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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 44th MEETING

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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 8 35 p.m.

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

Administrative and financial implications of the draft resolution in document A/31/L.4 concerning agenda item 30 (A/31/8/Add.11; A/C.5/31/50)

1. Mr. ROSENSTOCK (United States of America) said that his delegation would have no objection if the Committee interrupted consideration of item 100 to take up agenda item 92, if the other delegations had none, on the understanding that the Committee would then revert to item 100.
2. The CHAIRMAN supported the observation made by the representative of the United States.
3. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) said that, in the statement which he had submitted (A/C.5/31/50), the Secretary-General had estimated expenditure for the sixth session of the Third United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea at \$4,093,000, of which \$2,565,000 were direct conference servicing costs and \$1,528,000 were other costs under sections 2 and 4 of the programme budget for the biennium 1976-1977. In paragraph 10 of its report (A/31/8/Add.11), the Advisory Committee recommended that the General Assembly should be informed that, should it approve draft resolution A/31/L.4, there would be a need for additional appropriations in the amount of \$1,341,000 under section 2 and \$82,000 under section 4 of the programme budget to cover expenditure other than conference servicing costs for the session. It also recommended that conference servicing costs should not exceed \$2.5 million, subject to subsequent consideration by the Committee of costs for the revised calendar of conferences for 1977 when the Secretary-General submitted them. The reduction recommended by the Advisory Committee in paragraph 8 of its report (A/31/8/Add.11) mainly concerned external printing costs. The Secretary-General had requested \$399,000 for "other costs" for conference servicing, most of which should cover the costs of printing the proceedings of the sixth session. It was unlikely that the volume of summary records foreseen would be attained in view of experience with the fourth and fifth sessions of the Conference. The Advisory Committee consequently recommended that the estimate of \$399,000 should be reduced by \$100,000 to \$299,000.
4. As it had indicated in paragraph 5 of its report, the Advisory Committee had no objection to the reclassification of two posts from P-2/1 to P-3 and one post from G-4 to G-5.
5. The Secretary-General had also suggested that the secretariat personnel recruited for the Conference should be budgeted for a period of two years (salaries and related costs). As the Advisory Committee had indicated in paragraphs 6 and 7 of its report, the appointment, transfer and termination of staff fell within the competence of the Secretary-General to ensure the continuity of the secretariat of the Conference, but the necessary appropriations would be considered in 1977 by the General Assembly according to normal procedures in the event that the Conference met again in 1978.

6. With regard to the question of the contributions of non-Member States participating in the Conference, discussed in paragraphs 17 to 19 of the Secretary-General's statement (A/C.5/31/50), the Advisory Committee considered that the provisions of regulation 5.9 of the Financial Regulations of the United Nations, as amended by the General Assembly in resolution 3371 B (XXX), should be applied to the Third Conference on the Law of the Sea.

7. Mr. VISLYKH (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) noted from the statement on the administrative and financial implications (A/C.5/31/50) of draft resolution A/31/L.4 and the Advisory Committee's report on the subject (A/31/8/Add.11) that additional appropriations of almost \$1.5 million were being requested for the sixth session of the Third Conference on the Law of the Sea. In that connexion, it was to be regretted that the United Nations Secretariat had not applied the recommendation of the Ad Hoc Committee of Experts to Examine the Finances of the United Nations and the Specialized Agencies that all new activities undertaken during the financial period should be financed by redeployment of the resources available within the approved budget, and also that the Advisory Committee had not seen fit to draw the Secretariat's attention to the need to implement that recommendation.

8. In section V of the statement of administrative and financial implications (A/C.5/31/50), the Secretary-General, in requesting that the secretariat of the Conference should be budgeted for two years, proposed that the secretariat should play a central role in the implementation of the Final Act during the interim period before any new entity that might be established started to operate. In that connexion, his delegation noted that only the General Assembly and the Conference itself could, at the appropriate time, take a decision in that respect. The proposal made, which exceeded the powers of the Secretariat and encroached upon the competence of the General Assembly, would present the Conference with a fait accompli and impose upon it a nucleus of staff for a new international organization. In that connexion, it should be recalled that in paragraph 7 of document A/9008/Add.10 the Advisory Committee had specified that the secretariat of the Conference had been set up only for the servicing of the Conference and not for the creation of a nucleus for permanent international machinery.

9. While recognizing the importance of the sixth session of the Third Conference on the Law of the Sea, his delegation could not approve of the proposed financing arrangements. It felt that new United Nations meetings and conferences not provided for in the regular budget should be financed by funds released as a result of a reduction in the number of United Nations organs, a more rational organization of meetings and a reduction in expenditure on documentation.

10. Mr. STUART (United Kingdom) said that in general he supported the observations of the Advisory Committee (A/31/8/Add.11) on the administrative and financial implications of draft resolution A/31/L.4, but wished that the representative of the Secretary-General would explain how the estimates for intersessional private consultations could be reconciled with recommendation 3 of the Committee on Conferences (A/31/32) to the effect that the General Assembly should request the Secretary-General to continue to provide interpretation services for informal meetings on an ad hoc basis as existing resources permitted, in accordance with the practice established over the years, without requesting appropriations for that

(Mr. Stuart, United Kingdom)

purpose. In the present case, he wished to know how the adoption of specific financial provisions for intersessional private consultations could be justified.

11. Mr. MOLTENI (Argentina) noted that in paragraph 12 of the Secretary-General's statement (A/C.5/31/50) various measures were proposed to ensure stability and continuity for the secretariat of the Conference. The Advisory Committee did not appear to have realized the full implication of those suggestions, since in paragraph 7 of its report (A/31/8/Add.11) it had indicated that it did not see the need to budget the secretariat of the Conference for a period of two years and proposed that the competent departments should take appropriate measures to ensure the stability of the secretariat of the Conference. He hoped that the Secretary-General's representatives would clarify that point. Since he had participated in the negotiations of the Conference on the Law of the Sea personally, he had noted that all the staff servicing the Conference had performed with great competence and devotion, and that consequently, if Governments were willing, next year the Conference could conclude a treaty on the law of the sea.

12. Mr. BOUAYAD-AGHA (Algeria) said that, as a member of the Preparatory Committee for the Third Conference on the Law of the Sea, his delegation had been able to appreciate the importance of that Conference, which was to conclude its work in 1977. With regard to the financial implications of draft resolution A/31/L.4, he did not understand the need for the reshuffling consisting in organizing the session of the Conference in New York by recruiting staff from Geneva and vice versa.

13. Although it was understandable that \$1,042,000, or two thirds of the amount for "other costs", covered the maintenance in 1977 of the secretariat of the Conference (A/31/8/Add.11, para. 5), it was not normal for that amount to include the cost of consultancy services. Since all the participants in the Conference were specialists, it seemed unnecessary to use other experts. His delegation consequently wished to know how many consultants had been recruited for the Conference and what their functions were.

14. Mr. LAVAU (Director of the Budget Division), replying to the representative of the United Kingdom, noted that recommendation 3 of the Committee on Conferences stated a rule of a general nature, whereas paragraph 3 of draft resolution A/31/L.4 provided for exceptional activities which were associated with the priority nature of the Conference, emphasized in paragraph 2, and which were not part of the ordinary consultations for which servicing was provided on the basis of available resources. The Secretary-General therefore noted the wish thus expressed by the General Assembly in requesting that resources should not be spared for private consultations; he was not requesting special appropriations for that purpose but foresaw the need for expenditure in order to implement the draft resolution. At the end of the session, when the Secretary-General submitted the total estimates for conference servicing, he would include the amount to be provided if the costs of intersessional meetings could not be covered by available resources. At the present stage, the total costs of private consultations were indicated only as contingency costs.

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15. Mr. ZULETA (Under-Secretary-General, Special Representative of the Secretary-General to the Third United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea) observed that the sponsors of draft resolution A/31/L.4 had seen fit to include a provision to the effect that the General Assembly should expressly authorize the Secretary-General to make available the necessary facilities for consultations among Governments before the next official session. The Conference had approved that recommendation unanimously, in view of the very satisfactory results of the earlier informal consultations.

16. Replying to the question asked by the representative of Argentina, he said that since the Advisory Committee believed that the Secretary-General was responsible for the measures necessary to ensure the stability of the Conference secretariat, he proposed to renew for two years the contracts of the personnel that had been recruited.

17. In connexion with the question asked by the representative of Algeria, he recalled that all the appropriations approved by the General Assembly for the secretariat of the Conference on the Law of the Sea included an amount reserved for consultancy services in the event of a need for the secretariat to call upon specialists to draft the definitive provisions of the treaty. That amount had been utilized very rarely, and only during sessions. Consequently there had always been an excess under that heading, but the amount had to be provided in order to be able to call for high-level consultancy services to assist the delegations.

18. Mr. STUART (United Kingdom) said that he had no wish to criticize the provisions relating to private consultations but wanted merely to clarify the distinction between informal meetings, on the one hand, and consultations among Governments, on the other hand; the former were serviced from available resources, while the latter were an integral part of the Conference on the Law of the Sea and, in view of the valuable contribution they had made to the work of the Conference, justified the adoption of special financial arrangements. The cost of those consultations was estimated at \$156,200, and it was prudent to provide resources for those consultations, which constituted priority activities.

19. The CHAIRMAN proposed that the Committee should request the Rapporteur to report directly to the General Assembly that should it adopt draft resolution A/31/L.4, additional appropriations in the amount of \$1.341 million under section 2 and \$82,000 under section 4 of the programme budget for the biennium 1976-1977 would be required. In addition, an appropriation of \$200,000 would be required under section 25 (Staff assessment), offset by an increase in the same amount under income section 1. Conference servicing costs not exceeding \$2.5 million would be considered by the General Assembly in the context of its consideration of the total requirements of the revised calendar of conferences for 1977.

20. The Fifth Committee would in addition recommend to the General Assembly that the provisions of regulation 5.9 of the Financial Regulations of the United Nations, as amended by the General Assembly in its resolution 3371 B (XXX) of

(The Chairman)

30 October 1975, should be applied to the Third Conference on the Law of the Sea with regard to the financial assessment of non-Member States participating in the Conference.

21. It was so decided.

Use of experts and consultants in the United Nations (A/C.5/31/10 and Corr.1 and Add.1 and Corr.1) (continued)

22. The CHAIRMAN recalled that the Committee had postponed any decision on that question pending receipt of the statistical information referred to in paragraph 7 of the report of the Secretary-General (A/C.5/31/10) and submitted in the addendum to that document.

23. Mr. JOHNSON LOPEZ (Ecuador) said that the question of the transfer of technology was an element of the first importance for overcoming the problems of third-world countries in the struggle against under-development. The use of experts and consultants in the United Nations was part of that process. What was needed was not only to accelerate the transfer of technology between north and south but also to take better advantage of the experience acquired by the developing countries that had unused capacity and effective consultant organizations, as was the case in Latin America.

24. The Secretary-General's note (A/C.5/31/10/Add.1), to be sure, related only to the use of experts and consultants engaged by the United Nations to carry out important tasks of the Secretariat, but it must be emphasized in that connexion that the Secretariat should redouble its efforts not only to ensure a better geographical distribution in the ad hoc expert groups but also to make greater use of the services of experts from the developing countries, since today every country had something to learn and something to teach.

25. As indicated in the report of the Secretary-General (A/C.5/31/10), it was preferable for the Secretariat to call in external assistance only for clearly specified tasks. The recommendation that experts should be recruited in the developing countries took account of the fact that the appointments should be only temporary; the appointment of long-term experts, either in the Secretariat or in technical co-operation programmes should be avoided, and those experts should always form the permanent staff that would be concerned with the same tasks in the long term. The United Nations should make use of the services of experts from developing countries for short periods in order to ensure their return to their respective countries and not intensify the brain drain, which would aggravate the problems of the developing countries. Thus, the experts and consultants, enriched by the experience gained, would be able to bring new ideas to their countries and make concrete contributions to the establishment of the new international economic order.

26. Mr. MATSEIKO (Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic) said it was regrettable that the report presented at the beginning of the session (A/C.5/31/10) did not give satisfactory answers to the most important questions, namely, what the Secretariat

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(Mr. Matseiko, Ukrainian SSR)

was doing to follow up the decision taken by the General Assembly at its twenty-ninth session on the use of experts and consultants in the United Nations (A/9960, para. 30) and to apply in practice the three principles enunciated there: the requirement that experts and consultants should be recruited only from highly qualified candidates in the specific field in question; the criterion that outside expertise should be resorted to primarily for specific assignments and only for the services for which provisions could not be found within the established staff of the Secretariat for lack of specialized knowledge and/or expertise; and the principle that experts and consultants should be appointed from a wider and more representative number of countries than was being done at the time and should include a larger number from the developing countries. The information contained in documents A/C.5/31/10 and Add.1 did not give a complete picture of the situation and related only to the administrative instruction adopted for the internal use of the Secretariat, whereas the Fifth Committee would like to know the extent to which the General Assembly's decision was being implemented. In August 1976, when document A/C.5/31/10 had been prepared, the Secretariat might not have had enough information to evaluate the new system in effect since 1 January, but why did not the addendum to that document, which had been issued in late November, give more information?

27. It appeared from the Secretary-General's note (A/C.5/31/10/Add.1) that 572 contracts for consultants, experts and contractors had been granted under the new procedure. That figure was considerable, all the more so because the corresponding expenses amounted to more than \$2 million for a six-month period, whereas not long ago such an amount had been sufficient to cover the expenses under that heading for the entire year.

28. At the qualitative level, the documents also failed to indicate how effective were the services provided by the experts and consultants and how their conclusions and recommendations had served to solve the Organization's problems. In paragraph 7 of his note (A/C.5/31/10/Add.1) the Secretary-General stated that it had not been possible for the period covered, that is to say, for the first half of the year, to collect data on the evaluation of the work of the experts and consultants, even though external help had already been used for a long time. His delegation would have preferred a more precise reply on that subject. Furthermore, the Secretary-General did not give any information on the qualifications of the experts, that is to say, on the application of the first principle approved by the General Assembly at its twenty-ninth session. It was to be hoped that such information would be furnished in the next report, as announced by the Secretary-General in paragraph 9 of his note.

29. With regard to contracts relating to weekly radio broadcasts (A/C.5/31/10/Add.1, para. 11), he wondered whether the persons involved were in fact experts and consultants; the same question arose with regard to the translation of reports of conferences or other documents; work of the latter type could very well be entrusted to the permanent staff, according to the second principle approved by the General Assembly.

30. Lastly, the principle that the experts and consultants should be chosen from among candidates of a more representative number of countries was not being

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(Mr. Matseiko, Ukrainian SSR)

implemented: it was clear from annex II to the Secretary-General's note that only 27 consultants, experts and contractors had been selected from Eastern Europe, as against 148 from Western Europe and 145 from North America. That situation was not normal, and it was urgent that the Secretariat should take effective measures to correct it.

31. Mr. ABRASZEWSKI (Poland) thanked the Secretariat for supplying additional information in document A/C.5/31/10/Add.1, which gave a clearer idea of the functioning of the new system of recruitment of experts and consultants in the United Nations. However, his delegation found to its regret that the implementation of the decisions taken by the General Assembly at its twenty-ninth and thirtieth sessions to ensure a more rational utilization of the services of experts and consultants in the United Nations had not brought all the results expected of it. Document A/C.5/31/10/Add.1 related only to a six-month period, and the Secretariat had confined itself to giving statistical information on the duration of contracts, the distribution of consultants, experts and contractors by age group and their distribution by region and nationality. In that connexion, his delegation wished to emphasize that anomalies continued to exist with regard to the distribution by region and by nationality, and it hoped that the Secretariat would endeavour to eliminate them. It also hoped that the Secretariat would be in a position to give the information it had not yet been able to supply with regard to the evaluation of the work of the experts and consultants engaged by the United Nations. Furthermore, the reply given in paragraph 10 of the Secretary-General's note concerning the number of former United Nations staff members who had been given contracts as experts was inadequate.

32. In view of the inadequate information given in the note by the Secretary-General (A/C.5/31/10/Add.1), the Polish delegation proposed that the Committee should recommend the following draft decision to the General Assembly for adoption:

"The General Assembly,

"Takes note of the report of the Secretary-General on the use of experts and consultants in the United Nations and of the oral report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions,

"Reaffirms the decisions taken at its 2325th plenary meeting, on 18 December 1974, and 2444th plenary meeting, on 17 December 1975, on the use of experts and consultants,

"Requests the Secretary-General to submit to the General Assembly at its thirty-second session, through the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, a further report on the implementation of the aforementioned decisions".

33. The CHAIRMAN said that the Committee would consider the proposal made by the representative of Poland when it was about to take a decision on the item under consideration.

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34. Mr. NAUDY (France) said that paragraph 9 of document A/C.5/31/10/Add.1 raised certain questions. Thus a legitimate question regarding the first sentence was how the experts, consultants and contractors, who must be highly qualified, had been recruited. The second sentence suggested that the Secretary-General had overlooked the qualifications of the permanent staff members he had recruited. With regard to the third sentence, he wondered whether mention should not also be made of those cases in which the work of consultants had proved unsatisfactory. He trusted that, in accordance with the statement made at the end of paragraph 9, the Secretariat would be able to give additional information in its next report.

35. Mr. GAMBOA (Venezuela) said that it was not clear what role experts and consultants actually played in the Organization. In spite of the definitions given in document A/C.5/31/10/Add.1, it appeared that the term "expert" was used to designate any person engaged by the Secretariat when it was unable to discharge a particular task. Recruiting experts and consultants was really the same thing as establishing a parallel Secretariat, and it was appropriate to ask whether such a system was an effective way of carrying forward all the scientific and technical programmes for which the Organization was responsible, especially as it was stated in paragraph 7 of document A/C.5/31/10/Add.1 that it had not been possible to evaluate the work of the experts and consultants. His delegation considered that it should have been possible to evaluate the work of all the experts who had worked for the Organization in the past and, more especially, those who had been recruited between January and 30 June 1976.

36. He noted that the principle of equitable geographical distribution had not been applied to the recruitment of experts. Reference to the table in annex II of document A/C.5/31/10/Add.1 showed that most of the experts came from the United States or Western Europe and that very few were from developing countries. Yet the developed countries were not the only ones to possess the knowledge required; developing countries had universities and technical institutes which could provide helpful advice to other developing countries because they were thoroughly familiar with the problems which those countries faced. His delegation therefore urged the Secretariat to recruit more experts from developing countries. In addition, efforts should be made to overcome as soon as possible the problem of delays in recruitment. Sometimes it was necessary to wait one or even two years before finding the experts needed to solve problems which were often very urgent.

37. Mr. NORBURY (United States of America), referring to paragraph 9 of document A/C.5/31/10/Add.1, said that he did not fully understand why it had proved so difficult to evaluate the qualifications of experts, consultants and contractors; he would like some clarification on that point.

38. Mr. RASOLONDRALIBE (Madagascar), referring to paragraph 11 of document A/C.5/31/10/Add.1, said that he failed to see why it should be necessary to recruit experts for authorship. He associated himself with the views expressed by the representatives of France and the United States concerning paragraph 9 of the same document and expressed surprise at the fact that between 19 August 1976, the date of issue of document A/C.5/31/10, and 29 November 1976, the date of issue of

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(Mr. Rasolondraibe, Madagascar)

document A/C.5/31/10/Add.1, it had not been possible to gather statistics so as to be able to evaluate, the qualifications of the 572 experts recruited in the six-month period covered by the latter document. The note by the Secretary-General on the use of experts and consultants in the United Nations (A/C.5/31/10/Add.1) was inadequate.

39. Mr. TARZI (Chief, Secretariat Recruitment Service), replying to the questions put in the debate, explained to the representative of Ecuador, who had rightly stressed the need to ensure a more equitable geographical distribution of the experts recruited by the Secretariat, that the new procedures for recruiting experts and consultants had only recently been applied, and that the Secretariat firmly intended to improve the situation with respect to geographical distribution.

40. In reply to a question raised by the Ukrainian representative, he pointed out that the new procedures had been established in accordance with the decisions of the General Assembly. After ascertaining that the work in question could not be undertaken by permanent staff members, those responsible for recruitment always checked whether the candidates had the right qualifications for a particular task. With regard to recruitment itself, he assured the Committee that the Secretariat would endeavour in the future to apply more strictly the principle of equitable geographical distribution.

41. With a view to providing the Committee with specific details that might be of interest to it, he explained that at Headquarters a high-ranking official was responsible for co-ordinating the various recruitment operations. That official examined the requests for expert services communicated to him by departments or units and verified whether the work might not be done by permanent staff members or by officials on short-term or fixed-term contracts; it was only when all the necessary checking had been performed that he acted on the request of the department or unit concerned.

42. A number of delegations had raised the matter of the evaluation of the qualifications of experts and the services rendered by them. He said that it was often difficult to evaluate work which must sometimes be performed at home or on a part-time basis, as, for example, certain translation work or authorship. However, the Secretariat would, of course, endeavour in the future to provide more detailed information and a more comprehensive report.

43. Mr. DAVIDSON (Under-Secretary-General for Administration and Management) said that it was perhaps helpful to draw attention to the kind of information which the Secretariat in fact collected on the experts and consultants it recruited, since that might enable the Fifth Committee to form a clearer picture of the problems which the Secretariat encountered. He described some of the forms used for the recruitment of experts, which clearly showed the care and thoroughness with which the Secretariat acted. First, the requesting department or unit was required to fill in a form containing a list of 25 extremely precise and detailed questions, whose purpose was to determine to the extent possible whether the use of outside services was justified. In view of the diversity of the services requested (preparation of reports, translation, typing, authorship, sound recordings, and so forth), it was difficult to provide a comprehensive table of the qualifications

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(Mr. Davidson)

required. A second form had to be filled in by all the candidates without exception, irrespective of the duration of their contract. They must provide very exact information about their academic studies (school and university) and about previous employment. The Secretariat could of course inform the Committee of the number of candidates holding a given diploma; but such information would in fact be of very little interest. As would be seen from table 1 of document A/C.5/31/10/Add.1 showing the duration of contracts of consultants, experts and contractors, 254 of 572 persons recruited had had contracts for less than one month. It was questionable whether it would be worth-while to computerize data on people recruited for so short a period for the purpose of preparing reports on the subject.

44. There was also a form for the certification and evaluation of the services rendered, which showed that the Secretariat was not trying to avoid the evaluation exercise. The truth was that the Secretariat was still looking for ways of performing the evaluation task and of quantifying the results.

45. In reply to a question put by the representative of Venezuela concerning geographical distribution, he drew attention to the table showing the distribution of consultants, experts and individual contractors by region and nationality (A/C.5/31/10/Add.1, annex II). If the UNIDO classification for developing countries was used, it would be seen that 38 per cent of the consultants, 54 per cent of the experts and 37 per cent of the contractors recruited came from developing countries. Those numbers were fairly sizeable. The next report on the subject would show whether the situation had progressed favourably.

46. The CHAIRMAN proposed that, if there was no objection, the Committee should recommend to the General Assembly, as had been proposed by the Polish delegation, that it should take note of the Secretary-General's reports in documents A/C.5/31/10 and Add.1 and the discussions of the Fifth Committee on the item including the oral report of ACABQ, reaffirm the decisions taken at its 2325th plenary meeting on 18 December 1974 and its 2444th plenary meeting on 17 December 1975 on the use of experts and consultants in the United Nations, and request the Secretary-General to submit a further report to the thirty-second session on the implementation of the decisions taken at the twenty-ninth and thirtieth sessions.

47. It was so decided.

AGENDA ITEM 98: PATTERN OF CONFERENCES: REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON CONFERENCES (A/31/3 (chap. VIII, sect. G), A/31/32) (continued)

48. Mr. RASOULI (Afghanistan) congratulated the Chairman of the Committee on Conferences on the competent manner in which he had reconciled the views of the members of that Committee so as to reach a consensus on the controversial issues before it.

49. His delegation agreed in general with the recommendations of the Committee on Conferences, but could not agree with the idea of setting a quota for the number

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(Mr. Rasouli, Afghanistan)

of meetings, as proposed by the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) in its 1974 report (A/9795), or with the idea that the volume of conference work should be dictated by the availability of interpreters. The increasing role of the United Nations in all fields affecting the world community and the responsibility of the United Nations system as a whole for the establishment of the new international economic order, and the other tasks which the Organization was called upon to accomplish led his delegation to oppose the setting of a quota on conferences. The increasing number of issues confronting the world community required international co-operation and the harmonization of world-wide efforts in the interests of all countries, whether developed or developing. It was true that the financial resources of the United Nations were limited, but every effort should be made to hold all the necessary conferences and meetings.

50. Developing countries were confronted with numerous economic and social problems. International meetings offered the opportunity to take necessary measures relating to important issues which concerned all States, and in particular the developing countries. To limit the number of conferences would hinder the search for solutions to existing and future problems. His delegation hoped, therefore, that the Fifth Committee would provide the necessary means to deal with the matter and increase the number of interpreters. Finally, his delegation had no objection to the idea of establishing rules which would permit the General Assembly to schedule meetings in developing countries.

51. Mr. ZDROJOWY (Poland) expressed his keen satisfaction at the excellent work done by the Committee on Conferences. He particularly appreciated the efforts made by that Committee to check the proliferation of meetings, in keeping with its mandate set forth in General Assembly resolution 3351 (XXIX).

52. The growing number of conferences and meetings was, as the Committee on Conferences had indicated in its report (A/31/32), to some extent the result of the expansion of United Nations activities. In that connexion, it might be possible to utilize financial resources in a more rational way, in particular by convening meetings of United Nations bodies at their respective headquarters, in conformity with the general principle which had already been adopted, and by limiting documentation. His delegation nevertheless accepted the suggestion made by the Soviet delegation at the 39th meeting, that the Legal Sub-Committee of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space should be authorized to continue to hold its sessions alternately in Geneva and New York.

53. There were other possibilities for further reducing the costs for conference services. In that connexion, his delegation wished to remind the Fifth Committee that it had submitted a working paper (A/C.5/XXX/CRP.1) to the Committee at its thirtieth session in which it had requested detailed information on several matters, including the matter of United Nations meetings. In particular, it had asked what was the total number of meeting hours financed from the regular budget which had not been used in 1974-1975, owing to the late start of meetings and the lack of a quorum of speakers; what had been the total number of overtime hours required in 1974-1975 for meetings financed from the regular budget; and, finally what had been the average cost of one hour of meeting time financed from the regular budget. In its reply, contained in working paper A/C.5/XXX/CRP.4, the Secretariat had indicated that a little less than one fifth of the time allocated to meetings had been lost and that an hour of meeting time of the General Assembly and the Main Committee had cost an average of \$3,500. That had been the situation in 1975.

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(Mr. Zdrojowy, Poland)

54. It now appeared from an internal document of the Department of Conference Services that, at the thirty-first session, 302 hours had already been lost by 19 November 1976, because of late starts or early endings of meetings. If it was assumed that the cost of meetings had not declined since 1975, that number of hours lost represented a loss of more than \$1 million. His delegation was, of course, able to accept delays or suspensions of meetings prompted by the need for consultations between delegations, but effective and practical measures should be taken to improve the over-all situation.

55. In evaluating the item, it was important that the organizational efforts undertaken by the Secretariat should not be forgotten, and his delegation hoped that in the future it would be possible to achieve further economies, thus contributing to the improvement of operational activities.

56. Mrs. TROTTER (New Zealand) felt that the second report of the Committee on Conferences (A/31/32) was a useful document. That Committee's work programme for 1976 had been a formidable one, and an examination of the report showed that the Committee had carried out its functions effectively. It had systematically studied the departures from the calendar of conferences and had studied the options objectively. It had, furthermore, set out clearly the financial implications of each decision. The inclusion in the report of a tentative calendar for 1978, in addition to the 1977 draft calendar, was useful and should make the task of examining the full programme of conferences for 1978-1979 less arduous when the programme came up for approval as part of the next biennial programme budget at the thirty-second session of the General Assembly. In carrying out its advisory functions, the Committee on Conferences had been somewhat less successful. As the Chairman of that Committee had noted, it had often been difficult for the Committee to reach consensus on substantive issues.

57. The Committee on Conferences had recommended that the General Assembly should reaffirm the general principle underlying the pattern of conferences that United Nations bodies should meet at their respective headquarters, subject to the seven exceptions which had already been approved by the General Assembly. Her delegation endorsed that general principle and felt that the size of the additional costs incurred when meetings were held away from headquarters did not need emphasizing. Her delegation could accept the seven exceptions listed in paragraph 47 of the Committee's report (A/31/32), but wondered whether, in view of the present financial situation of the Organization, it was necessary to include regular sessions of the regional economic commissions and the meetings of their subsidiary bodies in the list. It should be noted, however, that the holding of sessions of the regional commissions away from headquarters required the approval of the Economic and Social Council.

58. Chapter IV of the report (A/31/32) on the optimum apportionment of conference facilities was interesting but rather inconclusive, in particular section E dealing with the feasibility of introducing a quota system as a means of obtaining optimum utilization of conference resources. Like ACABQ, her delegation felt that such a system would be worth considering further and could perhaps be introduced on an

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(Mrs. Trotter, New Zealand)

experimental basis. The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific had introduced a similar system in 1974, which was working satisfactorily. Meetings at the regional level were, of course, smaller and less frequent, but it was not clear why a quota system could not work on a world-wide scale.

59. With regard to section F of chapter IV, her delegation was disappointed that the Committee on Conferences had not been able to make more progress towards drawing up a comprehensive set of guidelines for the establishment of the calendar of conferences. The guidelines set out in the 1975 report (A/10032) for the effective use of the conference servicing capacity of the United Nations had been a step in the right direction. Her Government attached considerable importance to the work done by the Committee on Conferences on the elaboration of guidelines. Certainly, as paragraph 91 of the 1976 report (A/31/32) showed, a useful start had been made. However, it did not go far enough, and it was to be hoped that the Committee on Conferences would make more positive progress in the coming year.

60. In monitoring the application of the criteria for meeting records for United Nations bodies, the Committee on Conferences had performed a worth while, if at times frustrating, task and its recommendations on the matter were very interesting. Her delegation felt that the Committee on Conferences had done very useful work and accepted the recommendations summarized in chapter VI of the report.

61. The CHAIRMAN recalled that at the 39th meeting the Soviet representative had proposed the addition of a subparagraph (h) to paragraph 4 of the draft resolution in paragraph 118 of the report of the Committee on Conferences. The proposed subparagraph would read as follows: "The sessions of the Legal Sub-Committee of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space shall be held alternately in New York and Geneva;".

62. Mr. OKEYO (Kenya), speaking on behalf of the developing countries which were members of the Committee on Conferences, said that the representative of India also intended to propose a paragraph for inclusion in the draft resolution. Since the representative of India was absent, he proposed that a decision on that draft resolution should be postponed until the following meeting.

63. Mr. SEKYEI (Ghana) supported the Kenyan representative's proposal and said that the text of the amendment in question, which would resubmit the proposal quoted in paragraph 93 of the report of the Committee on Conferences, was of great importance to certain developing countries.

64. Mr. NORBURY (United States of America) said that he did not recall that the Soviet delegation had indicated the reasons for the amendment which it was proposing. At the preceding session, the Committee had considered a similar amendment, which had been rejected by both the Fifth Committee and the General Assembly. The Fifth Committee had on that occasion welcomed the fact that the Committee on Conferences had decided that in future the sessions of the Legal Sub-Committee of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space would be held at Headquarters, and no longer alternately in New York and Geneva. He therefore believed that the amendment should again be rejected.

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65. Mr. ZDROJOWY (Poland) recalled that his delegation had expressed support for the Soviet amendment. Poland was a member of the Legal Sub-Committee, and it was the Sub-Committee itself which had expressed a desire to hold its sessions alternately in New York and in Geneva, so that it would be able to have access to the documentation and libraries available in the two cities.
66. Mr. VISLYKH (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that the Polish representative had explained very clearly the reasons for the amendment of the Soviet delegation.
67. Mr. HAHN (Canada) observed that the question had been considered at length in the Committee on Conferences. In addition to the views of the Legal Sub-Committee itself, there were other considerations to be borne in mind. If some delegations wanted a decision taken by the Committee on Conferences to be reversed, it would perhaps be preferable to invite that Committee to reconsider the question and to report again on the matter at the next session.
68. Mr. STUART (United Kingdom) supported the position of the Canadian delegation. The proposal made by the Soviet delegation constituted an exception to the general principle, and exceptions generally resulted in additional expenditure. As the organ dealing with budgetary questions, the Fifth Committee should study carefully any exception to the rule. As had been proposed by the Canadian representative, the best procedure would be to refer the question to the Committee on Conferences, so that it could report on the subject at the next session.
69. Mr. VISLYKH (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) drew the Committee's attention to foot-note 6/ to paragraph 47 of the report of the Committee on Conferences. It was clear from that foot-note that, contrary to what had been said by the representative of Canada, the Committee on Conferences had not considered that question and had not made a recommendation on that subject. The Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space was an intergovernmental expert body which was doing extremely important work. If it considered that it was preferable for its Sub-Committee to meet alternately in New York and Geneva, there was no reason not to grant its wish.
70. Mrs. DERRE (France) said that she would have no difficulty in accepting the amendment proposed by the Soviet delegation. The question had not been definitely settled by the Committee on Conferences and, since opinions were divided, that Committee should be invited to resume its consideration of that question as a matter of priority.
71. Mr. RHODIUS (Netherlands) said that he was not convinced by the arguments advanced to justify the Soviet amendment, namely that it was the Legal Sub-Committee itself which had decided to meet alternately in New York and in Geneva, that it should have access to reference works and libraries in the two cities, and that the desire expressed by an intergovernmental organ could not be gainsaid. The Fifth Committee was also an intergovernmental organ empowered to take decisions on the subject. It would be unwise to take an immediate decision on the Soviet delegation's proposal, and it would be better to refer it to the Committee on Conferences.

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72. Mr. SEKYI (Ghana) noted that the United Kingdom representative had stated that any exception to the rule would result in additional expenditure. In the case under consideration, it would be useful to know what, in the opinion of the United Kingdom representative, would be the financial implications of the Soviet proposal.

73. Mr. STUART (United Kingdom) said that, when the same proposal had been considered at the preceding session, the Secretariat had said that it would have no financial implications if sufficient funds were allocated in the budget for a meeting in Geneva or in New York. That explanation had not been satisfactory. When an organ met away from its headquarters, expenses obviously had to be incurred for travel and subsistence.

74. The CHAIRMAN asked the Soviet representative whether he insisted on his proposal being put to a vote or whether he would agree to a postponement of the Committee's decision.

75. Mr. VISLYKH (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that he could agree to a postponement until the next meeting of the decision concerning his delegation's proposal.

76. The CHAIRMAN recalled that the representatives of Kenya and Ghana had proposed that the Committee postpone until the next meeting its consideration of the draft resolution contained in the report of the Committee on Conferences (A/31/32), so that the representative of India could submit an amendment. If there was no objection, he would take it that the Committee adopted that proposal.

77. It was so decided.

AGENDA ITEM 99: UNITED NATIONS ACCOMMODATION

(a) UTILIZATION OF OFFICE ACCOMMODATION IN THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM (A/9854, A/10279 and Add.1, A/10280 and Add.1, A/31/8/Add.4; A/C.5/31/7 and Corr.1, A/C.5/51/17 and Corr.1) (continued)

78. Mr. RHODIUS (Netherlands) said that it was gratifying to note that the Joint Inspection Unit, the Secretary-General and ACABQ were basically in agreement on the question. With regard to the utilization of office accommodation at United Nations Headquarters, his delegation hoped that the important role of the liaison offices of the specialized agencies in strengthening system-wide co-operation would not be hampered by the transfer of those offices to the vicinity of the Headquarters building. The transfer of sectors of the Secretariat to Vienna might enable the Secretary-General to keep the specialized agencies at the Headquarters building.

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(Mr. Rhodius, Netherlands)

79. As far as the question of accommodation for extrabudgetary staff was concerned, as the Secretary-General indicated in his report (A/C.5/31/33), and ACABQ in its report (A/31/8/Add.4), the question could not be separated from the question of "support services" for extrabudgetary activities. An equitable distribution of service costs should take into account services provided through those extrabudgetary funds to United Nations organizations, such as the services provided for the United Nations by UNDP resident representatives.

80. Since arrangements for support were only one aspect of a complex problem, his delegation suggested that any decision on the important matter of the accommodation provided for extrabudgetary staff should be postponed until more information was available.

81. Mr. THOMAS (Trinidad and Tobago) said that it was clear from the report of the Joint Inspection Unit (A/9854) that although, generally, formal occupancy standards in the Secretariat were satisfactory, in the case of General Service staff the problem of overcrowding was serious in some areas. To alleviate that situation the Unit proposed such measures as a doubling-up of junior Professional staff, a relocation of units to UNDC and a relocation of staff to other cities. That last suggestion was consistent with the decision taken by the General Assembly in its resolution 3529 (XXX) that no additional office space be acquired in New York or Geneva until consideration had first been given to available space in Vienna.

82. As regards the doubling-up of junior Professionals, his delegation noted that it would be only a marginal solution to the problem of overcrowding. The decision could have notable disadvantages in terms of staff productivity if applied too rigidly. It was to be hoped that the conclusions in paragraph 47 of the Secretary-General's report (A/C.5/31/17) would not be too clinically applied and that the Office of General Services would move with due consideration in the pursuit of that measure.

83. With regard to the relocation of units to the UNDC building, he believed that it was the Inspector's understanding that the measure would have been initially undertaken since 1975, but apparently that had not been the case. The relocation seemed not really to have affected the situation in the Secretariat building since relocation of units to UNDC had been effected from outside offices, and only a small number of staff had actually been moved from the Secretariat building. He noted that it was planned to relocate the Office of Technical Co-operation in the UNDC building, and hoped that that would help to alleviate the problem of overcrowding.

84. As for the relocation of staff to other cities, his delegation would wish to reserve its comments on that measure until the Committee had fully examined subitem 99 (b) of the agenda. The Joint Inspection Unit observed that the Office of General Services should be reinforced in its authority in the area of accommodation, and he agreed that that would be appropriate.

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(Mr. Thomas, Trinidad and Tobago)

85. His delegation was in agreement with the recommendations and conclusions which were recapitulated at the end of the Secretary-General's report (A/C.5/31/17). However it was not satisfied that the measures proposed by the Joint Inspection Unit, with regard to rentals and adjustment or reduction of space, were sufficiently comprehensive to promote the solutions required. It shared the view of the Unit that the General Assembly should take a decision as to the future of Headquarters accommodation which would enable the Secretariat to plan intelligently for future space requirements. His delegation also agreed with the Unit that the principal deterrent to effective planning to meet future space requirement at Headquarters had been the lack of certainty on the part of the Secretariat as to the intentions of the General Assembly concerning the expansion at Headquarters and the manner in which expansion was to be effected. His delegation believed, as ACABQ had recommended in 1969, that the problem of accommodation at Headquarters should be viewed in the over-all context of the development of the United Nations, projected over some 20 years, and in that connexion it would wish to consider very closely the Secretary-General's report on the relocation of staff to Vienna (A/C.5/31/34).

86. In its report on the utilization of office accommodation in the United Nations system (A/10280) the Joint Inspection Unit mentioned the same basic difficulty of overcrowding or lack of space. In paragraph 47 the Unit observed that the efficient management of staff space depended not only on the care and attention of the managers of that space, once a building was constructed, but perhaps even more on the manner in which the building was planned and constructed. The Unit further observed that there was a need for co-ordination by organizations in Geneva, both from the point of view of the utilization of office space and also at the stages of building and construction. His delegation endorsed the observation of the Unit on those two points and noted with satisfaction that efforts had already been made in that regard.

87. The Joint Inspection Unit also stated that the United Nations Office in Geneva consisted of many unrelated units. His delegation did not regard that as a happy situation and hoped that Vienna would offer the opportunity for a more rational relocation of staff and units. Incidentally, his delegation would wish to know whether the exchange of properties between the United Nations Office in Geneva and the Swiss authorities (A/C.5/1674), which had been authorized by the General Assembly at its previous session, had in fact taken place and to what extent it would contribute in the future to a more rational approach to the location of units.

88. The comments of the Joint Inspection Unit in its report (A/10279) on office accommodation provided for extrabudgetary staff in the United Nations system were generally relevant. Nevertheless, his delegation agreed with the Secretary-General about the difficulty in establishing consistency of principles with regard to rentals and the concession of areas to extrabudgetary staff. His delegation further agreed with the Secretary-General and the Joint Inspection Unit that decisions on where to house extrabudgetary staff should not be predicated on the sources of the funds from which such staff were paid but should continue to be based on over-all management considerations. He also agreed with the Secretary-General

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(Mr. Thomas, Trinidad and Tobago)

and ACC that the question of office accommodation provided for extrabudgetary staff could not be separated from the larger question of over-all support services for extrabudgetary activities. The Secretary-General would be submitting, in the context of his progress report on the programme budget, a separate report on the general question of the cost of support services, including the cost of accommodation, provided from the regular budget to extrabudgetary activities. Lastly, he noted that the Advisory Committee had in general agreed with the comments and recommendations of the Secretary-General.

89. Mr. AKASHI (Japan) said that he found the main conclusions and recommendations in the Secretary-General's report (A/C.5/31/17) acceptable. He noted that there was a wide variation in standards of accommodation among organizations of the United Nations system and would welcome the adoption of a common approach to that question within the framework of ACC. His delegation did not endorse the Secretary-General's stated target of assigning individual offices to not more than one half of the Junior Professional staff. There were many advantages in the joint use of office space by the junior Professional staff: it was conducive to better understanding, to harmonizing work methods and to better supervision, it accelerated on-the-job training and it reduced the sense of isolation often experienced by junior Professional staff members. In many government offices joint use was common practice, and there was no reason why the United Nations could not break away from the excessive isolation of staff members in the Professional category.

90. His delegation noted that the Secretary-General had undertaken to move from the Headquarters building a number of offices whose functions were not very intimately connected with the Secretariat. He welcomed that measure, which might not be very popular with the persons concerned. In that connexion, his delegation agreed with the Advisory Committee (A/31/8/Add.4, para. 7) that the Secretary-General should keep under constant review the use of rent-free space by news organizations in Headquarters so as to ensure that such space was allocated equitably. At the Palais des Nations in Geneva news organizations were charged rent; it should be noted news organizations were the largest non-Secretariat tenant at Headquarters. His delegation had no objection to the provision of rent-free space to news organizations provided that they were in fact engaged in propagating the purposes and activities of the United Nations.

91. His delegation welcomed the fact that new and more rational rentals were to be charged for the occupation of United Nations premises from 1977 onwards. It proposed that a new category of rental charges should be added to the three suggested by the Secretary-General in his report: the new category might be called the "free market rate" and it would differ from the "full market rate" in that United Nations facilities would be provided to a bank and a travel agency which provided the best services at the most advantageous terms. The bank or travel agency would be determined on the basis of free bidding and not on the basis of historical precedents. His delegation was not convinced that the travel agency at Headquarters had improved its services, as the Secretary-General stated in paragraph 22 of his report (A/C.5/31/17). It had the impression that few delegations and staff members shared the Secretary-General's view.

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(Mr. Akashi, Japan)

92. As the Secretary-General had pointed out, apparently neither the construction of a new office building nor the purchase of an existing building in New York was acceptable to Member States. The Secretary-General was right in suggesting, in the spirit of General Assembly resolution 3529 (XXX), adopted in 1975, that the possibility of moving further units out of New York should be vigorously pursued. That would require the slowing down of the rate of growth of office space at Headquarters, the rental of minimum space outside the Headquarters buildings and the transfer to other cities of appropriate functions when such transfers were compatible with functional and financial considerations. His delegation urged that a better space management policy for the United Nations should be developed. It was not an easy task to overcome the natural tendency among occupants to resist transfers or accept the use of smaller space. In the circumstances, the authority of the Office of General Services to manage space should be reinforced, as the Advisory Committee recommended in paragraph 11 of its report (A/31/8/Add.4).

93. Mr. VISLYKH (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) welcomed the efforts made by the Secretary-General to ensure better use of office accommodation at Headquarters; he believed that the first step should be to ask agencies and services which, contrary to the decisions of the General Assembly, were paying no rent or only a nominal rent for their office accommodation to move out of the Headquarters buildings. When the Secretary-General had talks with the representatives of those specialized agencies concerned which were paying a suitable rent about the space they were occupying at Headquarters, he should bear in mind the interests of those agencies. When the Secretary-General believed it was essential for a specialized agency to have a liaison office in the United Nations Headquarters buildings, the agency should naturally pay the market rent.

94. The CHAIRMAN invited the Committee to recommend that the General Assembly should take note of the reports of the Joint Inspection Unit on the utilization of office accommodation in the United Nations system (A/9854, A/10279 and A/10280) and of the relevant reports of the Secretary-General (A/C.5/31/7 and A/C.5/31/17) and of the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination (A/10279/Add.1) and should endorse the comments and observations made by the Advisory Committee in its report (A/31/8/Add.4).

95. It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 11.35 p.m.