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FIFTH COMMITTEE

27th meeting

held on

Wednesday, 10 November 1976

at 10.30 a.m.

New York

UN/SA COLLECTION

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 27th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. MUNTASSER (Libyan Arab Republic)

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

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12 November 1976

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The meeting was called to order at 11.05 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 91: FINANCIAL REPORTS AND ACCOUNTS, AND REPORTS OF THE BOARD OF AUDITORS (continued)

(f) VOLUNTARY FUNDS ADMINISTERED BY THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES (A/31/7/Add.5; A/31/140, para. 28)

1. Mr. BOUAYAD AGHA (Algeria) expressed regret that ACABQ had not examined the report on the voluntary funds administered by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (A/31/7/Add.5) very closely. The report concerned only voluntary contributions and did not require countries to make substantial contributions.
2. Referring to Schedule 11 of the document, he wondered why investments were placed in banks situated only in developed countries. It would be more practical for the funds to be closer to the countries where they would be used, and banks in developing countries could offer the same advantages as those in developed countries.
3. With regard to paragraph 14 of the report of the Board of Auditors, he expressed concern at the fact that no up-to-date and detailed record was maintained of equipment purchased by implementing agencies out of UNHCR funds. That suggested that the activities of UNHCR were not taken seriously. With respect to paragraph 20, he found it strange that funds were released in advance of their actual utilization and felt that that situation should be remedied. Lastly, the embezzlement incident mentioned in paragraph 30 demonstrated that UNHCR should be more cautious in the future when hiring staff.
4. Mr. DAYAL (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees), replying to the points raised by the representative of Algeria, said that funds placed in the banks of developed countries were left there for only a short period of time before they were transferred to the field; they constituted placements rather than investments. As to the latter, UNHCR followed the advice of the United Nations and sought to invest wisely. UNHCR recognized the short-comings of the accounting process described in paragraph 14 and said that efforts would be made to improve it, as recommended by the Board of Auditors.
5. UNHCR would endeavour to improve the situation relating to the release of funds in advance of their actual utilization. It also recognized that every effort should be made to prevent embezzlement.
6. The CHAIRMAN said that, if there was no objection, he would take it that the Committee wished to recommend the adoption by the General Assembly of the following draft resolution:

"The General Assembly,

- "1. Accepts the accounts of the voluntary funds administered by the

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United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees for the year ended 31 December 1975 and the audit opinion of the Board of Auditors;

"2. Requests the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to take such remedial action as may be required by the comments of the Board of Auditors."

7. It was so decided.

(g) FUND OF THE UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME (A/31/7/Add.6 and Corr.1; A/31/140, paras. 29-31)

8. The CHAIRMAN said that, if there was no objection, he would take it that the Committee wished to recommend the adoption by the General Assembly of the following draft resolution:

"The General Assembly,

"1. Accepts the financial report and accounts of the United Nations Environment Programme for the year ended 31 December 1975 and the audit opinion of the Board of Auditors;

"2. Takes note of the observations of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions as set forth in its report to the General Assembly at its thirty-first session;

"3. Requests the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme to take such remedial action as may be required by the comments of the Board of Auditors."

9. It was so decided.

(h) UNITED NATIONS FUND FOR POPULATION ACTIVITIES (A/31/7/Add.7; A/31/140, para. 32)

10. The CHAIRMAN said that, if there was no objection, he would take it that the Committee wished to recommend the adoption by the General Assembly of the following draft resolution:

"The General Assembly

"1. Accepts the financial report and accounts of the United Nations Fund for Population Activities for the year ended 31 December 1975 and the audit opinion of the Board of Auditors;

(The Chairman)

"2. Takes note of the observations of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions as set forth in its report to the General Assembly at its thirty-first session;

"3. Requests the Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme to take such remedial action as may be required by the comments of the Board of Auditors."

11. It was so decided.

AGENDA ITEM 103: REPORT OF THE INTERNATIONAL CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION (A/31/8/Add.6, A/31/30 and Add.1, A/31/239; A/C.5/31/26)

12. Mr. QUIJANO (Chairman of the International Civil Service Commission), introducing the report of the Commission (A/31/30 and Add.1), said that the report summarized the work of the Commission during 1976, described its plan of work and in particular the way in which it was proposed to assume the responsibilities provided in articles 11 and 12 of its statute with respect to the salaries of the General Service category, and presented to the General Assembly the review which the Commission had made of the United Nations salary system in compliance with its mandate under General Assembly resolutions 3357 (XXIX) and 3418 (XXX).

13. During 1976 the Commission had held two sessions, the first at Headquarters and the second in Rome at the invitation of FAO. As a co-ordinating body whose functions extended not only to the United Nations but also to the specialized agencies and other organizations in the common system which had accepted the Commission's statute, the Commission had sought to maintain close contact with the administrations of all the organizations and, when possible, to meet in the main headquarters duty stations so as to be better informed of local conditions and problems. The Commission had so far received formal invitations from ILO, FAO, IAEA and UNESCO.

14. The Commission had continued to maintain the classifications of duty stations for the purpose of applying post adjustments and determining the rates of daily subsistence allowances for official travel of staff members, which involved the classification of 161 countries and territories in which the more than 40,000 employees of the United Nations system carried out their duties. An Advisory Committee on Post Adjustment Questions had been established to provide the requisite technical advice to the Commission in carrying out that task.

15. During the period covered by the report, the Commission had examined questions submitted to it by the Secretary-General of the United Nations and by ACC as well as questions brought to its attention by staff associations regarding the post adjustment classification of duty stations where there had been major changes in the cost of living or local currency exchange values. Three questions referred to the Commission by the General Assembly at its thirtieth session had also been studied, namely, career development and promotions in relation to reclassification of posts, allowances and benefits of staff in the General Service category at

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Headquarters, and day-care centres for children of staff members. The views of the Commission on those three matters were reported in paragraphs 13 to 21 of document A/31/30.

16. Part one of the report concluded with the Commission's decisions concerning its future programme of work. The most important of those decisions was that, pursuant to article 12 of its statute, it would formally assume its functions with respect to the salaries of the General Service category and other locally recruited categories from the close of the fourth session; consequently, the subject would be included in its work programme for 1977. In taking that decision the Commission had been mindful of requests by WHO and ILO that it should assume those functions as soon as possible, particularly with respect to Geneva. The Commission planned to study the principles and the methodology to be applied in establishing the salaries of General Service category at its next session in February 1977.

17. The information received from WHO and ILO about the situation in Geneva had given rise to serious concern in the Commission, as a result of which he had conveyed to the Secretary-General, as Chairman of ACC, its hope that, since the Commission would shortly be assuming its functions under article 12 of its statute, the executive heads would bear in mind the undesirability of introducing in the meantime changes which might further complicate the task facing the Commission in 1977. The function which the Commission was assuming in making recommendations regarding the salary scales of the General Service category and other locally recruited staff in headquarters duty stations was an important innovation, for such responsibilities had previously belonged to the administrations, subject to the arrangements existing in each organization.

18. As it entered its third year of existence, the Commission would be concerning itself with practically all the functions provided for by its statute. Those results could not have been achieved without the active and effective participation of all members of the Commission or without the devotion and technical competence of its Executive Secretary and secretariat.

19. Part two of document A/31/30 presented the Commission's report on the review of the United Nations salary system to which the General Assembly, by its resolution 3357 (XXIX), had accorded highest priority. That part contained the recommendations and conclusions resulting from the review, the considerations on which they had been based and the views expressed by the members of the Commission, ACC, CCAQ and the representatives of the staff of all the organizations concerned, as expressed by FICSA. From the outset of the Commission's work, it had been its fundamental concern to carry out the review - and to consider all other subjects referred to it - in close consultation with the administrations and the representatives of the staff. The practice established during the first four sessions had served to consolidate that system of full participation, which could not fail to benefit the Commission's work. The staff representatives, defending energetically their interests and aims as was to be expected, had at all times

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shown a very constructive attitude, thanks to which the Commission had been able to be informed of their proposals and in many cases to accept them. However, the Commission had, following requests for separate hearings made to it by some groups of staff, become aware of some splits in the unity of the staff - a unity which was critical if they were to participate effectively. Any division could not but weaken the active participation of the staff.

20. The report was necessarily long because of the variety and complexity of the subjects covered. Nevertheless, the Commission had tried to be as concise as possible. To facilitate consideration of the document, a summary of conclusions and recommendations and of budgetary implications had been included (paras. 48-86). The Secretary-General had presented a new estimate of the costs for the United Nations which had been analysed by ACABQ, and ACC had submitted a document indicating the up-to-date costs for all the participating organizations.

21. Turning to the specific conclusions and recommendations resulting from the review of the salary system, he said that the starting point of the Commission's study had been that there was no satisfactory alternative to the principle accepted by the United Nations since 1945, and previously adopted by the League of Nations, that the salaries of the international staff should be sufficient to attract nationals of the country whose salaries were highest, so as to ensure the equitable participation of all Member States in the Secretariat. The next step had been to determine which country paid the highest salaries and experienced conditions which lent themselves to a satisfactory comparison. After studying the civil services of Canada, the Federal Republic of Germany and the United States, the conclusion had been reached that in general the latter offered the best basis for the United Nations system.

22. Next, the equivalencies of grades between the United States Federal Civil Service and the United Nations system had been studied, different functions and posts being compared in so far as the dimensions and characteristics of the two systems allowed. The study had led the Commission to recommend a slight change in the equivalencies which had traditionally been used, it being understood that those matching points should be checked periodically, since they constituted one of the basic elements of the system. The Commission also recommended that in future the comparison between the remuneration of the two services should be made at the headquarters of each - New York and Washington, D.C. - the difference in cost of living between the two cities being taken into account.

23. Using those new matching points and the new method of calculating the margin, United Nations salaries were some 13 per cent above those of the United States Civil Service. The Commission had considered that margin fully justified given the differences between a national civil service and an international one, in particular if allowance was made for the fact that most international civil servants bore extra expenses and certain sacrifices when they lived outside their own country.

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24. From 1 October 1976 the salaries of the United States Civil Service had been increased by an average of 4.8 per cent. If it was assumed, as the available data indicated, that United Nations remuneration in New York would be increased by an additional class of post adjustment on 1 January 1977, the present margin would not be substantially affected.

25. The Commission, accepting the current relationship as satisfactory, believed that it would not be appropriate to define a fixed margin; if that were done, United Nations salaries would be tied excessively to any increase or reduction which the Government of the comparator country might decide upon, perhaps for purely domestic considerations. The Commission was of the opinion that it was in a position to keep the situation under constant review and to recommend to the Assembly, or to take itself, corrective measures which might be necessary if the margin widened excessively.

26. With regard to the structure of the remuneration of the Professional and higher categories, three elements were involved. The principal element was the base salary, where a distinction had to be made between gross and net salaries to take into account the staff assessment levied to maintain equality of remuneration between all staff members. The second element was the post adjustment, designed to maintain equality of purchasing power of a given salary in all duty stations. The third element was the various allowances for which a staff member might be eligible.

27. The United Nations salary system differentiated between the remuneration of staff members with and without dependants through the application of differentiated scales of post adjustment. The Commission considered that the differentiation should be maintained. However, in order to correct the unjust anomalies caused by the existing method, in which differences between married and unmarried staff members could range between nothing and 25 per cent, the differentiation should be made by different scales of staff assessment, in line with normal tax practice. The Commission's study had concluded that an appropriate ratio would be achieved by giving a P-1 staff member without dependants 94 per cent of the base salary of a staff member at the same grade with dependants, while at the level of Under-Secretary-General the ratio should be 91 per cent. The post adjustment would become a fixed percentage, equal for married and single staff.

28. Parity between gross salary and pensionable remuneration had been lost because salaries had remained unchanged for the past few years, while pensionable remuneration had been adjusted automatically according to the movement of the weighted average of post adjustments (WAPA), in accordance with General Assembly resolution 1561 (XV). By 1 January 1977, pensionable remuneration would be 25 per cent above gross salary. To restore parity, the Commission recommended that five classes of post adjustment be consolidated into base salary (A/31/30/Add.1). The levels of real income and pensionable remuneration would be unchanged but the measure would affect all the entitlements which were calculated on base salary and the Commission considered that revalorization of those entitlements was justified.

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Furthermore, the Commission proposed that those special entitlements which had previously been calculated on base salary should be determined in the same way as pensionable remuneration in order to avoid the necessity for over-frequent consolidations of classes of post adjustment. The current method for adjusting pensionable remuneration as decided by resolution 1561 (XV) should be maintained and the same method should be applied to terminal payments, although in that case the pensionable remuneration would be subject to deduction of staff assessment. In future, consolidation of post adjustment would need to be considered only every five or six years, when a general review of the salary system was made.

29. The Commission's remaining recommendations related to the so-called selective entitlements, which had been carefully studied. Various proposals to revise them had been considered, including a proposal for indexation, which the Commission had rejected. It made the following recommendations: elimination of the existing spouse allowance of \$400, which would be incorporated into salary; maintenance of the children's allowance at \$450, as that was comparable to the benefit accorded under the tax laws of the United States; increase from \$200 to \$300 of the allowance for secondary dependants; revision of the conditions of the education grant, decided on the basis of detailed information provided by the administrations, to include reimbursement of education expenses incurred at universities in the country of the staff member's duty station, and an increase to \$2,250 of the present maximum of \$1,500. The flat amount allowable for boarders would be increased from \$650 to \$750. It was also proposed to revise the termination indemnity payable in case of termination of contract or abolition of post, the maximum being increased from 9 months' salary to 12 months' salary according to a scale set out in the report (para. 309).

30. The other allowances were to remain unchanged but there was justification for the creation of a new entitlement to compensate staff members holding a fixed-term appointment which was not renewed after a certain number of years of service. The organizations were increasingly giving that type of appointment to staff, extending their period of service by a series of contracts. The legislative organs of various organizations had approved specific directives to reduce the number of permanent appointments and the present policy in personnel matters placed a marked emphasis on fixed-term employment. The Special Committee for the Review of the United Nations Salary System had already come to the conclusion that some compensation should be granted after a certain number of years and the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination had urged it as a very necessary measure, particularly for organizations which used a large number of experts with contracts of a few years' duration. The Commission therefore recommended that a staff member holding a fixed-term appointment which was not renewed after six complete years of continuous service should be entitled, provided that he had not declined an offer of renewal, to an indemnity ranging from 3 months' pay to 12 months' pay if he had 15 or more years of uninterrupted service.

31. The Administrative Committee on Co-ordination had presented its comments in document A/31/239, generally accepting the Commission's recommendations. In spite

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of some differences of opinion in the course of the review, the proposed package of measures should assist the administrations in their personnel policy. The representatives of the staff and particularly of FICSA had expressed reservations about various proposals, but it was hoped that they did not doubt the objectivity and sense of justice which had guided the review.

32. The Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions had reported in document A/31/8/Add.6 on the financial implications of the Commission's recommendations. ICSC had been very conscious of the prevailing spirit of austerity and had considered very carefully the budgetary implications of the measures proposed. It had estimated that the cost of implementing all the proposals would be some \$10 million for all the organizations for 1977. ACC had given a slightly higher estimate - some \$10.5 million, of which the regular budget of the United Nations accounted for \$1.9 million (document A/31/239). Considering that the staff costs of the United Nations system represented about 75 per cent of the total budget, that cost did not seem excessive.

33. In the Commission's view, the United Nations salary system should not require further general review for five or six years. ICSC would continue to study particular aspects of the system and bring to the attention of the General Assembly any serious problem requiring its attention. The Commission considered that, with the proposed adjustments, the salary system could provide an adequate instrument for administrations to retain existing competent staff and to recruit other staff at the same high level. The salaries and other conditions of work offered compared favourably with those of the best paid national civil service among the Member States, which in turn had to compete with a powerful private sector based on a very strong economy. Adequate remuneration was an indispensable element in recruiting and retaining qualified professionals and it was not in the area of salaries that one should seek the economies which Member States rightly demanded in the face of ever-mounting staff costs. The much-needed rationalization should rather be made in staff utilization.

34. The Commission's task was to regulate and co-ordinate conditions of service for the whole of the United Nations common system, and the review had taken into account the needs and interests of all the organizations of the system. The Fifth Committee should therefore consider the proposals in the report as a set of measures to be applied as a whole.

35. Mr. PIRSON (Belgium) said that his delegation would like to have more information before taking a position on the recommendations in the report. The International Civil Service Commission had based its review on the Noblemaire principle and taken the United States civil service as the basis of comparison. In the Commission's report, there was no table giving an over-all picture of conditions of service in the United States administration and in the international civil service, although there were tables making limited comparisons. It was

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essential to have a table giving a comparison of salaries in the United States civil service and in the international civil service for all professional grades, excepting the post of Secretary-General. The table should also show the other benefits and entitlements accruing to United States civil servants and to international civil servants. It seemed that, although the United States civil service had been chosen as a basis, frequent departures had been made from that starting-point. Doubtless the table could be supplied rapidly, since much time and attention had already been devoted to the issue.

36. It would also be interesting to know exactly what elements were taken into account in adjusting the salaries of United States civil servants and whether adjustments were granted according to the duty station in the United States.

37. Another problem was whether, in present world economic conditions, the remuneration of international civil servants should be increased or whether, as had been done in several national administrations, the ever-rising level of salaries should be checked. It should be remembered that United Nations salaries were already subject to post adjustments applying to the total remuneration. Many States no longer proceeded on that basis and the cost-of-living adjustment often applied to that part of remuneration which was essential for current living expenses. There was apparently no recruitment problem and, indeed, organizations were almost overwhelmed with applications.

38. He would like to know the views of the Chairman of ICSC on the very important issue of partial adjustment, for example up to a specific amount of remuneration or according to a sliding scale.

39. With reference to the conditions of remuneration of the General Service category, particularly in the Geneva Office, he had noted with interest paragraphs 30 to 32 of the Commission's report. Before a decision was taken on the substance, it would be useful to have a table showing the remuneration paid to civil servants in Switzerland at various government levels, for officials in posts comparable to those of United Nations General Service staff. It was true that the Noblemaire principle did not apply to the General Service category and that their remuneration was based on the most favourable salary conditions at the duty station. But such information would be useful, since the situation of General Service salaries in Geneva was giving rise to serious doubts among many delegations regarding the methods used to establish those salaries. The table could also be used when the Committee considered the report of the Joint Inspection Unit on the strike in Geneva (A/31/137).

40. He would like to know why the Commission was recommending that the allowance for a dependent spouse, which was not an absolutely permanent allowance, should be incorporated in the revised base salary and used in determining the pension. Also,

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with reference to paragraph 190 of the report, he asked whether the ratifications of the Convention on the Privileges and Immunities of the United Nations and the Convention on the Privileges and Immunities of the Specialized Agencies gave grounds for hope that the two Conventions would be generally implemented. If so, it might perhaps be possible, as in the past, to express international civil servants' salaries in net figures.

41. It was also unclear why the International Civil Service Commission proposed that at some levels the staff assessment rate should be reduced and why other allowances should be increased. However, it was only in the light of the general table which he had mentioned earlier that it would be possible to evaluate the need for increasing, maintaining or eliminating those allowances.

42. Mr. AKASHI (Japan) said that his delegation was gratified that ICSC had been able to respond to the request of the General Assembly to complete work on the United Nations salary system and submit final recommendations to the current session despite the great pressure of work that had entailed for the Commission.

43. His delegation noted with satisfaction that the statute of the Commission had been accepted by most of the organizations in the United Nations system and that the two organizations which had not yet done so had nevertheless actively participated in the Commission's work. In view of the numerous short-comings of United Nations personnel policy, his delegation would like to see the Commission assume its responsibilities under articles 14 and 15 of its statute at the earliest possible opportunity.

44. In the light of the serious and even explosive situation with regard to the conditions of service in the General Service category, particularly at Geneva, his delegation agreed with the Commission that the major part of its efforts in 1977 should be devoted to that question with a view to establishing the relevant facts and making recommendations on General Service salary scales under article 12, paragraph 1, of the statute. There was an urgent need to review the guiding principles and methodology for determining the salaries and allowances of the General Service category; the question had too long been left to the discretion of the executive heads concerned.

45. The Commission was not proposing a fundamental reform of the Professional salary system, although it recognized that such a reform might be desirable at some time in the future. In the circumstances, the Commission's modest approach was probably the most realistic and practical one. While it might be argued that the Commission might have gone somewhat further than the minor modifications which it was proposing in some areas, it deserved high praise for striking a balance between the criteria laid down in Articles 100 and 101 of the Charter and their financial implications. Indeed, it would have been extremely difficult for Member States to assume a larger financial burden, even if the changes in the salary system might have been closer to the ideal than those actually recommended. The Commission had quite wisely taken into account the fact that over-all staff costs were a cause

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of concern to Member States. In that connexion, his delegation endorsed the view expressed in the Commission's report that as much attention must be paid to the area of management as to the area of salaries. It had also noted with interest the Commission's view that greater economies could probably be realized through improved management than through action in the area of salaries.

46. With regard to the Professional salary system, his delegation agreed with the Commission that there was no acceptable alternative to the Noblemaire principle. His delegation hoped, however, that in future greater precision would be achieved in comparing the international civil service and the highest paid national civil service.

47. His delegation accepted the conclusion of the Commission that equality of purchasing power between staff with dependants and those without dependants should be maintained at all classes of post adjustment. His delegation had stated at the preceding session that it was logical to eliminate the social and family element in the post adjustment system and incorporate it in the system of staff assessment.

48. His delegation accepted the recommendation of the Commission regarding the increased indemnity for termination. However, with regard to termination in the interests of good administration, his delegation was not completely convinced that the standard indemnity should be given together with an additional amount of up to 50 per cent at the discretion of the executive heads. In that connexion, his delegation noted that an indemnity not exceeding one half of the standard amount would be given in the case of termination owing to unsatisfactory service or misconduct. The indemnity for "agreed termination" seemed over-generous and his delegation reserved its judgement pending further information on prevailing practice.

49. While his delegation did not contest the gradual extension of the education grant as recommended by the Commission, it found the rationale given in the Commission's report to be insufficient. The application of the education grant had been widened considerably since 1946, when eligibility had been restricted to the children of expatriate staff members and when the purpose of the grant had been to facilitate the eventual assimilation of such children in their own home country. At present the education grant could be given for attendance at a school or university in any country, including the country of the duty station. Thus, the original justification for the grant appeared to have been abandoned and replaced by that of relieving the parent of the normal expenditure incurred in educating his children. His delegation was somewhat confused by the shifting basis for the education grant and would welcome some clarification.

50. His delegation agreed with the recommendation of the Commission to introduce the "end-of-service grant" in the light of the increasing use made by organizations in the United Nations system of fixed-term appointments which were renewed repeatedly.

51. His delegation welcomed the Commission's decision to review the question of language incentives at the earliest opportunity. Many statements had been made in

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(Mr. Akashi, Japan)

the Committee in the past regarding the absurdity and inequity of the present system, which discriminated against staff whose mother tongue was not an official or working language and penalized specialized technical staff whose professional training had not included the learning of a second language.

52. Mr. GARRIDO (Philippines) inquired whether the International Civil Service Commission would have time in 1977 to consider the question of the lump sum formula for paying experts, should that question be brought before it by UNDP.

53. The CHAIRMAN indicated that the Chairman of ICSC would answer the question posed by the representative of the Philippines at a future meeting.

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)

54. Mr. LAPOINTE (Canada) said that the question under consideration provided another example of the failure of the United Nations system to keep Member States adequately informed regarding major co-ordination issues. The Secretary-General had informed the Committee in his report (A/C.5/31/3) of the new terms of reference and tasks of the Inter-Organization Board for Information Systems and Related Activities (IOB). The Secretary-General indicated that changes had been made in the terms of reference of IOB following an assessment of its past activities and, in that connexion, drew attention to the report of ACC to the Economic and Social Council in document E/5803. The relevant section of that report, however, was less than a page and a half in length and contained nothing that would constitute an assessment of the performance of IOB or any reference to documentation that might enlighten Member States on its achievements in co-ordinating EDP activities on a system-wide basis. Moreover, ACC did not identify or explain the interesting changes in the link between IOB and ICC which could be deduced from the Board's new terms of reference. Apart from a reference to the Common Register of Development Activities (CORE), an information system which IOB had been developing since 1974, ACC made no effort to provide meaningful information about the Board, on which annual expenditure was approaching the impressive amount of \$500,000. Information might usefully have been provided in the Secretary-General's report as to the membership of IOB, the specific objectives it had pursued under its old mandate, why its mandate had had to be changed and what the specific changes had been. In the absence of such information, his delegation had no choice but to conclude that it was inadequately informed and advised on system-wide co-ordination in respect of EDP.

55. There was therefore an urgent need for information and policy advice on co-ordination in that area. His delegation wished to be informed about the growth in the number and cost of information systems throughout the United Nations system. In three agencies alone, there were 30 such information systems and subsystems, excluding management systems dealing with such matters as accounts and budgets. His delegation wished to know why interagency task forces had been established outside the IOB framework despite the Board's mandate in that area.

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(Mr. Lapointe, Canada)

It also wished to know why several information systems overlapped and duplicated each other and why the INIS system of IAEA and the AGRIS system of FAO were fully compatible, while others were not. It wished to be informed of work that had been done thus far to ensure compatibility of the software used for the various related systems.

56. While much useful EDP activity was carried out in the United Nations system, in several cases the usefulness of such activity was open to question. No effort seemed to have been made to determine the utility of any given programme and there appeared to be no general principles, policies and criteria that would assist agencies and Governments to promote the optimum utilization of EDP. Concern such as that expressed by CPC and ACABQ with regard to EDP strongly suggested the failure of both ACC and Member States to pay sufficient attention to a major co-ordination issue.

57. His delegation concluded that there was an urgent need for an analysis of the major EDP co-ordination issues, taking into account past performance and the objectives of EDP users. Such an analysis should lead to policy recommendations which could be implemented by all the organizations of the system. ACC and IOB had a major role to play in that endeavour. However, in view of the fact that fair and impartial analysis of past policies, activities and achievements should not be conducted by an interested party, an independent organ should be given over-all responsibility for EDP co-ordination. ACABQ might be chosen, given its responsibilities for administrative and budgetary co-ordination among the organizations of the United Nations system. The Advisory Committee had, moreover, indicated in document A/31/233 that it intended to deal with that question.

58. His delegation was seeking not a lengthy and expensive study filled with statistics and information of historical interest but a concise study of carefully selected co-ordination issues, their relative importance and their relationship to broad policy objectives pursued by the United Nations system. Concise recommendations were needed and his delegation was not willing to wait several years to receive them. A document dealing with relevant issues and prepared in the appropriate form would undoubtedly receive the attention of government decision-makers who were familiar with the proper uses of EDP and the methods for assessing relevant policy issues. An exercise along the lines suggested would yield substantial benefits and help to promote a positive and constructive relationship between Member States and the agencies of the United Nations system. His delegation therefore was considering the possibility of submitting a draft decision on that question under agenda item 96.

59. Mr. GARRIDO (Philippines) said that, as the United Nations system became more deeply involved in the development process, it would require a modernized and sophisticated EDP system. The Secretary-General's requests for meeting the Organization's requirements in 1976-1977 consisted of the necessary hardware and the manpower to operate it. Attention should be given to ensuring the efficient operation of the EDP system and avoiding unnecessary waste; as the number of EDP users would be increasing in future years, the absence of co-ordination would be counter-productive.

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(Mr. Garrido, Philippines)

60. His delegation was also concerned with meeting the EDP requirements of UNCTAD and UNIDO in support of their work programmes. The Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator too should receive assistance in implementing its programmes. His delegation had no objections to the recommendations of the Advisory Committee to establish an interdepartmental information systems board. It would suggest, however, that the board be given a responsibility for co-ordination in addition to the responsibilities described in paragraph 18 (b) of the Advisory Committee's report (A/31/255). His delegation was also prepared to accept the recommendation of the Advisory Committee to defer the installation of the new computer in the New York Computing Centre provided that the time involved was not too long. In that connexion, his delegation wished to know how much time would be needed by the interdepartmental information systems board to review the requests from the various computer users, including those related to the medium-term plan. His delegation feared that the new computer would remain idle pending completion of that review.

61. His delegation also wished to know whether using ICC as a service facility for all agencies had brought about an increase in the number of agency users since 1 January 1976. He requested additional information regarding the ICC Management Committee, as the report of the Secretary-General did not provide details regarding its composition. Finally, his delegation agreed with the Advisory Committee that in future the budget of ICC should be subject to review and approval by the General Assembly.

62. Mr. SLAUGHTER (Director, Electronic Data Processing and Information Systems Service) replying to the representative of the Philippines, said that it was planned to move forward as quickly as feasible in establishing the interdepartmental information systems board and in determining its terms of reference and its work plan for reviewing the various information systems. In accordance with the recommendation of the Advisory Committee, the upgrading of the central facility in New York would not take place until the board had been established and was operational. There was, therefore, no danger that the new computer would remain idle.

63. The number of agencies and organizations which currently used the services of ICC at Geneva was 11. Since the preparation of the Secretary-General's report, one additional organization - the UNESCO International Bureau of Education - had decided to use ICC. The Management Committee was composed of representatives of each user agency who were, for the most part, officials in charge of information systems and data processing. Many members of that Committee would welcome review of the budget of ICC by the General Assembly.

64. The CHAIRMAN suggested that the Committee should recommend to the General Assembly that it take note of the reports of the Secretary-General and the Advisory Committee contained in documents A/C.5/31/3 and A/31/255 and endorse the observations and recommendations of the Advisory Committee as contained in its report.

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(The Chairman)

65. He also suggested that the Committee should approve additional appropriations of \$513,300 under expenditure sections 22D and 22G, \$24,900 under income section 1 and \$290,000 under income section 2 of the programme budget to be included in the revised appropriations for the biennium 1976-1977.

66. Mr. GARRIDO (Philippines) said that, since many delegations had spoken in the debate on the item, some mention of the views they had expressed should be made in the draft decision.

67. Mr. PIRSON (Belgium) endorsed the suggestion made by the representative of the Philippines and reiterated his delegation's position that, before the Committee approved additional appropriations for EDP, the need for such services should first be determined.

68. The CHAIRMAN suggested that the Committee should also recommend that the Assembly take into account the views expressed by the members of the Fifth Committee in the course of the debate.

69. It was so decided.

70. Additional amounts of \$513,300 under expenditure sections 22D and 22G, \$24,900 under income section 1 and \$290,000 under income section 2 of the programme budget, to be included in the revised appropriations for the biennium 1976-1977, were approved by 64 votes to 9, with 3 abstentions.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.