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Agenda item 99

UNITED NATIONS ACCOMMODATION

Report of the Fifth Committee (Part I)

Rapporteur: Mr. E. Brian NASON (Ireland)

1. At its twenty-eighth session, the General Assembly, in the course of its consideration of the item on the proposed programme budget, requested the Joint Inspection Unit to study the question of the utilization of office accommodation within the United Nations system and to submit its recommendations to the Assembly at its thirtieth session. At its thirtieth session, the General Assembly had before it the reports of the Joint Inspection Unit on the subject, but decided to postpone comprehensive consideration to the reports of its thirty-first session.
2. At its 4th plenary meeting, on 24 September 1976, the General Assembly, on the recommendation of the General Committee, decided to include in the agenda of its thirty-first session the item entitled:

"United Nations accommodation:

"(a) Utilization of office accommodation in the United Nations system;

"(b) Utilization of office accommodation and conference facilities at the Donaupark Centre in Vienna: report of the Secretary-General"

and to allocate it to the Fifth Committee.
3. The Fifth Committee considered subitem (a) at its 36th, 38th and 44th meetings, on 24 and 29 November and 8 December 1976.
4. For its consideration of this subitem, the Committee had before it the following documents:

(a) Report of the Joint Inspection Unit on the utilization of office accommodation at United Nations Headquarters (A/9854 and Add.1);

(b) Report of the Joint Inspection Unit on office accommodation provided for extrabudgetary staff in the United Nations system (A/10279 and Add.1);

(c) Report of the Joint Inspection Unit on the utilization of office accommodation in the United Nations system (A/10280 and Add.1);

(d) Report of the Secretary-General on office accommodation provided for extrabudgetary staff in the United Nations system (A/C.5/31/7 and Corr.1);

(e) Report of the Secretary-General on utilization of office accommodation in the United Nations system: accommodation at United Nations Headquarters (A/C.5/31/17 and Corr.1);

(f) Report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions on utilization of office accommodation in the United Nations system (A/31/8/Add.4).

5. The Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions introduced the report of the Advisory Committee in an oral statement before the Fifth Committee at its 36th meeting.

6. The observer for Switzerland also addressed the Committee at the same meeting.

7. In its report (A/31/8/Add.4), the Advisory Committee stated its agreement, in general, with most of the recommendations of the Joint Inspection Unit and of the Secretary-General. It also drew attention to the elements of uncertainty in predicting future space requirements at Headquarters, because of the difficulties of anticipating future decisions of the General Assembly, and suggested that the predictions of the Secretary-General should therefore be evaluated in that light.

8. The Advisory Committee stated that, in the light of current administrative, financial and political considerations, the long-term policy for the accommodation of staff in New York should be based upon the rental of the minimum space required additional to that available in the Headquarters buildings (A/31/8/Add.4, para. 10).

9. On the question of space management, the Advisory Committee agreed with the Joint Inspection Unit that the authority of the Office of General Services to manage space should be reinforced.

10. As regards the question of office accommodation provided for extrabudgetary staff, the Advisory Committee noted that there was no uniform approach within the United Nations system to the problems of accommodation of such staff. In that connexion it noted that the Secretary-General would be submitting to the General

Assembly at its current session a separate report on the general question of the costs of support services, including costs of accommodation provided from the regular budget to extrabudgetary activities. When the Advisory Committee considered that report, it would revert, as necessary, to the information contained in the reports of the Joint Inspection Unit (A/10279 and Add.1) and the Secretary-General (A/C.5/31/7 and Corr.1).

11. The comments and observations made by delegations taking part in the debate on this question are reflected in the summary records of the meetings of the Fifth Committee (A/C.5/31/SR.36, 38 and 44).

RECOMMENDATION OF THE FIFTH COMMITTEE

12. At its 44th meeting, on 8 December, the Fifth Committee decided, without objection, to recommend that the General Assembly should:

(a) Take note of the reports of the Joint Inspection Unit on the utilization of office accommodation in the United Nations system, 1/ and the reports thereon of the Secretary-General 2/ and the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions; 3/

(b) Concur with the comments and observations of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions contained in its report. 3/

1/ A/9854, A/10279 and Add.1 and A/10280 and Add.1.

2/ A/C.5/31/7 and Corr.1 and A/C.5/31/17 and Corr.1.

3/ A/31/8/Add.4.