

United Nations
**GENERAL
ASSEMBLY**



FIFTH COMMITTEE
71st meeting
held on
Wednesday, 17 January 1979
at 3 p.m.
New York

THIRTY-THIRD SESSION,
*Official Records **

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 71st MEETING

Chairman: Mr. KOBINA SEKYI (Ghana)

CONTENTS

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

Services provided by the United Nations to activities financed from
extrabudgetary resources (continued)

Administrative and financial implications of draft resolutions II and VI
submitted by the Third Committee in document A/33/479 concerning agenda
item 88 (continued)

Administrative and financial implications of resolutions and decisions of the
Trade and Development Board at its eighteenth session at Geneva

Administrative and financial implications of the draft resolution contained
in document A/C.2/33/L.84/Rev.1 concerning agenda item 12

Performance report (continued)

Revised estimates under section 1, Executive direction and management, Office
for Special Political Questions (continued)

Administrative and financial implications of the draft resolution contained
in document A/C.2/33/L.39/Rev.2 concerning agenda item 70

Organization of work

* This record is subject to correction. Corrections should be incorporated in a copy of
the record and should be sent *within one week of the date of publication* to the Chief,
Official Records Editing Section, room A-3550.

Corrections will be issued shortly after the end of the session, in a separate fascicle for
each Committee.

Distr. GENERAL
A/C.5/33/SR.71
22 January 1979

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

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

Services provided by the United Nations to activities financed from extrabudgetary resources (continued) (A/C.5/31/33 and Corr.1; A/C.5/32/29 and Corr.1)

1. The CHAIRMAN informed the Committee that the Japanese delegation was preparing a draft decision on services provided by the United Nations to activities financed from extrabudgetary resources and would welcome contributions from other delegations.

Administrative and financial implications of draft resolutions II and VI submitted by the Third Committee in document A/33/479 concerning agenda item 88 (continued) (A/33/7/Add.27; A/C.5/33/90, A/C.5/33/97 and Corr.1)

2. Mr. BUJ FLORES (Mexico), referring to the regional preparatory meetings for the World Conference, said that his delegation was not clear as to what economies might be achieved through the efficient arrangement of itineraries, recommended in paragraph 14 of the report of ACABQ (A/33/7/Add.27). He wished to know whether the ACABQ recommendation implied that the Secretariat should absorb part of the \$37,130 referred to in paragraph 17 of the same document.

3. Mr. SCHMIDT (Federal Republic of Germany) said that the request made in document A/C.5/33/97 seemed to be yet another example of the Secretary-General's availing himself of almost every possible opportunity provided by resolutions proposed by the Main Committees of the Assembly to request additional resources from Member States. That impression was borne out by the ACABQ report, which had shown that the financial implications of the draft resolutions as estimated by the Secretary-General were too high.

4. In paragraph 27 of document A/C.5/33/97, the Secretary-General requested approximately \$22,900 for temporary assistance at the P-5 level to prepare the European regional review and evaluation and a draft European regional programme of action. His delegation was not aware of any decision taken by an intergovernmental body either within or outside the United Nations authorizing the Secretary-General to prepare a draft European programme of that kind. He asked whether any justification for such action existed in a legislative mandate. If not, his delegation would object strongly to the Secretary-General's decision to undertake such a programme in the highly sensitive area of human rights in Europe.

5. Furthermore, he wished to stress that ECE had no competence for social affairs, although ACABQ had stated that the relevant work would be done in Geneva, where ECE had its seat. His delegation believed that the necessary evaluation and review reports were available in New York. That, however, was a secondary consideration, as it was doubtful whether the Secretary-General had a mandate to carry out that programme.

/...

6. Mr. CUNNINGHAM (United States of America) expressed his delegation's appreciation of the careful study of the Secretary-General's request carried out by ACABQ. However, it believed that programme increases should not be sought at the mid-point in the biennium and that any requests for resources should be offset by corresponding reductions in programmes currently being carried out within the United Nations.
7. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions), in reply to the question raised by the representative of Mexico, said that the consolidated paper on conference servicing costs (A/C.5/33/100) indicated that all but \$21,800 of the conference servicing estimate for 1979 would be absorbed. The amount of \$37,130 referred to in paragraph 17 of document A/33/7/Add.27 would, therefore, be absorbed to the extent that it related to conference servicing costs of the United Nations/UNESCO Seminar on Women and the Media.
8. With regard to the question raised by the representative of the Federal Republic of Germany, he said that ACABQ had originally been informed that an official from ECE would be detailed to come to Headquarters to perform the functions referred to in paragraph 16 of document A/33/7/Add.27. However, it had subsequently been decided that the official should remain in Geneva and that the amount of \$22,900 estimated on the basis of New York expenditure would not be increased.
9. Mr. UY (Department of International Economic and Social Affairs), in reply to the question put by the representative of the Federal Republic of Germany, said that the World Plan of Action adopted in Mexico had provided for the holding of a conference in 1980 for the purpose of a mid-decade assessment of the advances achieved under the Plan. One of the major items on the agenda of the Conference would, therefore, be the review and appraisal of progress made. Regional meetings were being held in that connexion. ECE had indicated that, although it was not able to hold a meeting, it would hold a seminar, and the Secretariat at Headquarters had accordingly provided for the preparation of a paper, for which purpose the P-5 staff member was to be recruited.
10. It was possibly true that the secretariat of ECE did not have as much competence with regard to women as did the Advancement of Women Branch at Headquarters and, for that reason, it had originally been intended that a staff member, to be recruited for the purpose, should be posted to New York. However, ECE had decided that the staff member should be posted to Geneva and should spend one month in New York for consultations. The change had been explained to ACABQ, which had not objected to the recruitment of a temporary staff member but had stipulated that any additional funds required should be absorbed.
11. The CHAIRMAN said he thought that competence was an indivisible concept. The representative of the Federal Republic of Germany had stated that his delegation believed that ECE was not competent to deal with the matter. The representative of the Budget Division should address the specific question raised by the Federal Republic of Germany.

12. Mr. UY (Department of International Economic and Social Affairs) said that, in fact, ECE was not competent for the task.
13. Mr. SCHMIDT (Federal Republic of Germany) repeated his earlier question concerning the Secretary-General's mandate for a draft European programme of action and said that he wished to register his delegation's objection to the Secretary-General's adopting a programme for which he, apparently, had no mandate.
14. Mr. PALAMARCHUK (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that, while acknowledging the work done by ACABQ in the present instance, his delegation was not satisfied with that Committee's recommendations. On the basis of its position of principle, his delegation believed that any funds required for new activities launched during the biennium should be obtained through the transfer of resources within the current budget. Furthermore, the reports of the Secretary-General and ACABQ revealed that yet another unit was to be set up and would duplicate the work done by existing Secretariat units. The latter, his delegation believed, should do all the work necessary for the preparation and organization of the Conference. For those reasons, his delegation would not be in a position to support the Advisory Committee's recommendations.
15. Mr. GREEN (New Zealand) repeated the question he had raised at the 70th meeting. The Secretary-General had indicated that a large proportion of the funds for the regionally oriented information materials would be sought from sources outside the regular budget, although he had not made it clear what those sources were. Bearing in mind the caveat contained in paragraph 24 of the ACABQ report, his delegation wanted an assurance that adequate financial resources would be available.
16. Mr. MILLS (Budget Division) said that funds were being sought from Governments which had previously contributed on an extrabudgetary basis to information activities and from other sources, which he was not in a position to list. However, he was able to state that if the funds were not available, the activities would not be undertaken.
17. The CHAIRMAN suggested that the Committee should request the Rapporteur (1) to report directly to the General Assembly that, should it adopt draft resolution VI in document A/33/479, a total additional appropriation of \$598,600 would be required under sections 4 and 21 of the programme budget for the biennium 1978-1979, a further appropriation of \$122,600 would be required under section 25 for staff assessment, offset by a corresponding amount under income section 1, and conference servicing costs not exceeding \$21,800 would be considered in the context of the consolidated paper on conference servicing costs (A/C.5/33/100); and (2) to report directly to the General Assembly that, should it adopt draft resolution II in document A/33/479, an additional appropriation of \$14,000 would be required under section 4 of the programme budget for the biennium 1978-1979 and a further appropriation of \$4,000 would be required under section 25 for staff assessment, offset by a corresponding amount under income section 1.
18. The Chairman's suggestion was adopted by 61 votes to 8, with 4 abstentions.

Administrative and financial implications of resolutions and decisions of the Trade and Development Board at its eighteenth session at Geneva (A/33/7/Add.28; A/C.5/33/52)

19. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) said that the Trade and Development Board had requested that the Integrated Programme for Commodities should be extended until the end of 1979. The Secretary-General had indicated in his report (A/C.5/33/52) that an extension of the Programme would require additional appropriations under section 11A of the programme budget and corresponding conference servicing costs under section 23B. The Secretary-General had stated that the same level of resources would be required in 1979 as in 1978, recosted, of course, to take into account variations in currency exchange rates. Accordingly, the Secretary-General was requesting an additional appropriation of \$1,671,300 under section 11A of the programme budget. An amount had been appropriated for consultant services in 1978, but the Secretary-General, heeding the injunction of the General Assembly in resolution 32/209, was not requesting an additional appropriation for 1979.

20. The Advisory Committee noted that the Secretary-General had not fully explained the need for the same level of resources in 1979. In paragraph 7 of its report, the Advisory Committee indicated that it expected the level of staffing resources to be reviewed in the light of the results of the next session of UNCTAD, scheduled to take place during the first half of 1979. On that understanding, the Advisory Committee was prepared to recommend approval of the Secretary-General's request.

21. Mr. PALAMARCHUK (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that, in accordance with the well-known position of his delegation regarding additional appropriations, his delegation would not be able to support the Secretary-General's request.

22. Mr. BROTDININGRAT (Indonesia) said that his delegation was disappointed with the slow progress of the negotiations within the framework of the Integrated Programme for Commodities. As a commodity-exporting country, Indonesia considered the Integrated Programme to be an essential part of efforts to establish the new international economic order. The Programme was of great importance not only to developing countries but to importing countries as well. Efforts towards achieving an integrated programme for commodities should not only be continued but should even be given priority. The Secretary-General's request was far from excessive, and his delegation therefore fully endorsed the Advisory Committee's recommendation.

23. The CHAIRMAN suggested that the Committee should approve an additional appropriation of \$1,671,300 under section 11A of the programme budget for the biennium 1978-1979, and a further amount of \$394,300 under section 25 for staff assessment, offset by a corresponding amount under income section i. Additional appropriations for conference servicing costs not exceeding \$1,003,800 would be considered in the context of the consolidated paper of conference servicing costs (A/C.5/33/100).

24. The Chairman's suggestion was approved by 68 votes to 8, with 2 abstentions.

/...

25. Mr. CUNNINGHAM (United States of America) said that his Government supported the work of the Integrated Programme for Commodities but had abstained in the vote in view of the Secretary-General's failure to justify the need to continue funding the Programme in 1979 at the 1978 level. His delegation maintained, moreover, that it was improper to make net additions to the programme budget at the midpoint of a biennium.

Administrative and financial implications of the draft resolution contained in document A/C.2/33/L.84/Rev.1 concerning agenda item 12 (A/33/7/Add.31; A/C.5/33/109 and Corr.1)

26. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) said that, in adopting as resolution 33/148 the draft resolution recommended by the Second Committee calling for the convening in 1981 of a United Nations Conference on New and Renewable Sources of Energy, the General Assembly had failed to comply with rule 153 of the rules of procedure. In preparing the estimates for the Conference, the Secretary-General had made a number of assumptions which were outlined in paragraph 5 of document A/C.5/33/109. On the basis of those assumptions, the requirements for 1979 were estimated at \$2,095,370, a breakdown of which appeared in paragraph 4 of the Advisory Committee's report (A/33/7/Add.31), while requirements of approximately \$3.8 million were anticipated for the biennium 1980-1981.

27. In paragraphs 8 to 18 of its report, the Advisory Committee analysed the Secretary-General's request for temporary staffing and related expenditure for the Conference secretariat. It was not yet clear whether the Secretary-General of the conference would be appointed from within or outside the Secretariat. The choice of someone from within the Secretariat would, as indicated in paragraph 8 of the Advisory Committee's report, result in a saving in respect of salaries and other related expenses. The Secretary-General was requesting on a temporary-assistance basis 12 Professional and 7 General Service staff in connexion with the Conference. On the assumption that there would be eight technical panels to assist in preparations for the Conference, the Secretary-General requested that the Professional staff members who would service the panels should be graded at the P-5 level. The Advisory Committee had discussed those staffing requests at great length with the representatives of the Secretary-General and had ascertained that staff already available in the Centre for Natural Resources, Energy and Transport might be able to assume responsibility for servicing the panels. The Advisory Committee had also determined on the basis of information presented orally by the representatives of the Secretary-General that all the staff servicing the panels need not be at the P-5 level. The recommendations of the Advisory Committee in paragraph 13 was, therefore, influenced by such considerations.

28. With regard to administrative services for the Conference, the Advisory Committee believed that such services could be provided by the Department of Technical Co-operation for Development. As to public information, the Advisory Committee had noted that, owing to a lack of sufficient information, the Secretary-General had not been able to formulate a detailed information programme.

29. A request for a Professional post to provide editorial assistance had been made, and the Advisory Committee, while agreeing that such assistance would be needed, felt that the volume of documentation was likely to begin increasing only in the latter half of 1979 and that, consequently, the staff resources requested might not be fully utilized. The Advisory Committee's recommendations on that and other staffing requests were set out in paragraphs 10 and 13 to 17 of its report.

30. The Advisory Committee also recommended that a 10-per-cent delayed-recruitment factor should be applied to salaries and common staff costs for the reasons stated in paragraph 18. In paragraph 19, the Advisory Committee recommended that an amount of \$103,650 should be absorbed since, as a result of the removal of Secretariat units from New York to Nairobi and Vienna, additional office space should become available.

31. The Advisory Committee recommended that, should the General Assembly wish to make an exception to the rule set forth in resolution 32/209, 50 work-months of consultant services might be approved for 1979.

32. In the view of the Advisory Committee there was room for economy in respect of travel, and the recommendation in paragraph 22 was predicated on that belief. The requirements for travel, subsistence and conference servicing costs related to the eight technical panels were discussed in paragraphs 23 and 24, and he drew attention to the Advisory Committee's observations in paragraph 24.

33. The General Assembly had requested that the United Nations family should co-operate fully in preparations for the Conference and the Secretary-General had indicated his intention to hold interagency meetings for that purpose. The Advisory Committee trusted that those meetings would lead to positive and concrete results.

34. Since the Secretary-General had not included any estimates for the information programme for the Conference in his report, estimates for that purpose would be considered by the Advisory Committee in the context of the programme budget proposals for the biennium 1980-1981.

35. The recommendations of the Advisory Committee were summarized in paragraphs 27 and 28 of its report.

36. Mr. CUNNINGHAM (United States of America) said that his delegation had drawn attention earlier in the session to the undesirable practice of presenting oral statements of financial implications in the Main Committees of the Assembly. The matter before the Committee was a case in point. An extremely vague oral report had been made in the Second Committee concerning the financial implications of the Conference on New and Renewable Sources of Energy, and, as a result, the General Assembly, in the closing stages of the first part of the session, had acted on the resolution without observing rule 153 of the rules of procedure. In the view of his delegation, that action constituted a serious lapse in procedure. The Advisory Committee had done a thorough and commendable

/...

(Mr. Cunningham, United States)

job in examining the estimates submitted by the Secretary-General and had uncovered many flaws of reasoning. His delegation hesitated to allege that there had been collusion of any kind, but it was difficult to dispel the notion that something other than inadvertence had been responsible for the very unusual procedure which had been followed. In an earlier statement on a different item, the representative of the Federal Republic of Germany had noted the tendency of the Secretariat to use resolutions of the Assembly as pretexts for inflated requests for resources. His delegation therefore wished to lodge a strong protest at the failure of the Secretariat to assist the General Assembly to observe the rules of procedure.

37. As to the substance of the matter, his delegation supported the convening of a conference on such an important matter as energy but believed that the importance of the Conference did not justify the serious lapse in procedure which had occurred. His delegation's attitude to the additional appropriations requested would be guided by its general opposition to net programme growth in the course of a biennium.

38. Mr. SCHMIDT (Federal Republic of Germany) said that, as the representative of the United States had noted, the Committee was faced with yet another example of the Secretariat's use of every possible pretext to seek additional resources.

39. With regard to the estimates for the salary of the Secretary-General of the Conference, his delegation believed that it would have been more in keeping with the normal practice, outlined in the Secretary-General's bulletin in document ST/SGB/160, to assume that the Secretary-General of the Conference would be selected from within the Secretariat. In the event that the Secretary-General of the Conference was chosen from outside the Secretariat, the Secretary-General could have requested additional resources at the appropriate time from the General Assembly or through the Advisory Committee in accordance with the procedure for unforeseen expenditure. Lastly, his delegation did not believe that the rank of the Secretary-General of the Conference should be that of an Under-Secretary-General. As the new Director-General for International Economic Co-operation was to be responsible for over-all co-ordination of the Conference, the Secretary-General of the Conference should have a lesser rank.

40. The CHAIRMAN said that the representative of the Federal Republic of Germany had rightly observed that the more normal procedure would have been to assume that the Secretary-General of the Conference would be appointed from within the Secretariat. He was surprised, therefore, that the Advisory Committee, which was always anxious to find ways of reducing expenditure, had not noted that fact and formulated its recommendation accordingly.

41. Mr. PALAMARCHUK (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that there had been a flagrant violation of rule 153 of the rules of procedure, for which the Secretariat was clearly to blame. In that connexion, he recalled the repeated appeals made by delegations regarding the timely preparation of documents for consideration by the Main Committees and the plenary Assembly. There was a lesson to be learnt from the situation and the General Assembly should in future be extremely demanding with regard to the preparation of documents required for the

/...

(Mr. Palamarchuk, USSR)

proper conduct of its work. Since the General Assembly had already adopted the draft resolution recommended by the Second Committee without complying with the rules of procedure, it was not at all clear what procedure the Fifth Committee should follow in considering the financial implications. He wished to know, in particular, whether the General Assembly would once again consider the item and take a second vote on the resolution.

42. His delegation commended the Advisory Committee for its thorough review of the estimates submitted by the Secretary-General but regretted that there were certain lacunae in its report. Because of the short-comings of the Secretary-General's report, his delegation was unable to support the recommendations of the Advisory Committee regarding the estimates for the Conference. In particular, it considered the requests for additional staffing and travel to be unjustified and felt that an additional appropriation for consultant services would be at variance with decisions of the General Assembly.

43. The CHAIRMAN said that he too was perplexed by the procedural problem that had been created by the Assembly's action. However, his authority as Chairman was limited to the Fifth Committee. The responsibility of the Committee was to consider the item and submit a report on it to the plenary Assembly. It was for the Assembly to decide what action it would take on the report of the Fifth Committee, and he was not in a position to suggest what that action should be.

44. Mr. OREBI (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations) said that the item before the Committee was intimately related to FAO's substantive work programmes. Within the United Nations system, FAO had primary responsibility for matters dealing with fuelwood and charcoal, and was ready to assume responsibility for further technical work on those subjects needed for the proper preparation of the Conference on New and Renewable Sources of Energy. The Director-General was ready to request the Council and Conference of FAO to approve the necessary financial provisions for that work in the biennium 1980-1981, since the programme of work and budget for that period were now under preparation. Under FAO's full budgeting policy and practice, staff and other resources available to the Director-General for 1979 were already planned and committed. Therefore, financing through the United Nations would be required if substantial additional work had to be undertaken by FAO during 1979. It was hoped that that point could be taken into account during the consideration of the financial implications of General Assembly resolution 33/148.

45. FAO had also done extensive work in connexion with animals which provided draught power. Their potential as an energy source was a subject on which little specific work had been done by any international organization. That subject needed to be considered together with related questions on animal production. FAO was ready to assume responsibility for the necessary technical work on that subject on the basis of the same financial arrangements outlined for fuelwood and charcoal.

46. FAO also had interests in other areas covered by resolution 33/148, notably biomass conversion, the agricultural applications of solar and wind power, the

/...

(Mr. Orebi, FAO)

impact on fisheries development of arrangements to exploit hydroelectric, tidal and wave power, as well as the thermal gradient of the sea. FAO was therefore ready to co-operate fully in preparations for the Conference in the interest of co-ordination and coherence of the United Nations system, bearing in mind the need for orderly programming.

47. He wished to emphasize the importance of two principles. First, the technical work of the specialized agencies should not be duplicated by the United Nations itself, including the regional commissions, but should be built on by the United Nations in the preparations for the Conference. Further work was to be carried out by the agencies concerned within the framework agreed by the secretariat of the Conference. Secondly, the agencies, and specifically FAO, could, within reason, be expected to make financial provision in future budgets for additional work requested of them. They should be provided, however, on the same basis as the bodies within the United Nations itself, with financing for those additional expenditures required during a period for which their programme of work and budget had already been approved.

48. In document A/C.5/33/109, the Secretary-General had indicated that supplementary appropriations in the amount of \$717,170 would be needed for 1979. The Advisory Committee had recommended approval of \$307,393. The Fifth Committee might wish to take the FAO statement into consideration when deciding on its final recommendation to the General Assembly.

49. Mr. MILLS (Budget Division), in reply to the United States representative's question concerning the procedural legality of the oral statement made in the Second Committee on the administrative and financial implications of draft resolution A/C.2/33/L.84/Rev.1, said that rule 153 of the rules of procedure read: "No resolution involving expenditure shall be recommended by a committee for approval by the General Assembly unless it is accompanied by an estimate of expenditures prepared by the Secretary-General." There was nothing in rule 153 which made a written statement of administrative and financial implications imperative. There had been many occasions on which a particular committee had had to take a vote before the relevant documents could be prepared. Such committees had requested and received oral statements. The document containing draft resolution A/C.2/33/L.84/Rev.1 had been issued on 13 December 1978, only a few days before the then scheduled end of the session. The Secretary-General had been requested by the Second Committee to provide the statement of administrative and financial implications the following day, which he had done, although 36 hours were normally required. The oral statement had been carefully prepared and contained basically the same material as document A/C.5/33/109. Copies of the four typewritten pages of the oral statement had been made available to delegations at the time.

50. Economic and Social Council resolution 1978/61, on which the draft resolution was based, had been adopted on 3 August 1978. The Second Committee had had ample time to take action. The events in the second half of December had made it difficult to prepare comprehensive and accurate statements of administrative and financial implications, but the statement in connexion with the draft resolution had met the conditions of rule 153 of the rules of procedure.

/...

51. The CHAIRMAN said that whatever the wording of rule 153, statements of administrative and financial implications should be such as to enable committees to take responsible decisions. When millions of dollars were involved, as in the case under consideration, it was only reasonable that the statement should be in written form. It was important not to give the impression that the Secretariat was at complete liberty to provide oral statements of administrative and final implications.

52. Mr. DEBATIN (Assistant Secretary-General for Financial Services, Controller) said it was true that written statements were preferable and should be provided as a rule in the interest of meaningful discussion. The Secretariat had, however, an obligation to serve the committees. It could not have challenged the specific request it had received and had acted responsibly in an attempt to serve the Second Committee.

53. The CHAIRMAN said that the case was a special one which should not be generalized.

54. Mr. CUNNINGHAM (United States of America) said that his delegation endorsed the general thrust of the Chairman's remarks.

55. It was undesirable to attempt to set one committee against another. The Fifth Committee had heard that a particular request had been made by the Second Committee. There was the implication that if a request for an oral statement was made, the Secretariat was thereby relieved of all responsibility for urging the body in question to await a written statement. There seemed to be undue passivity on the part of the Secretariat with regard to the responsibilities it should assume concerning the financial resources and administrative affairs of the United Nations.

56. His delegation maintained its view that there had been a failure to comply with rule 153 of the rules of procedure. It recognized that there had been oral statements in the past, but felt that that was an inadvisable procedure to be resorted to only with extreme caution and to be followed up by a written statement as quickly as possible. The case in question should not be allowed to constitute a precedent.

Performance report (continued) (A/33/7/Add.26; A/C.5/33/25 and Rev.1)

57. Mr. DEBATIN (Assistant Secretary-General for Financial Services, Controller) said he wished to reply to some questions put by the representative of Belgium (cf. A/C.5/33/SR.70, paras. 5-9). When the appropriations for Geneva had been readjusted, the Secretariat had taken into account the fact that not all expenses relating to the Geneva Office were incurred in Geneva. The calculations were based on a very careful analysis of where and in what currencies the money was spent. Items such as representation allowance, honoraria and grants had been excluded from the figures given for Geneva. By the same token, provisions for consultants and experts had been excluded in accordance with General Assembly resolution 32/209. With regard to the units of the Secretariat as they were affected, the Economic Commission for Europe incurred virtually all its expenses

/...

(Mr. Debatin)

in Swiss francs. UNCTAD maintained a liaison office in New York, the cost of which had also been excluded from the calculation of the additional amount requested in the performance report (A/C.5/33/25/Rev.1).

58. The representative of Belgium had asked about the amount requested for miscellaneous expenses. The budget was submitted on the assumption of a certain exchange rate. If the forecast proved to have been incorrect, a correction procedure had to be initiated. The request in the performance report was intended to ensure that funds were really available and had not been eroded by adverse exchange rate fluctuations between the dollar and other currencies. Another problem had to do with the United Nations operational rate of exchange. Disbursements were made on the basis of that rate, which was determined at the beginning of each month. The operational rate had been unable to keep pace with daily declines in the value of the dollar. The resultant additional expenses were given under "Miscellaneous expenses" in annex 1 to document A/C.5/33/25/Rev.1.

59. The representative of Belgium had raised a question concerning the rate of inflation given for Switzerland in the performance report. Inflation rates measured the over-all economic situation of a country. It was important for the Budget Division to know when and to what extent disbursements would be affected by price increases. When reference was made to inflation, it should be borne in mind that salaries accounted for 80 per cent of the Organization's expenditure. The post-adjustment system compensated for cost-of-living increases and for changes in the exchange rate. The 3 per cent inflation rate for Geneva did not, however, affect post adjustment. Under the post-adjustment system, there was an increase in salary only when the cost of living increased by 5 per cent. Even when that ceiling was reached, there was a waiting-period of four months before salaries were increased to reflect the change in cost of living. A reduction from 3 to 1 per cent in the inflation rate would result in no immediately visible savings with regard to 80 per cent of the Organization's expenditure. As to the remaining 20 per cent, the high cost of communications, travel and other operational requirements in Geneva should be borne in mind. The first performance report was based on the various factors affecting disbursements during 1978. For 1979, the Secretariat would have the opportunity in the second performance report to reflect further changes in the situation.

60. The representative of Belgium had inquired who, apart from the Commissioner-General of UNRWA, had authorized the transfer of UNRWA headquarters to Vienna. At the 63rd meeting of the Fifth Committee, the Under-Secretary-General for Administration and Management had stated that in January 1976, owing to an emergency situation in Beirut, UNRWA headquarters had been relocated in Amman and Vienna. In December 1977, when conditions in Beirut had improved, the headquarters offices had been reunited in Beirut. The situation had subsequently deteriorated again and the Commissioner-General of UNRWA had decided to relocate the headquarters outside Lebanon because of the unacceptable operational difficulties created by the lack of security. Following consultations with the Governments of Lebanon, Austria, Jordan and the Syrian Arab Republic, the Commissioner-General had announced that a decision had been taken to relocate the headquarters in Vienna and Amman. The Under-Secretary-General had also stated that the decision had been taken in consultation with the Secretary-General (A/C.5/33/SR.63, para. 65).

/...

61. Mr. ANDERSSON (Sweden) said that expenses in currencies other than the United States dollar were probably known well in advance and that it should not be difficult to estimate what amounts would be required in those currencies. His delegation would like to know whether the Controller had given thought to hedging against currency losses by buying up currencies in advance or whether there were rules prohibiting such operations.

62. Mr. DEBATIN (Assistant Secretary-General for Financial Services, Controller) said that the Budget Division had indeed given much thought to that question and felt it was a very risky business which could result in substantial losses for the Organization and lead the Secretariat into a field which it should not enter. That was also the point of view emerging from the debate on the question in the Negotiating Committee on the Financial Emergency of the United Nations.

Revised estimates under section 1, Executive direction and management, Office for Special Political Questions (continued) (A/33/7/Add.30. A/C.5/33/113)

63. Mr. FALL (Senegal) said that the case made in the reports both of the Secretary-General and ACABQ for reclassifying the post held by the head of the Office for Special Political Questions from the Assistant Secretary-General to the Under-Secretary-General level was plain. The responsibilities and duties attached to the post had become more numerous and more sensitive, and the only objection raised by ACABQ to the immediate reclassification of the post was its general principle that posts should not be reclassified half-way through a biennium. He therefore proposed that the Fifth Committee should approve the recommendation contained in paragraph 7 of the report of the Secretary-General (A/C.5/33/113).

64. Mr. RAMZY (Egypt) pointed out that the reclassification suggested by the Secretary-General would simply restore the post of head of the Office for Special Political Questions to the level originally envisaged for it. It could safely be assumed that the Secretary-General had taken into account the many additional functions currently carried out by the Office, and in the circumstances it was only right not to delay the restoration of the post to its original level. His delegation therefore supported the proposal made by the representative of Senegal, and suggested that a representative of the Secretary-General should present his views on the matter to the Committee.

65. Mr. KABORE (Upper Volta), Mr. CHEBAANE (Tunisia) and Mr. RASON (Madagascar) expressed their unreserved support for the Senegalese proposal.

66. Mr. DAVIDSON (Under-Secretary-General for Administration and Management) said that the Secretary-General's principal reasons for proposing the reclassification of the post were set out in his report (A/C.5/33/113). He emphasized that the post had remained temporary in status for seven years, or rather longer than was normal practice, during which time the work-load had increased substantially. The Secretary-General had previously tried to have the post established as permanent in the context of the budget for the biennium 1974-1975, but his proposal had not been approved at that stage.

/...

(Mr. Davidson)

67. He drew attention to the organizational arrangements outlined in paragraphs 3 to 5 of the Secretary-General's report, pointing out that the previous Commissioner for Technical Co-operation, who had served as head of the Office for Special Political Questions, had been appointed Under-Secretary-General for Technical Co-operation only in March 1978. It had not, therefore, been possible to include a proposal for the permanent upgrading of the post in the budget proposals for the biennium 1978-1979.

68. Mr. CUNNINGHAM (United States of America) said it appeared from the explanation given by the Under-Secretary-General that the request before the Committee resulted in part from the recent restructuring exercise and not merely from the increasing responsibilities incumbent on the head of the Office for Special Political Questions. ACABQ, on the other hand, had considered the issue solely on its merits and had rightly concluded that the matter should be discussed in the context of budget requests for the following biennium. His delegation would be unable to support the proposal made by the representative of Senegal.

69. At the request of the representative of Senegal, a recorded vote was taken on the proposal to approve the recommendation contained in paragraph 7 of the report of the Secretary-General (A/C.5/33/113) concerning the establishment of a post of Under-Secretary-General to accommodate the head of the Office for Special Political Questions.

In favour: Afghanistan, Argentina, Bangladesh, Barbados, Benin, Bhutan, Brazil, Burundi, Cape Verde, Chile, China, Colombia, Cuba, Ecuador, Egypt, Ethiopia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Ivory Coast, Jamaica, Jordan, Kenya, Kuwait, Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Mexico, Nepal, Nigeria, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Peru, Philippines, Portugal, Romania, Rwanda, Senegal, Singapore, Somalia, Spain, Swaziland, Thailand, Tunisia, Uganda, United Republic of Cameroon, Upper Volta, Uruguay, Venezuela, Yugoslavia, Zaire, Zambia.

Against: Australia, Bulgaria, Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic, Canada, France, German Democratic Republic, Germany, Federal Republic of, Hungary, Mongolia, Netherlands, New Zealand, Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America.

Abstaining: Finland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Norway, Sweden.

70. The proposal was adopted by 58 votes to 15, with 6 abstentions.

71. The CHAIRMAN announced that the Committee had concluded its consideration of the subitem.

Administrative and financial implications of the draft resolution contained in document A/C.2/33/L.39/Rev.2 concerning agenda item 70 (A/33/7/Add.29; A/C.5/33/108 and Corr.1)

72. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) noted that the conference-servicing costs arising out of the draft

/...

resolution (A/C.2/33/L.39/Rev.2) would be entirely absorbed within existing resources. The non-conference-servicing costs of \$1,344,300 could be broken down under four headings: technical advisory staff, regional activities, interregional activities and the preparation of a cross-organizational report.

73. As the Advisory Committee noted in paragraphs 8, 9 and 10 of its report (A/33/7/Add.29) the Secretary-General was requesting an appropriation of \$640,000, \$600,000 of which had already been committed to provide additional advisory services in 1978, in addition to the \$550,000 for technical advisory staff in 1978-1979 appropriated by the General Assembly at the thirty-second session. The Secretary-General's request for \$600,000 had come as a complete surprise to ACABQ, which considered the procedure followed in the present case as inconsistent with normal budgetary procedures. The views of ACABQ were set out in paragraphs 9 and 10 of its report. On the basis of assurances from representatives of the Secretary-General, however, that such a situation would not be allowed to recur, the Advisory Committee was prepared to recommend the additional appropriation.

74. The Secretary-General had requested an amount of \$432,700 for regional activities in connexion with operative paragraph 7 of the draft resolution. As explained in paragraph 12 of its report, the Advisory Committee recommended that estimates of requirements for the continuation of regional advisers, regional co-ordinators and local-level staff and related travel should be based on a six-month period rather than the nine months envisaged by the Secretary-General, and that the Secretary-General's estimates should be reduced by one third (\$144,200) accordingly.

75. The Secretary-General's report also contained a request for \$151,600 to cover consultancy fees, travel, and general temporary assistance required for preparation of the cross-organizational report which the Secretary-General had been asked to submit to the fourth session of the preparatory committee for the Conference. But, as the Secretary-General pointed out, General Assembly resolution 32/209 required him not to request further resources for consultant services during the current biennium. Moreover, even if the estimated resources needed were made available immediately, it was the view of the representatives of the Secretary-General that it would be extremely difficult to produce the report in the time required, although the Secretariat had undertaken to do its best in the time available if the funds requested were approved. The Advisory Committee therefore indicated in its report that if the General Assembly wished to make an exception to resolution 32/209 so as to allow the additional consultant resources for the report, an additional appropriation of \$151,600 would be required under section 4 of the programme budget for 1978-1979, as well as a further amount of \$7,300 under section 25 to cover staff assessment for the support staff, to be offset by an equal amount under income section 1.

76. Mr. ABANKWA (Ghana) said that, in view of the difficulties which the cross-organizational report would apparently present, he would appreciate an estimate by a representative of the Secretary-General of how useful the report could be and what it would achieve.

/...

77. Mr. HANSEN (Assistant Secretary-General for Programme Planning and Co-ordination) explained that one report on United Nations activities in the field of science and technology had already been prepared for use by the Preparatory Committee for the Conference and by CPC. CPC, however, had found the first report of little use: it was a compendium of activities under way, rather than an analysis which could be used for planning purposes both within CPC and at the Conference itself. The resolution submitted by the Second Committee therefore referred to the need for the Conference to have the necessary analytical background on United Nations activities under way in the field.

78. The Office for Programme Planning and Co-ordination (IESA) did not yet have the resources necessary to carry out such a task in addition to preparing the studies demanded by CPC. If the report was to be produced, some reinforcement would be necessary.

79. It would be all but impossible to observe the six-week rule for the submission of documents and produce the report by 20 March 1979, i.e., six weeks before the fourth session of the Preparatory Committee. If, on the other hand, the six-week rule could be waived so that the report was presented either during the session or at the Conference itself, there would be a fair chance of producing a worthwhile document. The later the date on which the report had to be submitted, the more satisfactory the report was likely to be.

80. Obviously, Governments must have the opportunity to examine the report if it was to be of real use. If it was agreed that the report would be submitted during the fourth session of the Preparatory Committee, Governments would have three months to consider it; if it was decided that the report would be submitted in the context of the Conference itself, it would be submitted six weeks before the Conference in conformity with the six-week rule.

81. Mr. ABANKWA (Ghana) said that, in the circumstances, he could see very little justification for waiving resolution 32/209 in order to hire consultants for the preparation of the report. His delegation would find it difficult to vote for a waiver of the provisions of the resolution, which could set a dangerous precedent.

82. Mr. GREEN (New Zealand) and Mr. CUNNINGHAM (United States of America) requested that further consideration of the item should be deferred until the following meeting, in order to allow them time to seek instructions from their Governments.

ORGANIZATION OF WORK

83. Mr. CUNNINGHAM (United States of America) said that his delegation had not objected to the Committee's discussion of a number of items which had not been placed on the agenda for the day. Such a procedure, however, presented delegations with great difficulties. He hoped that departures from the advertised agenda would be kept to a minimum, if they could not be avoided altogether.

The meeting rose at 6.15 p.m.