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PROPOSED PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 1978-1979

Revised estimates under section 23A. Department of
Conference Services

Technological innovations in the production of the publications
and documentation of the United Nations

Thirteenth report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative
and Budgetary Questions

1. The Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions has considered document A/C.5/32/11 in which the Secretary-General submits proposals for technological innovations in the production of the publications and documentation of the United Nations. The report updates document A/C.5/31/77 which was submitted to the General Assembly at its thirty-first session and the consideration of which was postponed to the thirty-second session (A/31/470, para. 100 (h)).

2. The Secretary-General's proposals relate to the application of electronic data processing (EDP) technology to all stages of the processing of documents (namely, typing, editing, printing and distribution). The new computer-based systems are to be introduced gradually over a period of five to six years. For 1978-1979 the Secretary-General proposes to proceed with the implementation at Headquarters 1/ of the computerized word processing/text editing subsystem and the hard-copy reproduction subsystem. In addition, he plans to begin technical feasibility studies, with the assistance of outside consultants, on the introduction of computerized photocomposition and of a glossary subsystem. The Secretary-General

1/ The Secretary-General plans to introduce a comparable text processing system in Conference Services, Geneva, beginning in 1979, and to present related proposals to the General Assembly at its thirty-third session (A/C.5/32/11, para. 12).

estimates the total cost of his proposals at \$950,200 for the biennium consisting of \$730,800 for the text processing and hard-copy reproduction equipment, \$138,600 for general temporary assistance, and \$80,800 for the consultant studies and related equipment in connexion with the introduction of photocomposition and of the glossary subsystem.

3. The following table summarizes the Secretary-General's estimates for 1978 and 1979:

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Budget section 23A		1978	1979	1978-1979
		\$	\$	\$
<u>Text processing and hard-copy reproduction</u>				
A.	<u>Equipment</u>			
	Equipment, rental and maintenance	190 600	425 000	615 600 <u>a/</u>
	Shipping and installation	4 200	2 700	6 900
	Multi-image platemaker, one-time purchase . . .	35 000	-	35 000
	Supplies (diskettes and print wheels)	18 600	16 600	35 200
	Software (text processing)	10 000	-	10 000
	Miscellaneous equipment (tables, stands and covers)	17 300	10 800	28 100
	Subtotal A	275 700	455 100	730 800
B.	<u>General temporary assistance</u>			
	Automation co-ordinator (D-1) and secretary (GS)	67 700	70 900	138 600
	Total A and B	343 400	526 000	869 400
C.	<u>Photocomposition</u>			
	Consultant study	15 000	-	15 000
	Equipment	-	28 000	28 000
	Subtotal C	15 000	28 000	43 000
D.	<u>Glossary subsystem</u>			
	Consultant study	24 000	-	24 000
	Equipment	-	13 800	13 800
	Subtotal D	24 000	13 800	37 800
	Total C and D	39 000	41 800	80 800
	TOTAL A, B, C, D	382 400	567 800	950 200

a/ Includes \$74,400 for auxiliary equipment to be located in the New York Computing Centre (NYCC), of which \$25,300 would be incurred in 1978 and \$49,100 in 1979.

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4. The Secretary-General's proposals assume that by the end of 1978 the English, French and Spanish Typing Units would be equipped with one half their estimated needs for text processing equipment, that the platemaker and hard-copy reproduction equipment would be installed in the Reproduction Section, and that the correspondence Unit would be provided with all the necessary equipment. By the end of 1979, the English, French and Spanish Typing Units would be equipped in full and the installation of the various related communication and other facilities in the New York Computing Centre (NYCC) would be completed.

5. In paragraphs 3 to 6 of his report, the Secretary-General cites the benefits to be derived from the application of computerized text processing and reproduction systems; they include productivity increases from the direct typing operation, savings on paper and more efficient storage and retrieval of information. The Secretary-General estimates that the equivalent of 61 staff-years of typing, costed at some \$850,000 at 1977 prices, would be released annually in the English, French and Spanish Typing Units of the Stenographic Service (on the basis of present workload) and that savings on paper alone would be sufficient to cover the rental and maintenance costs of the related equipment (in the estimates for 1978-1979, these costs amount to \$615,600). The Advisory Committee understands that these figures represent gross potential savings based on estimates provided by the consultants.

6. The Advisory Committee agrees with the Secretary-General that the proposed technological innovations would result in improvements in efficiency, management and control of operations. There would also be benefits to delegations as well as to the United Nations in that less space would be required for the storage of documents. The balance of financial costs and benefits, however, is more difficult to assess because of uncertainties about the timing and amount of the savings, particularly those arising from increased productivity. In the light of oral evidence submitted to it on this aspect of the problem, the Advisory Committee concluded that the project was likely at least to break even; and given the other unquantifiable benefits, there were grounds for making a cautious, step-by-step start with the project.

7. At the same time, the Advisory Committee believes that, even with the uncertainties about the financial savings referred to in paragraph 6, it would be possible to undertake a clearer and more precise analysis of the costs and benefits of the project than the Secretary-General has so far provided. The Committee therefore recommends that:

(a) The General Assembly should appropriate at this stage the additional funds required to meet in 1978 the costs of text processing and reproduction equipment and of the feasibility studies on photocomposition and the glossary subsystems. The amounts involved would be:

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	\$
Rental and maintenance of text processing and hard-copy reproduction equipment	190,600
Shipping and installation	4,200
Acquisitions of multi-image platemaker	35,000
Supplies, software and miscellaneous equipment	45,900
Subtotal	275,700
Photocomposition, consultant study	15,000
Glossary subsystem, consultant study	24,000
Total	314,700

The resources which might be needed for the second year of the biennium can be determined at the thirty-third session of the General Assembly, in the light of a progress report by the Secretary-General reflecting experience in the first eight or nine months of 1978.

(b) The progress report by the Secretary-General should provide, inter alia, a clear and precise analysis and estimate of the quantifiable costs and benefits of the project.

8. The Secretary-General requests also \$138,600 (\$67,000 in 1978 and \$70,900 in 1979) (para. 11 and annex) for general temporary assistance (one automation co-ordinator at the D-1 level and one General Service post) in connexion with the implementation of the project. The Advisory Committee is of the opinion that the necessary expertise is already available in the Secretariat, particularly in the Electronic Data Processing Information Systems Office. Accordingly, the Committee recommends that the additional temporary assistance be disallowed.

9. Should the General Assembly concur with the recommendations of the Advisory Committee in paragraphs 7 and 8 above, an amount of \$314,700 would be required under section 23A of the proposed programme budget for 1978-1979.
