

UNITED NATIONS  
GENERAL  
ASSEMBLY



Distr.  
GENERAL

A/31/8/Add.11  
4 December 1976

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

Thirty-first session  
Agenda items 30 and 92

THIRD UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON THE LAW OF THE SEA

PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 1976-1977

Administrative and financial implications of the draft  
resolution contained in document A/31/L.4

Twelfth report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative  
and Budgetary Questions

1. The Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions has considered the statement by the Secretary-General on the administrative and financial implications of the draft resolution contained in document A/31/L.4 on the Third United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea (A/C.5/31/50).
2. The Secretary-General estimates the costs of the related programme of work at \$4,093,000 (to the nearest \$1,000) consisting of \$2,565,000 in direct conference servicing costs and \$1,528,000 in other costs. In paragraph 15 of his statement he indicates that the former will be reviewed before the end of the current session of the General Assembly to determine the extent of the contribution which the Department of Conference Services will be able to make from within already approved resources. He therefore confines his request for appropriations at this stage to the amount of \$1,528,000 for "other costs" under sections 2 and 4, as indicated in paragraph 16 of his statement.
3. As regards conference servicing costs, the Advisory Committee notes that the estimate of \$2,565,000 is based on the assumption that all the conference servicing staff will have to be recruited in Europe and brought to New York for the sixth session of the Conference and the related intersessional private consultations. Hence the savings that will arise from the use of already approved resources of the Department of Conference Services will include not only salaries but also travel and subsistence costs. The Committee notes further that the manpower requirements are based on the pattern of meetings indicated in paragraph 4 of document A/C.5/31/50. The Committee understands that the above pattern was not followed at recent sessions of the Conference and that recruitment of conference servicing staff for those sessions reflected actual requirements.

The Committee trusts that the same approach will also be followed at the sixth session. The Committee was informed in this connexion that conference servicing costs (other than those provided from within established resources) for the fourth session (15 March-7 May 1976) amounted to approximately \$825,000 and those for the fifth session (2 August-17 September 1976) to approximately \$950,000.

4. Should the Conference find it necessary to extend the sixth session by one week the related costs, to the extent that they cannot be met within the approved appropriations, should, in the Advisory Committee's opinion, be considered under General Assembly resolution 3540 (XXX) of 17 December 1975 on unforeseen and extraordinary expenses for the biennium 1976-1977.

5. As regards the amount of \$1,528,000 for "other costs", the Advisory Committee notes that two thirds of it (\$1,042,000) covers the maintenance in 1977 of the secretariat of the Conference, including related consultancy services, travel and general operating expenses. The Secretary-General proposes no change in the secretariat of the Conference other than the reclassification of two posts from P-2/1 to P-3; the Advisory Committee has no objection to this proposal.

6. In the light of the considerations indicated in paragraph 12 of his report, the Secretary-General suggests that the secretariat personnel recruited for the Conference be budgeted for a period of two years rather than one year as has been the case so far, and that the necessary provision for 1978 be included in the programme budget for the biennium 1978-1979.

7. The intent of the Secretary-General's suggestion is not clear to the Advisory Committee. The appropriations for the biennium 1978-1979 will be approved by the General Assembly at its thirty-second session, by which time the Conference will have concluded its work for 1977. The only consequence of the Secretary-General's suggestion would be that the estimates for 1978 would be included in his initial programme budget proposals instead of in revised estimates to be submitted at a later date. The former approach would not lead, however, to earlier action by the General Assembly and would thus have no impact on stability and continuity of the secretariat of the Conference. The latter can be achieved only by appropriate personnel action within the authority of the Secretary-General relating to the appointment, transfer and termination of staff.

8. The total of \$1,528,000 for "other costs" also includes \$399,000 for conference servicing costs. As can be seen from the breakdown in foot-note a/ to the table in paragraph 14 of document A/C.5/31/50, the major item in those costs is \$225,000 for the external printing of the proceedings of the sixth session. The Advisory Committee was informed that more than half the amount in question relates to the printing of 1,500 standard pages (500 printed pages) of summary records. If experience with regard to summary records at the fourth and fifth sessions is repeated at the sixth session of the Conference, such a volume of summary records is unlikely to be attained. For this reason, and bearing in mind that there is also room for economies in the estimates for the Office of General Services (\$84,700), the Office of Public Information (\$26,500) and the secretariat of the

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Conference (\$28,800), 1/ the Advisory Committee recommends that the estimate of \$399,000 be reduced by \$100,000 to \$299,000.

9. The balance (\$87,600) of "other costs" relates to the travel and subsistence of staff who will have to travel from New York to Geneva to service meetings of UNICEF and the Committee on Natural Resources if, as is recommended in paragraphs 7-9 of document A/C.5/31/50, these meetings are transferred to accommodate the requirements of the Conference. The Advisory Committee notes in this connexion that the Committee on Conferences has not pronounced itself on this question. 2/ If the Committee on Conferences concludes that the holding of the sixth session of the Conference will not necessitate the transfer of the meetings in question from New York to Geneva the requirement of \$87,600 for travel and subsistence will not arise. The Advisory Committee inquired whether - should the Committee on Conferences confirm the Secretary-General's assumptions - there would be any offsetting savings attributable to the cancellation of travel to New York by Geneva-based officials. It was informed that three UNICEF staff members stationed in Europe were scheduled to attend the meetings in New York; if the meetings in question are transferred to Geneva there will be corresponding savings of the order of \$5,500. Accordingly, the Advisory Committee recommends that the request for travel and subsistence of substantive staff to service displaced meetings be reduced from \$87,600 to \$82,000, subject to the conclusions of the Committee on Conferences on the venue of the meetings of UNICEF and the Committee on Natural Resources.

10. For the reasons stated in paragraphs 8 and 9 above, the Advisory Committee recommends that the Fifth Committee inform the General Assembly that should it approve the draft resolution contained in document A/31/L.4, there would be need for additional appropriations in an amount of \$1,341,000 under section 2 and of \$82,000 under section 4 of the programme budget for the biennium 1976-1977. Moreover, provision for \$200,000 would have to be made under section 25, Staff assessment, to be offset by a corresponding increase under income section 1. The Committee may also wish to inform the Assembly that conference servicing costs, including those to be provided from within already approved resources, should not exceed \$2.5 million.

11. As regards the question of the financial assessment of non-member States participating in the Conference (paras. 17-19 of document A/C.5/31/50), the Advisory Committee is of the opinion that the provisions of regulation 5.9 of the Financial Regulations of the United Nations, as amended by General Assembly resolution 3371 B (XXX) of 30 October 1975, apply to the Third Conference on the Law of the Sea for, if the Assembly wished to make exceptions to the regulation, it would have so specified in resolution 3371 B (XXX). The Advisory Committee recommends that the Fifth Committee advise the Assembly accordingly.

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1/ A breakdown of these amounts is given in para. 5 of the statement by the Secretary-General (A/C.5/31/50) under items A.VI and VII and B.I.

2/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Thirty-first Session, Supplement No. 32 (A/31/32), para. 46.