



SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 21st MEETING

Chairman: Mr. MUNTASSER (Libyan Arab Republic)

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

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The meeting was called to order at 10.55 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 92: PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 1976-1977 (continued)

Future trend in computer usage (A/31/255; A/C.5/31/3) (continued)

1. Mr. NAUDY (France) said that electronic data processing (EDP) was an important factor in modern management techniques but that it must be treated with care because of its complexity. The cost-benefit ratio of EDP techniques could be established only by specialists, and there was a risk that specialists might be influenced by their conviction that EDP was irreplaceable. It was true that EDP techniques were sometimes absolutely indispensable, but they were sometimes used unnecessarily. The use of EDP by the United Nations had developed in an unco-ordinated manner, and there was therefore a need to re-examine the whole question in order to avoid waste and duplication. Accordingly, each new information system should be examined in the context of the work programmes of the Organization (A/C.5/31/3, para. 12). EDP should be treated like any other programme and should be evaluated within the framework of the programme budget. It was difficult, however, to determine the exact requirements or results of such a programme, and he therefore endorsed the ACABQ recommendation concerning the establishment of an interdepartmental information systems board (A/31/255, paras. 17-18); the proposal was logical and pragmatic, particularly since the board would include EDP users. In general, he endorsed the recommendations of ACABQ, but attached particular importance to the condition established in paragraph 19 of its report (A/31/255).

2. The Secretary-General should provide further information in connexion with the apparent contradiction between the decision to purchase a computer in Geneva and the decision to hire one in New York. The Austrian proposal concerning the revolving fund technique (A/C.5/31/SR.15, para. 2) was interesting, but should be regarded as a complement and not an alternative to, the Advisory Committee's recommendations. Further information must be made available before any decision could be taken in that connexion. In particular, the Committee must be sure that the adoption of the revolving fund technique would be consistent with the establishment of the interdepartmental information systems board recommended by ACABQ.

3. Mr. STUART (United Kingdom) said that he agreed with the report of ACABQ (A/31/255) on all points. In particular, the computer system at the New York Computing Centre (NYCC) should be upgraded (A/31/255, paras. 11 and 19) and the Secretary-General should institute a new system for the central control of the allocation of computer resources in order to ensure that the financial implications and proposed benefits of computer use might be examined adequately. In the past, there had been a lack of budgetary discipline with respect to computer usage. ACABQ had stated that there was a growing tendency to demand the development of new computer information systems without due regard to budgetary and cost benefit

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(Mr. Stuart, United Kingdom)

considerations (A/31/255, para. 15), and the Secretary-General had said that the cost and benefits of new computer services were assessed before the services were introduced, but the contradiction was only apparent. In certain fields, analyses could show that computerized techniques would produce a higher output than non-computerized techniques. However, a cost-benefit analysis which ended there was incomplete, since it should also determine whether the large, cost-effective, but more expensive output was really required, or whether a smaller and less cost-effective output, produced manually and at lower cost, was adequate; the analysis must also determine which services should be given priority with respect to computerization. It was to be hoped that the proposed new central review board would ask the right questions and that the Secretariat would be able to answer them adequately. The argument that, since enhanced computer capacity had been provided, it would be economic to achieve high utilization as soon as possible would be valid if the United Nations was a commercial organization. Such was not the case, however, and to accept that argument would mean expending scarce budgetary funds on services of marginal utility and advancing the day when a further costly upgrading of the central processing unit would become necessary.

4. With respect to the Austrian proposal concerning the revolving fund technique (A/C.5/31/SR.15, para. 2), he did not agree that the apportionment of common service costs to different sections of the programme budget was a statistical reporting device rather than a tool of management, since there was at least one major instance where information on apportioned costs had led to improved resource management. The programme budget should include information on the apportionment of computer service costs to programmes, since such information would assist ACABQ in its examination of the programme budget and would complement the proposed new arrangements for central budgetary control. He could not support the Austrian proposal to introduce the revolving fund technique.

5. ACABQ had referred to the growing practice of legislative bodies to take unco-ordinated decisions on the development of new information systems (A/31/255, para. 15). While it was the prerogative of legislative bodies to take decisions on work to be undertaken by the Secretariat, the question whether EDP or traditional methods should be used was essentially a budgetary one and was therefore the responsibility of the Fifth Committee. That should be made clear in the report of the Fifth Committee and should be drawn to the attention of all legislative bodies concerned.

6. Mr. LELLIK (Sweden) said that one of the greatest problems with respect to the use of EDP in the United Nations system was that of co-ordination. He agreed with ACABQ that there was a need for greater discipline with regard to the use of NYCC facilities (A/31/255, para. 15) and that an interdepartmental information systems board should be established (A/31/255, paras. 17-18). He hoped that the mandate of the board would be broad enough to ensure the co-ordination of EDP programmes and policies throughout the United Nations. With regard to the proliferation of data systems within the United Nations, central co-ordinating bodies should ensure that new systems were as compatible as possible with existing systems and that they did not result in duplication. Data banks should

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(Mr. Lellki, Sweden)

be supplied with as much relevant information as possible from sources both inside and outside the Secretariat.

7. In view of its revised terms of reference (A/C.5/31/3, paras. 103-105), the Inter-Organization Board for Information Systems and Related Activities (IOB) could make an effective contribution to co-ordination. To that end, the Board should be granted the necessary resources and should enjoy the close co-operation of all United Nations bodies involved. The Board should try to estimate the need for co-ordination and should report on its findings annually, in order to provide the basis for consistent long-term decisions. He noted with appreciation the Secretary-General's decision to eliminate the administrative and procedural differences between payroll operations in Geneva and New York, since such an approach would result in considerable savings. With regard to NYCC, he agreed that the existing model should be replaced (A/C.5/31/3, para. 33) and that it would be inadvisable, for economic and technological reasons, to purchase a new computer. The upgrading of the computer facilities and the fairly modest increase in staff proposed by the Secretary-General seemed necessary in view of the problems which had arisen and the expanding workload.

8. Over the next few years, the rate of growth in the use of the facilities of the International Computing Centre (ICC) would be higher than average for a centre of that size and type. Furthermore, interactive processing would soon be introduced in both Geneva and New York. Accordingly, the question of raising the technical competence of staff members, which might involve investment, should be examined. The increase in the cost of ICC expected over the next few years was due largely to expenditure on equipment, including the acquisition of interactive terminals. If the demand on ICC facilities continued to rise after 1977, it might be desirable to hire another computer for some of the major users of ICC facilities, so that those facilities might be reserved for institutions whose need of computer services was too small to justify the acquisition of a computer for themselves. As the need for EDP facilities grew, further use should be made of the other computers serving the specialized agencies in Geneva, particularly ILO. It was vital that long-term investment planning in the computer field should take account of the expected large increase in the workload.

9. As proposed by the representative of Austria (A/C.5/31/SR.15, para. 2), the Secretary-General should study the feasibility of the revolving fund technique. There was reason to believe that such a technique would promote the most efficient use of the resources available for EDP activities.

10. Mr. VISLYKH (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said the Secretary-General's report (A/C.5/31/3) showed that there was a lack of discipline with respect to computer usage on the part of both Member States and the Secretariat. However, the report failed to provide concrete data on the advantages of EDP. Similarly, it did not explain the criteria used to determine which programmes would enjoy EDP facilities and did not enumerate the programmes for which EDP facilities were vital. The Secretariat apparently approved all requests for EDP services automatically, without analysing the economic advisability of those requests. The Secretariat should explain the marked increase in the number of NYCC computer-

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(Mr. Vislykh, USSR)

use hours allocated to several programmes, particularly the "Office of Personnel Services" programme and the "Sale of postage stamps" programme (A/31/255, table 2). Because of the undisciplined use of EDP, it was impossible to determine whether the existing NYCC facilities were adequate or not. There must be a rigorous selection of programmes for which EDP would be used, and EDP should be financed through the computer centres. Experience had shown the advantages of EDP in terms of speed, reliability and savings in personnel costs, but the Secretary-General's report had made no mention of those advantages.

11. He agreed with ACABQ that the steps taken by the Secretary-General to control user demands and ease the pressure on NYCC had not been effective (A/31/255, para. 15); any increase in the use of EDP should be conditional on a cost-benefit analysis. He supported the ACABQ proposal concerning the establishment of an interdepartmental information systems board (A/31/255, paras. 17-18), but considered that the final decision concerning any increase in the use of EDP must lie with the General Assembly. In general, new information systems should be established on the recommendation of the General Assembly and not of the Secretariat. He could not support the proposal to replace the existing NYCC computer until the whole question had been examined in detail.

12. He was pleased to note that the level of reimbursement for EDP facilities provided to the specialized agencies and private organizations had risen. However, it remained too low and did not cover certain overheads. It was to be hoped that the Secretary-General would take the necessary additional steps to ensure a more adequate reimbursement.

13. With respect to ICC, the absence of statistical data on the workload meant that delegations could not make comparisons between New York and Geneva. A previous report of ACABQ had indicated that the cost of EDP activities in Geneva was approximately three times higher than the cost of similar activities in New York (A/9008/Add.1, para. 14). However, the Secretary-General's report (A/C.5/31/3) contained no information on the current situation, and he could not therefore endorse the Secretary-General's recommendations concerning the expansion of ICC. Similarly, he could not agree to the allocation of any additional resources, particularly staff resources, to EDP activities, since the necessary resources had already been allocated by the General Assembly at its thirtieth session.

14. The Joint Inspection Unit should be asked to examine the whole question of the effective use of computer technology in the United Nations. In general, it was vital to determine the exact nature of a task before determining what financial, human and other resources should be allocated to its completion.

15. Mr. FERNANDEZ VIAROTO (Spain) said that there was a generally recognized need, prior to the installation of any data-processing equipment, to examine very carefully the benefits to be derived from its use compared to previous work procedures or older models of data-processing equipment. With the expansion of information systems, there was also an imperative need to take into account the

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(Mr. Fernandez Viaroto, Spain)

necessity of an integrated and unifying approach in terms of the interests and activities of the user. In his delegation's opinion, that philosophy should prevail in the United Nations system with regard to the establishment and use of information equipment. Accordingly, he fully agreed with the Advisory Committee (A/31/255, para. 17) that the proposed plan for the development of information systems should encompass all sectors and offices in the United Nations and endorsed its recommendation that an interdepartmental information systems board should be set up in the Secretariat.

16. Document A/C.5/31/3, despite the commendably detailed analysis it contained, did not place sufficient stress on the integrated approach to which he had referred, a short-coming which no doubt accounted for the incomplete presentation of the EDP estimates commented on by the Advisory Committee in paragraph 5 of its report.

17. His delegation welcomed the Advisory Committee's proposals concerning the functions of the interdepartmental information systems board (A/31/255, para. 18), especially the suggestions that the review should cover all EDP applications irrespective of source of financing and that representation on the board should be at the highest level possible, since such conditions were essential to the adoption of an integrated approach. The review should cover many different areas and should include a vigorous examination of the advantages of new equipment, the adequate training of personnel and the balance between the use of internal and external facilities as well as an assessment of remote processing facilities and of the technical compatibility of hardware and software and the formulation of stringent criteria for evaluating potential costs and benefits. No effort should be spared to achieve those objectives, which would have a significant impact on productivity and efficiency.

18. Mr. LEMP (Federal Republic of Germany) expressed appreciation for the detailed report of the Secretary-General and the lucid comments made by the Advisory Committee.

19. The main point made by the Advisory Committee in its report was the need for greater discipline in the use of EDP facilities, a point which was dramatically underlined in paragraph 9 of the Secretary-General's report, where it was stated that the number of tasks of work submitted to the computer had risen by 225 per cent in three years.

20. While aware of the difficulties of defining the real need for computer usage by the United Nations system, his delegation hoped that the board whose establishment was proposed in paragraph 17 of the Advisory Committee's report would be able to check the growth in demand for computer services. It agreed in general with the recommendations made by the Advisory Committee but would have liked to see stronger doubts expressed as to whether the replacement of the existing computer model by a technologically more advanced unit was truly justified. The Secretary-General had suggested the lease rather than the purchase of the new processing unit and seemed to envisage yet another replacement before the break-even point for purchase had been reached. The danger of a vicious circle was obvious because, as the Advisory Committee rightly stated, "the existence of additional capacity might tempt users to promote non-essential or marginal EDP applications" (A/31/255, para. 19).

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(Mr. Lemp, Federal Republic  
of Germany)

21. With respect to the proposal by the Austrian delegation, he said that, although his delegation would welcome more information on the intended usage to be made of computers within each major United Nations programme, it had not yet been able to form a definite opinion on the suggested revolving fund technique in that context. Moreover, it wished to stress the need to continue to deal with the question of computer usage within the United Nations system as one unified programme rather than to generate a fragmented discussion.

Review of action taken on the recommendations of the Administrative Management Service (A/31/8/Add.5; A/C.5/31/6)

22. The CHAIRMAN said that the report of the Secretary-General was contained in document A/C.5/31/6 and the comments of the Advisory Committee were to be found in document A/31/8/Add.5.

23. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) said that the recommendations made by AMS in all five areas in which it had performed work to date had been received with varying degrees of enthusiasm and in some cases with outright opposition. The attitude of those who were required to implement AMS recommendations had often varied according to the kind of recommendation involved. Management improvement studies and projects and productivity improvement projects seemed on the whole to have aroused greatest opposition, while a substantial number of the recommendations in the special organizational studies had been implemented.

24. On the whole, the Secretary-General had concluded that the rate of implementation of AMS recommendations was acceptable and that considerable benefits had already been derived and would continue to accrue to the Organization in the future. The Secretary-General had listed various impediments to management improvement efforts in the Secretariat, impediments which, in his view, explained the problems facing AMS and indicated the perspective in which the work performed by the Service should be evaluated.

25. The Secretary-General's claims of success in implementing the proposals of AMS were couched in very guarded language, indicating that he was less than enthusiastic about the results. The difficulties of evaluating management questions and the constraints under which AMS had to operate notwithstanding, the Advisory Committee believed that the results of the AMS work could have been much better and accordingly had made a number of suggestions in paragraphs 12 to 18 of its report which might help to make AMS more effective. In particular, the Advisory Committee believed that staff at all levels of the Secretariat should be made aware that management and other improvement efforts had the full backing of the Secretary-General and that, once it had been decided by the Secretary-General that a recommendation made by AMS was in the interest of the Organization, the recommendation must be implemented in full. The Secretary-General as the chief executive officer had the responsibility to decide the best course of action; there was no point in wasting resources on recommendations which, even though reasonable

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(Mr. Mselle)

and rational, could be ignored. The Advisory Committee also suggested that AMS should have the necessary degree of independence in the exercise of its functions, that it should have available to it staff competent to carry out its tasks, and that its role should not be hampered by the establishment of departmental administrative management units.

26. For the reasons stated in paragraph 19 of its report, the Advisory Committee had not commented on document A/C.5/31/29 concerning the proposed merger of AMS and the Internal Audit Service. It had decided to deal with that aspect of the question in the context of its examination of the Secretary-General's programme budget proposals for 1978-1979.

27. Mr. VANDERGERT (Sri Lanka) said that the Secretary-General's report provided an admirable summary of the activities of AMS over the past five years and the fact that it contained the views of the Secretary-General on the Service enhanced its value. All in all, it was clear that AMS was an indispensable tool for prudent internal management and that it had been carrying out its functions in an able and objective manner.

28. Many of the problems touched upon by the Advisory Committee derived from the fact that AMS gave advice only when requested, a situation which could impair the quality of its recommendations or diminish the number of requests for its services. The solution to the problem of the under-utilization of AMS seemed to lie in broadening its terms of reference in such a way that it would be empowered to identify problems through periodic inspection of the different areas of concern and to make recommendations to the head of the department concerned as well as to the Under-Secretary-General for Administration and Management. It should be the responsibility of the departmental head to initiate forthwith the necessary action to implement those recommendations which he accepted. In instances in which a departmental head disagreed with the recommendation, he should inform the Under-Secretary-General for Administration and Management of his reasons within a reasonable time and the Under-Secretary-General should inform the departmental head and AMS of the Secretary-General's position on those recommendations as soon as possible. Unless the Secretary-General upheld the objections of the departmental head, the latter should proceed immediately to implement the recommendation in question. AMS should be given authority to monitor the action taken to implement its recommendations and to bring to the attention of the Under-Secretary-General for Administration and Management any failure to do so.

29. The Secretary-General's annual report to ACABQ on the work of AMS should include a complete list of all the recommendations made by AMS, information on the progress made in implementing them, and an assessment of the benefits achieved. The report should also identify the recommendations rejected or amended by the Secretary-General and give a brief statement of the reasons.

30. AMS must be staffed by technically competent and highly experienced staff at all times. It would be inadvisable to reduce the resources of AMS or to dilute its importance in any way, and it was therefore difficult to see what benefits would be derived from the Secretary-General's proposal to merge AMS and the Internal Audit Service (A/C.5/31/29).

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(Mr. Vandergert, Sri Lanka)

31. His delegation suggested that the Fifth Committee should: take note of the reports of the Secretary-General and the Advisory Committee; place on record its conviction that a process of continuous internal review and improvement of management was essential for the efficient and economical functioning of the Secretariat; reaffirm the continuation of AMS; request the Secretary-General to make greater use of AMS and consider the possibility of enlarging its present role by expanding its terms of reference so as to authorize it to audit management arrangements with a view to detecting inefficiencies or uneconomical use of resources and recommending the necessary remedial measures; call upon the heads of major organizational units to endeavour wherever possible to bring about management improvements in their areas of responsibility and to that end to work closely with AMS; request the Secretary-General to pursue vigorously and expeditiously the measures outlined in paragraph 67 of his report; and request ACABQ to ensure that the suggestion in paragraph 67 (c) of the Secretary-General's report was fully complied with.

32. His delegation was ready to collaborate with other delegations in preparing a formal proposal along those lines for adoption as a decision of the General Assembly.

33. Mr. NAUDY (France) said that his delegation was disappointed by the trend of the discussion and by the rather negative character of the Secretary-General's report (A/C.5/31/6). It endorsed the comments on that report made by ACABQ in paragraphs 12 to 19 of its report (A/31/8/Add.5). The Advisory Committee had made some relevant suggestions, but its contribution was necessarily limited owing to the lack of constructive proposals by the Secretary-General.

34. In forming that judgement his delegation had in mind the provisions of General Assembly resolution 2924 B (XXVII), in which the Assembly had requested the views of the Secretary-General as chief administrative officer of the United Nations and Chairman of the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination on the machinery of the United Nations and of its system for administrative and budgetary control, investigation and co-ordination in order to conduct a review at the thirty-first session. The terms of that resolution had been further endorsed by the Assembly in the decision taken at its 2440th meeting on 15 December 1975. It would therefore have been more logical and less time-consuming to have linked the two questions concerning AMS, namely, the question under consideration and that of the review of its role. To add to the confusion, a further question concerning AMS was the subject of document A/C.5/31/29 in which the Secretary-General announced his intention to merge AMS and the Internal Audit Service in 1977.

35. Observing that in 1974 the United Nations had allocated \$3 million to cover the expenses of organs and bodies responsible for administrative and budgetary control, investigation and co-ordination, he asked what the equivalent figures for 1976 and 1977 would be.

36. His delegation did not contest the usefulness of the manpower utilization studies made by AMS during the first phase of its existence and considered that they had helped to prevent an unjustified increase in personnel. Nevertheless, the value of the role played by AMS had been limited by the fact that the exercise was one of internal evaluation and that a number of recommendations had not been

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(Mr. Naudy, France)

approved or, if approved had not been implemented. Those two factors made the task of AMS extremely delicate, despite the perseverance and dedication of its members.

37. The results achieved by AMS in its second phase were less weighty. It had spread its efforts and resources over too many projects of varying scope and importance. Moreover, the Secretariat units concerned had shown a lack of willingness to implement its recommendations. It was regrettable therefore that, after the first phase, the Assembly had omitted to weigh the merits of a second phase and to define the tasks and functions of AMS in that second phase. His delegation agreed with the Advisory Committee that it would have been prudent to limit the service to a small cadre of individuals possessing the highest possible competence in the field of management, which would be supplemented, as necessary, by experts in particular fields drawn from other parts of the Secretariat and by outside consultants. In any event, that suggestion should be taken into account in the future. Efforts to improve management and productivity could cover an infinitely wide area, and it was clearly necessary for the Service to concentrate on a few major goals and to determine precise objectives.

38. His delegation could not endorse the Secretary-General's proposal to merge AMS and the Internal Audit Service (A/C.5/31/29) until it knew the reasons for and financial implications of the proposal, whether it fitted into the over-all review called for in General Assembly resolution 2924 B (XXVII), and the exact changes envisaged. Delicate problems could not be solved by the simplistic method of combining two units and placing them under the authority of one director. He noted from the comments in paragraph 4 (d) of document A/C.5/31/29 that the reorganization would consist simply of the redeployment of existing personnel and would not involve any increase in staff.

39. Mr. AKASHI (Japan) said that AMS was indispensable in ensuring necessary discipline and avoiding administrative waste and disorder. It was, therefore, regrettable that the impact of AMS had been somewhat weakened by a gradual shift in emphasis in the services it provided from manpower utilization studies to internal management consulting. AMS had played a useful role in promoting a number of administrative reforms, as noted in paragraph 20 of the Secretary-General's report, but its achievements in the area of more effective utilization of staff resources were by no means unquestionable. The reduction in the net increase in the regular staff establishment since the establishment of AMS was not an accurate measure of its success, because many other factors were involved in that situation.

40. The report of the Secretary-General (A/C.5/31/6) gave numerous examples of reluctance to accept the recommendations of AMS (paras. 21, 25, 49, 61 and 65), and his delegation could not agree with the Secretary-General that an acceptable degree of success had been achieved. Moreover, the Secretary-General's references to inertia or general antipathy towards change on the part of management supervisors invited the question as to who was ultimately responsible for changing such attitudes. In the view of his delegation, the Secretary-General himself had to take a personal interest in and full responsibility for implementing AMS recommendations. He must, moreover, ensure that all recommendations of the Service were considered on their merits.

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(Mr. Akashi, Japan)

41. The measures suggested by the Secretary-General in paragraph 67 of his report were worthwhile steps towards the better implementation of management improvement programmes. Particularly welcome was the proposal for closer examination of budget proposals of Secretariat units to ascertain whether efforts had been made to make management improvements since the previous budget submission and to determine the extent to which the recommendations of AMS had been incorporated in budget proposals.

42. His delegation endorsed the proposal to merge AMS and the Internal Audit Service which had been made in response to its own suggestion at the preceding session of the General Assembly. It was to be hoped that the proposed merger would enable the Internal Audit Service to monitor the implementation of AMS recommendations during its inspection visits and also assess whether any new management problems called for attention by AMS. It was also to be hoped that the merger would result in some reduction in the over-all resources required for the operation of the new division.

43. It was important for AMS to maintain its independence vis-à-vis other organizational units in the Secretariat. It should not have a purely passive role, acting only when it received requests for management reviews, but it should be involved as a matter of course in all organizational studies. Situations such as the recent failure to invite AMS to study the preparation of the Yearbook of the United Nations should not recur. His delegation also shared the view of the Advisory Committee that the various Secretariat units should not be allowed to disregard unpalatable conclusions and recommendations. All cases of disputes relating to AMS recommendations should be brought to the attention of the Advisory Committee, which should in turn bring them to the attention of the Fifth Committee if necessary.

44. His delegation regretted that a very useful AMS report on a more rational and coherent organizational nomenclature for the Secretariat had been suppressed owing to resistance by some departments and offices. In its place the Committee had received a three-paragraph report of the Secretary-General (A/C.5/31/8). His delegation hoped that the episode did not mean that management sanity in the United Nations would be neglected.

45. While not wishing to weaken the office of the Under-Secretary-General for Administration and Management, his delegation was not certain whether AMS should continue to be responsible to that office. One alternative might be to attach AMS directly to the executive office of the Secretary-General. In any event, in considering possible organizational arrangements, it might be useful for the Committee to have more information regarding arrangements in the specialized agencies. AMS should, of course, maintain close contacts with JIU.

46. Mr. von HARPE (Federal Republic of Germany) said his delegation was convinced of the need for effective machinery for internal management control in order to ensure the achievement of the objectives set out in paragraph 19 of the Report of the Secretary-General (A/C.5/31/6). The results obtained so far by AMS,

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(Mr. von Harpe, Federal Republic of Germany)

however, left much to be desired. Consequently, it was necessary to place greater emphasis on the ways and means of AMS action. The internal managerial machinery of the Organization must be enabled to work in an independent and effective manner. The Secretary-General had expressed his own doubts as to whether the existing machinery was adequate for that purpose (A/C.5/31/6, paras. 24 and 64).

47. His delegation agreed with the Advisory Committee that the full potential of AMS should be more effectively realized in the second phase of its activity. AMS must adopt a co-ordinated and concentrated approach to its task and avoid dissipating its attention on too many projects of lesser importance. His delegation agreed with the two conditions identified by the Advisory Committee for the effectiveness of AMS and stressed that delays in the implementation of the recommendations of AMS could be eliminated only if all were aware of the objective of that Service, namely, to ensure the most effective utilization of staff resources. That objective could be attained only if AMS was permitted to operate independently under the direct guidance of the Secretary-General. For that reason, his delegation did not favour the establishment of departmental administrative management units. It agreed with the Advisory Committee that the Secretary-General must make it clear that he supported every recommendation of AMS which would lead to better management. The role of the Under Secretary-General for Administration and Management should be enhanced in ensuring a continuous management improvement programme, and that enhanced role should be reflected in the submission of reports at shorter intervals.

48. His delegation had doubts regarding the usefulness of the proposed merger of AMS and the Internal Audit Service, since neither Service had yet achieved a full degree of effectiveness. It would be preferable to await the submission of a separate Advisory Committee report on that proposal, which might consider ways of reducing the high cost of operating AMS. The Advisory Committee should, as it had suggested, consider the question at its spring session in 1977 in the context of the Secretary-General's programme budget proposals for 1978-1979.

49. Mr. MAJOLI (Italy) said that a fundamental question which remained to be answered was to what extent the Secretary-General had actually given the necessary support to the work of AMS. The report of the Secretary-General (A/C.5/31/6) seemed to reflect uncertainty as to the success achieved in implementing the recommendations of AMS, and the reasons for delays and defaults in taking recommended actions were given in paragraph 65. In paragraph 67 of his report, the Secretary-General stated that management improvement programmes could not merely be imposed from above and offered a number of suggestions regarding possible courses of action. The Italian delegation wondered why the steps outlined in paragraph 67 had not been considered sooner.

50. His delegation also wondered whether the implication of paragraph 14 of the Advisory Committee's report (A/31/8/Add.5) was that AMS had thus far not played a fully effective role. With regard to the first condition suggested by the Advisory Committee for a fully effective AMS, his delegation believed that the

(Mr. Majoli, Italy)

existing staff of the Service did possess the highest possible competence in the field of management. The second condition identified by the Advisory Committee reflected its doubts as to whether in the past the Secretary-General had in fact fully supported the management efforts of AMS.

51. The Committee might take note of the two reports of the Secretary-General pending a further report by the Advisory Committee on the proposal to merge AMS and the Internal Audit Service. The key to success in any management improvement efforts was the full support of the Secretary-General.

52. Mr. STOTTLEMYER (United States of America) said that his delegation did not interpret paragraph 14 of the Advisory Committee's report to mean that AMS had not thus far performed useful work. AMS, however, like any institution, could be improved and the two conditions identified by ACABQ were valuable suggestions to that end.

53. His delegation agreed that the independence of AMS must be safeguarded and that a continuous management improvement programme under the responsibility of the Under-Secretary-General for Administration and Management should be an integral part of the Organization's infrastructure for management and administration.

54. His delegation endorsed the recommendation of the Advisory Committee in paragraph 18 of its report. It welcomed the fact that the Advisory Committee had not called for the preparation of additional special reports in that connexion, as the Committee already had a heavy volume of documentation to deal with. His delegation urged the Advisory Committee to give particular attention to areas in which management improvement had in fact taken place.

55. His delegation was somewhat surprised that the Secretary-General's proposal to amalgamate AMS and the Internal Audit Service had been made at such a late date and agreed with the French representative that the Secretary-General's report (A/C.5/31/29) did not constitute a sufficient basis for taking an informed decision on that proposal. His delegation agreed that the Advisory Committee should deal with that subject at its spring session in 1977.

56. Finally, he suggested that the Fifth Committee should take note of the report of the Secretary-General on AMS and endorse the conclusions and recommendations contained in the report of the Advisory Committee.

57. Mr. PIRSON (Belgium) observed that the question of the future of AMS was only one aspect of the over-all question of machinery for administrative and budgetary control, investigation and co-ordination. That fact was brought out in the report of the Secretary-General on the merger of AMS and the Internal Audit Service (A/C.5/31/29). He suggested therefore that the review of action taken on the recommendations of the Administrative Management Service should be considered in connexion with agenda item 96. In the meantime, the Secretary-General might provide the Committee with additional information regarding the implications of the proposed merger. His delegation would like to know, in particular, whether the

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(Mr. Pirson, Belgium)

number of staff in the new division would remain approximately the same as the number of staff currently working in the two Services. It would also like to receive information regarding the level of the posts to be provided in the new division.

58. The CHAIRMAN said that he would consult delegations on the suggestion put forward by the representative of Belgium and that the Committee could take a final decision on the matter at a future meeting.

The meeting rose at 1.15 p.m.