



SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 44th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. KOBINA SEKYI (Ghana)

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

CONTENTS

AGENDA ITEM 101: MEDIUM-TERM PLAN FOR THE PERIOD 1980-1983 (continued)

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

Revised estimates under sections 13A (United Nations Environment Programme) and  
13B (Habitat - Human Settlements) (continued)

Revision of the Financial Regulations of the United Nations (continued)

AGENDA ITEM 112: UNITED NATIONS PENSION SYSTEM (continued)

(a) REPORT OF THE UNITED NATIONS JOINT STAFF PENSION BOARD (continued)

(b) REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (continued)

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The meeting was called to order at 8 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, A/C.5/33/51, A/C.5/33/60, A/C.5/33/L.19)

1. Mr. PEDERSEN (Canada) said that, as the Controller had already pointed out, the two key decisions to be taken by the Committee were whether or not to approve the draft medium-term plan and whether or not to give guidance with regard to relative growth rates. His delegation believed that the Committee should also give guidance on the planning process itself and, in particular, on improvements in the conceptual framework of the plan. The Committee for Programme and Co-ordination (CPC) had experienced serious difficulties in dealing with the plan, not only because the document was lengthy and had been issued late but also because of its format. Many delegations shared CPC's frustration.
2. CPC had nevertheless done invaluable work, and his delegation, in the light of the recommendations and conclusions contained in the CPC report (A/33/38), accepted the plan as the appropriate framework for the preparation of the programme budget for the biennium 1980-1981.
3. According to the plan, the real growth rate of programmes would average around 2 per cent. That being so, the average real growth rate of the next budget estimates should be below 2 per cent, especially as all new activities likely to be approved between now and the completion of the next budget cycle had been taken into account. His delegation hoped that, in preparing the budget estimates for 1980-1981, the Secretary-General would attempt to keep growth rates to the essential minimum.
4. His delegation had noted the Controller's comments with regard to the table of proposed relative real growth rates in paragraph 54 of document A/33/38. As the Controller had suggested, some programmes for which a "well-below-average growth rate" had been proposed would probably have to be cut back, if the over-all real growth rate of the budget was to be kept to 2 per cent or below. A cut-back in programmes was a normal exercise for any organization or Government. It did, however, necessitate in the case of the United Nations the establishment of an order of relative programme priorities. In that regard, his delegation believed that the relative growth rates suggested by CPC should serve as guidance to the Secretary-General when he prepared the programme budget for 1980-1981, even though the priorities could not be regarded as absolute. As CPC itself had indicated, the proposed growth rates were the result of a compromise, taking into account, as they did, the political views of Member States, the degree of effectiveness of certain programmes and divisions, and the very nature of the programmes. The next programme budget should be scrutinized to see whether it in fact reflected a concentration of resources on the most important activities and whether the obsolete and least useful activities had been terminated.
5. What emerged most clearly from the presentation of the plan was that a basic improvement in its conceptual nature was essential if the plan was to become a truly

(Mr. Pedersen, Canada)

effective tool in improving the budgetary and planning process. His delegation agreed with the United Kingdom delegation that the primary purpose of the plan should be to allow Member States and the Secretariat to decide how general objectives laid down in resolutions should be translated into activities. In particular, the plan should include information on: (a) specific objectives of programmes and subprogrammes; (b) the estimated time-frame within which each subprogramme objective would be completed; (c) the methods to be followed in achieving the subprogramme objectives (to be specified in detail in the subprogramme narratives); (d) those activities financed from the regular budget as distinct from activities financed from extrabudgetary funds (to be specified likewise in the subprogramme narratives); (e) the programmes, subprogrammes or projects which had been completed or would be discontinued; (f) the clientèle of each subprogramme. His delegation also supported the efforts of the Joint Inspection Unit to inject greater preciseness and accuracy into programming through the introduction of time-limited objectives and achievement indicators. It approved the JIU report on programming and evaluation in the light of the conclusions and recommendations of CPC and the observations of ACABQ.

6. His delegation also supported the CPC proposal that the introduction to the medium-term plan should be drafted as a self-contained document and should provide an overview of the activities of the Organization and a strategy for their implementation. It was important, too, that it should contain an estimate of the necessary resources by major programme, without, however, committing Governments.

7. In view of the difficulties which CPC and the Economic and Social Council had experienced owing to the late submission of the plan, he wondered what action the Secretariat proposed to take in the future to enable those two bodies to fulfil their proper roles under General Assembly resolution 32/197. His delegation approved the work programme of CPC (A/33/38, chap. I, sect. A) and welcomed in particular CPC's intention to carry out an in-depth study of the planning process at its nineteenth session. It also supported CPC's request to the Secretary-General to furnish within the 1978-1979 programme budget the technical services necessary for CPC to fulfil its mandate.

8. Mr. MONTHE (United Republic of Cameroon) said that his country had acquired considerable experience of planning and programming, since it had now drawn up its fourth five-year plan. His delegation had therefore studied with great interest the various reports concerning the medium-term plan of the United Nations, namely the report of the Joint Inspection Unit (A/33/226), the report of the Secretary-General (A/33/226/Add.1) and the report of the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination (A/33/38), which all demonstrated a concern for objectivity, realism and lucidity.

9. The United Nations medium-term plan, as currently drafted, fitted into a time-frame and a spatial framework. It was based, moreover, on objectives which were more or less precise, particularly at the level of the subprogrammes, and on

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(Mr. Monthe, United Republic of Cameroon)

financial data from a biennial programme budget drawn up according to the principle of full budgeting. Those basic parameters were modified by other information whose impact was not always immediately measurable. Thus, because of inflation and currency fluctuations, the financial data had become almost unpredictable; indeed, they were so unpredictable that some delegations had questioned the soundness of full budgeting. Their doubts were justified by the numerous requests for additional appropriations, which at the same time confirmed the instability of the Organization's financial situation.

10. With regard to the spatial framework within which the plan fitted, mention must be made of the plan's heterogeneous nature at the geopolitical, cultural and human levels. That heterogeneity was reflected in the Secretariat of the Organization, in which, as was stated by the Secretary-General in his report (A/33/226/Add.1), were represented not only the different countries but also different approaches and methods in respect of the work to be done and setting.

11. It was therefore inevitable that planning, programming and evaluation in the United Nations system should be subject to a degree of uncertainty, and even inefficacy, and that only the elements of an extremely relative solution could be identified. Since it had received the draft plan rather late, his delegation had been unable to consider the document in depth or to carry out the necessary consultations on some of the problems to which it referred. His delegation would therefore confine itself to some preliminary observations and reserve the right to revert to the question in 1979, when the plan would be considered by various organs.

12. With respect to problems of methodology, as the Chairman of the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination had said, the description of proposed activities was vague; the introduction to the draft medium-term plan, which should have given an overview of the main orientations of the Organization and the projected activities, was simply a descriptive summary of the opinions of the programme managers. The integrated approach to the planning process had yet to be perfected, as had over-all co-ordination within the system, in order to ensure concerted planning which would promote balanced development on a system-wide basis, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 32/197.

13. He was glad to see that the Secretariat had begun to establish co-ordinating structures, as indicated in document A/33/38, paragraphs 347 and 349. There was little or no mention of time-limits at the subprogramme level. The definition of functions referred to as continuing was often vague. His delegation therefore considered that the present planning and programming process should be refined or even redesigned, and it was gratifying that the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination had decided to consider the question in depth in 1979.

(Mr. Monthe, United Republic of Cameroon)

14. His delegation believed that the recommendations of the Joint Inspection Unit (A/33/226), if judiciously applied, were calculated to resolve the existing methodological problems. With respect to recommendation No. 1 (Format of descriptions of subprogramme objectives in the medium-term plan: adoption of a system of time-limited objectives), his delegation noted that the Secretary-General, in his report (A/33/226/Add.1), expressed reservations on certain points; he considered, for example, that precise definition of subprogramme objectives would mean providing too much detail, so that the plan would become less flexible and concise. The Secretary-General also stated that subprogramme objectives related only to fields of activity in which there were continuing needs on a long-term basis. Although those comments were justified on the whole, it was nevertheless true that "In order to test the practicality of the JIU's original intention, it would be useful to apply the recommendation experimentally to selected programmes in the economic and social sectors. If successful, the medium-term plan itself could acquire more and more objectives with fixed-time horizons" (A/33/226/Add.1, foot-note 8). His delegation also considered that one way of overcoming the difficulty passed by the continuing nature of needs at the subprogramme level would be, in the case of those extending over a number of years, to programme the different stages of the individual activities carried out within the subprogrammes.

15. As to recommendation No. 2 (System of identifying "outputs" in programme budgets), his delegation was gratified that the Secretary-General accepted the recommendation and stated that progress could already be made in preparing for the 1980-1981 programme budget. Only recommendation No. 2 (a), paragraph 5, concerning the introduction of indicators providing a concise measurement of the expected impact, could not be fully implemented at the present time, for practical reasons. His delegation considered that further studies should nevertheless be undertaken in that connexion.

16. With respect to recommendation No. 3 (Establishment of internal work programmes in divisions), the Secretary-General's comments on the informal basis of internal work programmes of the divisions and the lack of uniformity in their structures were apposite. The structures and execution of those programmes should be made more systematic, and an effort should be made to introduce uniformity; they should, moreover, be followed up, and be amended only if there were substantial reasons for change. In that connexion, the Secretary-General's comments (A/33/226/Add.1, para. 36 (e) and (f)), suggesting flexibility in applying the JIU recommendation, were well-founded.

17. With regard to recommendation No. 4 (Information process for ongoing programme implementation and output costing), it was gratifying that the Secretary-General had accepted that recommendation; however, his comment, in paragraph 41 of his report, on the modalities of providing such information should not have the effect of delaying the implementation of the recommendation. Serious efforts to improve the evaluation of the real cost of outputs should continue, despite the difficulties caused by inflation and currency fluctuations and despite problems of methodology and application.

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(Mr. Monthe, United Republic of Cameroon)

18. His delegation was also pleased that the Secretary-General had accepted recommendation No. 5 (Monitoring of programme budget performance) and noted with interest his comment on the weighting coefficient, which should reflect a more accurate idea of the real level of execution of the tasks envisaged in the programme budget. The coefficient could be calculated to take account of specific difficulties, of the order of priority of each subprogramme or programme element, of the actual quality of outputs and, lastly, of factors beyond the control of those in charge of programmes. It was extremely desirable that the Secretary-General should try to ensure progressive application of that recommendation. As to the substantive objections raised by the Secretary-General concerning subparagraph (b) of the recommendation, the point deserved special attention and should be given more detailed consideration by the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination so that the Fifth Committee could take an informed decision.
19. Lastly, on the subject of recommendation No. 6 (Evaluation methods and the use of built-in achievement indicators), the Secretary-General's general observations in paragraph 51 to 58 of his report were useful, and his delegation considered that several categories of achievement indicators should be distinguished. His delegation agreed with the Secretary-General's remark, in connexion with subparagraph (b) of the recommendation, that achievement indicators should be established only for application to programme elements and output, but thought that they might also be included in any suitable subprogrammes, even if it were only on an experimental basis. As to the Secretary-General's comment on recommendation No. 2 (a), paragraph 5, and recommendation No. 6 (e), his delegation considered that, despite the practical difficulties referred to by the Secretary-General in paragraph 65 of his report, the external evaluation operations carried out by Governments were calculated to expand the sphere of evaluation of outputs, as furnished to the recipient country. As JIU had indicated in its report (A/33/225, paras. 52 and 53, and para. 9 of the conclusion), it was therefore to be hoped that Governments would be encouraged to make their own evaluations.
20. As to the other problems raised by the medium-term plan, his delegation noted with satisfaction that the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions had recommended, in paragraphs 8 to 14 of its report (A/33/345), an appropriate formula which should make it possible to form a better idea of the budgetary and extrabudgetary financial resources that would serve as the basis for the medium-term plan in the spirit of General Assembly resolution 31/93. The Secretariat might apply that formula progressively. As to the problems of growth rates, his delegation noted that, in the table in paragraph 54 of its report, CPC had assigned an average or higher than average growth rate to some programmes of great importance to developing countries but had assigned very low growth rates to some other programmes that deserved attention. The establishment of growth rates should be based to a very great extent on the impact which the programmes concerned could have on other economic sectors. The order of priority for programmes could

(Mr. Monthe, United Republic of Cameroon)

not be absolute, since it depended on the economic situation and must be interpreted judiciously. It was gratifying that CPC had decided to consider the question in depth at its next session. CPC had also emphasized that the growth rates proposed in document A/33/38, paragraph 54, were only a provisional classification. His delegation would like to know if the comments made by the Committee in paragraph 518 of its report on the ambitious nature of the human settlements programme meant that that classification was likely to be revised downwards.

21. Lastly, some activities envisaged in the plan, such as transport and communications, rural development, commodity trade, research and industrialization, were of special importance to some developing countries. For that reason, the difficult problem posed by the inclusion in the regular budget of some posts financed from extrabudgetary funds should be solved judiciously, so that there would be no harmful impact on the growth rate originally assigned to the programmes in question, and that meant that marginal elements in programmes should be identified and treated as such.

22. Mr. EL-AYADHI (Tunisia) said that the question of the medium-term plan for the period 1980-1983 was one of the major items on the agenda at the thirty-third session, but because of the size of the draft plan and its late submission his delegation had not been able to give it proper consideration. That situation could have been avoided if the provisions of General Assembly resolution 31/93, which laid down what amounted to a code of procedure for the preparation, consideration, adoption and execution of the plan, had been complied with. In the case of the medium-term plan in particular, it was specified that "The medium-term plan will be considered by the General Assembly in the light of the comments and recommendations of the Economic and Social Council, the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination and the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions".

23. Because the draft plan had been submitted to the Economic and Social Council at so late a date, the Council had been forced to postpone consideration of it until 1979, with a view to ensuring that "the policies laid down by the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council were fully reflected in the plan and to make the necessary recommendations to that end" (Economic and Social Council decision 1978/84). His delegation hoped that those recommendations would be made in sufficient time to be taken into account when the next proposed programme budget was considered. In the circumstances, the General Assembly could not legitimately adopt the draft plan before it received the final views of the Economic and Social Council.

24. The report of the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination (A/33/38) showed that objectivity and clarity had been sought. Unfortunately, owing to the lack of time, the Committee had not been able to examine all the chapters of the plan, but that had not prevented it from formulating very relevant conclusions and recommendations relating, inter alia, to programming and evaluation in the United Nations system, to co-ordination and to the analysis of programmes, and, lastly, to the medium-term plan. His delegation supported the recommendations concerning the first two points.

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(Mr. El-Ayadhi, Tunisia)

25. As to the recommendations concerning the plan, they should be examined more closely, especially since the views of the Economic and Social Council on that subject were not yet known. The method suggested for fixing an order of priority was vague and not very rational. The idea of making approval of real resource growth for programmes dependent on demonstration that a given level of resource inputs was required to achieve the desired level of programme output (para. 53 (c)) might paralyse activity. As to the growth rates recommended for the credits allocated under the programme budget for 1980-1981, they gave an over-all impression of stagnation, if not of regression, because for the 25 programmes considered, no rate well above average was envisaged, and three rates above average, 11 average, seven below average and three well below average were provided for. Yet certain programmes warranted a much higher growth rate in view of their importance and their interest for a large number of Member States. On balance, there seemed to be a trend towards reduction of the scope of programmes.

26. It was said that not too much importance need be attached to those relative growth rates and that they should be interpreted with caution. However, the Chairman of CPC had stated that the tables showing programme growth rates were of practical interest and would enable the Secretary-General to lay down guidelines for the units concerned when the process of budgeting began. That meant that the table in paragraph 54 of the report of the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination (A/33/38) was to be the final authority with respect to any allocation of credits. That table was presumably the result of a compromise adopted by consensus, but there must be agreement as to the meaning of the terms "compromise" and "consensus" because it had not been possible to fix any rate for certain major programmes such as that dealt with in chapter 27. One major programme was even mentioned only by way of a reminder: that was the rural development programme, to which Tunisia attached great importance and which could have been included among the priority activities.

27. In its report (A/33/345) the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions expressed the opinion that the financial information in chapter 3 had been presented in a way which was unlikely to help the General Assembly when it considered the medium-term plan (para. 6). That meant that the Advisory Committee approved the recommendation of CPC that chapter 3 should not be included in the plan, as also its decision to examine at its next session all of the questions relating to the planning process in the United Nations. His delegation supported that decision and hoped that CPC and the Advisory Committee would combine their efforts in co-operation with the Joint Inspection Unit, whose help was most valuable.

28. It was therefore the task of the Fifth Committee to make the synthesis which would enable the General Assembly to overcome the difficulties which it had encountered during the current year.



(Mr. El-Ayadhi, Tunisia)

29. Introducing draft resolution A/C.5/33/L.19 on behalf of the members of the Group of 77, he said that the purpose of the draft was to propose constructive solutions. With regard to the adoption of the medium-term plan, in the five preambular paragraphs, because of the difficult working conditions in which the Fifth Committee found itself the General Assembly, recalling its resolutions on the medium-term plan and the report of the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination as well as the resolution on the restructuring of the economic and social sectors of the United Nations system, would acknowledge the receipt of the proposed medium-term plan and the related reports of CPC and the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, as well as the reports on evaluation submitted by the Joint Inspection Unit, would deplore the unacceptable delay in the submission of the documents, which hindered full consideration of the medium-term plan, and would be mindful of the decision of the Economic and Social Council to defer consideration of the plan.

30. In operative paragraph 1 of the draft resolution, the General Assembly would take note of the proposed medium-term plan for the period 1980-1983 and request the Secretary-General to regard it as a useful framework for the preparation of the programme budget for the next biennium. In paragraph 2, it would decide to consider at its next session the recommendations which the Economic and Social Council might make in 1979, for that would involve a factor which would be essential for the adoption of the plan, particularly since the Council had undertaken to express its views on the direction to be given to the programme for the United Nations for the coming four years. In paragraph 3 the General Assembly would take note with appreciation of the report of CPC, which was an excellent one, considering the material and psychological conditions in which CPC had examined the plan. In addition, the sponsors of the draft, welcoming CPC's intention to undertake at its next session an in-depth study of all aspects of the planning process (para. 4), hoped that the General Assembly would approve the recommendations of the Joint Inspection Unit on programming and evaluation as well as the recommendations of CPC on evaluation of individual programmes, especially those relating to the study by the Secretary-General on the feasibility of establishing time-limited objectives for subprogrammes (para. 5). That was a fundamental aspect of planning and as the United Nations gained experience in that field it should fix time-limits, at least at the subprogramme level, for otherwise there would be no real planning.

31. Next, the General Assembly should (para. 6) taken into consideration the recommendations of the Advisory Committee on financial information to be included in future medium-term plans, in accordance with the resolutions adopted by the General Assembly itself. With regard to the introduction to the medium-term plan, CPC's recommendation that the introductory survey should constitute an analysis of the activities of the United Nations and the strategy for their implementation should be endorsed. In that connexion, he pointed out that the word "organizations" in operative paragraph 8 should be in the singular, for the reference was to the activities of the United Nations only. The members of the Group of 77 felt that the recommendations of CPC on harmonization of programming in the United Nations system should be implemented and they approved them without reservation (para. 9).

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(Mr. El-Ayadhi, Tunisia)

32. Similarly, they would like the General Assembly to endorse the recommendation of CPC that the Director-General for Development and International Economic Co-operation should be associated with preparation of cross-organizational programme analyses (para. 10). In that connexion, he said that in future the introduction to the medium-term plan should be improved and he hoped that the task of preparing it would be entrusted to the Director-General for Development and International Economic Co-operation so that it would constitute an exhaustive analysis of all the activities of the United Nations.

33. In conclusion, he said that the draft resolution should be regarded as an effort to find a positive solution and meet the concerns expressed by the representatives of the Secretariat. It should receive general support, considering the constructive spirit and objectivity.

34. Mr. BELYAEV (Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic) said that it was not appropriate for the Committee to be considering a question the preparations in respect of which had not been completed. The Committee did not have exact information on documents relating to the medium-term plan for the period 1980-1983: it had not been informed of the changes which had been made in the draft plan following the observations put forward by the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination, which were of fundamental importance. Nor had it been informed of the revised version of the plan (A/33/6/Rev.1), which was referred to in paragraph 1 of the report of the Advisory Committee (A/33/345). What was more, decision 1978/84 adopted by the Economic and Social Council at its resumed second session in 1978, concerning the medium-term plan, had not yet been submitted to it.

35. His delegation could not accept the procedures imposed on the Committee for consideration of the documents submitted with respect to the medium-term plan, procedures which ran counter to the decisions taken on the matter by the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and other legislative organs. Thus, in General Assembly resolution 31/93 (para. 3 (b)), it was stated that the medium-term plan should be considered by the Assembly in the light of the comments and recommendations of the Economic and Social Council, the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination and the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, in accordance with the procedures adopted by the Economic and Social Council. The fact was that no observation or recommendation of the Economic and Social Council had been submitted to the Committee with regard to the question under consideration.

36. That omission could not be ignored, firstly, because under the United Nations Charter the Economic and Social Council "may make or initiate studies and reports with respect to international economic, social, cultural, educational, health, and related matters and may make recommendations with respect to any such matters to the General Assembly, to the Members of the United Nations, and to the specialized agencies concerned" (Art. 62, para. 1).

37. Secondly, 70 to 80 per cent of the medium-term plan was made up of programmes

(Mr. Belyaev, Byelorussian SSR)

of activity which were carried out by the United Nations in the economic and social fields and thus were indisputably within the competence of the Economic and Social Council. That in itself meant that the Council had an especially important role to play in the planning and programming of United Nations activities.

38. Thirdly, far from deciding not to consider the draft medium-term plan, the Economic and Social Council, taking into account the results of CPC's consideration of the plan and realizing its own responsibilities, had unanimously decided to consider it at one of its sessions in 1979 with a view to ensuring that the policies laid down by the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council were fully reflected in the plan and to make the necessary recommendations to that end (Economic and Social Council decision 1978/84, subpara. (e)). As those recommendations must be submitted to the General Assembly, he wondered why the United Nations Secretariat and some delegations were insisting that the draft medium-term plan should be considered at the current session of the Assembly, without waiting for the Council's recommendations.

39. The argument that the Fifth Committee must consider the plan because the General Assembly had allocated to it agenda item 101, entitled "Medium-term plan for the period 1980-1983", was not convincing; in view of the fact that the preparatory work on the question had not been done, the Committee had good reason to demur as other committees had in the past.

40. His delegation shared the feelings of those who were concerned at the fact that the time-table for considering and approving the medium-term plan was not being adhered to, but believed that that deviation, which was due to the late submission of documents, was entirely justified by the desire to ensure that the United Nations had an effective planning and programming system. It was in the interest both of intergovernmental bodies and of the Secretariat to draw up a satisfactory medium-term plan.

41. It had also been argued that the CPC and ACABQ reports on the medium-term plan might enable the Fifth Committee to consider the plan and to submit recommendations on the subject to the General Assembly. However, that applied only to recommendations for improving the method of planning and programming and the procedure for considering and approving the plan, since the Advisory Committee, as indicated in its report (A/33/345), had considered only the financial data contained in the draft medium-term plan, and the omissions in the documents submitted on that subject were clear from the Advisory Committee's report. In the absence of any additional information, the Fifth Committee had no alternative but to acknowledge that the documents relating to the medium-term plan could not serve as a basis for preparing the United Nations budget proposals for the next biennium.

42. The Committee for Programme and Co-ordination stated in its report (A/33/38) that "planning and programming documents of the United Nations, being policy-

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(Mr. Belyaev, Byelorussian SSR)

oriented and political in their nature, should be examined by the principal policy-making organs of the United Nations, namely, the Economic and Social Council General Assembly and its Main Committees dealing with political and economic and social questions" (para. 132). In addition, CPC had considered it "worthwhile to examine in greater detail the whole sequence in which the subsidiary bodies should deal with the planning and programming documents and to determine what kind of documentation was needed at each stage of the sequence and for each of the bodies involved in programme planning and the evaluation process" (para. 133). Some members of CPC had suggested that there should be a session of the Economic and Social Council devoted to planning (para. 367). CPC had made those observations because of its concern at the current state of planning and programming, the actual outcome of which was the draft plan which had been submitted.

43. The main task of the Fifth Committee in the matter was therefore to endorse the approach to its work recommended by CPC; for if it approved the draft medium-term plan solely on the basis of the CPC report, it would be encouraging executing organs to disregard the numerous recommendations and resolutions of the Ad Hoc Committee of Experts to Examine the Finances of the United Nations and the Specialized Agencies, the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, the Economic and Social Council and its subsidiary organs and the General Assembly itself aimed at improved planning and programme budgeting, and would thus be forcing CPC and the Economic and Social Council to undertake in 1979 a purely theoretical study of the problems raised by the medium-term plan.

44. His delegation was not convinced that the draft plan must at all costs be approved in 1978, on the pretext that the Secretariat would otherwise be unable to prepare the proposed budget for the biennium 1980-1981. A medium-term plan was in existence for the period 1978-1980, having been approved by the General Assembly in its resolution 31/93. Moreover, the financial data given in the draft medium-term plan were of no practical value, particularly for preparing the proposed budget, and the quality of the draft plan was not such as would help to solve the problem of the relationship between the plan and the budget. The Secretariat could draw up a proposed budget for the coming biennium on the basis of the existing plan, taking into account the resolutions of the General Assembly, especially resolutions 3534 (XXX) and 32/211, and the observations made during the discussion of the budget for 1978-1979. Finally, the Secretariat could benefit from the authoritative opinions of CPC, the Economic and Social Council and the Advisory Committee.

45. The fact that the draft medium-term plan was not ready had been attributed to the restructuring of the economic and social sectors of the United Nations system, and CPC had taken that circumstance into account by dividing its session into two parts and holding meetings in the evening and on non-working days. However, while restructuring might account for the delay in submitting documents, it did not explain the mediocre quality of those documents, the absence of vital information, the inclusion of certain activities and the reorientation of others without the prior approval of the governing bodies concerned, and the fact that no

(Mr. Belyaev, Byelorussian SSR)

account had been taken of General Assembly decisions that the Secretariat should propose alternative strategies for achieving set objectives and should indicate which programmes or programme elements were obsolete, of marginal usefulness or ineffective. Such defects could be attributed only to inability or reluctance to appreciate the advantages of the new planning and programming system.

46. It had been argued that the General Assembly was the supreme organ empowered to take a decision on the draft medium-term plan. While the powers of the General Assembly could hardly be disputed, the Fifth Committee for its part was only one of the principal organs responsible for submitting recommendations to the Assembly on the basis of an in-depth consideration of the items on the agenda and of the recommendations of subsidiary organs. The Committee did not have full documentation to consider the draft medium-term plan, since it had no recommendation from the Economic and Social Council concerning the draft plan and since the CPC report (A/33/38) was devoted largely to analysing the various documents relating to the draft plan and dealt with the substance of the activities of bodies within the United Nations system only in a very few cases.

47. His delegation, which was a member of CPC, noted with satisfaction that its views and those of other delegations were accurately reflected in the CPC report. It was glad to see that the Economic and Social Council and the Fifth Committee appreciated the results of the work of CPC at its eighteenth session, and in particular the conclusions and recommendations which CPC had submitted with regard to the draft medium-term plan. While there was no point in dwelling on the CPC report, the Fifth Committee should nevertheless study the results achieved by CPC following its consideration of the documents relating to the medium-term plan in order to determine whether it could use them as a basis for formulating its own recommendations on the subject.

48. However, of the 30 chapters of the medium-term plan, CPC had considered six only cursorily and had recommended that three others should not be included in the plan. It had considered that the first chapter did not fulfil the requirements of General Assembly resolution 31/93, had decided to postpone consideration of the problems dealt with in chapter 2 until 1979, and had concluded that the suggestions made in the course of the discussion of chapter 27 should be referred to the Economic and Social Council and to the General Assembly for a decision on the title and structure of the programme. In short, CPC had either expressed a negative opinion or refrained from reaching any definite conclusion on 12 of the chapters of the draft plan and, in the case of the remaining chapters, it had merely submitted recommendations on the form and content of the programmes and programme elements with a view to the redrafting of the documents submitted.

49. CPC had not been in a position to accomplish its main task, because it had not been able to devote the necessary attention to interagency co-ordination, to the elimination of duplication in the programmes of United Nations agencies, or to the discontinuance of programmes or programme elements which were obsolete, of

(Mr. Belyaev, Byelorussian SSR)

marginal usefulness or ineffective. The CPC report did not contain any recommendation to approve either the draft medium-term plan as a whole or the various programmes, except for the transport programme.

50. His delegation was therefore not convinced that the Fifth Committee could analyse programmes which had not been studied by CPC, consider the major changes it had recommended in the other programmes, or submit recommendations to the General Assembly. It could certainly not recommend approval of the existing draft medium-term plan which, according to General Assembly resolution 31/93 was to serve as the basis for all activities of United Nations bodies. First of all, the documents considered by CPC had not been revised and, secondly, the Fifth Committee was not competent to consider the activities carried out by the United Nations in the field of human settlements, natural resources and energy, or transnational corporations, and in any case it had not enough time at its disposal.

51. Consequently, the Fifth Committee should recommend that the General Assembly should express serious concern at the delay in the submission of the documents relating to the draft medium-term plan for 1980-1983, and at their mediocre quality; take note of CPC's report on the work of its eighteenth session and of the report of the Advisory Committee on the documents relating to the draft medium-term plan; take account of the Economic and Social Council decision on the medium-term plan; indicate that it was deeply concerned over the fact that the main provisions of its resolutions 31/93 and 32/201 on planning and programming had not been implemented when the documents on the medium-term plan for the period 1980-1983 had been prepared; postpone consideration of the medium-term plan for the period 1980-1983 until its thirty-fourth session; request the Secretary-General to submit the necessary documentation to CPC and the Economic and Social Council in time to enable them to follow the schedule they had set for consideration of the medium-term plan in 1979, and recommend that the Secretary-General prepare the draft programme budget for the biennium 1980-1981 on the basis of the United Nations medium-term plan in effect for the period 1978-1981 and of the appropriations approved under the regular budget for the period 1978-1979, in strict compliance with the provisions of General Assembly resolutions 3534 (XXX), 31/93 and 32/111, on the understanding that the growth rates of the various programmes might be zero, or even reduced.

52. His delegation was willing to participate in the elaboration of recommendations which the Committee could adopt unanimously. His delegation had been consistently concerned about the efficiency of the administration and budgeting of the United Nations, believing that its limited resources should be used in a rational and profitable way, so that the major tasks defined in the Charter of the United Nations could be carried out first of all, by means of a thorough planning, programming and budgeting system. However, the efforts made in recent years to perfect the system had not yet produced the desired results or made it possible to identify the substantial internal resources which could be released as a result of the completion, reduction, reorganization or discontinuance of certain activities, the elimination of duplication and other changes in United Nations activities.

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53. Mr. MINCHEV (Bulgaria) said he had noted both the positive aspects and the serious short-comings of the draft medium-term plan submitted by the Secretariat. In his view, the Secretariat should make an effort to draft the plan in such a way as to facilitate the task of the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination and enable it to do quality work. He associated his delegation with those which had, with good reason, expressed concern and dissatisfaction at the Secretariat's failure to prepare and submit the relevant documentation at the proper time. In the process of the elaboration of some sections of the draft medium term plan there had been certain deviations from the directives of the General Assembly and intergovernmental bodies within the United Nations system, and there were grounds for saying that duplication had not been eliminated. No provision had been made for singling out completed, obsolete or only marginally effective programme elements with a view to their removal, which would lead to significant savings.

54. Some of the programmes showed poor draftsmanship. For instance, sections of the plan such as "The planning process in the United Nations" and "Financial data" did not contain the type of information requested by the General Assembly in resolution 31/93. Precisely for that reason the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination had recommended that those sections should not be included in the medium-term plan for 1980-1983, and that the question of the planning process in the United Nations should be considered in 1979. His delegation also supported the CPC recommendation that the chapters on integrated programmes for rural development and development information services should not be included in the medium-term plan.

55. He noted that the Economic and Social Council had decided to discuss the draft plan at one of its 1979 sessions. In his view that decision reflected the wishes of a number of delegations, which had correctly pointed out that they had difficulties in taking a position on the draft medium-term plan because they had not had enough time to study it. His delegation shared the views expressed by several representatives who had underlined that the Economic and Social Council decision did not contain a recommendation concerning the consideration and approval of the draft medium-term plan for 1980-1983 at the current session of the General Assembly. His delegation therefore believed it was quite reasonable to suggest that the Secretariat should prepare a draft programme budget for the biennium 1980-1981 on the basis of the programme budget for the current biennium and on a zero growth-rate basis, as that would be a way out of the current difficulties. The draft could be corrected during the following year, if necessary, to reflect the results of the discussion on the medium-term plan for the period 1980-1983 by the Economic and Social Council.

56. In conclusion, he pointed out that CPC should continue to perform its role in co-ordinating United Nations activities at the intergovernmental level.

57. Mr. BLACKMAN (Barbados) said that his delegation considered the medium-term plan to be one of the most important items on the Fifth Committee's agenda. It recognized that the planning process for a period of four years was difficult for a bureaucracy of the size and nature of the United Nations which had such diverse global responsibilities, and it was grateful to the Secretariat for its efforts in that regard.

(Mr. Blackman, Barbados)

58. His delegation was of the view that the medium-term plan could neither be discussed nor assessed in isolation from the reports of the Joint Inspection Unit on programming and evaluation in the United Nations and on the United Nations public administration and finance programme (A/33/226 and A/33/227), and in that connexion it was grateful to the authors of those reports for having pointed to many of the weaknesses in the planning and programming systems of the Secretariat and for having made comprehensive recommendations aimed at redefining and qualitatively improving the planning and programming process.

59. He had no wish to repeat the criticisms which had been made by other representatives concerning the medium-term plan, but wished merely to state that his delegation endorsed the views of the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination and of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions in their respective reports (A/33/38, paras. 51-98 and A/33/345, paras. 7, 11-14 and 18). He commended the Chairmen of CPC and of the Advisory Committee for their constructive and critical analysis of the methods used in the preparation of the medium-term plan. However, he was somewhat concerned at the proposed relative real growth rates for regional food and agriculture and technical assistance programmes, and for the international trade programme. As a developing country, Barbados was strongly opposed to any plan designed to stunt sustained development and economic growth among developing countries.

60. He urged the Secretariat to pursue with vigour the recommendations on programming and evaluation put forward by the Joint Inspection Unit in document A/33/226. He noted with satisfaction that the Secretariat was taking the measures necessary to implement recommendations 2-6 set forth in that document. Moreover, his delegation stressed the need to adopt time-limited objectives and to develop precise indicators for measuring achievement. Future plans should clearly identify programmes that were obsolete, of marginal usefulness or ineffective in order to reduce expenditure and thereby reduce the financial burden borne by Member States. Finally, he hoped that in future medium-term plans would be communicated to CPC and the Economic and Social Council early enough to enable those bodies to submit recommendations to the General Assembly, as prescribed in paragraph 3 (b) of its resolution 31/93. He had reservations with regard to the possibility of using the draft plan as a basis for the preparation of the draft programme budget for the following biennium until CPC and the Economic and Social Council had considered the relevant chapters in detail.

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

Revised estimates under sections 13A (United Nations Environment Programme) and 13B (Habitat : Human Settlements) (continued) (A/C.5/33/42)

61. Mr. DEBATTI (Assistant Secretary-General for Financial Services, Controller), referring to questions asked at the preceding meeting, said, in reply to a proposal by the representative of the United States of America on evaluating the usefulness of meetings of the officers of the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme and the Commission on Human Settlements, that provision had



been made for those meetings in General Assembly resolution 32/162 but that so far only one such meeting had been held, in July 1978, before the Executive Director of the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements had been appointed. It was therefore still too early to assess the value of those meetings, but a report on that question would be submitted in due course. As to whether one or two meetings should be held each year, he observed that General Assembly resolution 32/162 (sect. VI, para. 1) made provision for two meetings per year. That question deserved close consideration, and in the near future the interested parties would try to determine whether one meeting annually might suffice.

62. In replying to another question by the representative of the United States about whether extrabudgetary funds could not be used to finance those meetings, he said that the General Assembly had not mentioned that possibility when it had adopted resolution 32/162, and that the costs of organizing the meetings were normally charged to the regular budget. With regard to the possibility of using appropriations already approved in sections 13A and 13B to cover travel costs, he pointed out that those appropriations amounted to only \$342,600 and \$74,900, respectively, and were therefore too small to cover the additional expenditures, which would amount to \$20,000 in each of those sections, if the Advisory Committee's recommendation was adopted. However, an effort would be made to achieve equivalent savings on staff travel costs, which would yield the same result. To decide, as matters stood, to use existing appropriations to finance travel costs would seriously jeopardize the activities for which provision was made in section 13, particularly section 13B.

63. In reply to a question asked by the representative of the Philippines, he explained that the assumption that the officers would make return journeys to and from Geneva, Bangkok, Santiago, Addis Ababa or Beirut had been made solely for the purpose of arriving at cost estimates, but that only travel costs actually incurred would be reimbursed.

64. With regard to standards of travel, he pointed out that under General Assembly resolution 2245 (XXI), "payment of travel expenses shall be limited to the cost of first-class accommodation ... in the case of ... all persons who serve in their individual capacities, as distinct from those serving as representatives of Governments". Since the Secretary-General stated, in paragraph 3 of document A/C.5/33/42, that "the members of the two bureaux would participate in the biennial meetings as the designated representatives of the organ of which they were a member rather than on behalf of their Governments," they would be entitled to first-class travel, subject, of course, to the limits set by General Assembly resolution 32/198, according to which persons previously entitled to first-class travel would be entitled to first-class travel only when the duration of a particular flight exceeded nine hours. The Secretary-General had therefore complied with the provisions of that resolution.

65. Mr. GARRIDO (Philippines) asked whether the Controller was not empowered to modify the provisions governing payment of the cost of first-class travel, as an economy measure.

66. Mr. DEBATIN (Assistant Secretary-General for Financial Services, Controller) said that only the Secretary-General could make such a decision. Should it prove possible, however, to pay the cost of economy-class rather than first-class travel, the United Nations would not fail to do so in order to achieve savings.

67. An additional appropriation of \$40,000 under sections 13A and 13B was approved by 61 votes to 13, with 3 abstentions.

68. Mrs. DERRE (France), speaking in explanation of vote, said that her delegation had voted against the decision that had just been approved for a number of reasons. First, her delegation had abstained in the vote on General Assembly resolution 32/162. Secondly, in her opinion no attempt had been made to achieve savings, whereas it would have been possible to take advantage of the meeting at Nairobi of the Governing Council of UNEP and the Commission on Human Settlements to arrange meetings between the Executive Directors of UNEP and the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements. Since the activities in question were financed mainly by voluntary contributions, travel planned in connexion with those activities should also be financed in the same way. Moreover, it was planned to increase expenditure on travel by 10 per cent at a time when most airlines were trying to reduce fares. Lastly, it was incorrect to say that members of bodies and subsidiary bodies served in their individual capacities and not as representatives of Governments.

69. Mr. KUYAIA (Japan) said that his delegation had voted in favour of the decision that had just been adopted, but that, in its opinion, it would be possible to reduce the expenditure incurred in connexion with the meeting proposed in paragraph 1 of section VI of General Assembly resolution 32/162 without diminishing its usefulness. His delegation felt that the Commission on Human Settlements would be in the best position to consider the question at its second session in spring 1979.

70. Mr. CUNNINGHAM (United States of America) said that his delegation had voted against the appropriation because, in its view, the meeting under consideration could be made to coincide with other meetings planned by UNEP and the Habitat Centre, which would make it possible to achieve savings. Moreover, the possibility of using funds contributed on a voluntary basis should be considered in greater detail.

Revision of the Financial Regulations of the United Nations (continued)  
(A/C.5/32/34 and Corr.1; A/33/7/Add.11)

71. Mr. SAFRONCHUK (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that, following consultations on the amendment submitted by his delegation, his delegation had decided that the wording of its amendment to regulation 3.10 proposed by the Advisory Committee (A/33/7/Add.11) would be: "... (a) are for activities which have been approved by the General Assembly and it is clear from this approval or from the nature of these activities that they are expected to continue beyond the end of the current financial period"; the rest of the text would be unchanged. That wording should be acceptable to both the Chairman of the Advisory Committee and the Controller. Moreover, it was the Secretariat that had to accept the will of the General Assembly, and not the other way around.

72. Mr. THOMAS (Trinidad and Tobago) said that the wording of the Soviet Union was too vague to dispel his delegation's misgivings. It was not clear, for example, whether the expression "provided that ... it is clear from this approval" meant that each resolution adopted on questions of the type concerned should embody a specific statement or what was to be done in the absence of such a specific statement. Moreover, it was uncertain whether, when invoking "the nature" of the activities, the inherent nature of the activities would suffice or whether someone would have to make a decision that the nature of the activities would require financial commitments to be entered into for a future financial period. The wording was therefore likely to raise serious problems of interpretation. For that reason his delegation would vote against the Soviet amendment.
73. The amendment proposed by the Soviet delegation was rejected by 32 votes to 29, with 7 abstentions.
74. The CHAIRMAN said, in reply to a question from the representative of the Soviet Union, that there had in fact been a quorum.
75. Mr. PIRSON (Belgium) said that he was not convinced that the existing text of financial regulation 3.10 was entirely satisfactory. He had, in fact, made an informal suggestion on the subject. He believed that more thought should be given to the matter and accordingly proposed that the vote on that important regulation should be deferred, because by approving it delegations would be approving the Secretary-General's decisions in advance.
76. Mr. SAFRONCHUK (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that the fact that his delegation's amendment had been rejected did not prevent any other delegation from submitting an amendment in writing for distribution before a vote was taken on the text of the regulation proposed by the Advisory Committee; his delegation could itself submit a further amendment.
77. Mr. STUART (United Kingdom) pointed out that, under the rules of procedure, delegations could not engage in further debate about the vote on financial regulation 3.10; they could at most make an explanation of vote before the vote.
78. Mr. PIRSON (Belgium) said, in explanation of vote before the vote, that his delegation would vote against the proposed financial regulation 3.10.
79. Mrs. DERRE (France) said that her delegation too would vote against regulation 3.10, because the Committee had not exhausted all opportunities for negotiation.
80. Mr. EL-AYADHI (Tunisia), supported by Mr. MONTHE (United Republic of Cameroon), suggested that the French text of regulation 3.10 should be re-examined, because it was likely to lead to confusion.
81. Mr. CUNNINGHAM (United States of America) said that his delegation would vote in favour of the text of the regulation proposed by the Advisory Committee, which gave the Secretary-General the powers he needed to ensure the financial management of the Organization.

82. New regulation 3.10 proposed by the Advisory Committee for inclusion in the Financial Regulations was approved by 49 votes to 9, with 17 abstentions.

83. Mr. SAFRONCHUK (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said, in explanation of vote, that the Committee had made a mistake in rejecting his delegation's amendment because new regulation 3.10 had not received sufficient support to guarantee its effective implementation. His delegation had not approved regulation 3.10 and reserved the right to express its views on commitments entered into by the Secretary-General in the light of future resolutions adopted by the General Assembly on that subject. If the Secretary-General entered into commitments that went beyond the framework of resolutions adopted by the Assembly and did not arise from the nature of activities approved by the Assembly, his delegation would vote against any appropriations requested for them.

84. The CHAIRMAN proposed that the Committee should, if it had no objection, approve the new text of financial regulation 10.2 proposed by the Secretary-General (A/C.5/32/34, annex I) without the additional final phrase, approve the recommendations of the Advisory Committee to accept the new wording proposed by the Secretary-General for the resolution on unforeseen and extraordinary expenses and to have the new wording reflected in the draft resolution on unforeseen and extraordinary expenses to be submitted at the thirty-fourth session, and endorse that Committee's recommendation that, of the proposals contained in annex II to the Secretary-General's report, only the text of paragraph 6 (e) should be approved.

85. It was so decided.

AGENDA ITEM 112: UNITED NATIONS PENSION SYSTEM (continued)

(a) REPORT OF THE UNITED NATIONS JOINT STAFF PENSION BOARD (continued)  
(A/33/9 and Add.1 and Corr.1, A/33/375; A/C.5/33/48, A/C.5/33/L.16)

(b) REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (continued) (A/33/375; A/C.5/33/7)

86. Mr. LANDAU (Austria) said that he was impressed with the high quality of the Board's report and by its carefully thought-out recommendations, particularly in view of the complexity of the task of establishing, in response to General Assembly resolution 31/196, a uniform system of adjustment of pensions aimed at maintaining their purchasing power in the light of changes in the cost of living and currency fluctuations.

87. The recommendations of the Board, particularly with regard to the revised pension adjustment system, were intended to maintain the uniform basis for the calculation of benefits while ensuring that equitable adjustments could be made for future fluctuations in the relationship between the United States dollar and the currency of the country of residence of the pensioner and for local cost of living changes. Like the Advisory Committee, his delegation believed that the proposed system did not solve all existing problems, because such an adjustment system could not tackle all questions having repercussions on a pension system to which 13 separate organizations were affiliated and which had to meet a tremendous variety

(Mr. Landau, Austria)

of situations, and it fully supported the recommendation made by the Advisory Committee in paragraph 26 of its report (A/33/375).

88. His delegation also agreed with the Advisory Committee on the importance of the question of the determination of pensionable remuneration, which was to be studied jointly by the Pension Board and the International Civil Service Commission. In his delegation's view, it was very important to make a clear distinction between the conditions at the duty station and the requirements of a pensioner living in his home country, if other than the country of the duty station.

89. With regard to the other relatively minor changes proposed by the Board, his delegation approved the proposal to increase the rate of accumulation for the thirty-first and thirty-second years of service and believed there would be some merit in adopting a rate of accumulation based on thirty-five years of contributory service. On the other hand, his delegation believed that the recommendation concerning staff members who retired between the ages of 55 and 59 after 30 years or more of contributory service would place too heavy a burden on the financial resources of the Pension Fund. He pointed out that, contrary to the expectations expressed in the report of the Board on its sixteenth session in July 1971, the liberalization of the provisions concerning early retirement benefits had not been offset by the decision to extend the retirement age of serving staff beyond the age of 60 if they so desired. It would therefore be imprudent further to liberalize the early retirement provisions.

90. With regard to the third recommendation of the Board, on applying an actuarial reduction of 2 per cent instead of 6 per cent in the case of staff members having 25 years of contributory service who decided to retire before the age of 55 and opted for a deferred retirement benefit commencing at the age of 65, his delegation believed that that was a minor change and would have no difficulty in supporting it.

91. His delegation also supported the Board's decision to increase the interest rate used for calculating the value of the lump-sum portion of the pension (A/33/9, paras. 92-94), but it believed that a rate of 4 per cent should be used for the period of contributory service completed both before and after the entry into force of the new interest rate, a step which would enable the Board to achieve much larger savings than those mentioned by the Consulting Actuary.

92. His delegation supported the Board's recommendations on the Emergency Fund, on administrative expenses for 1979 and on additional posts and reclassifications. Lastly, in connexion with investments (A/32/9, paras. 77-85 and A/C.5/33/7), his delegation noted with satisfaction the increase in investments in developing countries and the results so far obtained, and it looked forward to the additional information to be submitted by the Secretary-General at the thirty-fourth session in pursuance of Assembly resolution 32/73. It also approved the composition of the Investment Committee.

The meeting rose at 11.05 a.m.