



SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 39th 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 8 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 102: UNITED NATIONS ACCOMMODATION (continued)

(c) EXPANSION OF MEETING ROOMS AND IMPROVEMENT OF CONFERENCE SERVICING AND DELEGATE FACILITIES AT UNITED NATIONS HEADQUARTERS: REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (A/33/7/Add.13; A/C.5/33/24)

1. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) said that some proposals on the improvement of conference servicing facilities had already been considered by the Advisory Committee and the General Assembly and that the Secretary-General, in his report (A/C.5/33/24), stated the current position of the construction authorized by the General Assembly. In 1976 and 1977 the Secretary-General had submitted proposals for the improvement of catering facilities for staff and delegates, and on both occasions the Advisory Committee had recommended that the proposals should be reappraised by the Secretary-General in the light of actual needs and with due regard to economy. At the current session the Secretary-General was resubmitting his proposals, in which he compared two possible alternatives: A and B. After seeking technical advice on the feasibility of alternative A, the Secretary-General had concluded that alternative B would be less costly and would provide more space. Although the Advisory Committee has doubts concerning the estimate for alternative A, it was recommending approval of alternative B for financial and other reasons. Alternative B was a proposal to construct a two-storey structure to house a new cafeteria and kitchen for the staff. The Advisory Committee was convinced that, even if it could be demonstrated that the difference in cost between the two alternatives was minor, alternative B would provide more space and would not entail the unacceptable disruption of alternative A. Moreover, it would allow for the relocation, at no additional cost, of the language training class-rooms from the thirty-ninth floor to the lower level of the new building. The Advisory Committee, after receiving satisfactory justification, was also recommending approval of an amount of \$50,000, which was required for the conduct during 1979 of an architectural and engineering study to ascertain the modalities of redeveloping the thirty-ninth floor to provide office space.

2. Mr. TIMBRELL (Assistant Secretary-General for General Services) said that, so far as the cost of alternative A was concerned, the Secretariat had done its best to obtain accurate estimates from the architects and engineers. He should also point out that construction would begin in 1980 and not in January 1979, as stated in error in paragraph 28 of the Secretary-General's report (A/C.5/33/24). With regard to the current position, he said that it had been possible to install electronic voting equipment in Conference Room 1 without exceeding the appropriations. That equipment should be ready for use during the present week.

3. The CHAIRMAN said that he would like to know whether approval by the Committee of an appropriation of \$50,000 for the architectural study relating to redevelopment of the thirty-ninth floor would mean that the Committee was also approving the construction envisaged by the Secretary-General.

4. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) said that, as he understood it, the proposed study would determine the cost of redeveloping the thirty-ninth floor and the number of offices which the floor could accommodate. The use to be made of the thirty-ninth floor was not at present an issue to be decided on. The Secretary-General would presumably report on the outcome of the study to the General Assembly at its next session.
5. Mr. TIMBRELL (Assistant Secretary-General for General Services) confirmed that the amount of \$50,000 requested by the Secretary-General would be for an architectural study to ascertain the cost of redeveloping the thirty-ninth floor into office space, particularly for senior officials, and also of installing means of access from the thirty-eighth floor. The Secretary-General intended to report the findings of the study to the General Assembly at its next session and to make appropriate recommendations at that time on the best use that could be made of the thirty-ninth floor.
6. Mr. SAFRONCHUK (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) noted that, although alternatives A and B were both very costly, they would not provide much additional seating capacity. He would like to know whether the Secretary-General had made an estimate of how long the new catering facilities for staff and delegates would remain adequate. It seemed to him that the matter should be settled once for all, so that the need to request additional appropriations for further expansion of the facilities at an early date would not arise.
7. The CHAIRMAN said he hoped that, where the redevelopment of the thirty-ninth floor was concerned, the Secretary-General would submit at least two alternatives, as he had done in the case of the catering facilities, so that the Committee could make a choice.
8. Mr. TIMBRELL (Assistant Secretary-General for General Services), replying to the question put by the representative of the USSR, said the consultants whose advice the Secretary-General had sought had based their estimates on a moderate increase in the size of the Secretariat over the next five years and had recommended a seating capacity of 1,480. Alternative B, which the Secretariat recommended, would provide a seating capacity of 1,610, which, assuming a moderate increase in numbers, should be enough to meet the Organization's needs.
9. In reply to the question put by the Chairman, he said that the architects had been asked to suggest a number of alternatives for the use of the thirty-ninth floor.
10. Mr. PIRSON (Belgium) noted that redevelopment of the thirty-ninth floor of the Secretariat building would only provide approximately 550 square metres of office space. That being so, he would like to know whether the Secretary-General already had an idea how much the redevelopment would cost, so that it could be ascertained whether the cost was justified or whether a different solution should be considered.

11. Mr. TALIEH (Iran) said that he too would like to know the approximate cost of redeveloping the thirty-ninth floor. He noted that, in the case of the expansion of catering facilities, alternative A, estimated at \$10,912,000, was based on a study which had cost \$150,000. Since the appropriation requested for the architectural and engineering study on redevelopment of the thirty-ninth floor was \$50,000, or three times less, he wondered whether it might be assumed that the cost of converting that floor would be roughly one third of the estimated cost of alternative A.

12. He would also like more detailed information on how the Secretary-General had arrived at the figure of \$50,000.

13. Mr. SAFRONCHUK (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) asked whether account had been taken of the fact that a considerable number of staff members were to be transferred to other duty stations, particularly Vienna. He would also like to know whether any studies had been made to determine how intensively the existing catering facilities were used.

14. Mr. TIMBRELL (Assistant Secretary-General for General Services), replying to the representative of Belgium, said that he could not give any estimate of the cost of redeveloping the thirty-ninth floor. The fact of the matter was that the only way of determining whether redevelopment would be economic was to carry out the proposed architectural and engineering study. All he could say was that new construction would be more expensive than redevelopment, since some basic equipment, such as air-conditioning and electrical fittings, was already there. Moreover, the shortage of accommodation was such that any possibility for expansion should not be ignored.

15. In reply to the question put by the representative of Iran, he said that there was no direct relation between the cost of the architectural and engineering study and the cost of the project itself. The Secretary-General had asked the architects and engineers how much the study would cost and, in view of the fact that their estimates had always been accurate in the past, there was no reason to question the figure they had quoted. Replying to the representative of the Soviet Union, he said that account had been taken of the possible increase not only in the size of the staff but also in the number of Member States, since it must be borne in mind that many delegates use the cafeteria. The staff had been expanding constantly since the establishment of the United Nations, and the fact that it was proposed to transfer 102 staff members to Vienna would hardly affect the Secretariat's estimates.

16. Lastly, he said that the Secretary-General had obtained the services of a firm of consultants well qualified in the field of institutional catering to help him to determine how much space would be needed for catering facilities. The consultants had studied conditions during peak periods, such as the General Assembly or the special session devoted to disarmament, and also during slack periods, and the Secretary-General was quite sure that the advice they had given was the best that could be obtained.

17. The CHAIRMAN asked why, at the time of construction of the Secretariat building, no provision had been made for office space on the thirty-ninth floor. He would also like to know whether the Secretary-General had obtained cost estimates for the proposed study from more than one firm.

18. Mr. KEMAL (Pakistan) thought that it was essential to enlarge the cafeteria and, in that connexion, he would like to know whether, in determining the necessary seating capacity, due account had been taken of the fact that many people avoided using the cafeteria because it was too crowded. Moreover there was reason to believe that the cafeteria would have an even larger clientele if the quality of the food served, instead of being merely good, were excellent.

19. With regard to solutions A and B, he felt that if the terrace over the Council chambers had been more solid, there would have been no need to plan for such major works and solution A would thus have been less costly than solution B. He hoped that the same mistake would not be made when constructing the proposed new building, so that it would be possible to enlarge it later on if necessary.

20. Mr. TIMBRELL (Assistant Secretary-General for General Services), replying to the questions asked by the Chairman, explained that, first of all, when the Secretariat building had been put into operation in 1951, five floors had been incomplete because there had been no use for them at that time. It had not been until 1959 that those floors had been equipped to serve as office space. When the Headquarters building had been constructed, there had obviously been no need to use the thirty-ninth floor for office space. It was only when the problem had begun to grow serious that, out of necessity, that floor had been converted into class-rooms for language courses. However, the solution had turned out to be very inconvenient. In fact, the thirty-ninth floor could only be reached by service elevators and, quite often, staff members who used those elevators had to wait as long as 10 minutes.

21. With regard to the second question, he recalled that, according to the Financial Regulations of the United Nations, all contracts involving a sum of over \$20,000 were subject to competitive bidding, unless certain special requirements were met, in which case the question was referred to the Contracts Committee for advice. The Secretary-General's estimate of \$50,000 as the amount necessary for the architectural and technical study for the project to remodel the thirty-ninth floor was simply an approximate figure. In any case the Secretary-General would do his best to ensure that the cost of the study did not exceed that amount.

22. Replying to the comments made by the representative of Pakistan, he said that, in fact, many people were reluctant to use the cafeteria because it was too crowded. The consultants had taken that consideration into account when they had recommended that the seating capacity of the cafeteria, which was currently 462, should be increased to 680. The Secretary-General had proposed another solution which, if approved, would enable the seating capacity to be increased to 750.

23. With regard to the second question asked by the representative of Pakistan, namely if the new building proposed by the Secretary-General would be designed in such a way that it could subsequently be enlarged, he said that in order to allow for that possibility the foundations of the building would have to be far more solid than currently planned. Besides, because of the planned location of the building, such a possibility would hardly be desirable from the aesthetic point

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of view. However, there would be sufficient room for the construction, if necessary, of a small extra building of similar dimensions, between the south end of the conference building and the proposed new building, for the installation of a new cafeteria.

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

Revised estimates under section 26B and C. Alteration, improvement and major maintenance of premises, United Nations Office at Geneva (A/33/7/Add.12: A/C.5/33/33)

24. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) said that in his report (A/C.5/33/33) the Secretary-General was proposing that the villa "La Fenêtre" be reconditioned for use as the residence of the Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva, who at present lived in the villa "Les Feuillantines". In paragraph 4 of the same report the Secretary-General referred to environmental and cost factors in support of his proposal. In addition, as the Advisory Committee had learned from the representatives of the Secretary-General in the course of its visit to Geneva, there was the possibility that the Swiss authorities might expand the route de Ferney, near which the villa "Les Feuillantines" was situated. However, that reason was omitted from the Secretary-General's report, as was the question of principle referred to by the Advisory Committee in paragraph 11 of its report (A/33/7/Add.12).

25. After long deliberation, the Advisory Committee had finally decided not to recommend acceptance of the Secretary-General's proposal. It was not persuaded by the environmental factors mentioned in paragraph 2 of the Secretary-General's report. The Director-General had lived in "Les Feuillantines" for a number of years, and the Advisory Committee had not been given evidence that the level of noise had dramatically increased since the thirty-second session of the General Assembly. The security reasons were not convincing either. It would be difficult to submit that life in Geneva outside the main United Nations site was less secure than in other United Nations headquarters cities. With respect to the argument of costs, the Secretary-General's report gave the impression that continued occupancy of "Les Feuillantines" by the Director-General would be more expensive in the long run than the transfer of his residence to "La Fenêtre". For example, it was stated in paragraph 3 of the Secretary-General's report that major maintenance to be performed "within the next few years" would cost some \$214,700; however, there was no clear indication of the time span envisaged. As was stated in paragraph 7 of the Advisory Committee's report, the Secretary-General had estimated, on the basis of a firm bid, the cost of converting "La Fenêtre" at \$140,000. However, that amount had been progressively reduced, so that the net additional requirement was only \$8,900. The latter figure could be absorbed within available resources, so that no additional appropriation would be required in the biennium 1978-1979.

26. The Advisory Committee had questioned some of the assumptions used by the Secretary-General. As was indicated in paragraph 8 of its report, the savings to

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be used either would have been surrendered or would be obtained by displacing other work. Of course, the Advisory Committee had always requested the Secretary-General to make every effort to absorb additional requests within available resources; however, the proposed work was of a different category. The Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva was a representative of the Secretary-General, and it had been argued that the villa "Les Feuillantines" did not have adequate facilities for such functions as entertainment. But if that argument was carried to its logical conclusion, the executive secretaries of the regional economic commissions, who were of the same rank as the Director-General, the Secretary-General of UNCTAD and the Secretary-General of UNIDO, among others, should all have residences belonging to the United Nations. Moreover, the Advisory Committee had been informed that the Palais des Nations had a number of rooms which could be used for official functions.

27. In paragraph 11 of its report the Advisory Committee raised a question of principle and indicated that, except for the Secretary-General, the United Nations did not provide housing for its senior officials. It was also the understanding of the Advisory Committee that the executive heads of the specialized agencies did not have official residences. It appeared that the occupancy of "Les Feuillantines" by the Director-General was an ad hoc arrangement of 18 years' standing which had not had the prior approval of the General Assembly and was not part of the Director-General's conditions of service. It could be argued that it was an almost incidental privilege. The Advisory Committee had therefore considered the question of recommending that the ad hoc arrangement be terminated; otherwise, it might become an acquired right. Indeed, the Secretary-General's proposal to convert "La Fenêtre" to residential use could be construed as establishing that right, and in the future another Director-General, quoting the present case as a precedent, might claim the right to be moved to some other residence should he find "La Fenêtre" unsuitable.

28. The Advisory Committee indicated in its report that "La Fenêtre" had been used in the past for office accommodation and, as was generally known, there was often need for additional United Nations office space at Geneva. The Advisory Committee's report included information on the rent paid by the Director-General to the United Nations for use of "Les Feuillantines". The rent, which included heating and maintenance costs, was almost concessionary. The Advisory Committee noted that the Secretary-General's proposal left the question of a suitable rent to be settled later.

29. Because of all those factors, the Advisory Committee had felt that there was no alternative but to take the decision set forth in its report. He believed that that decision was reasonable and could not be lightly dismissed by arguing, for example, that the Advisory Committee should have raised the question at the thirty-second session when it had recommended approval of the \$31,000 requested by the Secretary-General to renovate "Les Feuillantines". At that time there had been no proposal to transfer the residence of the Director-General. While the Advisory Committee had been fully aware of the minimal cost of the Secretary-General's proposal, it believed that considerations of cost were not the only factor to be

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taken into account in reaching a decision, since the proposal raised a number of questions that went beyond mere cost considerations. It was in that light that the Advisory Committee's recommendation should be viewed by the Fifth Committee.

30. Mr. MAJOLI (Italy) said that he would like to have some clarifications which he thought would help the Committee to take a more reasoned decision on the proposal submitted by the Secretary-General. He would like to know, first of all, if it was true that the villa "La Fenêtre" had originally been designed as a residence, had been used for makeshift office accommodation, as indicated in paragraph 5 of the Secretary-General's report, but was structurally unfit for such use and could not be subject to extensive alterations because it was a historical landmark of Geneva. Secondly, was it true that the additional costs of moving the residence of the Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva to that villa could be absorbed without significant reduction of other programmes, because it only amounted to \$8,900? Thirdly, was it or was it not true that the Director-General was the dignitary to whom heads of mission presented their credentials, just as heads of mission accredited in New York presented their credentials to the Secretary-General? He would also like to know if it was true that, in view of the fact that the villa "La Fenêtre" was inside the grounds of the Palais des Nations, and therefore within the security protection area of the United Nations, while the villa "Les Feuillantines" was outside that area, the costs of maintenance and security would be lower?

31. Mr. LIMERES (Argentina) said that his delegation saw no objection to the villa "La Fenêtre" being converted for use as a residence for the Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva. It seemed clear that the additional expenditure of \$8,900 referred to in paragraph 8 of the report of the Secretary-General would be fully offset by the advantages which the location and facilities of the new residence would offer for the performance of the tasks entrusted to the Director-General. Moreover, the Secretary-General indicated in his report that, even if the present situation continued, it would be necessary to undertake repair and maintenance work for the villa "Les Feuillantines" as well as for the villa "La Fenêtre". However, the villa "La Fenêtre" was situated on the main United Nations property and consequently the costs of security and maintenance would be less than those for the villa "Les Feuillantines" which was outside that area. If one compared the two properties, it seemed clear that the villa "La Fenêtre" was better suited to the discharge of the many protocol functions incumbent on the Director-General, not only because of its location but also because it had a number of rooms suited to that purpose. It should not be forgotten that protocol functions had a very important place among the tasks devolving on the Director-General.

32. In paragraph 10 of his report, the Secretary-General indicated that the villa "Les Feuillantines" was really surplus to the United Nations and that, in general, it could be considered more of a future liability rather than an asset, and he accordingly recommended that the property should be offered for sale. He wondered, however, whether, in making that suggestion, the Secretary-General had taken proper account of all the factors involved. In the first place, the Secretary-General did

(Mr. Limeres, Argentina)

not specify what would be done with the proceeds of the sale. Moreover, it should not be forgotten that the United Nations Office at Geneva constantly had need of additional offices. The villa "Les Feuillantines" was, admittedly, not perhaps the ideal location for premises to be used as offices, but on several occasions it had happened that premises which were not really suited to that purpose had nevertheless been used as such on a temporary basis. That was precisely what had happened in the case of the villa "La Fenêtre" which, as the Secretary-General indicated in paragraph 5 of his report, had for some time provided office accommodation for part of the secretariat of GATT. Accordingly, for reasons of good management, it seemed desirable that the United Nations should retain a property which might be very useful to it in the future. In any event, it was important not to take a hasty decision regarding the use to be made of the villa "Les Feuillantines".

33. Mr. EL-AYADHI (Tunisia) agreed with the Advisory Committee that the question under consideration raised problems which went far beyond mere considerations of expenditure. In the view of his delegation, the essential requirement was the best possible management of the real estate owned by the United Nations. It was from that standpoint that the Committee should consider the question whether or not it was desirable to approve the proposal of the Secretary-General to transfer the residence of the Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva to the villa "La Fenêtre". At present, the villa "Les Feuillantines" was occupied by the Director-General while, since August 1977, when the villa "La Fenêtre" had been vacated by GATT, that property had remained unoccupied. Accordingly, still from the same standpoint, it appeared that the transfer of the Director-General's residence to the latter villa was a highly desirable solution so that that property could be preserved. On the other hand, the Secretary-General's proposal that the villa "Les Feuillantines" and the 7,500 square metres of land on which it was located should be offered for sale was surprising since the property was of some value when one considered the price of land in Geneva. Such a proposal ran counter to the concern to preserve and develop the real estate owned by the United Nations and his delegation could therefore not support it.

34. Mr. SADDLER (United States of America) said that, since the problem had many aspects, he only hoped that it would be resolved in the most equitable manner possible. The facts presented in the report of the Advisory Committee and by the Chairman of the Advisory Committee led his delegation to regard the present solution as the most advantageous, both from the point of view of the utilization of buildings and from that of the financial management of the resources of the United Nations. His delegation was therefore prepared to approve the recommendations of the Advisory Committee as set out in document A/33/7/Add.12.

35. Mr. PIRSON (Belgium) thought that the problem was in fact a simple one: the villa "La Fenêtre" could not be sold since it was in the grounds of the Palais des Nations at Geneva; on the other hand, the villa "Les Feuillantines" could perfectly well be sold if a decision to that effect was taken in the future. With regard to

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(Mr. Pirson, Belgium)

the entitlement of the Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva to an official residence, he said he thought that now was not the time to put an end to a precedent which had existed for 18 years. Moreover, the Committee had accepted the principle the previous year by approving an appropriation of \$81,000 for the renovation of the villa "Les Feuillantines". As far as the cost was concerned, the villa "La Fenêtre" could be brought into use without very great expense and part of the additional funds required could well be absorbed by, for example, a 10 per cent increase in the annual rent paid by the Director-General. Moreover, it would thus always be possible, at any given time, to offer the villa "Les Feuillantines" for sale or to transfer ownership of it to one of the agencies which had their headquarters in Geneva.

36. Mr. BIERING (Denmark) said that he might perhaps have allowed himself to be persuaded by the arguments put forward by the Chairman of the Advisory Committee but for the fact that he had had an opportunity to visit the villa "La Fenêtre" a few years earlier and he had noted how difficult it would be to convert it to offices. His delegation was therefore prepared to support the recommendations of the Secretary-General to the effect that the villa should be used as a residence - which was, moreover, its original purpose - since it could not be sold, as the representative of Belgium had observed. As for the villa "Les Feuillantines", further in-depth consideration should be given to its possible utilization, including the possibility of offering it for sale if necessary.

37. Mr. SAFRONCHUK (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that his delegation in general agreed with the views expressed by the Advisory Committee in paragraph 11 of its report (A/33/7/Add.12). The present situation was abnormal, since it was not based on any decision of the General Assembly, and it should therefore be changed. His delegation noted a certain paradox in that, on the one hand, the Secretary-General requested appropriations for new premises, and, on the other, there were premises which were known to be unused. The Secretary-General should therefore study in greater depth ways of ensuring better utilization of the available premises, specifically in Geneva. Consideration might be given, for example, to transferring some units from New York to Geneva.

38. The villa "Les Feuillantines" should be occupied since the rent received would at least in part cover the costs of maintenance. Moreover, the fact that it could accommodate 12 offices should not be overlooked. As the representative of Tunisia had observed, it would indeed be a pity to sell such a property. In short, his delegation thought there was no other choice but to approve the recommendations of the Advisory Committee.

39. Mr. ASKOY (Turkey) asked whether the Secretariat could provide information concerning another villa located in the grounds of the Palais des Nations at Geneva, namely the villa "La Pelouse".

40. Mr. DAVIDSON (Under-Secretary-General for Administration and Management) said he thought that the Secretary-General had taken a reasonable attitude towards the utilization of the villas "La Fenêtre" and "Les Feuillantines" and had provided the necessary information so that the Committee could take a decision on the matter. In reply to the questions put by the representative of Italy, he said that the villa "La Fenêtre" had indeed originally been conceived as a residence, that subsequently makeshift offices had been provided there for the secretariat of GATT (from 1969 to 1977), but that in his view the villa was ill-suited to office accommodation. He added that the villa was indeed of historical interest, but that did not prevent substantial reconversion work since that had already been done in the past. He confirmed that the additional expenditure to be incurred in converting the villa "La Fenêtre" into a residence would not exceed \$8,900 and could, as far as possible, be covered by the appropriations already approved under section 26. The Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva was the representative of the Secretary-General to whom the heads of missions at Geneva presented their credentials. Finally, it was correct that the villa "La Fenêtre" was located in the grounds of the Palais des Nations and that it was therefore better protected than the villa "Les Feuillantines" which was located outside that complex.

41. In conclusion, he pointed out that the Secretary-General felt that the proposal set forth in document A/C.5/33/33 was a reasonable one and he hoped that it would be considered favourably by the members of the Committee.

AGENDA ITEM 101: MEDIUM-TERM PLAN FOR THE PERIOD 1980-1983 (continued)
(A/33/6, Parts 1-30, A/33/38, A/33/345)

42. Mr. EL-HOUDERI (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) said that his delegation regarded the medium-term plan as the main instrument for the attainment of the objectives of the United Nations in so far as it made it possible to define those objectives as well as the strategies and over-all policy to attain them. The medium-term plan was also an essential tool for the preparation of the budget of the United Nations and for the adoption of policy decisions governing growth rates and the determination of the Organization's activities and priorities. Moreover, the medium-term plan made it possible to evaluate the progress achieved in attaining the targets set.

43. Since the Economic and Social Council had not yet approved the medium-term plan for the period 1980-1983, he wondered on what basis and according to what criteria the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1980-1981 would be prepared. His delegation thought that, in view of the urgency of the situation, an exception should be made and the medium-term plan for the period 1980-1983 should be considered as a preliminary document and the Secretary-General be authorized to use that document to prepare the proposed programme budget in question. When, during the coming year, the Economic and Social Council proposed changes to the medium-term plan it would inform the Secretary-General accordingly so that he could make the appropriate changes in the proposed programme budget, and the medium-term plan for the period 1980-1983 could be adopted at the same time as the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1980-1981.

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44. Mr. KOZUBÍK (Czechoslovakia) said that his delegation had always supported efforts to introduce medium-term planning in United Nations activities, in the belief that it would be a way of improving the Organization's efficiency and making economies. However, his delegation, having examined the draft medium-term plan, noted that, as in the past, the plan envisaged new and unjustified expenditure. He was concerned by the rapid increase in the United Nations budget and had expected that the medium-term plan would be prepared with due regard for the need to stabilize the Organization's expenditure. Consequently his delegation would support any measure to establish priorities and to reallocate resources.

45. A study of the allocation of funds by programme would make possible a better use of the United Nations budget. An estimate must be made of which programmes were or would become priority programmes. The draft medium-term plan did not sufficiently distinguish between programmes according to their degree of importance, although that would be a way of arriving at a more rational allocation of the available resources.

46. With respect to inflation and the additional costs it involved in the execution of programmes, his delegation considered that some programmes should be reduced, rather than requiring Member States collectively to support the financial consequences of inflation. Furthermore, there should be strict adherence to the provisions of General Assembly resolution 31/93 as far as the consideration of the medium-term plan was concerned. It was not right that the draft plan had not been studied in the first place by the Economic and Social Council. Lastly, his delegation was convinced that the level of the budget should remain the same, and that all the new activities approved by the General Assembly should be financed from existing reserves. It would be appropriate to support the recommendations of the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination to omit chapters 2 and 3 of the plan, which were not in accordance with the provisions of General Assembly resolution 31/93.

47. Mr. HERNÁNDEZ MARTÍNEZ (Cuba) said that his delegation had not had time to make a detailed study of the voluminous documents on the medium-term plan, in view of the late date of distribution, and he would consequently confine himself to a few preliminary comments. Under the provisions of General Assembly resolution 31/93 the medium-term plan, once approved by the General Assembly, should be the main general policy directive of the United Nations for the four following years. That made it all the more regrettable that the draft medium-term plan for 1980-1983 had not been examined as it should have been by the Economic and Social Council and the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination, since the document was essential for the preparation of the programme-budget proposals for the biennium 1980-1981.

48. Paragraph 2.30 of the medium-term plan (A/33/6, Part 2) stated: "The present medium-term plan is formulated within the framework of the existing legislative authority. Although the status of the above document is defined as a proposal by the Secretary-General, it should be borne in mind that the meaning of the term 'proposal' should be taken in a very narrow context. The plan document does not contain any major programme or subprogramme which was included in the plan document entirely on the initiative of the Secretary-General without a supporting

(Mr. Hernández Martínez, Cuba)

legislative mandate of the intergovernmental bodies of the United Nations. Therefore, the term 'proposed medium-term plan' signifies the mode in which the Secretary-General interpreted the respective legislative authority of the subprogramme as adopted by the intergovernmental bodies concerned." According to paragraph 2.44 of the same document, "specialized programme-formulating bodies consist of governing councils and boards, functional commissions and committees, and regional commissions", while according to paragraph 2.45 "at the moment there is no uniform involvement in the review of the medium-term plan or the programme aspects of the biennial budget by these bodies". The Cuban delegation wished to have more details about the participation of those bodies in the preparation of the draft medium-term plan for 1980-1983, and did not understand how paragraphs 2.45 and 2.30 of document A/33/6 (Part 2) could be reconciled.

49. His delegation approved the recommendation made by the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination in paragraph 53 of its report (A/33/38), recommending that the General Assembly "affirm that the relative growth rates determined by the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly in the light of the advice of CPC are intended to be guidance to the Secretary-General on the priorities to be accorded to the programmes in the preparation of the programme-budget proposals, and that a measure of discernment in their interpretation may be necessary in some cases, with the understanding that the growth rates of certain programmes could be brought to zero or negative". Concerning the real growth rates envisaged, the Cuban delegation noted that for the major programme entitled "Food and agriculture" (A/33/6, Part 15) an average real growth rate was proposed, but for some other programmes the rates were above the average.

50. With respect to the questions dealt with in paragraphs 334 to 392 of the report of the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination (A/33/38), his delegation considered that that Committee's comments on co-ordination of the planning process in the United Nations were useful for future work. His delegation agreed with the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions and with other delegations that the information in annex II of chapter 3 of document A/33/6 (Part 3) was incomplete and did not make possible an exact comparison of the real growth rates of the various programmes. His delegation also wished to indicate that the recommendations made by the Joint Inspection Unit in chapter VII of its report (A/33/226) could make a valuable contribution to improving the preparation of budgets and to their subsequent evaluation.

51. In conclusion he said that the medium-term plan should be the keystone of the United Nations system and should clearly define the aims that the Organization should attain for the period 1980-1983, which was not yet the case.

52. Mr. SAFRONCHUK (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that because of the delay in issuing the draft medium-term plan, and the great size and poor quality of the document, the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination had not had time to study all the chapters of the plan in detail. He noted moreover that the programme proposed in chapter 27 of document A/33/6 (Part 27) had been completely revised by the Secretariat, which had changed not only the title but also the content and had tried to place all social activities in the context of social welfare, which was unacceptable and contrary to the Declaration on Social Progress and Development and

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(Mr. Safronchuk, USSR)

other important decisions of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council on social questions. The competent officials in the Secretariat had informed the Economic and Social Council that they would prepare and submit to the Council a new version of chapter 27 of the draft medium-term plan in the light of the criticisms made by the Council and by the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination. The Soviet delegation was prepared to study the revised chapter at the forthcoming sessions of CPC and of the Council.

53. His delegation drew the Committee's attention to the fact that the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination had recommended that chapters 2 (The planning process in the United Nations) and 3 (Financial data) should not be included in the medium-term plan for 1980-1983, since it considered that those chapters were not in accordance with General Assembly resolution 31/93. It had also recommended the omission of chapters 29 (Integrated programmes for rural development) and 30 (Development information services), with the comment that they were not sound from a legal standpoint or drafted properly. The Soviet delegation approved those recommendations.

54. In the course of the consideration of the draft medium-term plan at the resumed session of the Economic and Social Council several delegations had rightly pointed out that it was difficult to give an opinion on the document because they had not had sufficient time to study it in detail. Those delegations had insisted that consideration of the document be postponed until the following year and had pointed out that the draft plan was not in conformity with the resolutions of the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly and that it should be redrafted. As a result, the Economic and Social Council had decided to postpone consideration of the draft plan until 1979 and had not made any recommendation to the General Assembly in that regard. The Fifth Committee therefore found itself in a dilemma because, owing to the reservations expressed by the Economic and Social Council, it was not in a position to take a decision on the draft plan. The Secretary-General was also in an awkward situation because he had to prepare the programme-budget proposals without being able to use the plan as a basis. That was contrary to all the General Assembly resolutions concerning the objectives of medium-term planning and the objectives of programming and budgeting. The programme budget should be based on a carefully prepared medium-term plan. His country had long experience of planning, since it was now implementing its tenth Five-Year Plan. The latter embraced all sectors of the economy and yet it comprised only about 100 pages, whereas the medium-term plan under consideration was 600 pages long; that was a sheer waste of time and paper. Under those circumstances his delegation believed that the Secretary-General should draw up the programme-budget proposals for the 1980-1981 biennium on the basis of the current programme budget, which was the only rational document available. The next programme budget should start from scratch and, if necessary, be revised once the Economic and Social Council had considered the draft plan in 1979.

55. Mr. LAHLOU (Morocco) said that his delegation had listened carefully to the explanations provided by the Chairman of the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination on that Committee's role in implementing measures to enhance the effectiveness of the planning, programming, budgetary and evaluation processes

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(Mr. Lahlou, Morocco)

within the United Nations system as defined in General Assembly resolution 32/197. However, although his delegation was fully aware that planning was an urgent necessity for the co-ordination of the Organization's work, it was unable to take a position on the draft medium-term plan before studying the many chapters of that plan in greater detail. In that regard his delegation pointed out that CPC itself, in its first recommendation, had deplored the delay in the submission of the document, which had prevented it from reviewing satisfactorily all sections of the plan. CPC had, however, drawn attention to a number of short-comings in the plan, including defects in the programme of disaster relief; it had noted in particular that the structure of that programme was loosely conceived and that the interrelationship of the subprogrammes was unclear. His delegation fully supported CPC's view that the Office of Public Information had not entirely fulfilled the role entrusted to it and that reforms were necessary in that sector. Where financial data were concerned, his delegation supported the recommendation contained in paragraph 9 of the Advisory Committee's report (A/33/345), that some specific financial information should be included in the chapters on individual major programmes. In paragraph 18 of its report, the Advisory Committee had also drawn attention to the potential for mutually incompatible decisions in the case of the three major programmes referred to in paragraphs 15 to 17 of that report. His delegation reserved its position on that issue, and on the plan as a whole, pending the necessary study by the Moroccan Government.

56. Mr. GREEN (New Zealand) welcomed the decision of the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination (CPC) to devote one of its 1979 sessions to a detailed review of the planning and programming process. Informative and useful though it might be, the draft medium-term plan for the period 1980-1983 was still not the management tool that the United Nations required and that Governments expected it to be. The concept and approach underlying the draft plan were sound, but their application needed further refinement.

57. The defects of the draft medium-term plan had been clearly identified by various speakers. With regard to the question of identification of marginal activities, which had been a subject of particular comment, his delegation welcomed the Secretary-General's report in document A/C.5/33/13. That report showed that the Secretary-General was conscious of the dissatisfaction expressed on the subject and was devoting some effort to finding a solution. One of the purposes of the debate on the medium-term plan was to offer guidance to CPC on the approach it should adopt in its review of the planning process. Its task would be not simply to remedy the deficiencies of the present draft plan but also to tackle broader and deeper conceptual problems. That Committee had already established many of the guidelines for such a review, with valuable assistance from Inspector Bertrand and, more recently, from the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions.

58. His delegation considered that the thoughtful statement of the United Kingdom delegation, identifying five broad subject areas for particular attention, was an excellent analysis which would provide an appropriate framework for CPC's work. With reference to the question of better co-ordination of social and other development issues, his delegation had consistently taken the view that the

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(Mr. Green, New Zealand)

unified approach to development analysis and planning which the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly had endorsed in numerous resolutions called for the full integration of the economic and social components of the development process. In other words, the organs of the United Nations system concerned with social development should play an active part in the review and appraisal of the results of the Second Development Decade and in the formulation of a new international development strategy. For that reason his Government had supported two initiatives of the Economic and Social Council designed to help bring that integration about. The Council's first proposal, which had been to establish a small expert group to examine the operational effectiveness of social development activities and the associated co-ordination machinery, had never been carried out, but had been superseded by the Council's decision (resolution 1978/35) to entrust that task to the competent bodies of the United Nations system, namely the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination, the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination (ACC) and the Committee for Development Planning. Only ACC had responded and, as his delegation had already stated during the resumed session of the Economic and Social Council, many of its observations were not very convincing.

59. The chapters dealing with economic matters and also chapter 27 of the draft medium-term plan did not effectively contribute to the integration of the economic and social components of the development process, but merely reflected the existing institutional realities of the system. At the intergovernmental level a rigid delineation was observed in allocating work between the First and Second Committees of the Economic and Social Council and the Second and Third Committees of the General Assembly. Within the Secretariat, social development activities were the responsibility of a discrete centre which did not appear to operate in close co-ordination with Secretariat units whose primary concern was economic development and which, in any event, was shortly to leave New York, where the principal development planning activities were undertaken. It was very difficult to see how the necessary co-ordination of activities would be ensured. His delegation suggested that that problem deserved special attention in the context of the review of the planning and programming process and believed that one element of a solution lay in a reappraisal of the procedures for intergovernmental consideration of the medium-term plan.

60. Finally, his delegation believed that the Committee should accept the medium-term plan, whatever its shortcomings, as the basis for the preparation of the programme budget for the next biennium.

The meeting rose at 11 p.m.