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FIFTH COMMITTEE  
31st meeting  
held on  
Tuesday, 1 November 1977  
at 3 p.m.  
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 31st MEETING

Chairman: Mr. TALIEH (Iran)

later: Mr. GAMBOA (Venezuela)

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

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

AGENDA ITEM 100: PROPOSED PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 1978-1979 (continued)  
(A/32/6, A/32/8, A/32/38; A/C.5/32/12 and 13)

Implications of extending Pension Fund coverage to certain former staff members for service with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) during the period 1950 to 1960 inclusive (A/32/8/Add.2; A/C.5/31/71; A/C.5/32/14)

1. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) said that, in his report, the Secretary-General had not made any proposals but had confined himself to supplying information in response to a question raised in the Fifth Committee at the thirtieth session. The Advisory Committee had concluded that the report of the Secretary-General did not deal with all the implications involved in extending Pension Fund coverage to the UNRWA staff members concerned, and in paragraphs 4 to 9 of its report had raised a number of serious questions which the Fifth Committee should consider before deciding to extend Pension Fund coverage to those staff members. The Advisory Committee had not recommended that the Fifth Committee should take further action, but considered that, if the Fifth Committee did decide to pursue the question, it should ask the Secretary-General to study the matter further and to submit a detailed report on all the implications.
2. Mr. CUNNINGHAM (United States of America) said his delegation was concerned that the extension of Pension Fund coverage to the UNRWA staff members concerned could have a far-reaching and costly effect on the entire United Nations common system. The implications of extending coverage to retired staff members were certainly broader than indicated by the Secretary-General in his report. If the General Assembly decided to extend coverage to "recently retired" former staff members, it would raise the entire question of the eligibility of retired staff members to benefit from decisions of the General Assembly that were limited to staff members serving when the decisions were taken. His delegation therefore proposed that the Fifth Committee should take note of the report of the Secretary-General and should decide to take no further action on the matter.
3. Mr. GARRIDO (Philippines) said that his delegation sympathized with the former UNRWA staff members involved in the case under discussion, but a cautious approach must be taken because of the additional financial burden that the extension of Pension Fund coverage would impose on the Fund and because of the additional financial contributions which would be required of Member States within the framework of the regular budget. Moreover, other groups of retirees might be similarly affected by the decision taken by the General Assembly in 1975, and the extension of Pension Fund coverage to them would compound the financial burden. In the case under discussion, the extension of Pension Fund coverage would affect not only those who had retired but also those who had left UNRWA before the age of retirement and who would be entitled to deferred pension benefits. General Assembly decisions on retirement benefits were presumed to refer only to serving staff and not to retired staff members. To establish two sets of rules would only

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(Mr. Garrido, Philippines)

complicate the situation. The matter should be studied further and, in that connexion, the General Assembly might wish to consult the Pension Board. A report should be submitted at the thirty-third session showing the costs of extending Pension Fund coverage on the assumption that 1 January 1978 would be the effective date for the payment of additional benefits and that the retirees were alive and receiving a pension directly or indirectly from the Fund. The report should also show the cost of making additional benefits retroactive firstly, to the date of retirement of the former staff members of UNRWA, and secondly, to the date on which the decision taken by the General Assembly in 1975 had entered into force.

4. Mr. VON HARPE (Federal Republic of Germany) said that the question of extending Pension Fund coverage to the staff members in question must be seen within the context of the principles which still governed the United Nations pension system. Former staff members must be provided with a well-balanced system of social security benefits, but at the same time the Fund must preserve its own financial stability to safeguard the interests of active civil servants. The two elements must be reconciled as far as possible. With respect to the case under consideration, the social aspects of the question had been adequately taken into account by the decision reached by the General Assembly in 1975. At that time, the General Assembly had observed the traditional practice of distinguishing between staff still in service and retired staff, and to depart from that principle by extending coverage to members who had not been serving at the time of the decision would raise serious questions related to the very basis of the pension system. Other groups within the United Nations might find themselves in a similar position to the UNRWA staff members under consideration, and to concentrate only on former staff members of UNRWA might create even more inequities and could lead to further demands to extend Pension Fund coverage. A favourable decision in the case of UNRWA staff members would set a precedent for future decisions. His delegation shared the critical views expressed by ACABQ in paragraphs 6, 9 and 10 of its report and agreed that the case of UNRWA staff members must not be dealt with in isolation. Such an approach might lead to the collapse of the pension system as a whole. The Secretary-General should be requested to study the matter further and to consider the basic issues involved. Additional advice could perhaps be given by the Pension Board and a further report could be submitted at the thirty-third or thirty-fourth sessions.

5. Mr. ABANKWA (Ghana) said that his delegation sympathized with the UNRWA staff members concerned but urged caution, since a decision to extend Pension Fund coverage would have many ramifications and serious financial consequences. His delegation therefore supported the Advisory Committee's recommendation that the matter should be studied further (A/32/8/Add.2, para. 11).

6. Mr. LACHANCE (Canada) said that the decision taken by the General Assembly in 1975 to extend Pension Fund coverage to certain UNRWA staff members had not applied to staff members who had retired before 31 December 1975. His delegation felt that those staff members who had retired while the General Assembly was considering its decision had perhaps been treated unfairly. In its report, ACABQ had pointed out that a departure from the traditional practice of distinguishing between serving staff and retired staff and the creation of classes of retired

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(Mr. Lachance, Canada)

staff through the application of other cut-off dates would raise new and serious questions (A/32/8/Add.2, para. 5). In particular, the effect of such a departure on other categories of staff members was not known. Neither the Secretary-General nor the Advisory Committee had dealt with the fundamental question of equity, and it would therefore seem appropriate for the former staff members concerned to appeal to the Administrative Tribunal if they so wished. There was no point in the Committee pursuing the matter further or requesting a more detailed report from the Secretary-General. The Administrative Tribunal should be left to interpret the decision taken by the General Assembly in 1975 and should reach a decision on the basic issues involved, if it considered it appropriate to do so.

7. Mr. RHODES (United Kingdom) said that the report of the Secretary-General was useful, but it was clear that the Secretary-General had placed a rather narrow interpretation on the request for further information on the implications of extending Pension Fund coverage. As indicated by ACABQ, the extension of Pension Fund coverage had ramifications which required careful consideration. The decision taken by the General Assembly in 1966 with respect to the extension of Pension Fund coverage had not applied to retired staff members, and it would therefore be difficult to treat staff members who had retired between 1966 and 1975 differently from staff members who had retired before 1966. The extension of Pension Fund coverage to retired staff members might set off a chain reaction in the United Nations system, and it would therefore be unwise for the Fifth Committee to take a hasty decision. The Organization had a special responsibility with respect to ensuring just treatment for former staff members, but the extension of Pension Fund coverage to the UNRWA staff members concerned would be financed by Member States through the regular budget, and Member States had a responsibility to their own tax-payers, many of whom were pensioners.

8. At its nineteenth session, the Joint Staff Pension Board had discussed a proposal to allow a member organization desirous of doing so to make arrangements for having periods of prior service performed by members of its current staff, which, because of the terms of their employment at the time of their entry into the Fund, were not part of their contributory service, made contributory, subject to the appropriate actuarial costs being paid to the Fund, and subject further to fulfilment of the same basic conditions embodied in the agreement with respect to prior service with UNRWA (A/9609, para. 80). The Board had accepted the proposal for application to ILO and had authorized other member organizations that wished to do so to conclude arrangements with the Fund on similar terms.

9. It was therefore clear that decisions taken in connexion with UNRWA had been applied to ILO and probably to other organizations. The Committee should proceed with caution and should think carefully before departing from traditional practice. His delegation suggested that the Committee should decide to take no further action, rather than raise false expectations in the minds of the staff members concerned. However, it would not oppose a proposal to request further information.

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10. Mr. SAFRONCHUK (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that his delegation doubted whether it was appropriate for the Fifth Committee to discuss the extension of Pension Fund coverage to former staff members for service with UNRWA during the period 1950 to 1960 inclusive, since during that period the administrative expenses of UNRWA had been financed through voluntary funds. There was therefore no justification for discussing the question in connexion with the regular budget. The extension of Pension Fund coverage to the staff members concerned could have unpredictable consequences, and no further action should be taken in that respect.

11. Mr. HANNAH (New Zealand) said that the main question before the Committee was one of equity. Pension Fund coverage had been extended to those staff members who had still been in service as of 31 December 1975, and the same coverage should therefore be extended to staff members who had retired just before that date. The Committee had a responsibility towards those who were not covered by the Pension Fund simply as a result of delays in the decision-making process. With respect to the implications of extending Pension Fund coverage, it was still not clear that the chain reaction referred to would take place, since the situation of former UNRWA staff members was unique. His delegation thought it preferable that a decision be taken at the current session, since to postpone a decision yet again would be to compound the inequity. However, the information before the Committee was incomplete, and the submission of a further report would be helpful. Moreover, the representative of Canada had made a suggestion that deserved further consideration. If the Committee could not decide to extend Pension Fund coverage, it should at least ensure that the staff members concerned could express their sense of grievance.

12. Mr. SCHMIDT (Federal Republic of Germany) suggested that the Committee take note of the Secretary-General's report and take no further action. If the Secretary-General or the Pension Board acquired additional information, they could submit it to the Committee.

13. Mr. NAUDY (France) said that his delegation required more time to consider the views that had been expressed.

14. Mr. PIRSON (Belgium) said that it was important to respect the rights of retired staff members, but no useful purpose would be served by discussing the question further. He therefore suggested that the Committee take note of the reports of the Secretary-General and the Advisory Committee, particularly paragraph 8 of the report of the Advisory Committee, and set the question aside. The Secretary-General could raise the matter at a later date if he so desired.

15. The CHAIRMAN said that he was reluctant to carry items over to the following session unless there was a clear need to do so.

16. Mr. LANDAU (Austria) said that the issue before the Committee was very complex. The former staff members of UNRWA who had retired before 31 December 1975 clearly felt that inequity existed, but it had long been the policy of the Secretary-General and the executive heads of the specialized agencies to exclude certain categories of staff from the Pension Fund at various

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(Mr. Landau, Austria)

times. For example, technical assistance experts who had served before 1958 and who had continued in service after 1958 had never been able to validate their years of service prior to 1958. Local personnel engaged in connexion with temporary missions had also been excluded from coverage. In Palestine, some staff members had served for 20 years without social security coverage; when remedial action had been taken in 1971, staff members' years of service prior to 1971 had not been taken into account. Accordingly, the extension of Pension Fund coverage to the UNRWA staff members concerned would eliminate a great inequity but would raise questions related to even greater inequities. Since the financial resources of the Organization were limited, his delegation reluctantly suggested that the Committee either postpone its decision or merely take note of the Secretary-General's report.

First reading (continued)

Section 15 - Regular programme of technical assistance

17. The CHAIRMAN said that in his initial estimates the Secretary-General had requested an appropriation of \$22,846,500, and the Advisory Committee had not recommended any reductions in those estimates.

18. Mr. SAFRONCHUK (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that, according to Article 17 of the Charter of the United Nations, the budget of the United Nations was intended to cover administrative costs and should not be used to finance technical assistance which, like UNDP, must be based wholly on voluntary contributions. Accordingly, the programme of technical assistance should be combined with UNDP and those States which made contributions to the regular programme of technical assistance should increase their contribution to UNDP by a sum equal to their contribution to that programme. The question of the currency in which voluntary contributions to UNDP were made should be left to the States concerned. If estimates for technical assistance were not excluded from the budget, the Soviet Union, as in the past, would pay its assessed contribution for technical assistance in roubles. His delegation would vote against the estimates submitted under section 15 of the programme budget.

19. Mr. CUNNINGHAM (United States of America) said that his Government supported the technical assistance programme but opposed the practice of funding the programme from assessed contributions. Activities carried out under section 15 of the programme budget should be transferred to UNDP and other appropriate voluntary funds. While the funding of technical assistance from assessed contributions might have been understandable before UNDP and other special voluntary funds had been established, it was no longer justified. The assessed contributions of Member States should be used to finance the administration of the Organization and activities of common benefit to all Member States. Assistance which benefited only some countries should be funded through voluntary contributions so that each country could determine what share of its national resources it wished to contribute for those purposes. The funding of technical assistance activities on a multilateral basis in such a way as to enable the recipients of assistance to increase that assistance against the will of donors could be detrimental to the United Nations, since its ability to carry out other activities of common interest might be endangered. His delegation would therefore vote against the estimates

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(Mr. Cunningham, United States)

submitted under section 15. However, the United States had paid its contributions for technical assistance in full and in convertible currency.

20. Mrs. DERRÉ (France) said that the budget of the United Nations was intended to cover administrative costs, and technical assistance activities should be financed through UNDP on the basis of voluntary contributions. Moreover, the programme budget did not contain enough information to justify the estimates submitted under section 15. Accordingly, her delegation could not support those estimates.

21. Mr. GARRIDO (Philippines) said that his delegation endorsed the estimates submitted under section 15 and welcomed the Advisory Committee's decision not to recommend any reductions. Technical assistance was an integral part of economic development and was particularly important to developing countries. The proposal to channel all technical assistance activities through UNDP seemed attractive in theory, but in practice UNDP would be unable to cope with all the programmes being carried out.

22. Mr. KITI (Kenya) said his delegation welcomed the fact that the Advisory Committee had recommended no reductions under section 15, since it attached considerable importance to that section. Some delegations opposed the regular programme of technical assistance on the ground that all technical assistance activities should be channelled through UNDP, but it should be noted that the regular programme of technical assistance was designed to complement assistance from other sources (A/32/6, vol. II, para. 15.1). It was quite appropriate that such a programme should be included in the regular budget, since, according to the Charter, the regular budget was not intended to cover purely administrative costs but could be used to promote the economic and social development of Member States. His delegation would vote in favour of the estimates submitted under section 15 and encouraged others to do the same. If the developing countries believed that the regular programme of technical assistance served a useful purpose, they must not let the developed countries persuade them otherwise.

23. Mr. AKASHI (Japan) said that, although his delegation believed that technical assistance should be financed on the basis of voluntary contributions and that UNDP had a particularly important role to play in that field, it would nevertheless vote in favour of the estimates submitted under section 15. Those estimates involved no resource growth and were therefore very modest.

24. Mr. MINCHEV (Bulgaria) said that technical assistance activities should be financed on the basis of voluntary contributions and not through the regular budget. Accordingly, his delegation would vote against the estimates submitted under section 15, and Bulgaria would pay its assessed contribution for technical assistance in national currency.

25. Mr. RHODES (United Kingdom) said that his delegation would vote against the estimate submitted by the Secretary-General and left unchanged by ACABQ. The regular programme of technical assistance should be financed by UNDP and the industrial development component should be reinstated in the regular budget only after UNIDO became a specialized agency.

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26. Mr. KHAMIS (Algeria) supported the estimate under section 15 because the technical assistance provided under the regular budget was truly multilateral and not tied to any conditions; he hoped to see an increase in the allocation in the next programme budget.

27. Mr. RICHTER (German Democratic Republic) pointed out that the United Nations budget was an administrative budget and should not contain an item of expenditure for technical assistance. That assistance should be financed by voluntary funds and his Government would therefore vote against the estimate under section 15 and continue to make its voluntary contribution to the programme in national currency.

28. Mr. LASCARRO (Colombia) said that he would abstain in the vote on section 15. He had serious reservations concerning the geographical distribution of staff in ECLA and its subsidiary bodies. For example, 51.4 per cent of the regional advisers attached to ECLA, and particularly the Latin American Demographic Centre (CELADE), were nationals of only three Latin American countries, and 10 out of 21 staff members working in the regular technical assistance programme also represented only three countries. His delegation objected, moreover, to the move to absorb the staff of the Latin American Institute for Economic and Social Planning (ILPES) into the general services of ECLA.

29. Mr. HARDING (Sierra Leone) observed that the appropriation of funds for the regular technical assistance programme from the regular budget relieved the excessive financial burden of UNDP. The estimate presented under section 15 was reasonable and realistic and his delegation would vote for it.

30. Mr. GAMBOA (Venezuela) supported the estimate under the section, because it was very important to the developing countries as a complement to UNDP assistance.

31. Mr. VAN VLOTEN (Netherlands) shared that view and would also vote for the estimate.

32. Mr. BAMBA (Upper Volta) saw no incompatibility between the modest sum requested under section 15 and voluntary assistance provided through UNDP, and hoped that the sum would be increased for the next biennium.

33. Mr. APALOO (Togo) appealed for support for the appropriation proposed under section 15, in the interest not only of the developing countries but of the whole international community. Technical assistance funds under the regular budget were not subject to the fluctuations which characterized voluntary contributions and complemented aid available to developing countries under other programmes, particularly for subregional projects.

34. Mr. MOLTENI (Argentina) and Mr. DERESSA (Ethiopia) also supported the estimate under section 15.

35. Mr. PAVICEVIC (Yugoslavia) supported the view that the regular technical assistance programme was an exercise in multilateral co-operation and in no way undermined or detracted from bilateral aid or voluntary assistance through UNDP. The United Nations regular budget was not merely an administrative budget: it implemented practical action in the economic and social fields.

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36. Mr. SCHMIDT (Federal Republic of Germany) said his delegation believed that all technical assistance resources should come from voluntary funds channelled through UNDP. However, since the estimate under section 15 did not prejudice that principle, his delegation would vote for it.

37. Mr. MAJOLI (Italy) remarked that two conflicting principles were involved in retaining the estimate for technical assistance in the regular budget: the principle of collective responsibility and that of avoiding duplication of effort by financing all such assistance through voluntary contributions. His delegation would abstain in the vote on the section.

38. Mr. KITI (Kenya) supported the request under section 15, but would welcome clarification from the Secretariat concerning the procedure for payment of contributions to the programme in national currencies.

39. Mr. DEBATIN (Assistant Secretary-General, Controller) said that under the Financial Regulations contributions to the budget must be made in dollars, although in practice other currencies were accepted when they could be used. The Secretariat endeavoured to arrange seminars whose costs could be met from the contributions in national currencies. He was unable to say extemporaneously which those countries were.

40. Mr. KITI (Kenya) said that he would welcome further information concerning the use of national currencies other than the dollar to meet the costs of seminars; a request made by his country in that regard had been turned down.

41. Mr. PIRSON (Belgium) said that he had mixed feelings about the request made under section 15. If the regular technical assistance programme were to be funded from voluntary contributions, Member States would be paying 3 per cent, not 1.8 per cent; consequently, it was fortunate that it was included in the regular budget. On the other hand, he deplored the fact that the Committee was divided on the problem and did not consider inclusion of the estimate in the regular budget as the best solution. Perhaps Member States could agree in informal consultations to excise the item from the regular budget and pledge to contribute more than equivalent amounts to extrabudgetary resources. His delegation would abstain in the vote on section 15.

42. An appropriation in the amount of \$22,846,500 under section 15 for the biennium 1978-1979 was approved in first reading by 85 votes to 13, with 3 abstentions.

Section 11A - United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (continued)

43. Mr. IYER (India) reiterated his delegation's view that the Advisory Committee had, on the whole, shown both financial prudence and political sensitivity in its recommendations on the estimates for UNCTAD. It was necessary, however, in evaluating those recommendations to take into account developments which had occurred after the submission of the Advisory Committee's report (A/32/8), such as the resumed thirty-first session of the General Assembly, which had taken place in early September, and the preparations being made in other Committees of the Assembly for the continuation of negotiations on important matters relating to

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(Mr. Iyer, India)

trade. As the representative of Sri Lanka had stated at a previous meeting, it was essential to strengthen the liaison activities of UNCTAD at Headquarters. Accordingly, the Indian delegation proposed that the Committee should restore the P-5 post requested by the Secretary-General.

44. Mr. THOMAS (Trinidad and Tobago), Mr. KEMAL (Pakistan), Mr. SHARMA (Nepal) and Mr. MOLteni (Argentina) endorsed the Indian proposal.

45. Mr. KHAMIS (Algeria) supported the Indian proposal. His delegation would have preferred it, however, if the Advisory Committee had been more generous in its recommendations on the estimates for UNCTAD in view of the key role played by that body in negotiations relating to the new international economic order and international economic co-operation generally.

46. Mr. ACEMAH (Uganda) said that the increasing intensity and scope of negotiations in UNCTAD relating to the establishment of the new international economic order demanded that close links be maintained between that body and the principal policy-making organs of the United Nations in the economic and social spheres. Accordingly, his delegation supported the Indian proposal.

47. His delegation also believed that the Assembly should not dismiss altogether the Secretary-General's request for the establishment of an additional Deputy Secretary-General post at the Assistant Secretary-General level. The establishment of that post would not only enhance the negotiating capacity of UNCTAD but would bring about greater effectiveness and coherence in its work. He recommended that the Committee should give further consideration to the request and perhaps take a decision on it at the next or some future session.

48. The CHAIRMAN said that the Committee could not decide to defer a decision on any budget estimate. If the Secretary-General wished to resubmit any specific request at a future session, he was, of course, free to do so.

49. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) said that the Advisory Committee's recommendation on the staffing requests for the UNCTAD Liaison Office had been based on the submissions of the Secretary-General in which no mention had been made of work arising from the thirty-first resumed session of the General Assembly. If the Committee decided to restore the P-5 post which the Advisory Committee had disallowed, it would be doing so on the basis of its own assessment that the workload arising from the thirty-first resumed session would warrant the establishment of a new P-5 post.

50. Mr. PIRSON (Belgium) sought clarification concerning the manning table for the Liaison Office if the Indian proposal was adopted. His delegation was in general wary of the proliferation and growth of liaison offices.

51. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) said that the Secretary-General had informed the Advisory Committee that he intended to redeploy one D-2, one P-3, one G-5 and two G-4 to the New York Liaison Office, all of which were existing posts. The Secretary-General also intended to second two Professional staff members to the Liaison Office from time

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(Mr. Mselle)

to time, but the Advisory Committee was unaware of the level of those two posts. Finally, the Secretary-General had requested the establishment of one new post at the P-5 level.

52. Mr. DEBATIN (Assistant Secretary-General, Controller) said that the P-5 post that had been requested was for the deputy head of the Liaison Office and that the two Professional staff members whom the Secretary-General would second to New York would be at the P-3 and P-4 levels. The staff members to be outposted from Geneva would not engage in liaison activities but would provide substantive backstopping in areas in which the Liaison Office might be working at a given time.

53. Mr. AKASHI (Japan) said that his delegation would have preferred to vote on the original recommendation of the Advisory Committee, which had been based on a careful assessment of the requirements of UNCTAD. However, in the light of the points raised by the representatives of Sri Lanka and India, there was a case for granting the Secretary-General's request for a P-5 post. His delegation therefore would accept the Indian proposal on the understanding that the staff of the Liaison Office would not be too large and that the existing D-2 post would be used for some better purpose, for example, by redeploying it to the Transfer of Technology Division.

54. Mr. ABDEL FATTAH (Egypt) said that his delegation would vote in favour of the Indian proposal and would support all the other recommendations of the Advisory Committee.

55. Mr. SCHMIDT (Federal Republic of Germany) said that basically his delegation believed that the Advisory Committee was in the best position to scrutinize the proposals of the Secretary-General and obtain the maximum amount of information needed to evaluate them. It therefore preferred to rely on the advice of the Advisory Committee in technical matters unless there was a clear case for doing otherwise. The brief exchange of views that had just taken place had not brought to light any compelling evidence for revising the Advisory Committee's recommendations on the estimates for UNCTAD but his delegation would, nevertheless, abstain in the vote on the Indian proposal in order to show some understanding for the arguments which had been put forward.

56. Mr. KEDADI (Tunisia) said that, in view of the circumstances in which the Advisory Committee had made its original recommendation regarding the P-5 post for the Liaison Office, his delegation would vote in favour of the Indian proposal.

57. Mr. KIVANÇ (Turkey) said that his delegation would have no difficulty in voting in favour of the Indian proposal.

58. The CHAIRMAN observed that the Chairman of the Advisory Committee had not endorsed the Indian proposal. In replying to the representative of Belgium, he had merely indicated that the only new post requested by the Secretary-General was the P-5 post.

59. Mr. SAFRONCHUK (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that his delegation concurred in the recommendations of the Advisory Committee, particularly with regard to the lack of justification for the establishment of a new P-5 post. His

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(Mr. Safronchuk, USSR)

delegation generally opposed the creation of large liaison offices and believed that there was no valid reason why the head of the New York Liaison Office should be at the D-2 level. It would therefore vote against the Indian proposal.

60. Mr. ABANKWA (Ghana) said that his delegation would vote in favour of the Indian proposal. The establishment of a new P-5 post was necessary in the light of new information which had become available.

61. Mr. BWALYA (Zambia) said that, in the light of the arguments adduced by the representative of India and the noncommittal comments of the Chairman of the Advisory Committee, his delegation would vote in favour of the Indian proposal.

62. Mr. KITI (Kenya) said that his delegation would vote in favour of the Indian proposal, although it would have preferred authorizing the establishment of a post at the D-1 level.

63. Mr. MAJOLI (Italy) said that his delegation would like to vote in favour of the Indian proposal, since the developing countries attached so much importance to the work of UNCTAD. It would abstain in the vote, however, because it believed that, as a rule, the Fifth Committee should defer to the judgement of the Advisory Committee and that, even without the addition of the new P-5 post, the Liaison Office would have a sizable staff. Moreover, his delegation noted the Advisory Committee's intention to study the whole question of liaison offices in the context of its report on administrative and budgetary co-ordination within the United Nations system.

64. Mr. BOMELE (Zaire) recalled that his delegation had enthusiastically welcomed the Advisory Committee's intention to study the question of liaison offices and submit a report on that matter to the thirty-second session of the Assembly. It was, however, willing to vote in favour of the Indian proposal.

65. Mr. PAVICEVIC (Yugoslavia) said that his delegation would vote in favour of the Indian proposal. UNCTAD attached great importance to liaison with the General Assembly and the developing countries were convinced of the necessity of establishing a P-5 post for that purpose. The Indian proposal should not be judged solely on the basis of technical considerations.

66. The CHAIRMAN invited the Committee to vote on the Indian proposal, which would entail an appropriation of \$49,200.

67. The Indian proposal was adopted by 80 votes to 10, with 11 abstentions.

68. The CHAIRMAN then invited the Committee to vote on the recommendation of the Advisory Committee, to which the appropriation of \$49,200 should be added.

69. An appropriation in the amount of \$33,116,900 under section 11A for the biennium 1978-1979 was approved in first reading by 103 votes to 9.

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Section 12 - United Nations Industrial Development Organization (continued)

70. Mr. SCHMIDT (Federal Republic of Germany) reaffirmed continued support for the programmes and projects of UNIDO, as reflected in his Government's recent pledge of over \$1 million to the Industrial Development Fund for 1978. His Government also supported the UNDP decision to increase the number of Senior Development Field Advisers to 36 and would finance one more 2-year Field Adviser post as of 1978. It shared the ACABQ view, however, that Field Advisers should not be funded from the regular budget. While his delegation appreciated the merits of consultations between experts from industrialized and developing countries, it was disturbed by the unduly large proportion of funds devoted to consultations. It agreed with the view expressed in the Industrial Development Board that there was a lack of balance in the UNIDO budget between resources devoted to operational activities and the costs of administration and studies, which consumed over 80 per cent of the funds requested under section 12. For those reasons, his delegation supported the ACABQ recommendations, especially with regard to consultants. It cautioned against the additive approach to the computing of travel costs and opposed the 40 per cent increase in those costs requested by the Secretary-General. In short, it was not convinced of the need for a 30.7 per cent increase in the appropriation for UNIDO over the revised 1976-1977 figures and would vote in favour of the reductions recommended by the Advisory Committee.

71. Mr. ELDON (United Kingdom) also supported the Advisory Committee's recommendations. Referring to paragraphs 12.4 and 12.5 of the programme budget (A/32/6), he pointed out that it was not clear precisely how much of the UNIDO budget had been set aside for the system of consultations. He hoped that the Secretary-General would provide more precise data in future concerning the major components of that budget. With regard to the Field Advisers, he associated his delegation with the position taken by the representatives of the Federal Republic of Germany and Japan. The Adviser should not be funded from the regular budget since UNIDO would shortly become a specialized agency. On all other items of the UNIDO request, his delegation also supported the recommendations of ACABQ.

72. Mr. BOMELE (Zaire) reaffirmed his delegation's support for increased funding of UNIDO in view of the recent restructuring of its substantive units to ensure full flexibility and autonomy. If the objectives of the Lima Declaration and Plan of Action were to be implemented, UNIDO had to be financially capable of playing a vital and innovative role within the framework of the new international economic order, particularly through its system of consultations. Consequently, his delegation had strong reservations about placing a ceiling on allocations for that purpose and would support the Secretary-General's request. It would also support the Secretary-General's request for new posts. On the other hand, it supported the ACABQ recommendations with regard to travel costs and deletion of the estimates for the Third General Conference of UNIDO pending the submission of revised estimates by the Secretary-General.

73. The CHAIRMAN reminded the Committee that it had agreed to the deduction of \$27,000 from section 12 for one reclassification from P-5 to D-1 and one reclassification from P-4 to P-5 pending a final decision on ACABQ recommendations on deductions due to reclassifications. Therefore, the Committee was requested to

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(The Chairman)

vote on a total amount under the section of \$57,797,800, as recommended by ACABQ. The United States delegation had proposed a reduction of that amount by \$1 million to a total of \$56,797,800. He suggested that that total should be voted on first.

74. Mr. SAFRONCHUK (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that his delegation could not support the increase in the estimate under section 12 requested by the Secretary-General and felt, in particular, that the proportion of increase due to inflation should be covered from savings and internal budget adjustments. It further opposed the request for additional posts, considering that they were not necessary if better use was made of available personnel and their productivity was increased. Since there were currently more than 10,000 permanent posts in the United Nations, absorbing 80 per cent of its budget, it was imperative to improve administrative methods and increase staff responsibility to ensure that workloads were completed. In keeping with repeated admonitions of the General Assembly, the cost of experts and consultants under section 12 should also be reduced. His delegation supported the United States proposal to reduce the UNIDO estimate by another \$1 million over and above the reductions recommended by ACABQ. As it was the practice to give priority in the voting to downward revisions of the Secretary-General's estimates, the Committee should vote first on the United States proposal.

75. Mr. ABDEL FATTAH (Egypt), supported by Mr. GARRIDO (Philippines) and speaking on a point of order, requested that the ACABQ recommendation be voted on first.

76. It was so decided.

77. The recommendation of the Advisory Committee for an appropriation in the amount of \$57,797,800 under section 12 for the biennium 1978-1979 was approved in first reading by 86 votes to 10.

Section 23 - Conference and library services (continued)

78. Mr. SAFRONCHUK (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics), addressing his question to the Secretariat said that he would welcome information as of 31 October 1977 on the cost of external printing for the current biennium.

79. Mr. LEWANDOWSKI (Under-Secretary-General for Conference Services and Special Assignments) said that he would produce the figures for the next meeting.

80. Mr. KEMAL (Pakistan) proposed that the Committee should vote on the ACABQ recommendations under section 23 and that the suggestions and proposals made by the United States, in so far as they concerned policy questions and the mandate of the Committee on Conferences, should be referred to that Committee for study with a request that it report back to the General Assembly through the Fifth Committee at the thirty-third session.

81. Mr. SAFRONCHUK (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that, while he did not oppose a vote on section 23, he reserved the right to express his views on the information he expected to receive from the Secretariat before the second reading of the section.

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82. Mr. CUNNINGHAM (United States of America) said that his proposals relating to section 23 had been intended primarily to expedite the work of the Department of Conference Services. He appreciated the attention they had received in the Committee and was willing to agree to the Pakistan proposal that they should be referred to the Committee on Conferences for an exploration of all their implications. He assumed that, as was the established practice with regard to all matters having financial implications, ACABQ would provide input into the report which the Committee on Conferences would submit to the General Assembly at the thirty-third session.

83. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) said that with regard to estimates for the Geneva Office, the reservations expressed by the Controller regarding the Advisory Committee's recommendation for a reduction of \$355,500 in the Secretary-General's request for temporary assistance for meetings (A/32/8, para. 23.33) would be taken into account by the Advisory Committee in the context of its consideration of the total request for the calendar of conferences for 1978.

84. The recommendation of the Advisory Committee for an appropriation in the amount of \$140,072,400 under section 23 for the biennium 1978-1979 was approved in first reading by 92 votes to 10.

85. Mr. ABRAHAMSON (Denmark) said that his delegation had voted for the Advisory Committee's recommendation despite the fact that it had considerable sympathy for the United States proposal. It trusted that everything possible would be done to initiate cost-saving procedures in conference services and that the interesting discussion of the United States proposal would be taken into account in future deliberations on appropriations for conference services.

86. Mr. LEWANDOWSKI (Under-Secretary-General for Conference Services and Special Assignments) observed that the representative of the United States, in his statement at the 30th meeting, had raised serious doubts about the efficiency of the staff in the Department of Conference Services and the way in which the Department was managed. That representative had suggested that it would seem by no means unreasonable for the United Nations to double the workload standards for translation, revision, stenotyping and editing so as to achieve savings. It was the Committee's prerogative to establish work standards of any kind. However, they would not necessarily mean more efficiency; the result might well be a more complicated statistical exercise whose implementation would require more staff. The work of translators was measured for purely budgetary purposes by dividing the total output by all staff, including supervisory, training and administrative staff. However, the individual translator did far more than the figures suggested. Moreover, allowances must be made for pressure of time and the intellectual awareness required to produce a good rendering in another language of texts of varying degrees of clarity. With respect to typing, the figure of 10 pages was the average daily per capita output after allowing for all other related tasks. The actual average figure expected was 21 pages per day of typing, and even that figure did not reflect reality, for it included the work performed by supervisory and other support staff. The conference typists, in addition to typing, were expected to proofread, check mistakes and references and perform other tasks.

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(Mr. Lewandowski)

That the work in the typing units was unusually heavy and demanding could be illustrated by the constant number of vacancies, particularly in the French and English Units. Despite publicity in the local media about exorbitant United Nations salaries, it was extremely difficult to recruit conference typists willing to accept the salaries paid and the conditions of work. As the manager of the programme, he was at a loss as to how to proceed when his proposal for the reclassification of the supervisory staff in the typing units had been simply rejected or bypassed in silence without comment on the arguments presented.

87. The representative of the United States had asked how workload standards in the Department of Conference Services compared with those in the average modern publishing house. He wished to point out that no commercial publishing house did the type of work performed by the United Nations, with the rigorous requirements of simultaneous publication in six languages, deadlines which were often shorter than those of newspapers, and circulation figures that would make commercial publishing totally unprofitable. The fact that it was difficult to attract to the United Nations staff who were working in commercial publishing and similar establishments in New York was in itself revealing. It should be added that the commercial experts who were introducing the word-processing technology were full of admiration for the efficiency and dedication of the Department's typists.

88. The Department had compared its productivity with that of other similar operations. Comparison within the United Nations system had yielded results which were very favourable to the United Nations. Comparison with the European Community in Brussels likewise showed that the Department's record of productivity, particularly in translation, reproduction and the management of the publication programme, was high. Arrangements were being made to effect a similar comparison with the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance in Moscow. Efficiency at the United Nations also compared well with that of the Government Printing Office in Washington, and he would be happy to show the representative of the United States the relevant data, if that was desired. The Department of Conference Services had been surveyed more often than any other department in the Secretariat - by AMS, JIU and outside experts and consultants. It was true that some recommendations for improvement had been made; nevertheless, the Department had been left with the net impression that it could readily challenge anyone to cite a comparable operation which was both more efficient and produced work of higher quality.

89. The Secretariat had had some difficulty in tracing in the budget documents the statistical and costing data cited by the United States representative. With respect to the UNCTAD meetings programme, for example, the United States representative had spoken of 46 meetings in 1976, 90 meetings projected for 1977 and more than 100 meetings projected for 1978. The table in paragraph 11A.52 of the proposed programme budget showed a figure of 4,450 UNCTAD meetings for the current biennium and 5,424 for the next biennium

90. In calling for a stringent across-the-board cut in the budget, the representative of the United States had said that the proposal was intended as an incentive to the United Nations to institute in the shortest possible time strong measures to bring about an increase in productivity in the various activities

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connected with conference services. In reply, it should be pointed out that the United Nations could not be profit-oriented as the commercial organizations were. The Department was not above criticism and indeed welcomed all realistic criticism which would help it to improve the quality and quantity of its work. But it needed above all recognition of what it was at present accomplishing. It therefore deeply appreciated the tribute paid by the representative of the United States at the 28th meeting, when he had spoken of the excellent work being performed by the Department and its key role in assuring the smooth functioning of the Organization.

91. Mr. Gamboa (Venezuela) took the Chair.

92. Mr. DEBATIN (Assistant Secretary-General, Controller) said that he would not attempt to reply to the comment made by the representative of the United States, since a vote had been taken on section 23 and the Controller's function was to assist during the deliberations. He would, of course, follow up all the points made by the United States delegation and endeavour to improve the presentation of the budget by providing more reliable information. Moreover, if the United States representative so wished, he would provide him with a detailed answer outside the meeting.

93. Mr. CUNNINGHAM (United States of America) thanked the Under-Secretary-General and the Controller for their replies. The statistics which his delegation had quoted had come from the Secretariat. The cost of \$300 per document page had been taken from section XI of the report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization (A/32/1); his delegation had been unable to find in section 23 of the proposed programme budget all the components of that figure.

The meeting rose at 6.30 p.m.