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PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 1978-1979

Revised estimates under section 23B. Documents Division,
Conference Services, Geneva

Fifteenth report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and
Budgetary Questions

1. The Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions has considered the report of the Secretary-General (A/C.5/33/36), in which he submits revised estimates under section 23B. Documents Division, Conference Services, United Nations Office at Geneva,
2. The revised estimates relate to the Secretary-General's request to acquire reproduction and distribution equipment for the Geneva Office at a cost of \$439,600. It will be recalled that the Secretary-General had included in his proposed programme budget for the biennium 1978-1979 the sum of \$348,400 ^{1/} for that purpose, but that the request was not approved pending a reassessment of the requirements. ^{2/}
3. The Advisory Committee, when it met at Geneva in May 1978, held a preliminary discussion of the subject with the representatives of the Secretary-General at the United Nations Office at Geneva.
4. The Committee has been informed that the Secretary-General, on the basis of his review of the requirements of the reproduction and distribution operations at Geneva, has concluded that the equipment needed will be basically the same as that initially requested. The following table lists the items and costs as compared with those in the original proposal.

^{1/} Official Records of the General Assembly, Thirty-second Session,
Supplement No. 6 (A/32/6), vol. II, table 23.40 and paras. 23.64-23.67.

^{2/} Ibid., Supplement No. 8 (A/32/8 and Corr.1), paras. 23.37-23.39.

(In United States dollars)

United Nations Office at Geneva	Revised estimates	Initial estimates	Increase/ (decrease)
	\$	\$	\$
<u>Reproduction Section</u>			
Small offset presses and stencil duplicators	68 000	46 100	21 900
Plate insulator	19 700	15 900	3 800
Camera platemaker	29 500	19 850	9 650
Typographic proof-press	7 400	5 000	2 400
High-speed heavy-duty offset press .	244 500	140 100	104 400
Collating/stitching machine	29 500	19 850	9 650
Automatic binding machine	not requested	29 800	(29 800)
Three-knife paper-cutter	not requested	19 850	(19 850)
Subtotal	398 600	296 450	102 150
<u>Distribution Section</u>			
Package-tying machine	8 300	5 650	2 650
Printer processor for microfiche . .	23 800	16 200	7 600
Filing cabinets for microfiche and addressograph plates	6 900	4 700	2 200
Other minor equipment	2 000	1 350	650
Scriptomatic machine in lieu of an addressograph machine	not requested	15 150	(15 150)
Pigeon-holed shelving units	not requested	8 900	(8 900)
Subtotal	41 000	51 950	(10 950)
Total	439 600	348 400	91 200

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5. As can be seen from the above table, the revised estimate is \$91,200 or 26.2 per cent higher than the initial estimate, even though the number of items requested has been reduced. The Committee understands that the revised estimates take into account price increases and the additional cost in dollars of adjusting the rate of exchange from 2.51 Swiss francs to the United States dollar, on which the initial estimates were based, to 1.63 Swiss francs to the dollar. 3/

6. In response to inquiries, the Advisory Committee was informed that the increase in the estimated cost of the heavy-duty offset press from \$140,100 to \$244,500 was attributable largely to the devaluation of the dollar, and that the estimate in Swiss francs had risen by about 13 per cent.

7. The Advisory Committee notes that the small offset presses and stencil duplicators, the plate insulator, the camera platemaker and the typographic proof-press are being requested to replace existing equipment which is in imminent danger of breakdown after many years of intensive use. The high-speed heavy-duty offset press and the collating/stitching machine are being requested to improve the output capacity of the reproduction shop. In this connexion, the Advisory Committee recalls that, when it was at Geneva, it was informed that, despite the gradual increase of offset and hardcopy reproduction, there was need to retain a large mimeograph capacity because much of the documentation produced at the Geneva Office did not require large runs.

8. The Committee notes from paragraph 8 of the Secretary-General's report that the replacement of reproduction equipment will result in a 25 per cent increase in the output capacity of the shop from the current average of some 12,000 page units per day per staff to an estimated average of 15,000 page units.

9. In this connexion, the representatives of the Secretary-General informed the Committee that the initial budget estimates for temporary assistance for meetings during the biennium 1978-1979 were predicated on a productivity standard of 15,000 page units per day. 4/ As the new equipment had not been acquired, that standard had not been achieved and output was currently estimated at 13,600 page units per day. At the same time, over-all workload in 1978 had been running above the estimated level (283 million page units per annum instead of 237.5 million). Those two factors had given rise to additional requirements under temporary assistance, estimated at 388 work weeks for 1978 5/ and at least as much in 1979 if the existing equipment were not replaced. Also, there would be additional costs for maintenance and repair amounting to at least \$40,000 for 1978-1979. The representatives of the Secretary-General concluded that, if the new equipment were not acquired, the

3/ The United Nations operational rate for September 1978 which will be used in the Secretary-General's first performance report (A/C.5/33/25).

4/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Thirty-second Session, Supplement No. 6 (A/32/6), vol. II, tables 23.28 and 23.29.

5/ The total number of temporary-staff work weeks in the reproduction shop in 1978 is estimated at 1,590.

additional expenditure on maintenance and temporary assistance which would have to be incurred during the current biennium would exceed the cost of the proposed heavy-duty offset press (\$244,500).

10. The Committee was also informed that there has been a slowdown in heavy offset reproduction during 1978 because of concern over possible breakdowns of the offset equipment if operations were to be continued at maximum level, and a corresponding shift to mimeograph reproduction. According to the representatives of the Secretary-General, the effect will be a decline in heavy offset reproduction from 113.5 million page units in 1977 to 100 million page units in 1978 and an increase in mimeograph reproduction from 137.5 million page units in 1977 to 160 million page units in 1978.

11. The programme of acquisition of equipment for the Distribution Section, estimated at \$41,000, includes the replacement of package-tying machines and a printer processor for microfiche (see table following para. 4 above). According to the Secretary-General, its implementation would increase the capacity of the distribution operation from an average output of 1,800 documents per day per staff to 1,960 documents, that is, by 8.8 per cent.

12. The Committee inquired whether the Secretary-General's proposals were developed in the context of a comprehensive modernization programme designed to improve the efficiency of the internal reproduction and distribution operations and to lower their cost in terms of staff, maintenance and materials, as the Committee had recommended last year. ^{6/} The representatives of the Secretary-General informed the Committee that the programme of acquisition of equipment described in the report of the Secretary-General (A/C.5/33/36) was limited to replacing obsolete and worn out machinery with faster up-to-date equipment. As regards future plans, the Secretary-General wanted to assess first the results of the technological innovations currently being tested at Headquarters before deciding on a large-scale modernization programme.

13. In the opinion of the Advisory Committee, the acquisition of reproduction and distribution equipment should lead to savings because of increased productivity and reduction in expenditure on temporary staff. In the circumstances, and bearing in mind the level of resources already available to the Secretary-General under section 23, the Advisory Committee recommends that the General Assembly should appropriate the amount of \$348,400 originally requested by the Secretary-General for the equipment acquisition programme, and that the balance of \$91,200 should be absorbed.

^{6/} Official Records of the General Assembly, Thirty-second Session, Supplement No. 8 (A/32/8 and Corr.1), para. 23.39.