



SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 27th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. KOBINA SEKYI (Ghana)

Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and
Budgetary Questions: Mr. MSELLE

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The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 100: PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 1978-1979 (continued)

Revised estimates for section 22G. Administrative and Financial Services, Geneva (A/C.5/33/20)

1. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) said that document A/C.5/33/20 restated the proposals which the Secretary-General had already submitted to the General Assembly at its thirty-second session and the consideration of which had been postponed pending a study in greater depth of the activities for which additional appropriations were requested. In that document, the Secretary-General submitted the same proposals as in the previous year, namely, the establishment of a new post at the P-4 level and the conversion of three existing posts at the P-2 level. The Advisory Committee, at meetings which it had held at Geneva during the spring of 1978 with representatives of the Secretary-General, had had the opportunity to examine those requests. In the light of the clarifications and additional information which it had thus obtained, the Advisory Committee was now ready to recommend that the requests submitted by the Secretary-General be approved. However, the Advisory Committee considered that the additional appropriation of \$5,000 requested for common services costs could be absorbed without difficulty out of funds already appropriated. It therefore recommended that an additional appropriation in the amount of \$34,000 be approved under section 22G.

Revised estimates for section 22F. Electronic Data Processing and Information Systems Service (A/33/7/Add.5; A/C.5/33/21)

2. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) said that the estimates for the Inter-Organization Board for Information Systems and Related Activities submitted to the General Assembly at its thirty-second session had amounted to \$900,200 for the biennium 1978-1979. The Advisory Committee had considered at that time that the information available had been insufficient to enable it to make a proper analysis of the estimates for IOB. Accordingly, it had recommended that an amount equivalent to only a portion of the United Nations share of the cost of IOB for 1978 should be approved and had taken no decision on the estimates for 1979.

3. As indicated in the Advisory Committee's report (A/33/7/Add.5), the initial estimates of \$900,200 had been raised to \$1.3 million owing mainly to currency fluctuations. Out of the latter total, the United Nations share of the cost of IOB was now estimated by the Secretary-General at \$514,500, which represented 39 per cent of the total cost. Since the Advisory Committee had already recommended approval of \$192,600 as part of the United Nations share of the cost of IOB for 1978, the Secretary-General indicated in his report that an additional

(Mr. Mselle)

amount of \$321,900 would now be required to provide for the full revised cost. The Secretary-General pointed out, however, that, he would include in the first performance report an amount of \$39,000 to compensate for the loss due to variations in currency exchange rates. The total additional appropriation requested by the Secretary-General under section 22F of the programme budget for 1978-1979 therefore amounted to \$282,900. The Advisory Committee recommended approval of that amount. Lastly, he pointed out that the additional information provided to the Advisory Committee in connexion with its consideration of the estimates for IOB were summarized in the annex to document A/33/7/Add.5.

4. Mr. MAJOLI (Italy) said that, in view of the comments just made by Mr. Mselle and in view of the fact that in paragraph 5 of its report (A/33/7/Add.5), the Advisory Committee recommended approval of the additional appropriations of \$282,900 requested by the Secretary-General under section 22F of the programme budget for 1978-1979, his delegation was disposed to support that request, although it had some doubts as to the advisability of requesting additional appropriations at the present stage. It was, however, extremely important to avoid duplication and overlapping of activities and the Inter-Organization Board played a very useful role in that regard. That did not prevent one feeling some concern on reading the analysis of the Board's programme of work which appeared in the annex to document A/33/7/Add.5. That programme of work covered such an impressive range of activities that it made one wonder whether they were not in turn duplicating a number of activities of other United Nations organs. All those activities should thus not be reflected in an expansion of staff, which would have the result of imposing much too heavy a burden not only from the strictly financial standpoint but mainly from that of the functioning of the system as a whole.

5. Mr. PIRSON (Belgium) noted that the revised estimate requested by the Secretary-General for the Inter-Organization Board had been established in the light of the restructuring of the secretariat of the Board which had taken place in 1977 and which had led to a reduction in staff. His delegation was not therefore particularly concerned by the sums requested. On the other hand, it would like clarification from the Chairman of the Advisory Committee concerning the rate of exchange proposed for 1979, namely 1.63 Swiss francs to the United States dollar, as indicated in paragraph 4 of document A/33/7/Add.5. Since nobody could know at the present stage how the dollar would evolve in the months to come or the following year, it would perhaps be prudent to take a slightly higher exchange rate than that mentioned in the Advisory Committee's report. That was admittedly a difficult problem to solve and it would inevitably arise again in connexion with the consideration of other documents which would shortly be submitted to the Committee. In any event, it would seem preferable to give a little less money than necessary rather than the opposite excess.

6. Mr. SAFRONCHUK (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that his delegation could not support the additional appropriation of \$39,800 requested by the Secretary-General under section 22G. It believed that there was no need to

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(Mr. Safronchuk, USSR)

strengthen the staff of the Administrative and Financial Services in Geneva and that the additional Professional posts requested by the Secretary-General were in no way justified. Moreover, appropriations had already been approved under the same section for the biennium 1978-1979 and, in principle, his delegation was opposed to any request for additional appropriations when the budgetary period had not been completed. Accordingly, it would vote against the appropriations requested by the Secretary-General under section 22G.

7. Under section 22F (Electronic Data Processing and Information Systems Service), the Secretary-General requested an additional appropriation of \$282,900. Moreover, paragraph 6 of document A/C.5/33/21 indicated that the first performance report would include a request for additional resources amounting to \$39,000 to compensate for the loss due to variations in the exchange rate. There again, his delegation could not agree to the appropriations requested by the Secretary-General which involved extremely large sums and which in addition were not sufficiently justified. It was in any event unacceptable that additional appropriations should be requested to meet variations in the exchange rate or the effects of inflation. As his delegation had had occasion to state many times in the past, increases in expenditures resulting from currency fluctuations or inflation should be absorbed within the appropriations already authorized by making economies in various areas and by making the necessary adjustments in the budget and reorganizing certain programmes. If the practice of approving requests for additional appropriations to offset the effects of variations in exchange rates or inflation was to be endorsed, it was hard to see what could then stop an unlimited growth in the budget. It was therefore essential to put up strong resistance to that trend. Moreover, as the representative of Belgium had pertinently observed, the rate of the dollar varied constantly, and it was therefore neither justifiable nor rational to request additional appropriations on that score. What was important was that the Secretary-General should have a sufficient margin for manoeuvre during the biennium to use the appropriations already approved as efficiently as possible, in other words by distributing the resources judiciously and showing a spirit of economy.

8. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions), replying to a question raised by the representative of Belgium concerning fluctuations in the United States dollar in relation to the Swiss franc, said that the question of exchange rates to be applied for future expenditures was difficult to determine precisely. Indeed, that question had been considered for years but no practicable solution had yet been found. The rate originally used of 2.51 Swiss francs to the United States dollar had been applied by both the United Nations and other organizations in the system which had come to an agreement for that purpose. However, as the biennium proceeded, that rate had had to be altered in the light of the changing situation. Furthermore, if the suggestion made by the Belgian representative was to be followed, it would almost amount to anticipating changes in the exchange rate and to forecasting the measures

to be taken to meet the situation. It would seem preferable rather to wait until it was known what the change would be with regard to that currency and then make the necessary adjustments.

9. Mr. PIRSON (Belgium) explained that he had not intended to say that more money might perhaps be given to the Secretary-General to anticipate possible variations in the rate of exchange of the dollar, but rather to give him less. One course of action, for example, might be to wait until the end of the General Assembly session and see what the state of the dollar was at that time. If the Secretary-General was to be given now the sums he requested, based on an exchange rate of 1.63 Swiss francs to the United States dollar, and if it proved that during the coming year the dollar rose, the Secretary-General would then have much too much money at his disposal.

10. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) agreed with the suggestion made by the Belgian representative that it would probably be better, if at all possible, to wait until the end of the year in order to fix the dollar exchange rate. In addition, when the performance report was submitted towards the end of the session to the Committee, it would be informed at that time of the full effect of the exchange rate fluctuations as forecast for the remainder of the biennium. He regretted that he had slightly misunderstood the question raised by the representative of Belgium.

11. Mr. GARRIDO (Philippines) said he would like to know to what extent the various regional economic commissions were at present able to use the information systems. In particular, it would be interesting to know whether ECWA, ECA or ECLA had access to a centre which could meet their needs with regard to electronic data processing. Secondly, he would like to know whether the specialized agencies had followed up the recommendations made several years previously by the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination with a view to ensuring budgetary co-ordination through the use of computerized systems. Lastly, it would be interesting to know whether the small organizations were able to meet their needs with regard to information systems by calling on other larger organizations which had the financial means available to use such systems.

12. Mr. SLAUGHTER (Director, Electronic Data Processing and Information Systems Service), replying to the questions raised by the representative of the Philippines, said that each regional economic commission, to varying degrees, used computerized data processing systems. ECA had a small computer which had been modernized the previous year. ESCAP was currently considering acquiring a small computer, but for the moment it relied on various electronic data processing offices in Bangkok. Similarly, ECLA was preparing to acquire a small computer to meet its needs in the area of administrative management. In the case of ECWA, it had also been proposed that when it was installed permanently in Baghdad, it would study the possibility of buying a small computer.

(Mr. Slaughter)

13. As far as the specialized agencies were concerned, the large agencies which had their headquarters at Geneva, such as WHO, ILO and WMO, used the services of the International Computing Centre, particularly for the preparation of their budgetary estimates. UNESCO and FAO had their own information systems and processed a considerable amount of budgetary and financial data by computer.

International Computing Centre - 1979 budget estimates (A/33/7/Add.6; A/C.5/33/22)

14. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) said that, in its report (A/33/7/Add.6), the Advisory Committee recommended approval of a revised estimate of \$5,068,900 for the 1979 budget of the International Computing Centre. Furthermore, he wished to draw the Committee's attention to two comments in the Advisory Committee's report. In paragraph 5, the Advisory Committee referred to information which it had received in 1978 concerning the capacity of the Centre's central processing unit and to certain changes which had taken place since then. It recommended that any future plans to change the configuration of the central processing unit should be reported to the General Assembly at a sufficiently early date to enable the Assembly to pronounce itself on the proposals. The second comment, which was mentioned in paragraph 9 of the report, concerned ad hoc requests made to the Centre from time to time by participating organizations. In the Advisory Committee's view, any such requests made after the budget of the Centre had been approved should not impose financial liabilities on the other participants. The Advisory Committee also considered that that question appeared to have been settled satisfactorily but it would continue to follow it closely.

15. Mr. MAJOLI (Italy) said that he was quite prepared to approve the recommendation of the Advisory Committee on the budget estimates for the Centre, but he wished to dwell on two points raised in its report (A/33/7/Add.6). In the first place, as stated in paragraph 5, it was essential that the General Assembly should be warned well in advance of the purchase of any major equipment, even if it was necessary to take into account the commercial imperatives of delays in delivery. Secondly, the idea of a "ceiling" mentioned in paragraph 9 should be retained since it was helpful to be able to have a fixed point of reference. Similarly, it was clear that the participating organizations which asked the Centre for ad hoc services once the Centre's budget had been approved should themselves defray the costs out of their regular budgetary resources.

16. The CHAIRMAN said that the Advisory Committee, in a report to the General Assembly at its thirty-first session (A/31/255), had recommended that the Centre's budget should be submitted to the General Assembly for consideration and approval.

17. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) observed that, in its report (A/33/7/Add.6), the Advisory Committee did not recommend an increase of \$1,947,000 in the budgetary estimates of the International Computing Centre for 1979, as a too rapid reading of paragraph 8 might lead one to think. The Centre had 12 participating organizations

and the United Nations contribution for 1979, which was indeed \$1,947,000, had already been taken into account in the programme budget for 1978-1979. The question of the adjustments necessitated by variations in exchange rates would be dealt with when the Secretary-General came to submit his performance report.

18. Mr. PIRSON (Belgium) shared the views of the representative of Italy regarding the need to report to the General Assembly any plans to change the configuration of the central processing unit at a sufficiently early date to enable the Assembly to pronounce itself on them. He fully agreed with the observations made by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions in its report A/33/7/Add.6.

19. His delegation would like to know what procedure had been followed in purchasing the 3033 system referred to in paragraph 4 of the Advisory Committee's report. It was to be hoped that that decision had been preceded by consultations and the Committee would no doubt like to know what organizations had participated in those consultations. The Inter-Organization Board for Information Systems and Related Activities, for example, had no doubt been questioned on the subject.

20. Mr. SAFRONCHUK (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that on reading the report of the Secretary-General on the 1979 budget estimates for the International Computing Centre (A/C.5/33/22), it was clear that the Secretariat, when it had decided to purchase the very expensive 3033 system, had not acted on instructions from the General Assembly. The Advisory Committee had, at the thirty-second session, deemed that a purchase of that importance should be decided on by the General Assembly. His delegation therefore shared the concern expressed by the Belgian and Italian delegations in the face of a situation which appeared to be a flagrant violation of the Financial Rules of the United Nations. It would like clarification on that point.

21. His delegation was categorically opposed to the authorization of additional appropriations during the current biennium and, in general, it was opposed to any excessive increase in staff. For that reason it could not agree to the requests for additional appropriations submitted by the Secretary-General to offset variations in rates of exchange to which, according to the report of the Advisory Committee, almost half the increase requested was attributable. Expenditure of that kind should be covered by savings and readjustments within the approved budget.

22. Mr. SLAUGHTER (Director, Electronic Data Processing and Information Systems Service), referring to the concern expressed by various delegations, said that the 3033 system referred to in the reports before the Committee had not been purchased, but leased on a rather long term. As for the consultations which had preceded the decision to lease the system, the 11 other organizations participating in the financing of the International Computing Centre had, of course, been consulted. The installation of the new system did not necessarily involve additional expenditure for the United Nations, but might on the contrary be reflected in a reduction in costs as a result of using a more powerful machine.

(Mr. Slaughter)

Lastly, the Advisory Committee itself stated in paragraph 9 of its report (A/33/7/Add.6) that the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions had examined the 1979 budget estimates for the Centre and had been informed of the probable usage of its services by the participating organizations. The Director of the Centre had, moreover, stated that the Consultative Committee on Administrative Questions would be kept informed of any improvement in equipment.

23. Mr. PIRSON (Belgium) expressed surprise at the fact that the French text of the report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (A/33/7/Add.6) made repeated references in paragraph 5 to "l'achat" (the purchase) of the 3033 system; he observed that such references disagreed with the explanations just given by the Director of the Electronic Data Processing and Information Systems Service.

24. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman, Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) said that there must have been an error in translation, since the Advisory Committee, in using the English word "acquire" in the original English text, had not meant to suggest that the material in question had been purchased.

25. Mr. SCALABRE (France) proposed that the controversial term mentioned by the Belgian delegation should be replaced in the French text by the words "se procurer", which could cover the concept of acquisition.

26. Mr. FALL (Senegal) proposed simply using the word "louer" (to lease).

27. Mr. SAFRONCHUK (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that the same difficulty existed in the Russian version.

28. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman, Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) proposed that the English version should also be amended in order to preclude any misunderstanding.

29. The CHAIRMAN announced that a corrigendum to document A/33/7/Add.6 taking account of the comments of the various delegations would be issued. Now that that point had been cleared up, he invited the Committee to take a decision on the various requests by the Secretary-General which were now before it.

30. He suggested that the Committee should recommend the General Assembly to appropriate an additional amount of \$34,000 under section 22G of the programme budget for the biennium 1978-1979 and to include in section 25F (staff assessment) an amount of \$5,500 which would be offset by the inclusion of an equivalent amount under income section 1.

31. The suggestion was adopted by 71 votes to 10, with 2 abstentions.

32. The CHAIRMAN suggested that the Committee should recommend the General Assembly to approve the appropriation of an additional \$282,900 under section 22F of the programme budget for the biennium 1978-1979.

33. The suggestion was adopted by 71 votes to 10, with 2 abstentions.

34. The CHAIRMAN suggested that the Committee should adopt the recommendation of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions to approve an estimated expenditure of \$5,068,900 for 1979 for the International Computing Centre.

35. The suggestion was adopted by 71 votes to 10, with 2 abstentions.

36. Mr. PIRSON (Belgium), speaking in explanation of vote, said that although his delegation had voted for the various recommendations, it retained its reservations concerning the exchange rate of 1.63 Swiss francs to the dollar which had been used as a basis for the calculation.

AGENDA ITEM 107: PATTERN OF CONFERENCES: REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON CONFERENCES (continued) (A/33/32, vol. I and II; A/C.5/33/L.12, L.13 and L.14)

37. Mr. CARRASCO (Chile) recalled that his country was a member of the Committee on Conferences and had always recognized the importance of that Committee's work. However, it considered it essential that the Committee on Conferences should be able to count on the co-operation of all Member States. All the questions it considered affected the activities of the United Nations, which could be carried out only by applying the recommendations of the Committee on Conferences and making the best possible use of the material and human resources and means available.

38. His delegation was particularly concerned about the problem of the control and limitation of documentation, which had recently grown worse. In its report (A/33/32, vol. I and II) the Committee on Conferences proposed some solutions in that connexion, such as the limit of 32 pages imposed on the report to the Economic and Social Council, a recommendation which his delegation fully endorsed.

39. Similarly, his delegation approved of the present rules governing the preparation of summary records of meetings, which were indispensable working documents, particularly for small delegations, such as those of the developing countries.

40. Small delegations also had to face the problem of simultaneous meetings, held either at New York or at Geneva. One solution would be to ensure closer collaboration and co-ordination with the Economic and Social Council.

41. His delegation wished to commend the Department of Conference Services for its constant efforts in connexion with the utilization of available resources for conference services.

(Mr. Carrasco, Chile)

42. The terms of reference of the Committee on Conferences were defined in General Assembly resolution 32/72, but, as was stated in that Committee's own report, those terms of reference should be made more precise and strengthened. On the whole, the report was very precise and contained a number of very useful recommendations which would help to improve the work of the Organization and make it more efficient. His delegation also approved of draft resolutions I and II contained in volume II of the report and was studying with interest the two draft decisions (A/C.5/33/L.13 and L.14) and the draft amendment (A/C.5/33/L.12) now before the Fifth Committee.

43. Mr. GOSS (Australia), referring to a comment made by the representative of Uganda at the Committee's 26th meeting, said that it did not seem advantageous to him to issue in a single volume the report of the Committee on Conferences (A/33/32, vol. I and II). It might perhaps be better to have volume II deal with statistics on meetings and to include in volume I the recommendations and accompanying considerations.

44. The Committee on Conferences recalled some seemingly obvious principles on how meetings should be arranged and run, but it was useful that they should be reaffirmed and that the Fifth Committee and the General Assembly should endorse them as being important. It was indicated, for example, that the Special Political Committee had lost more time than it had spent in meetings. An amount of time equal to one third of the total time spent in meetings had been lost, and more than one third of the time lost had had to be made up by overtime (A/33/32, vol. I, annex VII). In contrast, an example of how meetings could be run effectively was shown by the Committee on Conferences itself: its documents were timely and brief, and it had set out a programme of work for its next session.

45. He confidently expected that the recommendations of the Committee on Conferences would be carried out. His delegation's desire to see the conference programme of the United Nations and other international bodies carried out effectively derived not only from a justifiable concern for seeing things properly done but also from the fear prompted by the proliferation of meetings. That proliferation was a great strain on the resources of all countries, not only financially but also in terms of personnel and time. It was, in fact, difficult to ensure high-level consideration of the issues and high-level involvement of people at the meetings. The result was that proposals received inadequate consideration and inadequate progress was achieved, so that the aims for which the meeting had been convened was frustrated.

46. His delegation wished to recall three principles which it considered essential for the planning of conferences. First, conferences should be convened only when needed. His delegation therefore welcomed proposals for detailed examination of the periodicity of conferences and for limiting the number of special conferences.

47. Secondly, conferences should be properly planned. For that, it was essential that documents should be issued in time and should not be too profuse. A long report or a long speech was often a sign that insufficient time had been spent in reflection.

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(Mr. Goss, Australia)

48. Lastly, conferences should be conducted effectively. It was irritating for people coming from half-way around the world to have to wait days or even weeks before the real work began. It was also irritating to gather hundreds of highly-paid people and have them wait an hour for a meeting to start. For that reason, his delegation endorsed all the proposals made by the Committee on Conferences urging greater adherence to the rules for the conduct of meetings. In particular, it endorsed draft resolution I of volume II, which called on all United Nations bodies to conclude their work within the time allotted to them and to review their work procedures so as to conform strictly to the guidelines for reducing wastage (para. 3). Recommendation 4, in vol. I, paragraph 94, of the same report, was also a good one; the Committee on Conferences asked the Secretariat to provide each United Nations body at the beginning of its session with concise information on its use of meeting time during the preceding session.

49. In 1979, the Committee on Conferences might submit an even more precise recommendation. It would be desirable to have available for every meeting a weekly report on time lost by late starting, early ending or cancellation of meetings. Such a solution was already being implemented, but the report in question was being submitted to the Bureau of each Committee, whereas the information in it should be read out to all members. The Committee on Conferences should consider recommending, as part of a draft resolution to be adopted at the thirty-fourth session of the General Assembly, the full institution of that proposal. Moreover, the final report of each body should record the separate amounts of time lost by late starting, early ending or cancellation of meetings, and also record the overtime worked.

50. One delegation had suggested that the Committee had not done all it should, and that seemed to be the Committee's own view. Instead of focusing on what the Committee on Conferences had not done, it would be better to endorse formally and support strongly its report and recommendations, which would make it possible to avoid the problems caused by the proliferation of conferences and the inadequate preparation and conduct of meetings. That would require a certain degree of restraint by delegations, whose attitudes tended to differ according to whether they were or were not interested in a conference which was subsequently cancelled. The Committee on Conferences should therefore study ways to ensure rational planning of the calendar of conferences and to avoid the convening of more conferences than could be handled.

51. Turning to draft amendment A/C.5/33/L.12, concerning the conference services which the United Nations provided to certain bodies, he recalled that the Committee on Conferences had dealt with that question in paragraphs 62-65 of its report, and observed that the reimbursement of those services would deprive the extrabudgetary bodies concerned of resources which could usefully be devoted to the implementation of their projects.

52. With regard to draft decision A/C.5/33/L.13, he considered that the idea of a quota system deserved consideration and that the Committee on Conferences could usefully devote some of its efforts to that question. However, the draft programme of work proposed by the Secretariat contained in annex I to volume I of the Committee's report showed that the question of measures to reduce the number of

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(Mr. Goss, Australia)

meetings of United Nations bodies during the year, included under the heading "Calendar of conferences", was to be considered in April and May. Those dates seemed sufficiently close and his delegation therefore proposed that the words "on a priority basis" in the third paragraph of draft decision A/C.5/33/L.13 should be deleted. It also proposed that the words "of the introduction" in the same paragraph should be deleted.

53. With regard to draft decision A/C.5/33/L.14, his delegation wondered whether it was advisable to reproduce therein many recommendations of the Committee on Conferences. The recommendations in volume II of the Committee's report, which in its view were the most important, did not have the place they deserved in the draft decision in question. That draft therefore raised too many points, especially since the recommendations of the Committee on Conferences would in any event be adopted as a whole when the Fifth Committee approved the report (A/33/32 (vol. I and II)).

54. Mr. ANDERSSON (Sweden) said the recommendations of the Committee on Conferences would certainly make it possible to improve the situation with regard to the number of conferences and meetings held each year and they should therefore be implemented as soon as possible. His delegation would like the Committee on Conferences and the Economic and Social Council to co-operate more closely in order to improve the calendar of meetings. The Committee on Conferences proposed several solutions, for example that documents should be distributed on time, that they should correspond to the needs of delegations and that they should be concise and preferably indicate the measures to be taken. His delegation supported the recommendations of the Committee on Conferences and hoped that that Committee would pursue its efforts to improve the situation even further.

55. Mr. STUART (United Kingdom), referring to draft decision A/C.5/33/L.12 proposed by the Soviet delegation and concerning an amendment to draft resolution I contained in volume II of document A/33/32, said the question of reimbursement by extrabudgetary bodies of budgetary expenditures of the United Nations on conference services provided to those bodies would be considered by the Fifth Committee in connexion with agenda item 100, and there was consequently no need to cover it in connexion with item 107. His delegation therefore hoped that the Soviet delegation would withdraw its amendment.

56. Mr. CUNNINGHAM (United States of America), introducing draft decision A/C.5/33/L.14 proposed by his delegation, said that draft related to the recommendations of the Committee on Conferences which his delegation considered the most important, namely recommendations 3, 5, 6 and 7 contained in document A/33/32. Following informal consultations with other delegations, his delegation wished to make four changes in the text of its draft decision. First, in paragraph 1, the words "Calls upon" could be replaced by the word "requests". Second, in paragraph 3, the expression "interpretation services" could be completed as follows: "necessary interpretation and other services normally provided".

(Mr. Cunningham, United States)

Third, the following words could be added at the end of paragraph 5: "and to report the results to the General Assembly at its thirty-fourth session through the Committee on Conferences". Fourth, the first part of paragraph 6 could be revised to read: "Instructs the Committee on Conferences, in establishing calendars of conferences and meetings, in the light of the concerns and priorities of the international community, to take into account ..."

57. Mr. LAHLOU (Morocco) said he approved of many aspects of draft decision A/C.5/33/L.14 submitted by the United States delegation. At a later stage he would also wish to comment on the two draft resolutions of the Committee on Conferences.

58. The CHAIRMAN said he proposed to give the floor to Mr. Oudovenko, Director of the Interpretation and Meetings Division of the Department of Conference Services and to Mr. Diamond, representative of the Budget Division, so that he might make certain comments, to which delegations could reply as necessary.

59. Mr. OUDOVENKO (Director, Interpretation and Meetings Division) said that if the increasing level of meeting activities in all the areas of activity of the Organization posed serious problems for many countries, particularly the smaller ones, the Department of Conference Services faced difficulties that were all the greater because it was necessary to cope with the demands of a heavy, multifaceted meeting schedule. It was for that reason that greater attention had been paid in the previous year to establishing a more even distribution of the various conferences and meetings throughout the entire year, including the months of January, July and August, in order to avoid the overlapping of meetings. For example, at the end of August and the beginning of September 1978 there had been such an overlap of meetings and conferences that the Department of Conference Services had been obliged to recruit many interpreters to provide interpretation in all the official languages. Furthermore, the number of conference rooms was limited, especially since some rooms were being reconstructed and were therefore unavailable.

60. The Department of Conference Services would nevertheless continue its efforts, in close co-operation with delegations, the bodies concerned and other Secretariat services, to ensure that all necessary services were provided on time.

61. In the final analysis, the calendar of conferences was established in accordance with the decisions of the General Assembly, and the Secretariat had done its best thus far to provide all the necessary services. Since the previous year, its action in that connexion had taken three forms. First, overprogramming, which had made it possible to effect savings and to recruit fewer free-lance interpreters. Second, the flexible and intensive use of conference rooms, which had made it possible to hold all the meetings scheduled for 1978 despite the fact that three conference rooms could not be used owing to reconstruction. Third, the utilization of productivity reserves in the deployment of the staff of the Organization, particularly interpreters.

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(Mr. Oudovenko)

62. With regard to the thirty-third session of the General Assembly, the number of working groups of the whole was much higher than in previous years. For that reason it might be difficult to satisfy all requests, especially in November. The budget estimates presented to the General Assembly the previous year had not foreseen that conference services would have to be provided for more working groups established by the Main Committees. However, it should be noted that the scope of that problem could be reduced to some extent if the calendar of meetings at the current session of the General Assembly was more scrupulously adhered to. In that regard, it was to be hoped that the implementation of the recommendations of the Committee on Conferences, if adopted by the General Assembly, would permit a better utilization of available resources. The Secretariat would pursue its policy to that end and would provide the Committee on Conferences with all necessary assistance.

63. In reply to the question put by the representative of Japan, he said that the representative of the Budget Division would probably be able to explain in detail the extent of reimbursement of conference services by organizations financed from extrabudgetary and voluntary contributions. Replying to a question raised by the New Zealand representative, he said that no other body in the United Nations system performed functions which might duplicate those of the Committee on Conferences, but that interagency exchanges of views and meetings took place because the Secretariat felt that conference servicing problems were common to all organizations in the United Nations system. Lastly, replying to the representative of the Philippines, who had asked for the cost of a single page of documentation, he pointed out that the reproduction, distribution and translation in six languages of a single page of documentation cost approximately \$300, and would be higher if the text was of a more complex nature and special terminology services were required.

64. Mr. DIAMOND (Budget Division) said he had some comments on the financial implications of the proposed USSR amendment to draft resolution I of document A/33/32. The Committee on Conferences had been informed in April 1978 of the number of meetings held at Headquarters and Geneva by the governing organs, subsidiary organs and seminars of UNDP, UNICEF, UNITAR, the United Nations Special Fund and other organizations. Although they were financed from extrabudgetary funds and voluntary contributions, they were part of the subsidiary machinery of the General Assembly and should be treated as such. Accordingly, the Secretariat did not ask them to reimburse the costs of the conference services rendered.

65. Of the 289 meetings held at Headquarters and Geneva in 1977 by those bodies, 185 had required conference services. The cost of interpretation and précis-writing had amounted to a total of \$246,000 at 1977 rates, not including the costs of translation, revision, typing, reproduction and distribution of documents, and the portion of that sum chargeable to UNDP had amounted to \$193,000. For UNDP alone, the costs of translation and revision had amounted to \$490,000 in 1977. Those figures had been computed on the basis of full costing of services to be provided, that is, on the assumption that none of those services could be financed from existing resources budgeted for conference services.

66. Should the amendment be adopted, the Secretary-General would enter into consultations with the bodies concerned in order to determine an equitable basis on which the charges in question would be reimbursed. The effect of the amendment on the organizations concerned could not yet be accurately assessed, but the impact of those additional costs on their budgets were likely to be significant.
67. Mr. GARRIDO (Philippines) asked the Secretariat whether there was any agreement in existence under which the United Nations had undertaken to provide conference services to bodies such as UNDP and UNICEF at no charge.
68. Mr. HANNAH (New Zealand), reverting to the question he had asked concerning item 53 of the revised calendar of conferences and meetings for 1979 (annex I, vol. II of the report of the Committee on Conferences), inquired whether the Committee on Conferences was competent to decide where the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination should hold its nineteenth session.
69. The CHAIRMAN said that the Fifth Committee should proceed to take a decision on recommendations 1 to 19 of the report of the Committee on Conferences (A/33/32) and on the two draft resolutions under recommendation 20, amendment A/C.5/33/L.12, draft decision A/C.5/33/L.13 and draft decision A/C.5/33/L.14. He suggested that the Committee should decide first on recommendations 1 to 12 and 14 to 19 of the report of the Committee on Conferences, and then take up recommendation 13 separately since it dealt with the calendar of conferences and meetings.
70. Mr. IYER (India), supported by Mr. PEDERSEN (Canada), pointed out that the Committee could not at the same time approve recommendations and adopt a draft resolution which merely "took note" of those recommendations. That contradiction could be resolved by rewording the end of paragraph 1 of draft resolution I so that it would read: "... and approves the recommendations contained therein;".
71. Mr. SERBANESCU (Romania) suggested seeking the advice of the Chairman of the Committee on Conferences concerning the procedure to be followed.
- 71A. Following an exchange of views in which Mr. HANNAH (New Zealand), Mr. THOMAS (Trinidad and Tobago), Mr. LAHLOU (Morocco), Mr. SERRANO AVILA (Cuba), Mr. GOSS (Australia) and Mr. STEVENS (Sierra Leone) took part, Mr. ANVAR (Secretary of the Committee) said that all the procedures suggested were valid and the Fifth Committee should simply indicate its approval or disapproval of the recommendations contained in the report of the Committee on Conferences.
72. Mr. EL AYADHI (Tunisia) supported the procedure suggested by the Chairman.
73. Mr. SAFRONCHUK (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that there was no need to adopt the recommendations separately; it was sufficient to amend paragraph 1 of draft resolution I as proposed. Then, by adopting the draft resolution, the Committee would automatically have adopted the recommendations.
74. On the other hand, the other texts should be dealt with separately because they introduced new elements. The draft decision submitted by the Soviet delegation

(Mr. Safronchuk, USSR)

(A/C.5/33/L.13) reverted to an important question which had been considered, but had not been the subject of a recommendation in the Committee's report, namely, the question of a quota system. The amendment submitted by the Soviet delegation (A/C.5/33/L.12) completed draft resolution I, but it was important for it to be put to the vote before the draft resolution. His delegation proposed that the Fifth Committee should proceed in that order.

75. Mr. GOSS (Australia), supported by Mr. PIRSON (Belgium), thought that the Committee should proceed as the Soviet representative had suggested.

76. Mr. BUJ FLORES (Mexico) recalled his proposal to add the words "with satisfaction" after the words "Takes note" at the beginning of paragraph 1 of draft resolution I.

77. Mr. PEDERSEN (Canada) proposed that the Chairman of the Committee on Conferences be consulted.

78. Mr. OKEYO (Chairman of the Committee on Conferences) also endorsed the procedure suggested by the Soviet delegation. The Fifth Committee should approve the whole set of recommendations contained in the report of the Committee on Conferences, amend the wording of paragraph 1 of draft resolution I, adopt that draft resolution, then draft resolution II, and lastly, take a decision on the amendment and draft decisions.

79. The CHAIRMAN read out paragraph 1 of draft resolution I, as it would be put to the vote: "Takes note with satisfaction of the report of the Committee on Conferences established by its resolution 3351 (XXIX) and retained by its resolution 32/72, and approves the recommendations contained therein;". The Committee would then proceed to vote on the amendment submitted by the Soviet delegation (A/C.5/33/L.12).

80. Mr. CUNNINGHAM (United States of America) requested that, in the light of the details given by the representative of the Budget Division, the author of amendment A/C.5/33/L.12 to draft resolution I should clarify what he meant by "extrabudgetary bodies" and whether they should be regarded as subsidiary organs. He sought his opinion and that of the Secretariat concerning the possible effect of adopting the amendment on the United Nations method of work.

81. Mr. GARRIDO (Philippines) said that the question put by the United States representative was germane and if bodies financed from extrabudgetary funds were actually subsidiary organs, he withdrew his earlier question on the subject.

82. Mr. LEMP (Federal Republic of Germany) asked whether the Soviet delegation was maintaining amendment A/C.5/33/L.12, because he had understood that it would not press it to a vote if the Committee felt that it would be better to come back to the question in connexion with the agenda item on services provided by the United Nations for activities financed from extrabudgetary funds.

83. The CHAIRMAN said it was for the Committee to decide the matter.