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PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 1978-1979

Revised estimates for section 22F. Electronic Data Processing
and Information Systems Service

Inter-Organization Board for Information Systems and Related
Activities - United Nations share

Sixth report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and
Budgetary Questions

1.   The Advisory Committee has considered the report of the Secretary-General in
which he submits revised estimates for the United Nations share of the ●osts of
the Inter-Organization Board for Information Systems and Related Activities (IOB)
under section 22F of the programme budget for 1978-1979 (A/C.5/33/21).

2.   As stated in paragraph 1 of A/C.5/33/21, initial estimates for the
United Nations share of the cost of IOB were submitted to the General Assembly at
its thirty-second session in document A/C.5/32/37, paragraphs 29 to 41. The
Advisory Committee in its related report 1/ stated that the information available
was insufficient to enable it to make a proper analysis of the estimates for IOB.
Accordingly, the Committee recommended that an amount equivalent to one half of
the United Nations share of the cost of IOB for the biennium should be approved and
indicated that it would revert to the matter of the IOB estimates when it met with
representatives of the Board at its spring 1978 session. The Advisory Committee
recommendation having been approved by the Fifth Committee, the appropriations as
approved by the General Assembly in its resolution 32/213 include only a partial
provision for the United Nations share of the costs of IOB in the current biennium.

3.   At its spring 1978 session at Geneva, the Advisory Committee received
additional information on the 1978-1979 proposed budget and work programme of IOB
and met with representatives of the Board. The information provided to the Advisory
Committee is summarized in the annex to the present report. On the basis of this
additional information and its discussions with the Board, the Committee concluded
that initial estimates of $900,200 for the total requirements of IOB in 1978-1979
were justified.

1/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Thirty-second Session, Supplement
No. 8A (A/32/8/Add.1-30), document A/32/8/Add.25, paras. 29-31.

4.   As indicated in paragraph 4 of the Secretary-General's report, those initial estimates were based on an exchange rate of 2.51 Swiss francs to the United States dollar. Due to exchange rate fluctuations in 1978, and based on the revised exchange rates to be proposed for 1978 (Sw.Fr. 1.8075 = $US 1) and 1979 (Sw.Fr. 1.63 = $US 1) in the Secretary-General's first performance report, 2/ the United Nations share, 39 per cent of the total cost, is now estimated by the Secretary-General at $514,500 ($239,400 for 1978 and $275,100 for 1979). Of this amount $192,600 has already been approved by the General Assembly in the initial budget appropriations (resolution 32/213). Further, as indicated in paragraph 6 of the Secretary-General's report, a request for $39,000 to compensate for the loss due to variations in the exchange rate will be included in the first performance report.

5.   The total additional appropriation requested by the Secretary-General in his report (A/C.5/33/21) thus amounts to $282,900 under section 22F of the programme budget for 1978-1979. In the light of what is stated in paragraph 3 above, the Advisory Committee recommends approval of this request.

2/ To be issued as document A/C.5/33/25.

ANNEX

Summary of additional information provided to the
Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary
Questions in connexion with its consideration of
the 1978-1979 estimates for the Inter-Organization
Board

1.   The main documentation before the Advisory Committee in connexion with its
consideration of estimates for IOB at its spring 1978 session was a paper which
provided a description of the 1977 reorganization of the IOB secretariat and
presented an analysis of the 1978 and 1979 programme of work of IOB following the
discussion at the eleventh session of the Board (IOB/SC4/2).

2.   The reorganization of the IOB secretariat resulted in a 100 per cent turn over
of staff and a reduction of the staff complement from 6 professional and 2 general
service staff to 4 professional and 2 general service staff.

3.   The 1978-1979 programme of work of IOB, as described in the paper presented
to the Advisory Committee, is as follows.

Programme 1. Basic Co-ordination and Secretariat Services

      This programme has been divided in the analysis into 1(a) Basic Co-ordination
and 1(b) Secretariat Services as the former has mainly a substantive content and
the latter mainly deals with the overhead of servicing the Board meetings and
maintaining the IOB as an independent mechanism.

      Programme 1(a) Basic Co-ordination is designed to improve communications
between the organizations of the United Nations family, avoid duplication of
effort, promote exchange of information and further the basic co-ordination measures
which the Board is instituting. The following individual work projects comprise
the programme.

(a) Work Project 1.1. Preparation of periodic reports on conference and committee
activities. This work project is directed at the preparation of reports of meetings
for the Standing Committee of the Board and to full sessions of the Board and at
furthering basic co-ordination measures by ensuring a presence of the Board's
secretariat in meetings. Attendance at meetings is selective and governed by
relevance of the subject matter to the Board's ongoing concerns. Special
relationships and in some cases joint work projects have been established where
there is a direct relation to the Board's work programme to avoid duplication and
competition. Such relationships exist between the IOB secretariat and the
secretariat of UNESCO/UNISIST, the CCAQ Working Party on Programme Planning,
Budgeting and Evaluation, the ACC Sub-Committee on Statistical Activities and the
ACC Working Party on the Indexing of Documents. A special case is represented by
the attendance of the Board's secretariat in an observer capacity at the meetings

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of the Steering Committee of the UNDP Integrated Systems Improvement Project (ISIP) in which Governments have made an investment of $1.3 million. Although presently involving the UNDP and two pilot agencies ISIP will eventually have an impact on most existing management information systems and administrative systems in the United Nations family. Work was commenced on Work Project 1.1 in 1977.

(b) Work Project 1.2. Development of an information paper on committees, task forces and other groups dealing with information systems. This work project was commenced in March 1978. The Board considers that there has been a proliferation of committees dealing with information systems and that the burden is such that organizations have problems in maintaining adequate representation at the almost continuous calendar of meetings in North America and Europe. The question of the rationalization of the ACC committee structure is also a concern under General Assembly resolution 32/197 (the restructuring resolution) and this work project will need to be implemented taking into account action stimulated by that resolution. The first product of the work in 1978 will be a listing of committees and their functions to be followed in 1979 by proposals for rationalization.

(c) Work Project 1.3. Development of bi-monthly interorganization newsletter. The Board considers that while there has been an increased circulation of information on system development in 1977 through activities of the IOB communications between organizations of the United Nations family need to be improved. The newsletter which will be restricted to staff members of the United Nations family will be initiated in May 1978 and run bi-monthly for an experimental period of about a year.

(d) Work Project 1.4. Development of information paper on the response to information support requirements of interagency bodies. One of the requirements of the Board's terms of reference is that it "should take into account and assist in meeting the information support requirements of other inter-agency bodies". During 1977 the Board carried out an enquiry with the CCAQ and the International Civil Service Commission aimed at investigating the availability of data elements dealing with occupational classifications, language ability, educational qualifications and working experience of United Nations staff. Out of these discussions came the suggestion for an interorganization system which could assist in the recruitment of field staff and in improving career prospects for professional project staff. Discussions with CCAQ/ICSC will continue during 1978; no new work project is currently proposed but the question will be reconsidered in the light of developments in 1979 and a report prepared.

(e) Work Project 1.5. Development of criteria recommended for the planning of information systems, information policy. This work project is for implementation in 1979 being dependent on the outputs and products of a number of work projects in other programmes notably, 2.1, 2.2, 3.1, 4.1, 4.2 and 4.7.

(f) Work Project 1.6. Assistance to the Joint Inspection Unit in the development of assessment of IOB work programme. As mentioned in paragraph 9 above, ACC has invited JIU to assess the Board's work programme in 1978 and submit findings to ACC's spring 1979 session. The Board has agreed to make the services of their secretariat available in 1978 to give whatever assistance may be requested by JIU in the preparation of the report required by ACC.

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Programme 1(b) provides for the general overhead tasks of servicing the Board

(a) Work Project 1.7. Servicing Board and Standing Committee meetings. The Board normally holds one three-day session each year and meetings of its Standing Committee on which five organizations are represented (United Nations, UNDP, ILO, WHO and UNESCO) as required (three were held in 1977).

(b) Work Project 1.8. Correspondence and other general services. This project covers correspondence other than that involved in other work projects, general administration, recruitment, staff training and unscheduled requests for information and the preparation of papers not covered by other work projects.

Programme 2. Documentation and Data Systems

This programme covers questions of co-ordination and harmonization of what are usually known as technical and scientific information systems.

(a) Work Project 2.1. Preparation of Directory of United Nations Information systems and services. This work project was commenced in 1977 with the help of the ACC, Inter-Agency Task Force on Information Exchange and the Transfer of Technology (IATFIS) with the objective of producing a user-oriented directory. The draft document circulated in November 1977 was welcomed by the General Assembly in resolution 32/178 as an effort "useful to all countries in particular developing countries". The final version of the Directory in English, to be issued in May 1978, will contain particulars of over 100 information systems and over 2,500 addresses of input centres, offices of organizations in countries, depository libraries, etc. (4). This is the first attempt to bring together the information systems and services of the United Nations family. Translation of the interorganization technical content of the Directory has raised difficulties and the work is being undertaken on the French and Spanish versions under contract with organizations of the French and Spanish Governments. Updating of the Directory is not envisaged before 1980, but provision has been made for preparatory work in 1979.

(b) Work Project 2.2. Development of bibliography of nomenclatures, classifications and thesauri employed by the United Nations family. This work project is the follow-up to work project 2.1 and is the starting point for the work on the harmonization of technical and scientific information systems. That part of the work which involves co-ordination between bibliographic systems inside and outside the United Nations family will be undertaken in co-operation with UNISIST/UNESCO with which the secretariat has a special agreement.

(c) Work Project 2.3. Preparation of information paper on United Nations family requirements for current economic and social country assessments. This work project is concerned with the harmonization and co-ordination of the material assembled by organizations to assist in cross-organizational efforts for dealing with international co-operation and development and the assistance requirements of recipient countries. An additional concern is the link between systems dealing with data and those with information mainly of a documentary character. Work is not envisaged until 1979.

(d) Work Project 2.4. Collection and compilation of a list of "Broad Terms" representing the programmes and activities of organizations. At the request of the Preparatory Committee of ACC, the Board has agreed to implement in co-operation with the ILO and UNESCO a recommendation of the ACC Working Party on the Indexing of Documents that a list of broad terms should be collected and compiled representing the programmes and activities of organizations. The original purpose of this effort is the development of the first stage of a vocabulary through which member Governments and organizations can locate United Nations family publications on a given subject. However as the list involves the programmes of organizations the final project should have wider application. In order to ensure that the administrative and programme aspects of the work are fully exploited, IOB is co-ordinating this work project with related activities of the CCAQ Working Party on Programme Planning, Budgeting and Evaluation which is engaged on the different but related task of revising the ACC Programme Classification.

Programme 3. Management Information and Administrative Systems

This programme covers the exchange of information and questions of co-ordination and harmonization of what are usually known as administrative support and management systems.

(a) Work Project 3.1. Development of inventory of United Nations family administrative support systems. This work project was commenced in 1977, the work being initiated by a consultant service contract. The inventory covers the capabilities and characteristics of five major types of administrative support systems - accounting, budget, payroll, personnel and project resources systems - in 14 organizations of the United Nations family - United Nations (New York), United Nations office at Geneva, UNCTAD, UNIDO, UNICEF, UNDP, ILO, FAO/WFP, UNESCO, WHO, the World Bank Group, ITU, WMO, and IAEA. The first product of the work project will be a Directory of United Nations Administrative Support Systems designed to be used by subject-matter officers within organizations. This Directory will be issued in the summer of 1978. Follow up on the results of the inventory is planned for 1979 as follows:

(b) Work Project 3.2. Development of inventory of programme and project management systems in the United Nations family. This work project concerns an inventory of management or management information systems in the United Nations family, and is planned by the Board for 1979.

(c) Work Project 3.3. Further development of an interagency project register (CORE) and an examination of the estimated costs involved both for agencies and centrally. Work on this project was commenced by the Board in 1974 following Economic and Social Council resolution 1889 (LVII). As part of the response to the Board's new terms of reference, the project was replanned and simplified in 1977 and for working purposes divided into two interrelated parts

- CORE/1 is aimed at obtaining from organizations in machine readable form (that is in a form which is acceptable to computers) basic information on expenditure analysed by the ACC Programme Classification, by country and by project.

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- CORE/2 is aimed at obtaining text descriptions of technical co-operation projects and the indexing of the activities involved.

In the case of CORE/1 an investigation of the problems involved in obtaining financial information from ongoing administrative systems was commenced in 1977 under the same consultant assignment as employed for work project 3.1. It is planned to implement CORE/1 in 1978 and to prepare an analysis of the material. As far as the development of CORE/2 is concerned the objective in 1978 is to submit a report on the problems and costs involved for organizations. This report, together with the results of the effort with CORE/1, will form the basis of a paper by the Board to ACC in 1979 on the basis of which a decision on the future course of the project will be made. The resources envisaged for 1979 are based on the assumption that a decision will be made to implement the project as required by Economic and Social Council resolution 1889 (LVII).

Programme 4. Computer facilities and operating systems

This programme covers the exchange of information and questions of co-ordination and harmonization in the area of United Nations computer facilities.

(a) Work Project 4.1. Development of inventory of United Nations family computer facilities

Work Project 4.2. Development of inventory of general purpose proprietary software owned or rented by members of the United Nations family

These two inventories were combined and undertaken as one work project in 1977. The product of the inventories has been issued as a Directory of United Nations Computer Facilities (5). The Directory shown for the first time the computer facilities (hardware) and proprietary programmes and packages (software) owned or rented by 30 organizations of the United Nations family: eight other organizations are also listed which make no direct use of computer facilities. The Directory is intended to enable organizations and those within organizations concerned with the development of computer systems and services to locate experience on the use of particular hardware and proprietary software and to obtain initial information on questions of compatibility of facilities. The inventories are to be up-dated in 1978 to show changes in facilities and extended to include regional office facilities. The 1978 Directory of Computer Facilities will also include the output of work project 4.6 (which is costed separately).

(b) Work Project 4.3. Development of information paper on the possibilities of sharing software developed by members of the United Nations family. The objective of this work project is to assemble particulars of software which organizations have developed for their own use which could have possible application in other organizations of the United Nations family. Part of the material for this information paper will emerge from other work projects but resources are provided in 1979 for a final assembly and analysis.

(c) Work Project 4.4. Development of information paper on material available in agencies in computer readable form. The objective of this work project is to establish an inventory of material which organizations have available in machine-readable form which could contribute to the programme activities of other organizations. Material for this work project will become available from other work projects, and resources are assigned to prepare an information paper in 1979.

(d) Work Project 4.5. Development of information paper on computer or information system training courses, training manuals and training materials organized by agencies for their own staff. The objective of this work project is to provide for the sharing of experience on training. The work is not planned until 1979.

(e) Work Project 4.6. Development of section on word-processing to be included in the 1978 Directory of United Nations computer facilities. Several organizations are currently making or considering large investments in the relatively new technique of word- or text-processing. The Board believes that there has been a good deal of experience acquired by some organizations and that it is important to share it. Further the development of word- or text-processing is still in a sufficiently early stage for sensible measures for compatibility or harmonization of facilities to be undertaken. It is proposed in the output of this work project to prepare a report on the state of the art, assess possibilities and give an analysis of developments to date within the organizations of the United Nations family. The results will be included in the 1978 Directory of United Nations Computer Facilities.

(f) Work Project 4.7. Development of paper on policies and strategies on technological support in the area of information processing. This work project has the objective of developing policies and strategies for the acquisition and use of computer facilities including mini-computers, the use of programming languages, the acquisition of software and other questions where compatibility of facilities are concerned.

4.   The following tables summarize the total estimates for IOB for 1978-1979 by object of expenditure and by programme based on information provided to the Advisory Committee . The figures have been revised to reflect an exchange rate of 1.8075 Swiss francs to the United States dollar for 1978 and 1.63 Sw.Fr. to the US dollar for 1979. The United Nations share of the IOB costs equals 39 per cent of the totals shown in the tables.

	1976/77 revised estimates	1976/77 expen- diture	1978/79 estimates		
			Total	1978	1979
	(in thousands of United States dollars)				
1. Established posts	400.3	343.4	577.8	269.5	308.3
2. Common staff costs	116.8	124.3	150.2	70.1	80.1
3. Temporary assistance	15.7	24.7	45.1	21.4	23.7
4. Consultants (incl. travel)	219.5	152.5	259.9	145.4	114.5
5. Official travel	12.0	14.1	76.4	33.3	43.1
6. Computer services	138.2	50.3	126.8	23.6	103.2
7. Printing/translation	2.0	2.3	60.5	38.2	22.3
8. Miscellaneous	10.3	6.1	22.6	12.4	10.2
Total	914.8	717.7	1 319.3	613.9	705.4

Programme	1978	1979	Total
	(in thousands of United States dollars)		
1. Basic Co-ordination and Secretariat Service	163.0	217.7	380.7
2. Documentation and Data Systems	155.6	98.2	253.8
3. Management Information and Administrative Systems	176.8	342.3	519.1
4. Computer Facilities and Operating Systems	106.1	37.0	143.1
Total	601.5	695.2	1 296.7
General operating expenses	12.4	10.2	22.6
GRAND TOTAL	613.9	705.4	1 319.3