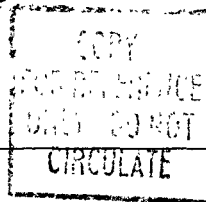


United Nations
GENERAL
ASSEMBLY
THIRTY-EIGHTH SESSION
*Official Records**



UN LIBRARY



FIFTH COMMITTEE
42nd meeting
held on
Friday, 18 November 1983
at 10.30 a.m.
New York

UN/DA COLLECTION

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 42nd MEETING

Chairman: Mr. KUYAMA (Japan)

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

CONTENTS

AGENDA ITEM 117: UNITED NATIONS COMMON SYSTEM: REPORT OF THE INTERNATIONAL CIVIL
SERVICE COMMISSION (continued)

AGENDA ITEMS 109 and 110: PROPOSED PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 1984-1985 AND
PROGRAMME PLANNING (continued)

First reading (continued)

Section 6. Department of International Economic and Social Affairs (continued)

*This record is subject to correction. Corrections should be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned *within one week of the date of publication* to the Chief of the Official Records Editing Section, room DC2-750, 2 United Nations Plaza, and incorporated in a copy of the record

Corrections will be issued after the end of the session, in a separate fascicle for each Committee.

Distr. GENERAL
A/C.5/38/SR.42
23 November 1983

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

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

AGENDA ITEM 117: UNITED NATIONS COMMON SYSTEM: REPORT OF THE INTERNATIONAL CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION (continued) (A/38/30; A/C.5/38/23 and 40)

1. Mr. RALLIS (Greece), speaking on behalf of the 10 States members of the European Economic Community (EEC), said that it was a positive development that the report of ICSC was being examined before the Committee took up the personnel questions relating to the United Nations Secretariat. That procedure would facilitate a more constructive examination of the issues before the Committee.
2. He noted the Commission's finding that the margin between the remuneration of the United Nations federal civil service and that of the United Nations system remained above the level generally accepted as appropriate under the Noblemaire principle. In that connection, he drew attention to General Assembly resolution 37/126. On the question of language incentives, he said that, it was highly desirable that staff should be encouraged to acquire additional language skills, starting with the working language they did not possess on appointment.
3. Turning to the subject of the post adjustment system, he noted that cost-of-living surveys had been conducted at six duty stations and that they were expected to be reviewed shortly by the Commission at its special session. It was regrettable that the Commission would not have the benefit of an agreed recommendation from the Advisory Committee on Post Adjustment Questions. The delegations of the 10 EEC countries expected, none the less, to receive at the current session specific recommendations on the subject from ICSC. A situation in which staff at certain duty stations were receiving a post adjustment allowance higher than justified should be rectified without delay, especially since it affected pensionable remuneration and a variety of other allowances.
4. The delegations of the 10 EEC countries could go along with the proposal to increase the maximum education grant but were disappointed at the Commission's failure to provide much in the way of detailed justifications for the proposed increase. They considered that the issue of the mandatory age of retirement should be kept under review. With regard to the health insurance benefit, the countries were conscious of the difficulties caused by the cost of health care, particularly at Headquarters, and might comment further on the matter under the agenda item on personnel questions.
5. The delegations of the 10 EEC countries had gone along with the Fifth Committee's rather hasty decision to hear the representative of the Co-ordinating Committee for Independent Staff Unions and Associations of the United Nations System, although, in that connection, they would like to recall their statement on the subject of staff access at the thirty-seventh session, when they had noted that resolution 35/213 stipulated that the Fifth Committee might issue an invitation to a single recognized representative of the staff of the Secretariat. It remained their view that it was for the staff associations to work together to meet the terms of resolution 35/213 and not for the Fifth Committee to amend that resolution in order to cater for divisions of opinion among the staff.

/...

(Mr. Rallis, Greece)

6. The ongoing work to establish and refine job classification standards for all staff of the common system, including General Service staff in the field was commendable, and the 10 EEC countries hoped that that process would improve flexibility and efficiency. They supported the introduction and strengthening of human resources planning in organizations of the common system, and recognized the need for common methodology and tools to facilitate interorganizational exchanges of staff through a common understanding of occupational definitions on which a roster of standard skills could be based. They took note of the recommendation to dispense with the probationary appointment after a series of fixed-term appointments.
7. Concerning the priorities established by ICSC for its study of recruitment policy, he said that the strengthening of national recruitment services should help to improve equitable geographical distribution and to increase the employment of women. The proposal to review the possibility of extending common prospecting procedures seemed most timely, since increased interagency co-operation in the field of recruitment might help to increase the flow of suitable candidates from unrepresented and under-represented countries.
8. Mrs. DORSET (Trinidad and Tobago) paid a tribute to the officials who were responsible for implementing the rules and regulations governing conditions of service in the United Nations system. Her delegation was convinced that that took a special talent. In its view, there was a clear need for simplifying an unnecessarily complicated system. While the prevailing economic climate dictated that every effort should be made to conserve the financial resources of the Organization, it was imperative that decisions on conditions of service for staff should be free of any hint of discrimination. For that reason, her delegation was not satisfied that the proposed extension of the rental subsidy scheme was equitable. All internationally recruited staff at whatever level were subject to the same hardships in respect of housing. A rental subsidy should therefore be granted to all such staff on a continuing basis, at all duty stations. In paragraph 61 of its report, ICSC indicated a link between the rental subsidy and the non-resident's allowance for the General Service and related categories. Her delegation understood the non-resident's allowance to be analogous to the assignment allowance paid to Professional staff; if that was the case, the rental subsidy should not be used as a substitute for the non-resident's allowance. In view of the parallel between the assignment allowance and the non-resident's allowance, her delegation could go along with the fixed duration proposed.
9. Her delegation concurred with ICSC that the current language incentive should be discontinued and practices throughout the system harmonized, although it realized that that would entail certain unwelcome adjustments. While agreeing that knowledge of more than one language was a highly desirable asset, her delegation believed that linguistic knowledge should not automatically be a requirement for promotion. Some form of language incentive was, however, appropriate. Her delegation agreed that training facilities should be enhanced and looked forward to the Commission's future consideration of that question.

/...

(Mrs. Dorset, Trinidad and Tobago)

10. In dealing with the question of the education grant, it should be borne in mind that the object was to help staff members to meet the education costs of eligible dependants. That being so, education costs should be monitored and reviewed in a timely manner. In spite of the decision taken at the thirty-seventh session that the education grant should be solely an expatriate benefit, debate on that matter continued. Of course, expatriate staff members should not be worse off for having been assigned away from their home country. However, the original concept of the education grant as a means of avoiding the alienation of children of international civil servants from their national systems of education had not been preserved, since many children were being educated in the host country or a third country. That development had contributed to the charges of inequity in the system and the call for extending the grant to all categories of staff. The Commission should continue to examine both sides of the question with a view to determining whether the education grant should be an expatriate allowance in the strictest sense, as originally intended, or whether it should be granted to all staff, as might be the practice in some private organizations. That would naturally give rise to the question whether the practice of private organizations should be used as a basis for comparison despite the Noblemaire principle.

11. With respect to conditions of service in the field, her delegation considered that the employment of national professionals had built-in advantages and agreed with it in principle. However, such staff members should be properly remunerated and the question of their status must be settled with a minimum of delay. Professional staff, whether recruited locally or otherwise, should be treated as such, and there was no justification for creating an artificial category somewhere between the General Service and the Professional categories. Her delegation looked forward to the review of conditions of service in difficult duty stations. The career prospects of General Service staff in the field, as elsewhere, warranted special consideration. It was to be hoped that the pilot scheme for the circulation of vacancy notices would take into account the timely notification of vacancies in order to allow prospective candidates the opportunity to be considered for vacant posts. Vacancy notices should also give complete details of the posts advertised.

12. She welcomed the action taken by the Commission with respect to human resources planning; the development of skills inventories was a most important factor. Concerning types of appointment, she noted the Commission's decision to request its secretariat to propose criteria to harmonize the granting of career appointments, but allowing for the reappointment on a fixed-term basis of staff members on secondment or where renewal of expertise was required, and said that care should be taken to avoid the abuse of the system by individuals to accrue double benefits, while the opportunity to bring new recruits into the system was unduly limited. Steps should be taken to shorten the recruitment procedure and to circulate in good time the bulletin of vacancies, which should contain job specifications. She noted that the recruitment of women would be discussed at the Commission's twenty-second session and wondered why that priority subject had not been scheduled for discussion earlier. Promotion policy should have as its objective the elimination of any feeling of insecurity based on what was perceived

(Mrs. Dorset, Trinidad and Tobago)

by some, whether rightly or wrongly, to be a system of patronage. While raising the mandatory age of separation would help to improve the actuarial balance of the Pension Fund, opinion was still divided as to whether it had other advantages. The decision to continue in service until the age of 62 should be at the discretion of the staff member and not of the executive head, who, in spite of good intentions, could be exposed to charges of discrimination. If staff members chose to retire at age 60, they should be entitled to full benefits. In any event, the decision on the mandatory age of separation should be taken in the context of personnel policy and should not be postponed much longer.

13. The proposed ILO complementary pension scheme, which was a matter of importance, ought not to be put aside, as it appeared to have been. Nothing should be done that might jeopardize efforts to improve the actuarial situation of the Pension Fund.

14. Her delegation had experienced a feeling of acute discomfort when the representative of FICSA had stated in the Fifth Committee that various initiatives taken by ICSC had served to erode the confidence of the staff throughout the common system in the workings of the Commission. The statement brought to mind an earlier unfortunate incident in the Fifth Committee. Her delegation was convinced that the Commission, the executive heads and the staff were well able to conduct business in an atmosphere of cordiality and high regard for one another, without resorting to signals of impending doom, keeping at the centre of their efforts the efficient and effective functioning of the system, which ought to be first and foremost at the service of the international community.

AGENDA ITEMS 109 AND 110: PROPOSED PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 1984-1985 AND PROGRAMME PLANNING (continued) (A/38/3 (Part II) and Corr.1, A/38/6, 7 and Add.1, 38, 334 and Add.1)

First reading (continued)

Section 6. Department of International Economic and Social Affairs (continued)

15. Mr. DITZ (Austria) said that the Committee had taken up section 6 without having all the relevant documentation before it, since the Advisory Committee's report on the JIU report on the Department of International Economic and Social Affairs (DIESA) had not yet been submitted. He doubted whether the Committee should take a decision on the appropriation, even in first reading, until that report was available.

16. Mr. PEDERSEN (Canada), referring to the JIU recommendation to move the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs (CSDHA) back to New York, said his delegation recognized the problems encountered in Vienna by the Centre but also accepted that it was there to stay. The financial and human costs of moving it back to New York would be prohibitive. It was incumbent on the Secretary-General to find ways of ensuring that the Centre functioned effectively, which might include improving communications, the delegation of authority to the Centre and staff changes.

/...

(Mr. Pedersen, Canada)

17. As to recommendation 6, which dealt with the integration of programme planning, monitoring, budgeting and evaluation functions, he was aware that the Secretary-General had established a high-level group to consider that matter, and the Committee should await its findings before taking any decision on the recommendation. The JIU recommendation for the establishment of a central unit was probably a good one. There was a need for close co-ordination between secretariat units concerned with programme planning, on the one hand, and budgeting, on the other. His delegation fully agreed with the JIU recommendation concerning the Statistical Office. The Statistical Office enjoyed a deserved high reputation and it would be risky, if not disastrous, to split it up.

18. Mr. EMENYI (Nigeria) said that the developing countries attached great importance to the Committee on Promotion of Aid to Co-operatives (COPAC) and the ACC Sub-Committee on Nutrition. Both bodies were important to the efforts of the African countries to develop their rural areas and build-up their nutrition infrastructures. His delegation understood the Advisory Committee's concern that no programme of activities for the two bodies had been submitted. However, it favoured approval of the funds requested by the Secretary-General on the condition that the Secretariat would provide the Assembly with a description of those activities.

19. Mr. TOMMO MONTHE (United Republic of Cameroon) said that, in considering DIESA, the Fifth Committee should focus first on the programme content of its activities, second, on the organizational issues raised in the JIU report (A/38/334), and, only then, on the approval of an appropriation under section 6.

20. With regard to the programme of DIESA, JIU had found that, in general, the Department had not always lived up to the expectations of Member States, as reflected, inter alia, in General Assembly resolution 32/197. For example, the economic and social surveys and projections produced by the Department were not always exactly what had been envisaged and very few of the intersectoral analyses and syntheses it prepared were sufficiently action-oriented. The Secretary-General had stated in his comments that there were several criticisms made by JIU with which he could not agree, and had pointed out that DIESA was large, that the substantive issues which it dealt with were wide-ranging and complex, and that judgements about its work required not only a general knowledge of organizational arrangements within the Department but also familiarity with the substantive and technical content of its work. The Secretary-General stated further in paragraph 6 of his comments that a thorough understanding of the pertinent issues and their relevance to the work of the Department was essential if reports of JIU were not to be highly restricted and of limited utility. However, as the Inspectors stated in their report (A/38/334, para. 5), they had discussed the issues involved with many officials in DIESA, including the Under-Secretary-General, with the Director-General for Development and International Economic Co-operation and his staff, and with officials of the Department of Technical Co-operation for Development. Surely the Secretary-General did not believe that JIU was unfamiliar with the structure of DIESA or that the issues were too complex for it to comprehend. CPC, for its part, had been highly critical of the sections of the medium-term plan relating to DIESA,

/...

(Mr. Tommo Monthe, United Republic of Cameroon)

and had complained about the Department's lack of dynamism and its failure to produce studies that were sufficiently action-oriented to enable Member States to identify solutions to their problems. JIU had correctly observed in its report that DIESA had not emerged as a dominant intellectual influence throughout the system, as envisaged in the restructuring resolution. There were defects in the programmes of DIESA which needed to be corrected and the Fifth Committee, in considering the appropriation requested for the Department, should ensure that the outputs of DIESA would be adequate.

21. Turning to the JIU recommendations relating to the restructuring of DIESA, he expressed the hope that the Secretary-General, in considering the organizational arrangements and relationships in the area of programme planning and evaluation, would bear in mind the request by CPC that the services provided by the Office for Programme Planning and Co-ordination (OPPC) should be improved. OPPC had a fundamental role to play in the formulation and revision of the medium-term plan and in reviewing the programmatic aspects of the budget. If that function was not performed by OPPC, the General Assembly would find itself in the same situation as in 1976, when the medium-term plan had been a tedious document lacking in all rigour and when the budget had been drawn up by object of expenditure. Since its establishment, OPPC had done good work, and that fact had to be taken into account in considering any recommendations for the restructuring of organizational arrangements in the area of programme planning.

22. The Joint Inspection Unit indicated, in connection with its recommendation to transfer the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs back to New York, a series of administrative steps that could be taken to deal with the Centre's problems (A/38/334, para. 50). CPC agreed with the Secretary-General that the difficulties cited by JIU were essentially short-term ones, and that the Centre should remain in Vienna.

23. The Unit had also made some sound proposals on the programme aspects of the budget proposals for DIESA, and had gone deeply into the question of decentralization dealt with in General Assembly resolution 32/197. The gradual approach to the decentralization of United Nations activities was a matter that needed to be taken up again.

24. Mr. van HELLENBERG HUBAR (Netherlands) said that he would prefer to wait for the report of the Advisory Committee before taking any decision on the possible transfer of the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs back to New York. His delegation shared the concern of the Swedish and Nigerian representatives at the Advisory Committee's recommendation to delete the Secretary-General's requests for the Committee for Promotion of Aid to Co-operatives (COPAC). The activities dealt with by COPAC were of great importance to developing countries, and it would be a pity to lose them. It was not his delegation's habit to go against the carefully considered recommendations of the Advisory Committee, but in that particular case it felt that the matter should have been given more careful study.

/...

(Mr. van Hellenberg Hubar, Netherlands)

25. Turning to the recommendations of JIU on DIESA in document A/38/334, he said that whatever happened to the Office for Programme Planning and Co-ordination (OPPC) should not adversely affect the careful development of a programme planning approach within the United Nations. His delegation did not believe it was unnatural to make an administrative distinction between budgeting and programming, even if the functions were two sides of the same coin. In an organization like the United Nations it was desirable to have an independent unit specifically responsible for pointing out the programme implications of decisions taken by policy-making bodies and helping the Secretariat to formulate its own priorities. The administrative integration recommended by JIU would not necessarily be to the advantage of the programme approach.

26. Mr. OKEYO (Kenya) expressed his delegation's support for the Department of International Economic and Social Affairs which should, he felt, be responsive to the substantive requirements of developing countries. It was, indeed, doing a good job but there was room for improvement. The Department should use its financial and manpower resources to improve its intellectual input into the substantive details of its work.

27. The Joint Inspection Unit's recommendation on the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs (A/38/334, recommendation 5) was of particular concern to his delegation because of the principle involved. Returning the Centre to New York would violate the whole notion of decentralization which the General Assembly had adopted in order to ensure greater universality in the work of the Organization. His delegation could not accept the recommendation under any circumstances.

28. As to the budget for DIESA, his delegation could accept all the Advisory Committee's recommendations in document A/38/7 except those in paragraphs 6.18 and 6.19, which dealt with the Committee for Promotion of Aid to Co-operatives (COPAC) and the ACC Sub-Committee on Nutrition. The activities of those two bodies were of great importance to Member States and should be continued. Finally, it was to be hoped that the next set of budget submissions relating to DIESA would be better presented and would contain more substance.

29. Mr. ROY (India) said that his delegation agreed with the Secretary-General's views on recommendation 5 (A/38/334/Add.1, paras. 21 and 22). The difficulties which the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs was facing could all be regarded as teething problems such as any unit might experience in similar circumstances. Bringing the Centre back to New York would be prohibitively costly, besides going against the General Assembly's recent decisions on decentralization. His delegation was convinced that the steps suggested in paragraph 50 of the JIU report (A/38/334) would resolve most of the problems. The Centre should remain in Vienna. His delegation set great store by the programme planning, budgeting and monitoring functions of the Organization. Recent developments in that area showed that the Organization was making progress. The Joint Inspection Unit's recommendation 6 therefore caused it some concern. His delegation was not

/...

(Mr. Roy, India)

against integrating the programming functions in the Secretariat but had serious reservations about the administrative integration proposed, which might well create a monolithic structure that would take away some of the benefits of the Organization's programmatic approach. If that happened, programme delivery would be hampered, especially in the economic and social fields. His delegation therefore suggested that the Office for Programme Planning and Co-ordination should be left as it was for the present, pending the report to the General Assembly at its thirty-ninth session by the high-level advisory group on administrative reform, on which it would be useful to have a representative of DIESA. As far as his delegation was concerned, evaluation should devolve as far as possible on departments and regional commissions, since they were most familiar with the activities concerned. A central evaluation unit, if any were established, should confine itself to general evaluations of the work of other units.

30. Mr. GARRIDO (Philippines) expressed his surprise and displeasure at the fact that the AMS report referred to in paragraph 6.16 of the report of the Advisory Committee would not be available until after the closure of the current session of the General Assembly.

31. Mr. DITZ (Austria) said that one point to which JIU constantly returned was the consequences of separating research from technical co-operation in the United Nations system. His delegation recognized the interdependence of the two areas, and therefore welcomed the Inspectors' suggestion of a fresh look at the units concerned in DIESA and DTCD. For much the same reasons, his delegation also supported JIU recommendation 7

32. He could see the pros and cons of transferring the Energy Unit, the Fiscal and Financial Branch and the Mineral Resources Section of the Ocean Economics and Technology Branch to DTCD as suggested in paragraph 22 of the JIU report, but felt that it was up to the Secretary-General to decide where the units should be located. General Assembly resolution 32/197 had established that global and intersectoral research should be concentrated in DIESA, while sectoral research was left to other bodies, but the distinction was not easy to make in practice. Despite repeated efforts, the United Nations system had not yet learnt how best to distribute research functions among its different constituent bodies. And however desirable a better division of labour between DIESA and other United Nations organs might be, as a task it lay beyond both the scope of the JIU report and the authority of the Fifth Committee.

33. The General Assembly was often hampered by a lack of appropriate information and the fact that documents were not always submitted in a readily usable form. His delegation therefore supported JIU's recommendation 2. While sharing the Secretary-General's view that corrective action should be based on the findings of an objective review, it was not convinced that the objective study called for by the Inspectors could be achieved simply by establishing an interdepartmental working group.

/...

(Mr. Ditz, Austria)

34. The Inspectors had explored a variety of possibilities for dealing with the Office for Programme Planning and Co-ordination (OPPC) without actually analysing the implications of their suggestions for the remainder of the Secretariat. One possibility they had not discussed was to merge OPPC with the relevant sections of OFS to serve as a secretariat for CPC and the Programme Planning and Budgeting Board. That option would have the advantages of not breaking up a unit that was functioning well and of maintaining close links between the planning and co-ordination functions, while at the same time dealing with other shortcomings noted by the Inspectors.

35. His delegation had no doubt that the problems of communication between the Centre of Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs and New York were not beyond remedy through appropriate administrative action. The related recommendation by the Joint Inspection Unit seemed to disregard the facts of the situation: under its agreement with the Austrian Government, the United Nations was responsible for the operation and maintenance of the buildings and facilities at the Vienna International Centre as a whole, and whether some of the offices were occupied by the Centre or not would have little effect on the overall costs to the Organization. The high level of post adjustment in Vienna cited by JIU affected only Professional staff members, while General Service salaries were lower in Vienna than in New York, and a recent survey by ICSC in any case indicated that either the post adjustment paid at duty stations in Europe was too high or the rate paid in New York was too low. His Government, having spent almost half a billion dollars to make the Vienna International Centre available to the United Nations, was determined that the Vienna-based organizations should work under optimum conditions.

36. Administrative efficiency would be easiest to achieve if all parts of the United Nations were concentrated at Headquarters, but if that argument was used to justify the return of the Centre from Vienna, United Nations offices should also be brought back to New York from other sites. Such an approach hardly seemed possible. Over the past 30 years, Member States and the Secretariat had together arrived at the conclusion that the Organization needed to be decentralized. He therefore hoped that the Committee would unanimously support the draft decision shortly to be submitted by his delegation.

37. Mr. MURRAY (United Kingdom) said that the recommendation of the Joint Inspection Unit to change the location of the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs, which had major implications, undoubtedly reflected the Inspectors' concern at the problems affecting the Centre's functioning. However, as the Secretary-General did not share the view that the Centre should be relocated, his delegation awaited with interest the Advisory Committee's views on the subject.

38. As a member of CPC, his delegation greatly appreciated the work of the Office of Programme Planning and Co-ordination (OPPC). His delegation understood that the Secretary-General intended to consider OPPC under his proposed administrative review and that that review would be combined with the review of the economic and social sectors of the United Nations system called for in General Assembly resolution 32/197.

/...

39. Mr. KAMAL (Pakistan) said his delegation disagreed with some of the Joint Inspection Unit's recommendations concerning DIESA as well as with the manner in which the JIU report had been prepared, in view of the dissenting opinions expressed by one of the Inspectors in many crucial areas. He proposed that the relevant recommendations of the report should be considered further by the Second and Third Committees because they involved important economic and social development issues; no action on those recommendations should be taken by the Fifth Committee until that had been done.

40. His delegation believed that the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs should remain in Vienna and was confident that the efforts of the Secretary-General to solve the Centre's administrative problems would be successful.

41. Mr. HANSEN (Assistant Secretary-General for Programme Planning and Co-ordination) said he would answer questions raised by delegations with reference to programme budget proposals for DIESA. With regard to United Nations involvement in the Committee for Promotion of Aid to Co-operatives (COPAC), he noted that many resolutions of the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly had stressed the importance of co-operatives in promoting development at the national and local levels. DIESA, through the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs, was involved in two types of activities relating to co-operatives: the preparation of the periodic reports of the Secretary-General on national experience in the promotion of co-operative movements, and participation in the meetings of COPAC. The latter was a unique organization in that it was not a sub-committee of ACC but was composed of representatives of intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations active in the field of co-operatives. All members provided substantial financial support for the COPAC secretariat, which promoted and co-ordinated assistance to co-operatives in developing countries. Although there was always a possibility of duplication when many agencies were active in a single field, COPAC tried to provide a forum for all organizations working with co-operatives in order to avoid such duplication of effort.

42. The Sub-Committee on Nutrition had been established in 1977 to replace the Protein Advisory Group, which had been established in the late 1960s to deal with the issue of the protein gap. When ACC had been restructured in accordance with General Assembly resolution 32/197, three of its sub-committees, including the Sub-Committee on Nutrition, had been maintained, since they were found to have unique functions and could not be consolidated under the new structure. There appeared to have been a misunderstanding with regard to United Nations participation in the work of the Sub-Committee at its most recent session; he wished to point out that the United Nations had been represented at that session by the World Food Council, which was an organ of the General Assembly. Confusion in the matter might have been due to the fact that the Sub-Committee's budget came under the OPPC budget (and, consequently, the budget for DIESA). However, it had not been possible for OPPC to be represented at the Sub-Committee's session at Copenhagen because of other commitments at Headquarters, a situation which could conceivably have been interpreted as demonstrating a lack of support by the United Nations for the Sub-Committee. With respect to the financing of the Sub-Committee,

/...

(Mr. Hansen)

the United Nations, in a reversal of the usual situation, made contributions in a lesser amount than did FAO, WHO, the World Bank and other agencies. The Sub-Committee had been established by a resolution of the Economic and Social Council, and its work would suffer greatly if the United Nations, and particularly the World Food Council, should cease to participate in its activities. He referred members of the Committee to document ACC/1983/16, which contained the Sub-Committee's programme of work.

43. With regard to other budget proposals, a question had been asked about the degree of flexibility applied to temporary posts in CSDHA for the International Youth Year. It might be more appropriate for either the Chairman of ACABQ or the Controller to respond to that question, particularly since it was related to a report of AMS.

44. The recommendation of CPC to delete programme element 7.2 from the statistical programme was based on the fact that resources for that programme element had been allocated for staffing purposes only and were insufficient to constitute a full post over the biennium. Thus, those resources could not be transferred easily to another programme. However, they would be reallocated to programme element 1.2 in the statistical programme, a high-priority element which was to be carried out by the same unit in the Statistical Office that would have carried out programme element 7.2.

45. Mr. FORAN (Controller) said that the staff changes and shortages in the Administrative Management Service (AMS) during the first half of 1983 had made it impossible to complete the study on staff resources for the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs (CSDHA) by mid-year. Subsequently, the Advisory Committee had been informed that the study would be conducted during the second half of 1983, in time for submission to the General Assembly at its thirty-eighth session. However, the prior commitments of senior CSDHA staff members had made that impossible as well. An agreement had since been reached by the Under-Secretary-General for International Economic and Social Affairs, the Assistant-Secretary-General in charge of the Centre and the Director of AMS to begin the study in mid-January 1984 so that it could be submitted to the thirty-ninth session of the General Assembly.

46. Mr. YOLAH (Under-Secretary-General for International Economic and Social Affairs) said he wished to speak on two issues of policy. The first issue was the extent to which DIESA could take the initiative and issue action-oriented recommendations. DIESA could be dynamic only to the extent that Member States wished it to be; it rarely advised Member States to follow a specific policy, acting instead in accordance with directives received from Member States. At the same time, DIESA had to ensure that its studies provided Member States with several alternative courses of action. While Member States frequently did little more than take note of DIESA reports, some Governments analysed the reports and subsequently discussed with the Department specific points that were of interest to them in the formulation of their national policies. The Department was always ready to furnish more information to any delegations desiring it.

/...

(Mr. Yolah)

47. The Department functioned in three different settings. At the national level, it was engaged in dialogues with Governments which were initiated in response to DIESA studies. In the field of international co-operation, Member States were able to apply the information learned from those studies to their co-operation activities. Finally, within the United Nations system, most of the Department's activities were reviewed on an ongoing basis by ACC. The Department intended to continue its interaction with other United Nations bodies and agencies, and was determined to profit from the comments of Member States.

48. He urged Member States not to complain about a lack of action-oriented recommendations, but instead to provide the Department with specific instructions for action. It should be borne in mind that there were other branches of the United Nations system that were by their very nature more action-oriented. Nevertheless, DIESA sought instructions as to how it might broaden its presentation of information, although the financial implications of such requests should be taken into account by Member States.

49. The second policy issue he wished to address was the question of decentralization. General Assembly resolution 32/197 had had important consequences for the Secretariat, which was doing its best to implement that resolution. From ongoing consultations with the regional commissions and other units at Headquarters, he had realized that the Secretariat must implement the spirit as well as the letter of that General Assembly resolution. It was his conviction that the General Assembly did not want decentralization instituted in an arbitrary manner, but wished it to be achieved in a way that was cost-effective and would increase the efficiency of the United Nations system. To institute decentralization in an objective and scientific way required time and care; his Department had adopted just such an approach to the question, and he hoped that he would eventually be able to present a full report on the process to the General Assembly.

50. Mr. ALI (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations) said he wished to supplement the information which the Assistant Secretary-General for Programme Planning and Co-ordination had provided on the work of the Committee for Promotion of Aid to Co-operatives (COPAC) and the Sub-Committee on Nutrition, since FAO was deeply involved in the work of both bodies. FAO considered the work of COPAC to be most important in providing background information on the status of the development of co-operatives in developing countries, documenting project assistance, providing advice with regard to co-operative policies and encouraging a greater commitment of resources to the development of co-operatives by government and non-governmental development agencies. COPAC was developing materials of interest to the United Nations in such areas as the disabled, health, women and aging. COPAC had also assisted in the preparation of the report of the Secretary-General contained in document A/38/63. FAO had increased its financial support for COPAC each biennium since the Committee had been established, and currently contributed \$50,000 annually; in addition, FAO provided the Committee with administrative support at FAO headquarters at no cost to COPAC.

/...

(Mr. Ali)

51. The ACC Sub-Committee on Nutrition provided a forum for technical and non-technical United Nations agencies and bilateral donors to co-ordinate their efforts in the field of nutrition. Such multi-agency efforts included: the integration of nutrition in agricultural and rural development; the promotion of multi-sectoral applied research in nutrition; and the examination of food-aid options and the future role of United Nations agencies in the field of nutrition. Since several members of the Sub-Committee were making their contributions at the country level, the ending of United Nations would constitute a serious blow and could only discourage the participation of other agencies and donors.

52. Mr. AMNEUS (Sweden) suggested that the Advisory Committee's conclusions with regard to COPAC and the Sub-Committee on Nutrition might have been different if it had had access to the information just provided. He hoped that the Fifth Committee would be given an opportunity to reflect on the additional information before taking a decision.

53. Mr. EMENYI (Nigeria) proposed that, in view of the broad interest in the matter expressed by various delegations, and since the Committee had now been provided with adequate information, the Committee should adopt the budget proposals of the Secretary-General concerning COPAC and the Sub-Committee on Nutrition.

54. Mr. BEIYAEV (Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic) said that the section of the budget under discussion was complex; moreover, other delegations might wish to make comments in the light of the information just provided. He therefore thought it would be better for the Committee to postpone taking a decision until the 43rd meeting.

The meeting rose at 1.25 p.m.