to the General Assembly that it should take note of the report of ACCIS (A/C.5/38/1) and that it should decide that the financial arrangements which were applicable to the Unit in 1982-1983 should be continued in 1984-1985.

14. It was so decided.

Revised estimates resulting from decisions of the Economic and Social Council at its first and second regular sessions, 1983 (A/38/7/Add.15; (A/C.5/38/32 and Add.1)

15. The CHAIRMAN drew the attention of the Committee to the reports of the Secretary-General on the revised estimates resulting from decisions of the Economic and Social Council at its first and second regular sessions, 1983 (A/C.5/38/32 and Add.1) and the relevant report of ACABQ (A/38/7/Add.15).

16. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) said that section A of the report of ACABQ (A/38/7/Add.15) provided information on estimates made by the Secretary-General of the additional resources required in order to implement a number of decisions taken by the Economic and Social Council at its first and second regular sessions in 1983. The Advisory Committee supported the request of the Secretary-General for additional appropriations under Sections 10, 20, 23 and 27. The Advisory Committee had not recommended any reduction in the amounts requested because in preparing document A/C.5/38/32 the Secretary-General had taken full account of the recommendations submitted to him by ACABQ on 20 June 1983. At that time the Advisory Committee had reviewed the requirements arising out of decisions of the Commission on Human Rights which had been endorsed by the Economic and Social Council. ACABQ had authorized the Secretary-General to enter into commitments in respect of resolutions and decisions requiring urgent action in 1983 under the terms of General Assembly resolution 36/241. The commitments entered into would be reflected in the Secretary-General's final performance report for the biennium 1982-1983. In the report of the Secretary-General under consideration full account was taken of recommendations made by ACABQ on a number of reductions.

17. Part B of document A/38/7/Add.15 dealt with the Secretary-General's request in respect of conference-servicing requirements for the International Conference on Population to be held in August 1984 at Mexico City. The additional requirements under the regular budget were estimated on a full-cost basis at \$796,900. That request would be submitted to the General Assembly towards the end of its current session in the consolidated statement of conference-servicing requirements for 1984.

18. Mr. KELLER (United States of America) said that his delegation strongly supported a number of the decisions of the Economic and Social Council referred to in the report of ACABQ. However, his delegation had strong objections to expenditures in respect of the travel and subsistence of representatives of national liberation movements. It was also opposed to expenditures incurred through the provision of summary records, which were rarely justified, and to the request for \$400,800 for conference-servicing, which should have been absorbed in the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1984-1985. His delegation, therefore, would vote against the additional resources requested in document A/C.5/38/32.

(Mr. Keller, United States)

19. With regard to the report in document A/C.5/38/32/Add.1, his delegation noted with satisfaction that the Government of Mexico had offered to host the International Conference on Population and had agreed to defray the costs involved. His Government was pleased to join in the consensus in support of the request of the Secretary-General in that regard. The United States had made a voluntary contribution of \$500,000 to ensure the success of the Conference.
20. Mr. EMENYI (Nigeria) said that many of the countries represented in the Committee had achieved independence through national liberation movements and were proud of it. National liberation movements needed support because they were unable to collect funds on their own to finance their efforts. His delegation felt that the recommendations in parts A and B of the report of ACABQ (A/38/7/Add.15) should be adopted as a package.
21. Mr. TOMASZEWSKI (Poland) reiterated the position of his Government that resolution 1983/30 of the Commission on Human Rights was illegal, null and void, politically harmful and morally hypocritical. If the estimate for implementing Council decision 1983/145 was put to the vote, his delegation would vote against it.
22. Mr. YOACHAM (Chile) said that, for reasons which had been explained on a number of occasions in the Fifth Committee, his Government did not accept the appointment of a Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Chile. He reaffirmed his Government's desire to co-operate with competent bodies of the United Nations which conducted their work on the basis of universally applicable rules. If the estimate for implementing Council decision 1983/149 was put to the vote, his delegation would vote against it.
23. Mr. MA Longde (China) said that, if the costs to be incurred in connection with Council decisions on the situation of human rights in El Salvador, Poland, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Guatemala and Chile were put to the vote, his delegation would vote against them. His country, however, would vote in favour of the Secretary-General's requirements in respect of the other decisions and resolutions contained in document A/C.5/38/32.
24. Mr. TAKASU (Japan) asked why the additional amount of \$5,300 for public information under section 27 could not be absorbed within the resources provided in the programme budgets for 1982-1983 and 1984-1985.
25. Mr. MOJTAHED (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that, if a separate vote was taken on the requirements for Council decision 1983/147, his delegation would vote against them.
26. Mr. FORAN (Controller) said that there seemed to be some confusion regarding the meaning of paragraph 3 of document A/C.5/38/32. It was necessary to look at the total requirements for all objects of expenditure, which added up to more than \$250,000. For that reason, the amount of \$5,300 to which the representative of Japan had referred had been included in the Secretary-General's estimates.

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27. Mr. KELLER (United States of America) requested a vote on the additional appropriations recommended by the Advisory Committee.

28. The recommendation of the Advisory Committee for additional appropriations of \$17,600 under section 10, \$44,000 under section 20, \$315,800 under section 23, \$5,300 under section 27 and \$18,100 under section 31, and for an increase of \$18,100 in the estimate under income section 1, for the biennium 1984-1985 was approved by 89 votes to 1.

29. The CHAIRMAN proposed that, on the basis of the recommendations of the Advisory Committee, conference-servicing requirements relating to the International Conference on Population, estimated on a full-cost basis at \$796,900, should be considered in the context of the consolidated statement of conference-servicing requirements to be submitted later in the session.

30. The Chairman's proposal was adopted.

31. Mr. ROY (India) said that, had his delegation been present during the vote, it would have voted in favour of the Advisory Committee's recommendation.

32. Mr. EL SAFTY (Egypt) said that, had there been a separate vote on the requirements relating to Economic and Social Council resolutions 1983/144, 1983/145, 1983/147, 1983/148 and 1983/149, his delegation would have abstained for both technical and substantive reasons. Egypt was not a member of the Economic and Social Council and would not support the appropriation of funds for the implementation of decisions in which it had not participated. Furthermore, it did not agree with the practice of singling out countries in order to conduct an experiment in human rights there.

Contractual status of language teachers (continued) A/38/7/Add.13; A/C.5/38/41)

33. The CHAIRMAN recalled that the representative of Egypt had proposed, at a previous meeting, that the Committee should adopt the proposals made by the Secretary-General in his report (A/C.5/38/41).

34. Mr. VISLYKH (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) asked why the Committee was taking up the matter when the Chairman of the Advisory Committee was not present. The report of the Advisory Committee was part of the relevant documentation for the item.

35. His delegation concurred in the Advisory Committee's conclusion that the requirements of the Organization and the concerns of the language teachers could best be met by appropriate contractual arrangements which would not require a change in their status. The current arrangements governing the service of language teachers had proved to be effective and appropriate, and his delegation saw no reason for any radical departure from them. The proposals outlined in the Secretary-General's report seemed to be one-sided and discriminatory vis-à-vis some teachers, including virtually all the teachers of Arabic, Chinese and Russian. His delegation was in favour of equal treatment for all the official and working languages of the Organization and fair and equal treatment of teachers of all

(Mr. Vislykh, USSR)

languages. The Secretary-General's proposals would create a privileged caste of teachers and afford a privileged status to some official languages. Such an approach was unacceptable. He therefore appealed to the representative of Egypt not to press his proposal, so that the Fifth Committee could approve the recommendations of the Advisory Committee without a vote.

36. Mr. MURRAY (United Kingdom) said that it was unusual for the Advisory Committee, which was able to consider matters submitted to it in greater detail than delegations could, to find itself in the position of having to disagree with the Secretary-General. His delegation was satisfied that the conclusion reached by the Advisory Committee, as set out in paragraph 12 of its report, had not been reached lightly, and was content to accept the Advisory Committee's recommendations on the matter.

37. Mr. TOMMO MONTHE (United Republic of Cameroon) reminded members that it had been his delegation which had asked the Committee to defer its decision on the Egyptian proposal so that it could take a fully informed decision. Where questions of personnel were concerned there was a need for special care. The Fifth Committee should put itself in the position of the Administration and should bear in mind the human element involved. Many of the language teachers who would be affected by the Secretary-General's proposal had given valuable service to the Organization for many years, and the Fifth Committee should be sensitive to their concerns. His delegation was not in favour of according special treatment to any group of teachers but merely wished the Committee to take a decision with due care so as to assure the Organization the continued services of proficient language teachers. His delegation was not in the habit of rejecting the views of the Advisory Committee but, in the circumstances, it felt that the Egyptian proposal was the proper approach.

38. Mr. GOGUIKIAN (Lebanon) said that his delegation consistently supported the recommendations of the Advisory Committee on budgetary questions. In personnel matters, however, the views of the Secretary-General and ICSC were also highly relevant. The Fifth Committee was faced with an urgent question, that of the fate of some employees of the United Nations who had so far been deprived of the rights and privileges enjoyed by their colleagues in other occupational groups. The work of the language teachers was of special importance in a multicultural institution like the United Nations. In his statement on the item on personnel questions, he had dwelt at length on the need to improve the conditions of service of the language teachers. At that time, he had not been aware that the language teachers were paid hourly rates. Such a situation was unacceptable and would sooner or later have an adverse effect on their performance. Teaching was a sacred profession and the issue must not be considered from a narrow financial point of view. Accordingly, he urged the adoption of the Secretary-General's proposals.

39. Mr. van HELLENBERG HUBAR (Netherlands) said that the representative of the United Republic of Cameroon had emphasized the humanitarian aspect of the question. However, the solution suggested by the Advisory Committee was no less humanitarian than that proposed by the Secretary-General. His delegation failed to see how the wishes of the language teachers would not be met by some special contractual arrangement. He shared the concerns of the Soviet delegation with regard to discrimination against some language teachers.

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40. Miss ZONICLE (Bahamas) observed that there seemed to be some contradiction between the view stated by the Advisory Committee in paragraph 5 of its report, to the effect that the difficulties relating to the participation by language teachers in the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund were not insurmountable, and the conclusion it reached in paragraph 15. The Advisory Committee had stated in paragraph 8 of its report that it did not believe that the mere according of the status of staff member in and of itself would make a difference in the quality of the contribution of language teachers, and in paragraph 10, it said that it remained unconvinced that the teaching schedule could be effectively adapted to the normal work schedule of United Nations staff. The Fifth Committee needed to have clarification with regard to those points if it was to take an enlightened and rational decision on the matter. She noted, moreover, that, as indicated in paragraph 11 of the Advisory Committee's report, no indication had been given as to what the career development structure of the language teachers might be. She asked whether the Chairman of the Advisory Committee had any comments to make on the new information provided to the Fifth Committee by the Assistant Secretary-General at the preceding meeting, to the effect that the Office of Personnel Services saw the language teachers as becoming part of a more comprehensive training programme under which language training would be put on a firmer footing.

41. Mr. LAHLOU (Morocco) said that, of course, priority should not be given to any one language or languages. In that connection, he noted that there were very few teachers of Arabic, Chinese and Russian among the 48 full-time teachers who would be affected by the Secretary-General's proposals. He understood that the number of teachers for a given language depended on the number of individuals who wished to study that language. However, if the Secretariat enforced a clear-cut policy requiring a balance in the use of the various official languages, there would doubtless be a much greater demand for instruction in some of the languages which at present did not attract large numbers of students. Language teachers should enjoy the same rights without distinction as to the language they taught.

42. Noting that there were only two full-time language teachers in Addis Ababa and Bangkok respectively, he said that the number of language teachers at those two duty stations, situated in developing countries, should be increased.

43. The Advisory Committee's proposals could not be described as constructive. The Fifth Committee must not lose sight of the human aspect, and individuals who dedicated their lives to teaching in the Secretariat should be entitled to the same guarantees with respect to security of tenure as staff members. The majority of delegations supported the Egyptian proposal, and adoption of that proposal was not in conflict with the recommendations of the Advisory Committee, which had taken only some considerations into account, leaving it to the Fifth Committee to take a final decision based on all relevant factors.

44. Mr. TAKASU (Japan) said that his delegation was aware of the importance of language training and of the human aspects of the situation of language teachers at the United Nations. The main implications of the Secretary-General's proposals seemed to relate to personnel matters, particularly career development and the duties, obligations and privileges of language teachers. His delegation would like the Secretariat to comment on the other implications which implementation of the proposals would have.



(Mr. Takasu, Japan)

45. One concern behind the Secretary-General's proposals had been to enable language teachers to become participants in the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund. Yet alternative arrangements could have been devised to make that possible, perhaps by amending the Pension Fund regulations. In any event further consideration of the matter was obviously required and no decision should be taken for the time being.

46. Mr. DITZ (Austria) asked for a breakdown by language of the 48 full-time teachers to whom the status of staff member would be given under the Secretary-General's proposals and how that number had been determined. Further, it was not clear what would happen to the part-time teachers and who would be selected for employment as permanent staff members. His delegation also wished to know whether, if language teachers were included as participants in the Pension Fund, there would be any difference between their benefits and those of other locally recruited staff. Finally, what system of career development was envisaged for teachers?

47. Mr. RUSSO CHECA (Peru) said that his delegation fully supported the Egyptian proposal. The Committee should take a decision on the contractual status of language teachers without further delay.

48. Mr. MA Longde (China) said that the Committee was considering the matter from the point of view of all six languages used in the United Nations system, not from that of any particular language. The other main consideration was whether language teachers actually spent all day teaching. His delegation endorsed the Egyptian proposal. It was reasonable for the Committee to change the status of the 48 full-time language teachers, but further study of the status of part-time language teachers was required.

49. Mr. TRUSCOTT (Australia) said that both the Secretary-General's proposals and those of ACABQ seemed to take account of the human aspects of the question before the Committee. He wished to know what would happen if the demand for a particular language fluctuated, leaving teachers underemployed.

50. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) apologized to the representative of the Soviet Union for not being present in the conference room all the time. The Soviet delegation could rest assured, however, that even when not present in the room he was engaged in Fifth Committee affairs and always closely followed developments in the Committee.

51. The Advisory Committee's report was open to various interpretations and could, of course, be accepted or rejected by the Committee. The Advisory Committee's recommendations had not been based on financial considerations. In fact, if they were accepted, more expense might be incurred. ACABQ's view was that the Secretariat had not considered the matter in sufficient depth. A quick solution to the problems of language teachers had been sought, resulting in the proposal to make them staff members. There were, in fact, other possibilities that had not yet been fully explored.

(Mr. Mselle)

52. In preparing its report, the Advisory Committee had conferred with the representative of the Secretary-General, who had provided the information requested. However, no evidence had been given to support the assumption that language training programmes were being carried out less effectively than they might be because language teachers were not staff members. Reference had been made to paragraph 5 of the Advisory Committee's report (A/38/7 Add.13). The essential point was that ACABQ did not believe the difficulties involved to be insurmountable, and it saw no reason why participation in the Pension Fund should be considered as the only solution.

53. A number of pertinent comments had been made for and against both the Advisory Committee's and the Secretary-General's proposals. The matter was important, and it involved a number of human and technical issues. Careful consideration was necessary before taking any decision. He believed, however, that there was no question of there being a conflict of interest between developed and developing countries. The United Nations employed language teachers from both. In any event, it would perhaps be more appropriate for the Committee to defer a decision to allow time for further consideration.

54. Mr. NEGRE (Assistant Secretary-General for Personnel Services), replying to questions, said that there was no planned or nationally organized career development system in the United Nations. Staff members took responsibility for their own careers. In that respect, the situation of language teachers was no different from that of other employees. They constituted one of the groups now under study, but were merely one of a number of groups whose members found their mobility or advancement blocked. The Secretary-General hoped to submit proposals on career development to the General Assembly at its next session, including the institutionalization of links between one group and another.

55. With regard to the Pension Fund, the position of the language teachers was somewhat unusual in that they had no social benefits, which was why the Secretary-General wished to give them the status of staff members. The Secretariat hoped that language teachers could participate in the Pension Fund without any restrictions, on the understanding that they would work full time at the United Nations and would not be authorized to work outside. It was also essential for them to be involved in the preparation of language teaching programmes.

56. With respect to fluctuating demand for language classes, he said that the main purpose of employing part-time teachers was to enable such fluctuations to be absorbed. Should demand decrease, part-time staff members would be dismissed first, before the full-time staff, in accordance with the Staff Rules. When full-time vacancies arose, priority would be given to part-time staff members in filling them. In fact the language teachers themselves recognized the need for large numbers of part-time staff. There was a core of full-time staff at each duty station, and in practice the numbers of students remained fairly stable. At New York, for example, there were 20 full-time language teachers: eight for French, six for Spanish, three for English and one each for Arabic, Chinese and Russian. The criteria used in recruiting language teachers were competence, academic qualifications and the numbers of students for the language in question.

57. Mr. DITZ (Austria) said that his questions had not been fully answered. He wished to have a breakdown of all the 48 full-time teachers, including those outside New York, and also wished to know what difference there would be in the level of pay and benefits between the language teachers and locally recruited staff.

58. Mr. FORAN (Controller) said that, on the assumption that language teachers participated fully in the Pension Fund, the only difference between language teachers and locally recruited staff members would be that the latter were entitled to allowances for a dependent spouse and children. It was difficult to give precise details, since they would depend on what scheme was ultimately devised.

59. Mr. NEGRE (Assistant Secretary-General for Personnel Services) said that he did not have the figures for language teachers serving in duty stations other than New York.

60. Mrs. de HEDERVARY (Belgium) said that it would be useful if the Secretariat could provide the Committee with a comprehensive written statement of the financial and other implications of both sets of proposals before the Committee, to enable it to take an informed decision.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.