



SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 37th 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 101: MEDIUM-TERM PLAN FOR THE PERIOD 1980-1983 (continued) (A/33/6, parts 1-30, A/33/38, A/33/345)

1. Mr. SERBANESCU (Romania) expressed his delegation's frustration over the conditions in which the Fifth Committee had to consider the medium-term plan for 1980-1983. The plan itself was lengthy and complex, and a number of technical and other difficulties had prevented CPC and the Economic and Social Council from conducting a full review of its contents. In the circumstances, it was difficult for the Committee to form a sound judgement, not to mention take a decision on the matter. Moreover, while it was the responsibility of the Fifth Committee to issue directives, it did not have the views of the other Main Committees of the General Assembly. Accordingly, it would have difficulty in deciding what course of action should be taken to rectify the abnormal state of affairs which existed, and he hoped that a solution would emerge from the present discussion.
2. The medium-term planning exercise was intended to serve a variety of purposes. In practical terms, it should help to identify directions and objectives in the various sectors of activity, and the ways and means to be employed to attain those objectives, not only by the United Nations but by the system as a whole. The medium-term plan should also provide an overview of all the resources which were available or which were expected to become available within the system. On the basis of such data, priorities and time-limits should be set and activities should be co-ordinated in order to avoid overlapping. Completed projects should be identified and the resources thereby released put to good use. Medium-term planning should, moreover, be an exercise in self-discipline for the Secretariat, which could, in the process, gain a better understanding of the inner workings of the Organization's activities, identify ways of increasing their effectiveness and uncover possibilities for the integrated management of different types of activities.
3. Measured against those criteria, the medium-term plan submitted by the Secretary-General was unsatisfactory. Apart from its inordinate length, the plan was so arcane that only a specialist would be able to use it properly. The distribution of tasks among the various parts of the system was not always clear, and that hindered system-wide planning. Time-limits were rarely, if ever, given for subprogrammes, and the descriptions of "ongoing" activities were shrouded in generalities, while in virtually no case were past activities analysed or evaluated. Obviously, in the circumstances, the Fifth Committee's review of the plan could be little more than perfunctory and procedural.
4. His delegation noted with satisfaction the intention of CPC to make a serious in-depth study of the planning and programming process and hoped, in that connexion, that a way would be found to elicit comprehensive and standardized replies from the secretariats of the United Nations and the specialized agencies.
5. His delegation agreed with the Chairman of CPC that the introduction to the medium-term plan, entitled "Problems and strategies of the United Nations in the

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(Mr. Serbanescu, Romania)

medium-term future" was entirely unsatisfactory in that it was primarily descriptive and was not binding on the Secretariat. It endorsed the recommendation of CPC that the introduction to the medium-term plan should take the form of an overview of the activities of the Organization prepared under the authority of the Secretary-General by the Director-General for International Economic Co-operation and Development. The medium-term plan should contain information relating to the activities of the system as a whole in order to provide a comprehensive picture. When preparing documentation for the forthcoming session of CPC, the Secretariat and JIU should take particularly into account the suggestions made in the Advisory Committee's report (A/33/345).

6. In carrying out the delicate and complex task of setting priorities, CPC currently used a method involving relative real growth rates. Such a procedure for setting priorities for United Nations activities was rather unsophisticated, not to say subjective and even arbitrary. Growth rates for activities should be decided on by the competent Main Committees of the Assembly, and it was inconceivable that those Committees should not consider the relevant documentation, including the report of CPC. Assurances had been given that a similar situation would not recur in future, but a specific decision should be taken by the Fifth Committee to make certain that it did not.

7. In determining growth rates, account should be taken of programmes already carried out, similar programmes being executed by other organizations of the system and, especially, the scope and seriousness of unsolved problems, as well as their impact at the international level. The problem was not a simple one, and the solutions adopted should be tried on an experimental basis and revised in the light of the subsequent experience.

8. The evaluation of activities and programmes should go hand in hand with programming and planning. CPC should therefore include evaluation in its future work programme. The evaluation could be done in stages, beginning with major departments and activities and the most urgent and important tasks. While limited and piecemeal efforts at evaluation had already been made by CPC, his delegation had in mind a major exercise aimed at contributing to and complementing the programming and planning process.

9. Mr. MAJOLI (Italy) said that, in view of the fact that the session was rapidly drawing to a close and in the light of comments made by other delegations, it might be best to admit that a detailed consideration of the medium-term plan at the current session was virtually impossible. A proper consideration of the medium-term plan would require the Fifth Committee to scrutinize the activities contained in it and ascertain the degree to which they corresponded to the resolutions adopted by the General Assembly. There was, however, a general feeling that the plan could be accepted only as a broad framework that would not be binding on the Secretary-General, to be used by the latter as a basis for preparing the budget proposals for the biennium 1980-1981.

10. The planning process in the United Nations, including efforts to eliminate marginal activities, was still in its early stages, and his delegation welcomed

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(Mr. Majoli, Italy)

the intention of CPC to make a detailed study of the planning process with a view to increasing the usefulness of future medium-term plans to the Secretariat and Member States alike.

11. His delegation agreed that future plans should include the financial information requested by the Advisory Committee in paragraph 9 of its report (A/33/345). Much disapproval had been expressed over the format of the medium-term plan, and future plans should provide a concise yet comprehensive overview of the activities of the Organization; while delegations interested in more detailed information regarding individual programmes should be able to contact the departments concerned directly. Pending the examination of the plan by the Economic and Social Council and the study of the planning process to be carried out by CPC, the best course was for the Fifth Committee to accept the proposed medium-term plan simply as a reference document which provided flexible guidelines for the preparation of the budget proposals for the next biennium.

12. Mr. KOTHARI (India) said that, in considering the direction which United Nations activities should take over the long term and the resources required to implement those activities, the first question which had to be faced was that of budgetary growth. The growth in the United Nations budget was more apparent than real, since real growth amounted to barely 2 per cent of the total. The expansion of the budget in monetary terms was due primarily to the impact of inflation and currency fluctuations. It was essential, therefore, to avoid taking a negative approach that might result in a reduction of resources in real terms, and hence in the Organization's activities in areas of crucial importance. The developing countries, in particular, could ill afford to have the expansion of those activities curtailed and his delegation was, therefore, opposed to any attempt to place a ceiling on budgetary growth. International co-operation should be seen as a means of fulfilling human needs and solving the long-term problem of a more equitable distribution and utilization of resources.

13. The task of assigning relative priorities to individual programmes was not a simple one, and the criteria to be used for that purpose were still not precisely defined. It was difficult, if not impossible, to lay down quantitative criteria for the setting of priorities. Quite often growth in a particular activity could be justified on other than purely economic grounds, because the economic impact of some activities could be felt only in the long term. The Secretary-General should adhere closely to the recommendations of the General Assembly with regard to growth rates when submitting his budget proposals to the next session. It was gratifying that many programmes which were of major concern to developing countries had been assigned satisfactory growth rates; however, even those growth rates could be considered arbitrary when viewed in the light of the recommendations of substantive bodies. Unless there was full integration of the programming and budgetary processes and complete involvement of the substantive bodies in those processes, inadequate planning would continue to plague the system.

14. A recent development of major significance was the phenomenal increase in

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extrabudgetary sources of financing, which had obvious implications for planning and programming. More importantly, however, that form of financing impinged on the obligation which Member States had assumed under Article 17, paragraph 2, of the Charter to contribute to the financing of the activities of the Organization on the basis of a scale of assessments drawn up by the General Assembly. In the early years of the United Nations no attempt had been made by any Member State to draw an arbitrary distinction between activities which could be financed from the regular budget and those which must be financed from extrabudgetary resources. The technical co-operation programme had automatically been financed under the regular budget and continued to be so financed until the early 1960s. The attempts in recent years to confine the regular budget to the financing of certain types of activities were totally arbitrary and at variance with the provisions of the Charter. Those attempts, moreover, diluted the universal character of the Organization and gave rise to a host of problems relating to planning and programming. In that connexion, he noted with deep disappointment that the Congress of the United States, a country which had always been in favour of financing at least a part of technical co-operation activity from the regular budget, wished to restrain the United States Government from financing the technical co-operation activities of any of the organizations of the United Nations system through its assessed contributions. Recent statements by President Carter had been reassuring, and it was to be hoped that the United States Congress could be persuaded to reverse its stand on the matter.

15. Ideally, all United Nations activities should be financed from the regular budget and voluntary contributions should be regarded as supplementary resources. Yet, at present, the level of voluntary funds available to the United Nations was far greater than that of the regular budget. The uncertain nature of voluntary contributions, however, made it difficult for the Secretariat and intergovernmental bodies to plan adequately for the medium or long term. That was why General Assembly resolution 32/197 specifically emphasized the need to make voluntary funds available on a predictable, continuous and assured basis. Unfortunately, there were no grounds for hoping that that goal would be attained in the near future. Neither the agreed target of 0.7 per cent for official development assistance nor the goal of a real increase of 14 per cent in the resources of UNDP had been met, while the UNICEF Executive Board had earlier in the year rejected the Executive Director's proposal for a fixed annual target for increasing the resources of the Fund. Voluntary funds had grown at a minimal rate in real terms, and, moreover, bore no relation at all to the relative capacity of Member States to contribute. In the view of his delegation, an element of equitable burden-sharing should be introduced in respect of voluntary contributions and ideally, all contributions to the United Nations should be on an assessed, obligatory basis.

16. The system of voluntary contributions had another adverse effect: it encouraged the assignment of low growth-rates to those United Nations programmes

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which involved mixed financing, as it was maintained that substantial voluntary funds were likely to be available and must be taken into account before financing was increased under the regular budget. In view of the essential unpredictability of voluntary funds, that was tantamount to a freeze on the growth of the programme concerned. Accordingly, the financing of technical co-operation activities under the regular budget should be not only continued but greatly expanded. In that connexion, his delegation welcomed the initiative taken by some specialized agencies to finance for the first time some technical co-operation activities under their regular budgets. However, it urged the specialized agencies to ensure that such financing would not result in the curtailment of key non-operational activities which had a vital bearing on efforts to establish a new international economic order.

17. There was a need for strict accountability in the expenditure of extrabudgetary resources. The information in the medium-term plan regarding personnel financed from extrabudgetary sources was inadequate in that it did not permit the Fifth Committee to determine whether, for example, the qualifications of experts corresponded to their responsibilities or the manpower deployed was proportionate to the scope of a particular task.

18. Efforts at both the secretariat and the intergovernmental level to harmonize the budgets of the organizations of the system had resulted in some avoidance of duplication and some savings. However, the tendency so far had been to seek ways of avoiding overlapping and of reducing expenditure arbitrarily through the imposition of a ceiling on over-all resources rather than to devise methods of improving the quality and effectiveness of programmes. That negative approach had resulted in the sacrifice of some of the basic values and purposes for which the United Nations had been established.

19. The documents relating to the medium-term plan seemed to reveal a feeling of frustration, as though the authors were dismayed by their inability to assess programme content and impact in quantitative terms. Yet, surely, programme budgeting did not require a mechanical, quantitative approach. Above all, it should be remembered that the United Nations was a political ideal and that its activities - some of which might seem unrealistic to those impatient for instant results - would have a profound influence on the lives of future generations and the shape of the world of tomorrow. The medium-term plan must, therefore, be not only functional and efficient but also flexible, dynamic and forward-looking.

20. Mr. BRODODININGRAT (Indonesia) said that according to paragraph 3 (c) of General Assembly resolution 31/93, after approval by the General Assembly, the medium-term plan constituted the principal policy directive of the United Nations. The circumstances in which the Fifth Committee had to consider and eventually take a decision on the very important matter of the medium-term plan for the period 1980-1983 were unfavourable, given the procedural difficulty the Committee was facing. Being aware that it was virtually impossible for the General Assembly or the Fifth Committee to study the medium-term plan in depth, the General Assembly

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in paragraph 3 (b) of resolution 31/93 had stated that the medium-term plan would be considered by the General Assembly in the light of the comments and recommendations of the Economic and Social Council, CPC and the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions following the procedures adopted by the Economic and Social Council in its decision 139 (ORG-76) of 15 January 1976. Unfortunately, owing to extremely difficult working conditions, CPC had been unable to study the proposed medium-term plan in an appropriate manner, and at least eight chapters of the plan had been given only cursory consideration. There were still some difficult and delicate problems outstanding. Furthermore, in the absence of comments and recommendations from the Economic and Social Council, the burden was left entirely to the Fifth Committee. The dilemma faced by the Committee was whether to study the plan in depth, which was virtually impossible for lack of time, or to take a decision without adequate consideration. His delegation would not object to the solution which had been suggested, but, in view of the importance of the matter, it wished to express its concern.

21. The over-all planning process in the United Nations, including the medium-term planning exercise, was still far from satisfactory. His delegation welcomed the CPC decision to carry out an in-depth study of the planning process at its next session. For that purpose, some valuable inputs were already available, the most significant being the JIU report on programming and evaluation in the United Nations (A/33/226). That highly competent study had correctly identified the gaps in the United Nations programming system, and his delegation joined CPC in supporting the six JIU recommendations designed to fill the gaps and correct the defects in the present programming system.

22. Planning and programming in the United Nations was not merely a technical exercise, but certainly had political aspects as well. The medium-term plan, as the principal policy directive of the United Nations, was and should be a good translation of the wishes of Member States. As paragraph 3 (a) of resolution 31/93 had stated, the medium-term plan should be developed in accordance with legislative decisions. The verification as to how far the proposed programmes reflected legislative decisions constituted an important element in the planning process. In his delegation's view, that verification exercise would be best carried out by the relevant intergovernmental bodies. In that regard, the review mechanism of the medium-term plan deserved careful consideration. CPC had had a preliminary discussion on the problem of the role of intergovernmental bodies in the planning process at its eighteenth session. However, since a satisfactory answer had not yet been found, it might be necessary for CPC to give further consideration to the problem in the context of its proposed in-depth study. Due account should be given to the interests of all Member States.

23. Paragraph 9 of resolution 31/93 stressed the responsibility of the Secretary-General to draw to the attention of the competent intergovernmental bodies activities which were obsolete, of marginal usefulness or ineffective. Paragraph 11 (b) of the same resolution instructed CPC to determine which programmes, subprogrammes or programme elements were obsolete, of marginal usefulness or

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ineffective. It was regrettable that the Secretary-General had not yet satisfactorily fulfilled his obligation. On the other hand, however, the procedure by which the Secretary-General should fulfil that obligation was unclear. It was difficult to understand, in the framework of the medium-term planning exercise, how the Secretary-General could propose a future programme, subprogramme and programme element and at the same time indicate that the programme, subprogramme or programme element was obsolete, of marginal usefulness or ineffective. It was therefore questionable whether identification of such programmes or activities was a part of the medium-term planning exercise rather than an evaluation exercise. That question deserved further consideration by CPC in its in-depth study.

24. As far as the substance of the medium-term plan was concerned, his delegation had participated in the work of CPC at its eighteenth session and remained committed to the conclusions and recommendations appearing in the report (A/33/38). There was, however, the problem of duplication. Undoubtedly, one of the most important concerns in the medium-term planning exercise was co-ordination and the avoidance of duplication. CPC had identified lack of co-ordination among United Nations bodies and specialized agencies and between the United Nations and the regional commissions and had pointed to instances of duplication. However, his delegation regarded some of the alleged instances of duplication referred to in the report as well-justified programming. He was referring to the proposed UNCTAD programmes, which his delegation fully supported, because they faithfully reflected the bare minimum requirements of the developing countries in respect of trade and development.

25. With respect to the CPC recommendation on relative growth rates, he recognized that the table of relative growth rates represented a hard-achieved compromise. A slight modification would risk upsetting the entire compromise, and his delegation was prepared to accept that particular CPC recommendation as it stood. However, should there be any effort to modify the table, his delegation reserved the right also to make new proposals.

26. A matter of particular concern to his delegation was the proposed programme of decolonization in East Timor, mentioned in the chapter on trusteeship and decolonization in the draft medium-term plan (A/33/6(Part 7)). He reaffirmed his Government's position that the decolonization process in East Timor had been entirely completed on 17 July 1976, with the formal integration of that Territory into the Republic of Indonesia by a decision of the people of East Timor itself. The proposed programme of decolonization was a completely obsolete activity and thus constituted an unnecessary waste of resources. Therefore, his delegation would like to express its objection to the inclusion of that programme in the medium-term plan. Should the General Assembly approve the plan, his delegation would certainly express its reservations on that particular matter.

27. Mr. CUNNINGHAM (United States of America) said that programming and evaluation were integral parts of the planning process. The JIU report on evaluation in the United Nations system (A/33/225) contained a broad and thoughtful discussion of the problem and showed that a balanced approach had been used to arrive at practical proposals. The report did not pretend to be more than an excellent starting-point for a systematic development of a comprehensive evaluation operation within the United Nations. As such, it deserved the whole-hearted support of the General Assembly. The United States intended to continue its campaign to improve evaluation within the United Nations system and hoped that JIU and the Secretary-General would continue to work on the various elements identified in the report, which were prerequisites to the formulation of broad guidelines for internal evaluation systems that might be adopted by all the organizations of the United Nations system.

28. His delegation could understand for the moment the desire of some organizations to adopt a gradual approach. Evaluation, after all, was still in an embryonic stage in the system. Some impatience had been noted, however, within governing bodies and among donor countries. The so-called gradual approach to evaluation should not be taken as an excuse for procrastination. The organizations should pursue the development of evaluation procedures and systems with as much vigour and sincerity as possible.

29. The JIU report on the United Nations public administration and finance programme (A/33/227) had been discussed at length in CPC, where it had generated a considerable amount of comment. Some of the observations in the report had apparently been found displeasing by the Secretariat. Following CPC's consideration of the report, his delegation hoped that the anxieties aroused in the Secretariat had subsided. The report was to be commended for highlighting the weaknesses in the implementation of the public administration and finance programme, on its clear identification of the over-all problem and on its contribution to the improvement of evaluation methodology.

30. The JIU report on programming and evaluation in the United Nations (A/33/226) deserved the whole-hearted support of the Fifth Committee and the General Assembly. It also deserved positive acceptance and active implementation by the Secretary-General. It was refreshing to read a report on United Nations activities which rejected the assumption that United Nations operations were immutable and that they would enjoy an indefinite duration. The report was an important stock-taking of the United Nations, all the more valuable as it underscored certain indefensible and irresponsible features in United Nations programming. As one of the leading supporters of the United Nations, his Government could only applaud the JIU efforts to eliminate obscurity, obfuscation and vagueness, characteristics which seemed increasingly to permeate United Nations operations. His delegation joined other delegations in urging the Secretary-General to pursue with vigour and sincerity the changes suggested in the report, with special emphasis on the adoption of time-limited objectives and the development of precise indicators for increasing achievement.

(Mr. Cunningham, United States)

31. His Government attached crucial importance to the content of the medium-term plan and to the planning process at the United Nations. His delegation realized that serious problems existed in the medium-term plan and had already made criticisms, comments and suggestions in the course of CPC's consideration of each part of the plan. Although the United States had participated in the consensus adoption of the draft report by CPC, it had expressed reservations about many features of the plan and about some portions of the report, including the table of relative growth rates. The plan was consistently lacking in quality, as was reflected in its presentation of vague, marginal or dubious programmes. It was poorly drafted and therefore difficult to read, sometimes to the point of obscurity. Its excessive length stemmed from verbiage rather than necessary explanation of details and it would certainly have benefited by being shortened. All too frequently, the changes recommended by intergovernmental bodies at various stages of the planning cycle had gone unheeded by the Secretariat. The result had been that CPC, then the Economic and Social Council and now the Fifth Committee had received exactly the same document, despite previous assurances by representatives of the Secretary-General that comments, criticisms and suggestions would at some stage be incorporated in the plan and that a revised version would be presented.

32. Those occurrences raised questions about the role of Member States in the United Nations planning process. Their role should be that of final arbiters approving programme activities and resource allocations proposed by the Secretary-General. To enable Member States to perform that role properly, the Secretary-General should prepare a viable plan and issue it in a timely fashion.

33. Complaints had been made in the Fifth Committee, the Economic and Social Council and CPC that medium-term plan documents had arrived very late for consideration by Member States. That situation could not be tolerated if Member States were to participate effectively in the planning process. Although delegations had been told that the lateness of the documents had been due to a variety of causes, such as reorganization of the Secretariat, misplaced stencils and late pouches, there were serious reasons to doubt that those factors were in fact to blame in all instances.

34. His delegation looked forward to the consideration of the planning process itself at the next session of CPC. A number of questions about that process should be examined and resolved in order to ensure the smooth and prompt delivery of United Nations programmes to the least developed nations, which needed them most. The issues which CPC should consider at its next session included ways to avoid the unanticipated difficulties which had handicapped the consideration of the medium-term plan in 1978. In framing United Nations planning procedure, his delegation had envisaged harmony and agreement between the different intergovernmental bodies at various levels in the planning process. That could mean, for example, that it was assumed that the Economic and Social Council would agree with the recommendations of CPC, that the Fifth Committee would endorse the views of the Council and that the General Assembly would approve the medium-term plan on the basis of the Council's prior consideration. His delegation noted, however, that the Council would give consideration to the policy implications of

(Mr. Cunningham, United States)

the present medium-term plan only under its agenda for 1979, though it had taken note of the conclusions and recommendations of CPC and transmitted the plan to the General Assembly with a view to facilitating the 1980-1981 programme budget planning process. An unusual situation had arisen in which one intergovernmental body, the Economic and Social Council, might eventually decide that there were serious policy deficiencies in the present medium-term plan, despite the fact that other intergovernmental bodies with membership drawn from many of the same nations had, after detailed consideration, found the same plan suitable as the basis for the next biennial budget. The United Nations must have a programme budget for 1980-1981, the Secretary-General needed the assurance that the medium-term plan provided an appropriate basis for planning the 1980-1981 biennial budget, and major changes in the general outline of the plan, in United Nations programmes or in the over-all allocation of resources should not delay the submission to the General Assembly of a programme budget for 1980-1981. Serious difficulties could arise when the roles and concerns of various intergovernmental bodies at different stages of the planning process overlapped. His delegation hoped that the planning process could be further defined to develop ways of avoiding such an impasse. It believed that it should be possible to avoid a recurrence of those difficulties.

35. A further potential difficulty arose when delegations attempting to reach a consensus were unable to agree on appropriate changes in a particular portion of the medium-term plan. Member States in CPC had been unable to reach agreement on the text of chapter 27 of the medium-term plan. The understanding reached was that the Secretary-General's proposals were totally inappropriate and did not reflect the views of Governments. That situation had caused serious difficulties for the Economic and Social Council in its discussion of the medium-term plan; it affected the Fifth Committee's consideration of the medium-term plan; and it might unfortunately create further difficulties. Several other problems had also affected the ability of Member States to enter into constructive informal negotiations, not only on the text of chapter 27, but on several other portions of the plan.

36. The problem of how the United Nations was to proceed when Member States had rejected portions of the Secretary-General's draft must also be resolved. One solution would be to require the Secretary-General to redraft the portion of the plan which had met with disfavour and have it submitted well in advance of the specific date when Member States would consider the revised text. Until the new draft text of the plan had been accepted by the intergovernmental body, the activities in question could proceed at the same budget level and with the same programme content as during the immediately preceding biennium. The new document should take into account all the comments, recommendations and criticisms made by delegations in the discussion of the chapter. Since his delegation regarded the medium-term plan as the Secretary-General's document containing his proposals alone, it would expect that when a new draft text was prepared it should reflect primarily the Secretary-General's views as to the best means of providing the United Nations programmes, taking into account existing resolutions and mandates. His delegation

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had confidence in the ability of the Secretariat to produce a new draft text in a reasonable period of time, even when the views of Member States had to be reconciled. In such cases, the Secretariat's primary concern should be the presentation of a workable, rational plan and not simply the views of one delegation or a group of delegations. The programmes contained in the plan should reflect what the Secretary-General considered to be the most efficient, effective and economical means of implementing the relevant legislative mandates.

37. His delegation assured the Secretary-General of its support in preserving his role of chief administrative officer and the prerogative to transfer, reassign or reallocate appropriations within a single budget section or department as he believed necessary to achieve the desired result. His delegation encouraged the Secretary-General to streamline programmes and to make changes in accordance with the various General Assembly resolutions, including resolution 32/197. It was the Secretary-General's duty to provide delegations with a sensible, reliable and attainable plan, and it was hoped that the preparation and presentation of the next medium-term plan would elicit commendation rather than fresh disappointment.

38. Mr. ANDERSSON (Sweden) said that it was obvious from the remarks of the Chairmen of the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination and of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, and from the statements made in the Economic and Social Council that many questions remained to be answered and many problems had to be solved in order to arrive at a meaningful medium-term plan which could be used as the framework for the preparation of the programme budget for the biennium 1980-1981. In its resolution 31/93 the General Assembly had determined what financial information should be provided in the medium-term plan, yet financial data such as the actual extrabudgetary expenditure for the preceding calendar year had not been provided and, as explained in chapter 3, paragraph 4, of the medium-term plan (A/33/6, Part 3), it had not been possible to provide estimates of the resources allocated or expended on related activities by other organs of the United Nations system. In addition, item d. had been omitted from the quotation of operative paragraph 3 (a) of General Assembly resolution 31/93 contained in paragraph 1 of the same chapter. In other words, the medium-term plan as presented by the Secretary-General did not distinguish itself by a very satisfactory level of compliance with the decision of the General Assembly.

39. In view of the delay in making the medium-term plan documents available and the limited number of copies distributed, his delegation wished to stress the importance of the timely issue of documents in order to give national authorities sufficient opportunity to study them. It was not surprising that the Economic and Social Council had found it necessary to postpone further consideration of the plan until one of its regular sessions in 1979. As the Chairman of CPC had pointed out when introducing that Committee's report (A/33/38), financial data on both the regular and extrabudgetary resources were essential in achieving the objectives laid down in General Assembly resolution 32/197. That requirement had also been recognized by the Advisory Committee in paragraph 7 of its report (A/33/345).

(Mr. Andersson, Sweden)

40. Though it did not completely rule out the possibility of a zero or negative growth rate, CPC had recommended growth rates for all programmes which left little room for any substantial increase in the relative growth rates of a great number of programmes unless others were cut or eliminated. Due consideration should be given to the matter to permit higher growth rates for priority programmes, and his delegation endorsed the view expressed in paragraph 376 of the CPC report (A/33/38) in that regard. The growth rates recommended by CPC for certain programmes might have to be revised in order to avoid mutually incompatible General Assembly decisions, as paragraph 18 of the report of the Advisory Committee (A/33/345) made clear. His delegation would be presenting further comments on specific programmes when the Committee examined the various parts of the medium-term plan.

41. His delegation shared the concern expressed with regard to the planning, programming and evaluation process and endorsed the improvements recommended in the relevant reports of the Joint Inspection Unit, particularly the urgent need for programme time-frames, built-in achievement indicators and evaluation methods. It was confident that the joint efforts of the appropriate organs of the United Nations system would in due course lead to satisfactory medium-term planning and programme budgeting. The proposed work programme of CPC, in particular the in-depth study of the planning process, would be an important contribution to those efforts.

42. Mr. ADEDEJI (Executive Secretary, Economic Commission for Africa) said that during the past three years, the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) had been taking a hard look at the direction and pace of Africa's development and economic growth and had come to the conclusion that the region could not hope to get anywhere in the 1980s by continuing to espouse concepts, policies and programmes which had brought it to a state where neither trade, aid, nor foreign investment seemed to be having any effect in attacking the twin problems of mass poverty and mass unemployment. It had become necessary to review the conventional diagnosis and prescription, the failure of which was revealed by the lack of progress of the least developed countries, most of which were located in the African region.

43. As far back as 1973, Member States had declared their rejection of the thesis that sustained development and economic growth could come from outside their socio-economic systems, but African Governments tended to be confused by the discussions and writings surrounding the new international economic order and well-meant advice from numerous sources. The Commission had therefore been engaged in clarifying matters and in translating concepts, policies and strategies into programmes and projects which met broad regional or multinational and national needs. That included not only technical inputs, but also dealing with the pervasiveness of enclaves, semi-enclaves and dysfunctional relations, which considerably impeded the functioning of the national socio-economy and curtailed the impact of over-all and sectoral planning. The Commission was therefore concerned with integrative planning and with the need to propose improvements in the information base for policy-making and planning. In addition, it was in the process of raising the technical level of its secretariat and rationalizing its machinery, as required under Economic and Social Council resolution 1978/74. Where the secretariat was concerned, the aim was to raise the technical competence of

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(Mr. Adedeji, Executive Secretary, ECA)

personnel through training at ECA and full-time attachments to field projects, to revitalize and extend interdivisional working arrangements, and to strengthen the multinational programming and operational centres (MULPOCs) and integrate their work programmes more tightly with those of substantive divisions. The rationalization involved extending the machinery for dealing with critical sectors, establishing mechanisms concerned with intersectoral questions, altering the methods of work of specialized technical bodies to enable them to deal continually with particular problems, and involving African experts and representatives of African Governments more intimately in programme and project design. In addition to the existing joint Industry and Agricultural Divisions, the Commission had entered into or was negotiating arrangements to co-operate with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and the International Maritime Consultative Organization.

44. In the context of its current activities, ECA was developing a programme of sectoral projects and institution-building in industry, and the project document for the Regional Centre for Engineering Design and Manufacturing had recently been approved by the Follow-up Committee of the Conference of Ministers of Industry. Future projects would cover metals, chemicals, building materials, and the building and construction, food, and forest products' industries.

45. In pursuance of the Freetown Declaration of African Ministers of Agriculture, FAO and ECA had recently submitted a regional food plan for Africa to a ministerial conference at Arusha. Details of the resource inputs from the United Nations had not yet been worked out, but it was clear that the resources currently available to the Agricultural Division in ECA would be grossly inadequate. It was the Commission's intention to put forward proposals for a substantial strengthening of its resources for the promotion of agriculture and food production to meet the expected food crisis.

46. As a result of the increasing recognition of technology as a major factor in development and economic growth, ECA had devised regional mechanisms to advance particular aspects of technology in Africa, such as the Regional Centre for Technology and the Regional Centre for Engineering Design and Manufacturing, but its unit of four staff members was far too small to promote institution-building of that kind and did not represent even the minimum of critical specialization required.

47. A recent intergovernmental regional meeting on the follow-up and implementation of the Mar del Plata Action Plan had drawn up a long-range work programme in the field of water resources development and had recommended that the staff of the Water Resources Unit should be considerably augmented in view of the importance of the evaluation, development, conservation and efficient use of water resources in Africa. Although the issue of resources of the sea had far-reaching implications for Africa, because of lack of posts, ECA had not been able to assist African Member States in that field.

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48. In the context of the studies on the role of the public sector in economic development requested under resolution 1978/60 of the Economic and Social Council, the Commission had begun to examine the potential role of public utilities and other public enterprises as intrasectoral pace-makers, promoters of co-operation across national frontiers, and organizers of technological research and development. It was trying to determine how public enterprise fitted in with the two new concepts of business institutions, namely the African multinational industrial corporation and the teaching company, and it would be obliged to seek at least a modest increase in resources to cover that new activity.

49. The activities of the African Regional Training and Research Centre for Women had so far been sustained by bilateral aid, but donor Governments and agencies were rightly insisting that it should develop a solid core of permanent staff financed from the regular budget so that bilateral funds could be devoted to specific field projects. Following an appraisal mission by representatives of the specialized agencies, bilateral donors and advisers from Member States, a request had been submitted for three additional posts for 1978-1979; the Commission would be requesting more posts for the biennium 1980-1981.

50. He stressed the importance ECA attached to the multinational programming and operational centres (MULPOCs) as a principal field arm for its operational activities. The dominance of the subsistence sector in most African economies, the small, fragmented national markets, under-utilization of resources, and excessive external orientation, combined to make economic co-operation indispensable for the rapid and self-reliant transformation of the African region. To achieve success in promoting multinational co-operation it was imperative that national development plans should be related meaningfully to subregional and regional programmes. The MULPOC machinery was intended to be the instrument for the mobilization of groups of African countries for collective action in the identification and implementation of a limited number of critical bilateral or multilateral projects and programmes over two year cycles. Currently MULPOCs were largely dependent on financial assistance from the United Nations Development Programme. It was necessary to build up their credibility in terms of practical results before Governments, particularly those of the least developed countries, could be expected to invest substantially in them. During that critical period resource reinforcement was needed.

51. Most of the Commission's work on transport and communications in the 1980s was expected to focus on the regional plan for the Transport and Communications Decade in Africa which was in the process of preparation. In a region the size of Africa, with its endowment of natural resources, potentially complementary economic zones and large number of small and fragile economies, the role of transport and communications was obvious. Close attention was being given to the advantages of implementing plans at the level of MULPOCs, with a view to promoting the development of inland surface intermodal networks in response to opportunities for complementarity in natural resources, production and trade. The guiding principle would be realism and flexibility but, whatever the approach adopted, the secretariat would need some reinforcement in the sections dealing with transport.

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telecommunications and postal services following the mid-1979 meeting of African ministers to adopt the plan, and the subsequent meeting of donors. There was an immediate need for specialists in inland waterways, coastal shipping development, the operation of intermodal systems, and transport cost analysis.

52. With regard to statistical and non-statistical information, accurate data on population, natural resources, agricultural output, the industrial sector and manpower were hard to come by, even if fairly full information was generally available on import and export trade, aid, foreign experts, cargo movements and the like. Assistance enabling Governments to improve or establish national data bases would make possible the expansion and enrichment of the regional data centre which ECA, with encouragement from the Organization of African Unity, proposed to establish at Addis Ababa. The Commission was receiving assistance from the International Development Research Centre of Canada in preparatory work on the project, and whilst it was expected that African Governments would make some investment in the development of their own data bases and data banks, and that bilateral assistance would be secured by the secretariat to implement the project at the regional level, resources would certainly be needed to engage staff to establish and operate the data bank at Addis Ababa.

53. The CHAIRMAN said that it was extremely useful and enlightening to have first-hand reports from the regional economic commissions in the course of discussion of the medium-term plan and he hoped that it would become a regular feature of the Committee's work.

AGENDA ITEM 111: REPORT OF THE INTERNATIONAL CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION (A/33/30 and Add.1; A/C.5/33/37) (continued)

54. Mr. MAJOLI (Italy) said that his delegation fully agreed with the Chairman of ICSC that the United Nations, like all employers, must give its workers, not only an adequate salary, but also a series of social benefits which contributed to the protection and betterment of the individual. At the same time, in the current atmosphere of financial stringency, where most Member States were adopting measures of austerity at the national level, it was obvious that similar austerity was required on the part of international organizations and their staff. It might be questioned whether the Noblemaire principle was still valid under current circumstances and whether ICSC should not make a general survey of the conditions in the civil services of Member States.

55. His delegation endorsed the view of the Chairman of the ICSC that there was plenty of scope for the control of expenditure on personnel so justifiably called for by Member States, and hoped that the appeal would be heeded by the Secretary-General and by all executive heads in the system. A proper utilization of staff would enhance the morale of staff members, and mobility in assignments would help

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them to feel that they belonged to a common system and to realize that the needs of developing countries were as great as the resources were scarce and it was therefore necessary to eliminate selfish attachment to privileges and to accept equitable conditions for all. The improvements in benefits which were being proposed by ICSC would cost the international community \$905,000 for the United Nations and \$6.6 million for the system as a whole during 1979 alone. The Commission had had to contend with the difficult problem of currency fluctuations; yet it had also faced that problem in 1977. Accordingly, it should have decided either to submit proposals for the protection of local currency values of benefits to the thirty-second session of the General Assembly when the programme budget for the current biennium was being considered, or to await the thirty-fourth session of the General Assembly, when they could be included in the programme budget for the 1980-1981 biennium. A question of principle was involved and the whole concept of biennial programme budgeting was at stake.

56. The proposal to establish an end-of-service grant would entail an increase in expenditure of \$2.1 million for the system as a whole. The suggested increase to nine of the number of years of service required to make a staff member eligible for the grant did not seem likely to quell the objections which had been raised to a similar proposal at the thirty-first session of the General Assembly. His delegation nevertheless felt that the proposal should be accepted, but only on the clear understanding that no staff member who reached the age entitling him to a regular pension would also be eligible for the new grant.

57. On the question of the repatriation grant, his delegation felt that the condition that the staff member should sign a declaration that he did not intend to remain permanently in the country of his last duty station was not acceptable because it would infringe the right of the individual to move freely from one place to another. If, having signed such a declaration, a person decided that he wished to return to the country of his last duty station, he could hardly be obliged either to stay in his home country for ever, or to repay the repatriation grant. Furthermore, it could be argued that a staff member wishing to retire to a distant part of a large country should be entitled to a similar type of grant. His delegation supported the recommendations concerning the education grant, because they favoured the unity of the family, which might otherwise be disrupted by financial considerations. It agreed with ICSC that the current age-limit of eligibility for the education grant (21 years) was adequate.

58. As to Professional salaries, his delegation appreciated the efforts of ICSC to create a grading system comparable to that used by the United States civil service, but believed that a review of the system of post adjustments was needed. The margin

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of 9.3 per cent by which United Nations salaries exceeded United States salaries was adequate under present circumstances and should not be increased. It was true that expatriate members of staff had initially to bear higher expenses than the citizens of the country in which they worked, but that disadvantage disappeared after a few years. With respect to the installation grant, his delegation felt that the proposed increase in the number of days' entitlement payable in locations outside Europe and North America might be excessive in some cases and too small in others. The very fact that it was currently found necessary to pay rental subsidies in some localities confirmed that view.

59. With regard to General Service salaries, his delegation believed that once a specialized agency had accepted the Statute of ICSC, it should comply with the ICSC recommendations, as endorsed by the General Assembly; otherwise the principles underlying the creation of ICSC would be put in jeopardy and the efforts of the Commission would be in vain. It hoped that the idea of the independence of some organizations would not obscure the paramount goal of maintaining the unity of the system as a whole, and avoiding differences which might arouse resentment among the staff.

60. His delegation was concerned about the increased costs that would be incurred by the organizations and the staff as a result of the likely increases in pensionable remuneration, but was confident that, after appropriate consultations between ICSC and the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Board, fair proposals would emerge.

61. Mr. SCHMIDT (Federal Republic of Germany) welcomed the information provided by ICSC in its report but considered that the size of the report could have been reduced somewhat if certain procedural details had been omitted.

62. Among the issues dealt with in the report, developments concerning salaries, particularly the protection which the post adjustment system afforded against currency fluctuations, were probably the most important. His delegation did not share the optimism expressed in paragraph 37 in that respect. It was disquieting that the report made no mention of the fact that at duty stations of countries with strong currencies the post-adjustment system had compensated staff members almost completely for the depreciation of the dollar. That was true of Geneva, where the net remuneration of Professional staff was now very much higher than in New York, although in 1971 it had been lower. His delegation therefore hoped that ICSC would examine the working of the post-adjustment system and consider how far it still reflected purchasing power relationships. It should not confine itself to a comparison between the United Nations and the United States civil service, since national civil service salary systems were not faced with such problems as currency fluctuations and differences in purchasing power.

(Mr. Schmidt, Federal Republic
of Germany)

63. On the question of pensionable remuneration, it was clear that currency fluctuations and the current post-adjustment system had exacerbated the problems faced by retired staff members. Since the post-adjustment was not pensionable, although it had become an essential element of salaries, the decrease in income after retirement was enormous. A review of the post-adjustment system might provide some relief in that respect, but the whole question of pensionable remuneration needed to be reconsidered. His Government was satisfied that ICSC and the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Board recognized the urgency of the problem, but had doubts about some of the ideas under consideration. There seemed to be a feeling that the post-adjustment system used to establish purchasing power relationships in relation to salaries could be used in determining pensions as well, but it could well be asked whether, if that system was inadequate for salaries, it was not even less suitable for pensions. It should be borne in mind that the major difference between the pension system and the salary system was that, while the latter was financed from the regular budget, the former was financed in part by contributions from staff members. Thus if pension levels varied according to differences in purchasing power, the discrepancies could be considered unjust by individual staff members with similar career histories. The greater the discrepancy between contributions and the actual pension received, the more problems would arise. The pension system was not so much a social security system as a commercial enterprise financed by contributions; that concept should not be abandoned lightly as it was a guarantee of the independence of international civil servants.

64. His Government was concerned about the difficulty of giving effect to the recommendations of ICSC, and deplored the fact that it had not been possible to prevent a deviation from the common system in the case of the International Labour Organisation, particularly as there was apparently scant justification for that deviation. It believed that next salary review in Geneva would provide an opportunity to harmonize General Service salaries, and it hoped that no further increases would be made in the salaries of ILO General Service staff without first consulting the ILO governing body.

65. His delegation could not support the renewed proposal for an end-of-service grant, since it had found no new arguments with which to overcome its earlier objections. Generally speaking, staff members should not be employed on fixed-term contracts for nine years or more; in such cases they should have permanent contracts in accordance with the concept of a career civil service. In any case, there was no reason why staff members on fixed-term contracts should receive large sums in the form of end-of-service grants, while those with permanent contracts received nothing. Moreover, the end-of-service grant did not exist in other international organizations.

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of Germany)

66. His delegation noted that, for the first time, it was proposed to extend to allowances the principle of making adjustments for currency fluctuations and felt that such a development needed to be considered very carefully. It had grave doubts about the criterion set forth in paragraph 152 of the Commission's report. While it could support the recommendation that the value of the education grant in local currency should be protected, it would hesitate to apply the same principle to the children's allowance, which was a flat amount and was unrelated to any specific expenditure.

67. Mr. AKASHI (Japan) said that ICSC had a vital function in advising the General Assembly on achieving better co-ordination in the United Nations system on questions of salary and other conditions of service of the staff. It had already contributed a great deal towards better co-ordination on an interagency basis, but his delegation was concerned by what the Chairman of the Commission had described as "separatist tendencies" and "yearnings for a greater degree of independence" in some of the agencies. Three recent developments appeared to constitute a challenge to the goal of system-wide co-ordination in salary allowances.

68. The first was the failure of the International Labour Organisation to comply with the ICSC recommendations, endorsed by the General Assembly at the thirty-second session, on the General Service salaries in Geneva. His delegation deeply regretted that development, and in view of the two contradictory opinions handed down by the United Nations Administrative Tribunal and the ILO Administrative Tribunal on the same subject, the time might have come for the General Assembly to ask the Secretary-General and his colleagues on the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination to study the feasibility of having a single administrative tribunal for the United Nations system as a whole.

69. The second development was the response of the Director-General of UNESCO to the ICSC recommendations on General Service salaries in Paris, which he had deemed "somewhat excessive". Since ICSC formulated its recommendations after full consideration of the facts and of the views expressed by both the administrations and the staff, it seemed unusual for an administration to disassociate itself from the conclusions reached by ICSC.

70. ICSC still had much to do in the realm of General Service salaries at different duty stations, including London, Montreal, New York and Rome, to say nothing of the need to re-examine the situation at Geneva. He hoped that the Fifth Committee would see fit to deplore separatist tendencies which undermined the authority of the Commission, and that it would reaffirm its unswerving support for the Commission, which was engaged in a difficult yet essential task.

(Mr. Akashi, Japan)

71. The third development was the action of WHO in parting from the other organizations concerning the end-of-service grant by introducing it as an interim measure in spite of the fact that the Assembly had not approved it at the thirty-second session. If at the current session the General Assembly adopted the revised recommendation of ICSC on the matter, he hoped that WHO would then align itself with the other organizations.

72. Turning to the question of grading equivalencies with the comparator national civil service and the possible modification of the post-adjustment system, he said that his delegation was satisfied that the Commission had carried out its work very thoroughly. Japan reserved its judgement as to whether 10 per cent was an adequate margin between the comparator national civil service and the United Nations system. It wished merely to take note of the fact that the margin had narrowed considerably over the years, and that there must be some margin to take account of expatriate and other special features of the international civil service. He trusted that the Commission would also keep under close review the question of which national civil service should constitute the comparator civil service, since the answer might have ceased to be as self-evident now as it once had been. His delegation agreed with the Commission that comparison should not mean that each particular benefit must necessarily be aligned between the United Nations and the comparator service, regardless of differences in the character of the two services.

73. In view of the unprecedented currency fluctuations confronting many duty stations, Japan appreciated the difficulties involved in establishing equity among staff, and in principle agreed with the Commission that the amounts of some of the allowances had to be adjusted to maintain their purchasing power in different countries. His delegation would agree to the proposed adjustments of the children's allowance, although it would have preferred an arrangement similar to what the Assembly had decided on for United Nations pensions, namely, that compensation for country-to-country differences in the cost of living were given limited recognition, falling short of full equality of purchasing power.

74. Currency fluctuations had also imposed considerable strain on the system of pensionable remuneration established by the General Assembly in resolution 1561 (XV). While some over-compensation or under-compensation was unavoidable in any system of global averaging, Japan was concerned by the too frequent upward changes of pensionable remuneration brought about by currency fluctuations, and was therefore pleased that the Commission was giving that matter urgent attention, in co-operation with the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Board. He looked forward to recommendations on the subject to the General Assembly in 1979. With respect to the pensionable remuneration of General Service staff, his delegation considered that it should be reviewed in the context of the prevailing local conditions, as in the case of salary, with a view to reducing the overlap with the pensions of the Professional category and above.

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75. Japan was prepared to accept the end-of-service grant, since eligibility had been considerably tightened in order to meet some of the doubts that had been expressed about the proposal at a previous session. A clear distinction must be made between a permanent contract and a fixed-term contract, although it was true that some fixed-term contracts acquired new features by virtue of their frequent renewals and longer duration.

76. With regard to the repatriation grant, Japan, while approving the present proposal of the Commission, considered that the proposed condition for payment of the grant, that the staff member should sign a declaration that he did not intend to remain permanently in the country of his last duty station, did not constitute a sufficient guarantee against its abuse.

77. As to the education grant, at the thirty-first session Japan had asked for a clearer presentation of the reasoning behind the grant. He appreciated the ample explanation in the Commission's report, and his delegation was prepared to agree to the inclusion of post-secondary studies in the country of the expatriate staff member's duty station. It understood that the value of the grant would be strictly linked to the currency in which the expenses were incurred.

78. His delegation regretted that it could not agree with the Commission's recommendation to extend the coverage of the assignment allowance from five to seven years. Such an extension, whose purpose was to keep field staff at a given duty station for a long period, was contrary to the desire expressed by many delegations in the Fifth Committee for greater mobility and rotation of staff between Headquarters and the field, as well as between different duty stations, in the interests of career development as well as system-wide cohesion. Subject to the foregoing comments, his delegation was prepared to accept the remaining recommendations of ICSC.

79. Japan attached importance to the Commission's endeavours to develop a common classification of occupational groups, better recruitment standards and policies, and career development. In 1976 the Commission had decided to review the question of language incentives "at the earliest opportunity", and he hoped that the Commission could turn its attention to the matter, since the anomaly represented by the existing practice required a critical examination from the standpoints of both equity and rationality.

80. Japan fully agreed with the view of the Chairman of the Commission that adequate remuneration was an indispensable element in the recruitment and retention of staff with the highest standards of efficiency, competence and integrity, and that the conditions of service offered by the United Nations were, on balance, not excessive (A/C.5/33/SR.32, para. 53). At the same time the organizations in the United Nations system should heed other comments of the Chairman of the Commission that they had in general more staff than their needs called for, and that new posts were still being established for programmes which could be carried out with the existing human resources (*ibid.*, para. 54). Japan appreciated that the sound development of the international civil service was essential to the future of world community, but wished to point out that it was indeed the existence of dead wood

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and redundancy in international world organizations which induced Member Governments to adopt a critical and sometimes even negative attitude on different aspects of staff emoluments. That might well mean that the minority of deserving staff were forced to make unfair sacrifices for overstaffing and under-utilization of resources in the secretariats, a phenomenon for which the Member Governments must share some of the responsibility with the Administrations. Japan considered that the comment made two years ago by the Commission (A/31/30, para. 47), that greater economies could be realized through improved management than through action in the area of salaries, was as valid today as it had been then.

81. Mr. EL-AYADHI (Tunisia) said that his delegation wished to associate itself with previous speakers who had paid a tribute to the ICSC for its work in harmonizing the United Nations system, particularly with respect to salaries. However, he had been surprised to note in paragraph 173 of the report that the Commission was renewing the recommendation it had made to the General Assembly at its thirty-first session on an end-of-service grant. Tunisia considered that the Fifth Committee had been right to reject that proposal in 1976, and he wished to ask the Chairman of the ICSC what legal right ICSC had to go against the views expressed by the Fifth Committee and reintroduce the proposal. He had two reasons for raising that point: the first was to avoid innovations that would lead to financial implications for the United Nations, and the second was to avoid establishing a precedent that might be used at the national level. He would accordingly like to hear a detailed explanation why ICSC had reconsidered the possibility of an end-of-service grant.

82. Mr. CUNNINGHAM (United States of America), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that he wished to refer to a comment made during the discussion of the medium-term plan. The United States delegation respected the right of each Member State to speak its mind frankly and fully in the United Nations. However, it hoped that all delegations, in making their views known, would observe those conventions that had become an accepted courtesy in the Organization. One such convention was that in almost all circumstances delegations would avoid explicit reference to events falling entirely within the domestic realm of other Member States. During the discussion on the medium-term plan a reference had been made to an action by the legislative branch of the United States Government. The history of the United States Government's position on that subject was too well-known to require recitation in the Fifth Committee. The same was true of the declared intention of the Chief Executive of the United States Government to seek the earliest possible reconsideration by the Congress of its recent action. Those well-known circumstances, however, had nothing to do with the agenda item then under discussion - the medium-term plan - nor would any reference to them be appropriate even if they were relevant to the debate.

83. Mr. KOTHARI (India), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that India had always extended courtesy to all nations and to all domestic institutions of Member States. He had believed that the decision of the United States Congress referred to, and the hope extended by the President of the United States concerning the contribution concerned, had a direct relation to important aspects of the medium-term plan and to technical co-operation activities. He hoped, and he was

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confident that other delegations also hoped, that in accordance with what the United States representative had said, and what the Chief Executive of the United States Government had previously said, the situation had become more hopeful.

84. Mr. SAFRONCHUK (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that on 15 November the Soviet Union had asked the Secretariat to submit at the end of the preceding week a revised programme of work for the remainder of the session, with information about which documents had been issued or would be issued before 25 November and which documents would be issued after that date. The Fifth Committee had already decided that documents issued after 25 November would not be considered at the present session. He asked the Secretariat when the revised programme of work would be available.

85. The CHAIRMAN said that he had been informed that the document was in preparation and would be available shortly.

86. Mr. THOMAS (Trinidad and Tobago) said he understood that on the following day the Committee would be considering recommendations by the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination, including recommendations relating to the Office of Public Information (OPI) (A/C.5/33/38). Since questions relating to information were to be discussed in the Special Political Committee in the following week, he asked whether the Fifth Committee's consideration of the recommendations concerning OPI would have to be deferred until the Special Political Committee had finished its discussion.

87. The CHAIRMAN said that he hoped to provide information on that point at the next meeting.

The meeting rose at 6.10 p.m.