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UN/SA COLLECTION

FIFTH COMMITTEE

61st meeting
held on

Tuesday, 21 December 1976

at 8 p.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 61st MEETING

Chairman: Mr. MUNTASSER (Libyan Arab Republic)

later: Mr. KEMAL (Pakistan)

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

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The meeting was called to order at 8.50 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 99: UNITED NATIONS ACCOMMODATION (continued)

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

Expansion of meeting rooms and improvement of conference servicing and delegate facilities at United Nations Headquarters (A/31/8/Add.23; A/C.5/31/22 and Corr.1;

1. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) said that the Secretary-General's proposals for the expansion, alteration and construction of meeting rooms and other facilities at United Nations Headquarters were summarized in paragraph 3 of the report of the Advisory Committee (A/31/8/Add.23). Paragraphs 40-41 of that report contained a recapitulation of all the Secretary-General's requests for additional expenditures and the recommendations of the Advisory Committee thereon.

2. With regard to the expansion of the Plenary Hall, the Advisory Committee was recommending that the project should be set in motion and that alternative 1 (option 2) should be adopted for that purpose. That alternative had been costed by the Secretary-General at \$3,867,962 for 1977-1979. As described in paragraph 22 of the Secretary-General's report (A/C.5/31/22 and Corr.1), it would seat two delegations at each table; instead of the existing arrangement of six seats for each delegation there would be only four seats, but every delegation would have a seat on an aisle. The Advisory Committee had felt that such an arrangement was the most desirable, because option 3 would require the placement of some tables and seats at a considerable distance from the podium and would reduce sharply the number of seats available for other purposes. Option 1 had been ruled out by the Advisory Committee because it would deprive one of the three delegations seated at each table of access to an aisle.

3. The Advisory Committee considered the Secretary-General's proposals regarding the main conference rooms to be a consequence of work on the plenary hall and it therefore recommended acceptance of those proposals. With regard to the smaller conference rooms, however, a compelling case had not been made for their expansion.

4. The Advisory Committee had considered the proposals regarding the expansion of conference servicing and delegate facilities and, although acknowledging the need for the additional space which would be created by the North Lawn extension project, it believed that the Secretary-General should review his proposal with a view to reducing the cost entailed. The Advisory Committee regarded the Conference Building (second and third basements) project as being contingent on the construction of the North Lawn extension. Accordingly, it recommended that, there again, the Secretary-General should review his proposal.

5. The Advisory Committee did not believe that approval of the North extension project, which would increase the delegates' lounge and dining areas, provide a mezzanine lounge at the third-floor level and add space for conference servicing on the first-basement and first-floor levels, merited priority. Nor was it convinced that that project constituted the only option for expansion of the existing facilities, and it therefore recommended against its approval.
6. The improvement of the facilities of the Security Council was a priority requirement, and the Advisory Committee recommended acceptance of the Secretary-General's proposals for the area to the south of the Security Council Chamber. As to the other components of the South extension plan, namely, the construction of a new Secretariat cafeteria and an additional conference room, the Advisory Committee noted that in the Secretary-General's plans those two projects were inseparably linked. While agreeing that the current cafeteria facilities were inadequate, the Advisory Committee did not believe that the construction of a new conference room was a priority, and it therefore had no alternative but to recommend that the Secretary-General should review the proposal and submit to the General Assembly at its thirty-second session a revised plan which would reflect the Advisory Committee's recommendation in paragraph 36 of its report in connexion with the proposed construction of a new main conference room.
7. The Advisory Committee also recommended that the Secretary-General should review his proposal relating to additional air-cooling equipment in the light of its recommendations on the expansion of conference servicing and delegate facilities.
8. Finally, in connexion with the Secretary-General's request for temporary staff, the Advisory Committee recommended approval of one P-5/4, one G-5 and one G-4/3. The cost of such staff for the period 1977-1979, together with the cost of equipment and furniture, would total \$154,055. Since the period 1978-1979 would be dealt with in the context of the programme budget for the biennium 1978-1979, the additional appropriations to be approved at the thirty-first session related only to 1977. The Advisory Committee therefore recommended, in paragraph 41 of its report, an appropriation in the amount of \$2.4 million for 1977 to enable the Secretary-General to proceed with the development stage of the project.
9. Mr. KIVANC (Turkey) said that the expansion and improvement of Headquarters facilities should be started as soon as possible, since the Secretary-General's proposals would entail a long-term investment of direct benefit to delegations. Prompt action was desirable from the administrative, managerial and financial standpoints, especially in view of inflationary trends.
10. His delegation endorsed the recommendations of ACABQ regarding the expansion of the General Assembly Hall, the Trusteeship Council Chamber and the main conference rooms, and the improvement of the facilities of the Security Council. It also agreed with ACABQ that revised plans should be submitted in connexion with the North Lawn extension, the Conference Building (second and third basements) and the new Secretariat cafeteria.

11. Mr. BOUAYAD-AGHA (Algeria) said that he had been surprised when The New York Times had recently published a report outlining the Secretary-General's plans for the expansion and improvement of Headquarters facilities. Nevertheless, his delegation believed that the projects recommended were necessary, but it was concerned that if work was to begin in 1977 the bodies scheduled to meet at Headquarters during that year would suffer some disruption. Had the report of the Secretary-General been submitted at the beginning of the session, delegations would have been better able to evaluate the recommendations of the Advisory Committee.

12. Mr. THOMAS (Trinidad and Tobago) said his delegation was satisfied that the expansion recommended by the Secretary-General was necessary and that the dimensions of the projects recommended were appropriate, since the structural limitations of the existing Headquarters buildings would admit of no further expansion after that recommended in the Secretary-General's report.

13. The expansion of the General Assembly Hall and the main conference rooms were priority matters. The experience of the recent session of the United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea had underscored the lack of space in those rooms. His delegation therefore agreed with the Advisory Committee that the restructuring of the Plenary Hall, the main conference rooms and the Security Council area should be undertaken as a matter of priority. While not disagreeing with the Advisory Committee's choice of alternative 1 (option 2), his delegation felt that it would be a disadvantage to provide only four seats for each delegation. In that connexion, he asked the representative of the Secretary-General whether the conference rooms in Geneva were much larger than those at Headquarters.

14. With regard to the smaller conference rooms, his delegation would prefer action to be taken promptly on the Secretary-General's proposals, as those rooms were particularly useful to the regional groups, which had grown in number and could use additional space for their meetings.

15. His delegation could go along with the Advisory Committee's recommendations related to the initial stage of the plan, and hoped that the Secretary-General would submit revised plans for those projects which had been questioned by the Advisory Committee.

16. Mr. HART (Australia) said that the Committee had had insufficient time to study the very important report of the Secretary-General and that, even if the time had been available, many delegations would have been hampered by a lack of the technical knowledge needed to assess the recommendations contained in the report.

17. With regard to the plans for the General Assembly Hall, his delegation believed that the character of the United Nations was best embodied in the general debate of the General Assembly, at which time there was always a shortage of seating in the Plenary Hall. Although at other times the seating available in the Hall was not filled to capacity, it was necessary to bear in mind the important occasions on which it was. He trusted that the Advisory Committee had

(Mr. Hart, Australia)

given sufficient thought to that point before recommending the arrangement which would provide only four seats for each delegation.

18. His delegation also wished to know how soon the General Assembly could be expected to reach a membership of 186, which was the maximum seating provided for in the Secretary-General's proposals. The proposal to provide four seats for each delegation would mean that 294 seats in the Plenary Hall would be gained, whereas not nearly that many seats were likely to be required by the admission of new Members. It seemed from the proposed plans for the General Assembly Hall that a considerable amount of space would remain at the side of the Hall and would be used to seat observers and alternates. His delegation wondered how many delegations could be accommodated in that space if the seats were to be replaced by desks, thus obviating the need to seat some delegations on raised platforms.

19. Mr. GRODSKY (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) supported the idea of a speedy remodelling of the Plenary Hall and the Main Committee rooms in order to provide increased seating capacity and meet the future needs of the Organization. It was also essential to reconstruct the area adjacent to the Security Council Chamber in order to enhance the function of that supreme body, which was concerned with international peace and security. On the whole, however, the proposals and plans of the Secretary-General were excessively costly, and a number of recommended projects were not altogether urgent; indeed, some of them, such as the proposal for rearrangement of the smaller conference rooms, were ill-conceived. His delegation wondered whether it was possible to provide more seating capacity without making structural changes and at less cost than was envisaged in the report of the Secretary-General. It did not understand the rationale for the proposed expansion of smaller conference rooms, since they were useful for the meetings of bodies with smaller memberships.

20. The other recommendations of the Secretary-General were not of extreme urgency. In view of the conference facilities which were being made available at Vienna, there was no reason to expand the existing facilities in New York. His delegation therefore urged the Secretary-General to reconsider various aspects of his proposals with a view to reducing the costs involved, and to report on the question to the General Assembly at a future session.

21. Mrs. DERRE (France) pointed out that the report of the Advisory Committee (A/31/8/Add.23) had been issued only on 19 December and that delegations had not yet had time to receive instructions from their Governments. The observations of the Advisory Committee were, however, marked by that Committee's accustomed good sense. There was a genuine need for additional space at Headquarters because of the admission of new Members to the United Nations. However, representatives came to New York to attend meetings, and not to spend their time in the delegates' lounge. Priority should therefore be given to the expansion of conference rooms. Her delegation objected to the Advisory Committee's

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(Mrs. Derre, France)

recommendations with regard to the General Assembly Hall, It believed that it was preferable to provide six seats for each delegation in order to accommodate the large number of persons attending meetings on important and ceremonial occasions.

22. Mr. KEMAL (Pakistan) said he agreed with the comments of the representative of France concerning the General Assembly Hall, and felt that account must be taken of the fact that on certain historic occasions it was necessary to have three or four advisers present. The Advisory Committee's report on the matter had been issued so late that it was not possible to give it the in-depth consideration it merited. He supported the Advisory Committee's recommendation concerning the Security Council in paragraph 30 of its report, but could not agree with its recommendations concerning the cafeteria in paragraphs 31 to 33. The cafeteria was not only for the Secretariat but would continue to be used by delegations. Since the present facilities were grossly inadequate, he wished to know why the Advisory Committee had been unable to support the Secretary-General's plan. He invited interested delegations to contact his delegation with regard to the cafeteria. A new conference room would be necessary because many informal meetings were held and a conference room which could accommodate more than 100 representatives was often unavailable.

23. Mr. STOTTLEMYER (United States of America) said that the Advisory Committee's report, weighing the magnitude of the projects and the benefits to be gained, focused on priorities and on the degree of urgency of particular aspects of the projects. Its recommendations in paragraph 40 of the report were prudent, in that they approved certain indispensable changes and requested that other plans should be revised. His delegation was prepared to support the Advisory Committee's recommendations.

24. Mr. PIRSON (Belgium) said he regretted that the Committee, having received the documents very late in the session, now had to take a decision involving almost \$50 million. For the moment, he felt that the Committee should approve the Advisory Committee's recommendations so that certain necessary changes could be made. At the next session, the reports of the Secretary-General and the Advisory Committee should be made available by the third Tuesday in September.

25. Mr. SEKYEI (Ghana) agreed with the representative of France and others that the General Assembly Hall served a certain ceremonial function and that a four-seat arrangement was not appropriate. The expansion of the North Lounge depended on the increase in the number of Members. He thanked the representative of Pakistan for fighting to save the cafeteria. He was dismayed that no provision was being made for mechanical voting facilities in Conference Room 1.

26. Mr. RYAN (Assistant Secretary-General for General Services), replying to the point raised by the representative of Algeria, said that there would be no inconvenience to delegations in 1977, when the Secretariat would be drafting specific plans for the modification of various rooms. There would be certain inconveniences to those participating in conference activities between January and August in 1978 and 1979, but they would be kept to the minimum.

(Mr. Ryan)

27. In reply to the representative of Trinidad and Tobago, he said that the configuration of rooms was different in Geneva; that was the reason for the different seating arrangements there.

28. The representative of Australia had asked when it was estimated that seating capacity for 186 delegations would be needed. He pointed out that the figure of 186 did not relate purely to the number of Members of the Organization but also took account of the use of conference rooms for such functions as the Conference on the Law of the Sea. The Secretariat's estimate was that it would probably be about 10 years before the membership reached 170. As to the provision of additional seats for observers and alternates on the sides and at the rear of the General Assembly Hall, the space at the side of the Hall was not useful because it was under the overhanging structure and the sight-lines were poor. The representative of Australia had also asked whether optimization studies had been carried out concerning the space needed to seat six representatives. The question had been discussed with architects, and their feeling was that the present size of the seats and tables was best for the functions which had to be performed. The Secretariat agreed with that conclusion.

29. The representative of the USSR had asked whether the seating capacity could be increased without structural changes. Architects who had carefully studied the question had concluded that structural changes would be necessary. However, the Secretariat would certainly take account of the views expressed by the representative of the USSR in developing its plans for remodelling the conference rooms.

30. He had noted the comment made by the representative of Belgium, and assured him that every effort would be made to have the next report prepared by the opening date of the session.

31. The CHAIRMAN suggested that the Committee should recommend to the General Assembly that it should take note of the reports of the Secretary-General and the Advisory Committee and concur with the recommendations of the Advisory Committee in paragraphs 10, 13, 15, 20, 22, 27, 30, 33, 36, 38 and 39 of its report (A/31/8/Add.23) and the summaries in paragraphs 40 and 41. He also suggested that an additional appropriation of \$2.4 million should be approved for the biennium 1976-1977.

32. Mr. KEMAL (Pakistan) said he felt strongly that the Committee should not decide at the current meeting on the Advisory Committee's recommendation in paragraph 10 of its report. Apart from the fact that very few members were present, a number of delegations were greatly concerned over that recommendation and would have preferred to have six seats for representatives and advisers. He had very serious reservations on the matter and could not accept the Advisory Committee's recommendation.

33. Mr. GRODSKY (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) requested a vote on the matter.

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34. Mrs. DERRE (France) supported the views expressed by the representative of Pakistan, and said she believed that a number of delegations did not agree with the Advisory Committee's recommendations concerning the General Assembly Hall. She therefore felt that other solutions should be envisaged: the Committee might either continue its consideration of the matter or, perhaps, agree to the formula which had been adopted when the Economic and Social Council Chamber had been expanded.

35. Mr. HART (Australia) felt that the space per delegation could be reduced. He therefore disagreed with the Assistant Secretary-General for General Services and supported the views expressed by the representatives of Pakistan and France.

36. Mr. BOUAYAD-AGHA (Algeria), supported by Mr. KEMAL (Pakistan), pointed out that several delegations had expressed reservations concerning the number of seats. He felt that the "3 plus 3" arrangement was the most logical one. He proposed that a vote should be taken on the Advisory Committee's recommendation and on the difference in cost between the two alternatives.

37. Miss FORCIGNANO (Italy) felt that the Committee should rely on the advice of experts in the matter and should therefore support the Advisory Committee's recommendations.

38. Mrs. DERRE (France) proposed that the Committee should approve the estimates under alternative 2 (option 3) and recommended the establishment of a committee in which Member States not represented on the Advisory Committee could study the matter together with the Advisory Committee in an effort to arrive at a solution acceptable to all.

39. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) said that, in view of the great importance of the question, he saw merit in the establishment of an intergovernmental committee to consider the various options submitted by the Secretary-General and the Advisory Committee's recommendations.

40. Mr. THOMAS (Trinidad and Tobago) said that he found that suggestion very pertinent. Most delegations were agreed on the need to expand the General Assembly Hall to some extent; the only point at issue was the choice between option 2 and option 3. He therefore felt that the Committee should agree to the estimates recommended by the Advisory Committee and approve an appropriation covering the difference between options 2 and 3, leaving the details to be worked out later by the proposed intergovernmental body.

41. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) said that, whatever option the Fifth Committee recommended, the intergovernmental body which might be set up would also have before it the various options and recommendations of the Secretary-General and the Advisory Committee and the comments made in the Fifth Committee.

42. Mr. ANVAR (Secretary of the Committee) said that, subject to editing, the French proposal might be worded as follows: "The Committee also proposes the appointment by the President of the General Assembly of an intergovernmental committee composed of 15 Member States to study the various options with regard to the seating arrangements in the Plenary Hall and to report to the General Assembly at its thirty-second session, taking into account the views expressed in the Fifth Committee." The adoption of that proposal would mean that paragraph 10 would not be included in the list of paragraphs which the Chairman had read out earlier.
43. Mr. BOUAYAD-AGHA (Algeria) said that he had proposed a solution; the Committee should approve the appropriation of \$2.4 million recommended by the Advisory Committee and also of the difference between that amount and the cost of option 3. He appealed to the representative of France to withdraw her proposal.
44. Mr. STOTTLEMYER (United States of America) felt that action should be taken on the formal proposal made by the representative of Algeria. He agreed with the views expressed by the Chairman of the Advisory Committee.
45. Mrs. DERRE (France) said that she would heed the appeal of the representative of Algeria and withdraw her proposal. However, she would like to know the views of the Chairman of the Advisory Committee on the matter.
46. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) said that the Committee would have to take a political decision, and he did not feel that he had any mandate to pronounce on a proposal from the floor. However, he considered it most appropriate to refer the matter to the proposed intergovernmental body. The merits and demerits of option 3 were set out in paragraph 5 of the Secretary-General's report: that option called for the most alterations and was the most costly alternative.
47. Mr. THOMAS (Trinidad and Tobago) suggested that the Fifth Committee should not decide on any specific option with regard to the expansion of the General Assembly Hall, but should approve an appropriation of \$2.6 million and leave all options open, on the understanding that the President of the General Assembly, in consultation with Member States, would direct the Secretary-General, by 31 January 1977, as to the option which was acceptable to Member States, after which the Secretary-General would proceed with plans and report to the Assembly at its thirty-second session.
48. Mr. SEKYEI (Ghana) said that, if the proposal put forward by the representative of Trinidad and Tobago was adopted, the Fifth Committee would not be involved in the decision on the General Assembly Hall.
49. Mr. GRODSKY (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) requested that a vote should be taken on the proposal made by the representative of Trinidad and Tobago. He asked whether it was correct to assume that the proposed appropriation of \$2.6 million would cover reconstruction costs incurred in connexion with both the General Assembly Hall and the four main conference rooms.

50. Mr. RYAN (Assistant Secretary-General for General Services) said that that assumption was correct.

51. The CHAIRMAN invited the Committee to vote on the proposal of the representative of Trinidad and Tobago.

52. The proposal was adopted by 62 votes to 9, with 3 abstentions.

53. Miss ELMES (United Kingdom), speaking in explanation of vote, said that her delegation had abstained, since it thought that the Committee ought to have taken a decision. Her delegation could have accepted the recommendations of ACABQ.

54. Mr. VANDERGERT (Sri Lanka) said that his delegation had abstained, since there was some doubt as to whether the President of the General Assembly could carry out the consultations referred to by the end of January 1977.

55. The CHAIRMAN suggested that, in view of the adoption of the proposal made by Trinidad and Tobago, the Committee should recommend to the General Assembly that it should take note of the reports of the Secretary-General (A/C.5/31/22) and the Advisory Committee (A/31/8/Add.23) and concur with the recommendations of the Advisory Committee contained in paragraphs 13, 15, 20, 22, 27, 30, 33, 36, 38 and 39 of its report, as summarized in paragraphs 40 and 41. An additional appropriation of \$2.6 million would be approved for the biennium 1976-1977.

56. It was so decided.

57. The CHAIRMAN declared that the Committee had thus concluded its consideration of agenda item 99.

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

Establishment of the United Nations Industrial Development Fund (A/C.5/31/57)

58. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) said that the Second Committee had decided to refer the question of the establishment of the United Nations Industrial Development Fund to the Fifth Committee. Document A/C.5/31/57 contained the Secretary-General's comments on the matter. For the reasons indicated in paragraphs 11 to 13, the Secretary-General proposed that section III, paragraph 1, of the draft resolution recommended by the Industrial Development Board at its tenth session (first part) should be amended to enable him to promulgate financial rules for the Fund. The Advisory Committee supported that proposal by the Secretary-General, since he traditionally had responsibility for promulgating financial rules. The Advisory Committee trusted that the Secretary-General's understanding of the purpose of the Fund and of the Guiding Principles and Functions, as stated in paragraph 14 of his report, would be accepted. The Advisory Committee also took note of the statement by the Secretary-General in paragraph 15 of his report.

59. Mr. Kemal (Pakistan) took the Chair.

60. Mr. GRODSKY (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics), referring to article VI, paragraph 13 of the general procedures governing the operations of the United Nations Industrial Development Fund, as recommended by the Industrial Development Board (A/C.5/31/57, annex II) and amended by the Secretary-General (A/C.5/31/57, para. 18), proposed that the last sentence should be amended to read:

"Reimbursement for such services shall be from UNIDF resources." The reason for the amendment was that the rate of reimbursement applied by UNDP was too low and did not cover the actual cost of the services rendered. The result was that technical assistance activities were being financed under the regular budget of the United Nations. The amendment he proposed would prevent the setting of a further unfortunate precedent. He requested that the amendment should be put to the vote.

61. Mr. MILLS (Budget Division, Office of Financial Services), referring to the amendment proposed by the representative of the Soviet Union, said it was desirable, for the sake of clarity, to stipulate the rate of reimbursement. In his paper on support services for extrabudgetary activities, the Secretary-General had stated that, for the sake of uniformity, the rates applied with respect to UNDP would be applied to all extrabudgetary activities.

62. Mr. GRODSKY (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that he did not completely agree with the representative of the Budget Division. While it was difficult to measure services rendered, it was not impossible, and rules should be established in order to ensure that the cost of such services was completely reimbursed by the institutions concerned.

63. The CHAIRMAN invited the Committee to vote on the amendment proposed by the representative of the Soviet Union.

64. Mr. RHODIUS (Netherlands), speaking in explanation of vote, said that, for the sake of simplicity, the existing practice should remain unchanged. His delegation would therefore vote against the amendment.

65. Mr. ABOUL GHEIT (Egypt) said that his delegation would vote against the Soviet amendment for the reason stated by the representative of the Netherlands.

66. The Soviet amendment was rejected by 40 votes to 12, with 18 abstentions.

67. The CHAIRMAN said that, if there was no objection, he would take it that the Committee agreed to the amendments indicated in paragraphs 13, 17 and 18 of the note by the Secretary-General (A/C.5/31/57) with regard to section III, paragraph 1, of the draft resolution contained in annex I to the note, and with regard to article V and article VI, paragraph 13, of the text proposed in annex II.

68. It was so decided.

69. The CHAIRMAN said that, if there was no objection, he would take it that the Committee concurred with the comments of ACABQ with regard to paragraph 14 of the Secretary-General's note.

70. It was so decided.

71. The CHAIRMAN said that, if there was no objection, he would take it that the Committee wished to recommend to the General Assembly that it should adopt the draft resolution contained in annex I to document A/C.5/31/57, as amended, and the general procedures contained in annex II, as amended.

72. It was so decided.

Emoluments of the Secretary-General (A/31/8/Add.24)

73. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions), introducing the report of the Advisory Committee (A/31/8/Add.24), said that the salary of the Secretary-General had last been revised with effect from 1 January 1974. Since that time, the General Assembly had taken decisions affecting the emoluments of the Administrator of UNDP and the executive heads of the major specialized agencies (A/31/8/Add.24, para. 4). Since the emoluments of the Secretary-General were not subject to automatic revision, it was for the General Assembly to take a separate decision on that matter and establish a reasonable balance between the emoluments of the Administrator of UNDP, the executive heads of the specialized agencies and the Secretary-General of the United Nations. ACABQ had thought it appropriate to recommend a revision of the emoluments of the Secretary-General to coincide with the commencement of his new term of office, but a review would in any event have been necessary by now. The Advisory Committee therefore recommended that the emoluments of the Secretary-General should be established as indicated in paragraph 5 of its report (A/31/8/Add.24). It also recommended, in paragraph 7, that pensions in payment to former Secretaries-General or their surviving spouses should be adjusted proportionately whenever the Assembly took a decision affecting the maximum retirement allowance for the Secretary-General. The existing situation was anomalous, since changes in the emoluments or retirement benefits of the Secretary-General were not applied to previous Secretaries-General or their surviving spouses. The financial implications of the Advisory Committee's recommendations were indicated in paragraphs 8 and 9 of its report.

74. In the past, proposals for a review by the General Assembly of the emoluments of the Secretary-General had been made on an ad hoc basis. The procedure whereby ACABQ submitted recommendations to the Fifth Committee should be applied in future, since such a procedure would avoid undue delay when it became necessary to revise the emoluments of the Secretary-General.

75. Mr. Muntasser (Libyan Arab Republic) resumed the Chair.

76. Mr. BOUAYAD-AGHA (Algeria) said that his delegation supported the Advisory Committee's recommendations. Since the Fifth Committee had decided to postpone consideration of the question of honoraria until the thirty-second session, he proposed that the question of raising the honorarium received by the Chairman of ACABQ should be examined. The chairmanship of ACABQ was a full-time occupation, and the existing honorarium was inadequate. He therefore proposed the following draft decision:

"The General Assembly requests the Secretary-General to review, within the context of the draft programme budget for the biennium 1978-1979, the amount of honorarium received by the Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions and to report to the General Assembly thereon."

77. Mr. ABOUL GHEIT (Egypt) and Mr. BERGAOUI (Tunisia) supported the Algerian proposal.

78. Mr. PIRSON (Belgium) also supported the proposal, and said that the basic issues involved could be discussed at the thirty-second session.

79. Mr. GRODSKY (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that his delegation supported the recommendations of ACABQ with regard to the emoluments of the Secretary-General.

80. Mr. SAULS (United States of America) noted that the percentage increase in the salary of the executive heads of specialized agencies had been approximately 6 per cent, while the proposed increase in the emoluments of the Secretary-General amounted to 27 per cent. He wondered why the difference between the respective increases was so great.

81. Mr. DEBATIN (Assistant Secretary-General, Controller) explained that the base salary on which the increase had been calculated had been adjusted to include five classes of post adjustment. The increase, as calculated on the new base salary, did not amount to more than 6 per cent.

81a. Mr. SAULS (United States of America) said it was, therefore, his understanding that the recommendations of ACABQ were aimed at restoring the relationship between the emoluments of the Secretary-General and those of the executive heads of specialized agencies to what it had been before 1975.

82. The CHAIRMAN suggested that the Committee should concur with the recommendations of ACABQ contained in paragraphs 5, 6 and 7 of its report (A/31/8/Add.24) and approve net additional appropriations of \$12,000 under section 1 of the programme budget for the biennium 1976-1977. In addition, there would be an increase of \$21,000 for staff assessment under section 25, offset by an equivalent amount under income section 1.

83. It was so decided.

84. The CHAIRMAN suggested that the Committee should adopt the Algerian draft decision by consensus.

85. It was so decided.

Consolidated statement of requirements of the revised calendar of conferences for 1977 (A/C.5/31/94 and Add.1)

86. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) pointed out that the amount of \$95,000 for conference servicing costs of the Commission on the Status of Women should not have been included in annex I to the consolidated statement of administrative and financial implications in respect of conference servicing costs (A/C.5/31/94). The amount of \$2,795,180 representing the total net additional requirement estimated by the Secretary-General should be reduced accordingly.

87. With respect to costs expected to be absorbed within available resources, it was understood that an amount of \$349,000 representing revised estimates arising from decisions of the Economic and Social Council (A/C.5/31/23 and Corr.1) had been included under section 4 of the budget. That amount was included in the \$466,000 expected to be absorbed in available resources. The Conference on Technical Co-operation among Developing Countries had been postponed to 1978 and the amount of \$3,994,995 indicated by the Secretary-General should be reduced by \$349,000.

88. Document A/C.5/31/94/Add.1 contained a request for a net additional requirement of \$292,300. That amount would have to be added to the amount of \$2,795,180 less \$95,000 which had been incorrectly included, as indicated earlier.

89. The Advisory Committee recommended that net additional requirements for conference servicing at Headquarters and Geneva should be set at \$2.5 million. Immediately following the Fifth Committee's consideration of the question, the Secretary-General would report on the effect of the Advisory Committee's recommendations on the various conference servicing lines indicated in document A/C.5/31/94.

90. The CHAIRMAN suggested that the Committee should approve an additional appropriation of \$2.5 million under sections 2B, 4, 5B, 11, 22 and 22A of the programme budget for the biennium 1976-1977.

91. Mr. GRODSKY (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that his delegation wished to protest against the request for an additional appropriation for conference servicing costs. At the current session, the General Assembly had taken a decision on the basis of a recommendation by the Fifth Committee to enforce a new principle according to which over-all conference servicing costs should not exceed the level of appropriations authorized in the programme budget. No sooner had the General Assembly adopted that principle than the Fifth Committee was on the point of infringing it. Document A/C.5/31/94 contained no information which would justify the additional appropriation requested. The need for additional appropriations could be avoided if, for example, some meetings were postponed or steps were taken to reduce the volume of documentation. His delegation therefore requested a vote on the proposed appropriation and would vote against it.

92. The additional appropriation was approved by 55 votes to 11, with 4 abstentions.

Budget and programme performance of the United Nations for the biennium 1976-1977
(A/31/8/Add.25 and Corr.1; A/C.5/31/37 and Corr.1 and Add.1, A/C.5/31/51)

93. Mr. BELYAEV (Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic), speaking on a point of order, said that at the 56th meeting his delegation had proposed that the Committee should, with a view to concluding its work on time, defer a number of items to the thirty-second session, including the subitem relating to the performance report. In order to save time, his delegation had not then given all the reasons for its proposal, but it felt that it should now do so.

94. From the purely formal point of view, it should be noted that document A/C.5/31/37 was dated 22 November and document A/31/8/Add.25 was dated 20 December. They had thus not been issued in conformity with the General Assembly decision that documents on agenda items should be made available six weeks before the end of the session. Document A/C.5/31/37 contained information on the six months from 1 January to 30 June 1976. In other words, the Secretariat, the executive organ responsible for programme implementation, had taken five months to prepare its report. The Advisory Committee, which was composed of highly qualified and competent experts, had taken a further month to issue its report. The Fifth Committee, a legislative body, was thus confronted with a situation in which it had to consider those two documents at midnight. Delegations would surely agree that that was not the best time to consider such important documents.

95. Mr. RHODIUS (Netherlands), speaking on a point of order, said that the Committee had already discussed that matter during its consideration of the Byelorussian draft decision. At that time, the Byelorussian representative had heeded the appeal to withdraw his proposal concerning item 92 (a), to which he was now reverting. Since the Committee had already concluded that it was technically not possible to postpone the subitem, the Committee should immediately take up the substance of the matter.

96. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions), introducing his Committee's report (A/31/8/Add.25), said the Advisory Committee had concluded that there was no need for the Assembly to pronounce itself at its current session on each and every request included in the report of the Secretary-General (A/C.5/31/37) and had therefore confined itself to those areas on which, in its opinion, a decision could not be postponed. With regard to the posts requested by the Secretary-General, the Advisory Committee felt - unless otherwise indicated in its report - that such changes should not be approved half-way through a biennium; accordingly, where the Advisory Committee had approved such posts, it had done so on the basis of temporary-assistance rather than established posts.

97. Mr. BELYAEV (Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic) noted with regret that technical considerations sometimes hindered the implementation of decisions of the General Assembly and other legislative bodies. He would therefore comment on the report of the Secretary-General from the technical point of view.

98. His delegation had always considered that General Assembly decisions on financial questions were mandatory in nature and that the budgets of executive bodies had the

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(Mr. Belyaev, Byelorussian SSR)

same mandatory nature. At the preceding session the Fifth Committee and the General Assembly had adopted a budget for the biennium 1976-1977, which should be considered mandatory for the executive organs and for Member States paying assessed contributions. Now, a report calling for changes in the budget which had been adopted was being submitted. In that connexion, he drew attention to document A/C.5/31/37, annex III, paragraph 5A.39, and pointed out that the Secretariat's request in that area had already been considered at the preceding session, when the competent bodies - the Advisory Committee and the Fifth Committee - had not seen the need for the appropriations requested. He did not, therefore, understand the nature of the information given in that paragraph. He also drew attention to paragraphs 22.77 to 22.81, which, after clearly indicating that the General Assembly had withheld approval of the Secretariat's request for \$57,400 at the last session, that the Advisory Committee had not supported the request and that ICSC had not spoken in favour of it, went on to say that the Secretary-General continued to be of the opinion that an undertaking along the lines described was deserving of the support of Member States and submitted another request, for \$25,000. On what grounds were such requests being resubmitted to the General Assembly?

99. Paragraph 1 of the Secretary-General's report stated that the purpose of the report was, inter alia, to provide a reassessment of total anticipated resource requirements. He wondered who had carried out that reassessment. Paragraph 5 referred to another report (A/C.5/31/27), which the Committee would not have forgotten - a report that had given no information at all on the majority of programmes. Now the Committee was presented with a document giving information on all the programmes and asking for further resources. His delegation could not agree to the procedure which had been followed and could not support the additional appropriations requested without having an opportunity to study them properly.

100. Mr. AKASHI (Japan) said he regretted that the Committee had not had sufficient time to study the documents on the subitem with the thoroughness they deserved.

101. He noted that the rate of inflation had been smaller than initially projected by the Secretary-General at major duty stations, particularly Geneva, but that the exchange rate fluctuations had been less favourable than had been assumed, thus more than offsetting the savings achieved as a result of the lower rate of inflation. His delegation would have liked to consider the additional requirements paragraph by paragraph but, under the pressure of time, would refrain from insisting on it. It wished, however, to state that it had serious reservations about agreeing to a contribution from the regular budget towards the operation of a day-care centre at Geneva, even if it was a one-time contribution which did not constitute a precedent. He recalled that ICSC had been unable to express any views on the general problem and had considered itself not competent to pronounce on the question of possible financial support from the United Nations budget.

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(Mr. Akashi, Japan)

102. With regard to the Advisory Committee's recommendation that staffing changes, including the reclassification of posts, should not be approved half-way through a biennium, his delegation proposed that the Fifth Committee should consider acting favourably on the Secretary-General's recommendations in document A/C.5/31/95, in so far as they related to the up-grading of top-echelon posts at the five regional economic commissions and in the Office of Public Information. The important responsibilities borne by the heads of those very large units of the Secretariat warranted the reclassification of the six posts concerned, as an exceptional measure.

103. Subject to those comments, his delegation would abstain on the approval of the first performance report itself.

104. Mr. NAUDY (France) said that his delegation had already had occasion to stress, at previous sessions of the General Assembly, that the conditions in which the Committee had to consider the budget estimates did not permit it to discharge its responsibilities satisfactorily. An intergovernmental body like the Fifth Committee should not have to take decisions on so lengthy a document during a very short part of a single meeting and on the basis of a report which it had received from the Advisory Committee on the very same day. His delegation wished to reiterate its view that the proliferation of decisions having financial implications during a budgetary period made the process of programme budgeting illusory and inoperative. As it had already stated, it would like to see such administrative vagaries corrected. The situation at the current session was even worse than in previous years. His delegation would therefore abstain in the vote on the additional appropriations requested, since it had not had time to make even a superficial study of the questions before the Committee.

105. Mr. GRODSKY (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that, in keeping with its position of principle based on General Assembly decisions, his delegation considered it improper that such documents should be submitted in the middle of a budgetary period. That violated the principle of the two-year budgeting cycle adopted by the General Assembly. In the case at hand, the document submitted related only to the first six months of a 24-month budgetary period. As the representative of the Byelorussian SSR had convincingly stated, the Committee simply did not have time to consider the numerous requests, some of which contradicted General Assembly decisions. His delegation would therefore vote against the additional appropriations requested.

106. Mr. LEMP (Federal Republic of Germany) said that the performance report was one of the most important documents considered in off-budget years, and its importance should be reflected in the amount of time devoted to it. Owing to lack of time, it had not been possible to study that report adequately, and his delegation would therefore abstain in the vote on the revised estimates. In order to avoid a recurrence of that situation, the Secretary-General should set a fixed deadline for the submission of the performance report.

107. Mr. RINDORINDO (Indonesia) said that his delegation shared the views expressed by the representative of Japan.

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108. Mr. STOTTLEMYER (United States of America) said that his delegation would abstain in the vote on the total revised estimate because, as the Advisory Committee had pointed out, there was a possibility that an additional 26 million would be requested over and above the amount requested in the performance report. In taking a decision, it was imperative for delegations to have a total picture and avoid a piecemeal approach.

109. The representative of Japan had referred to the issue of the up-grading of staff at the top levels. It was his (Mr. Stottlemyer's) understanding, however, that the Committee had decided to defer consideration of that matter, and he appealed to the representative of Japan not to press his proposal. The question could be dealt with in the manner suggested by the Chairman of ACABQ.

110. Mr. WANG Lien-sheng (China) said that his delegation would not participate in the vote on the total amount of the revised budget estimates recommended by ACABQ in document A/31/3/Add.25 because that amount included expenditures which it opposed.

111. Miss FLEMES (United Kingdom) said her delegation would abstain in the vote on the revised estimates under the first performance report, since it had not been possible to reach a proper conclusion in the limited time available. She endorsed the remarks of the representative of Japan with regard to the day-care centre at Geneva.

112. Mr. OKEYO (Kenya) expressed the hope that in future it would be possible to avoid the submission of important documents at the very end of the session. The performance report was extremely important and should be considered earlier in the session. His delegation, which attached particular importance to the question of human rights, was concerned about violations of human rights in southern Africa, and in particular about the policy of apartheid. He therefore sought clarification from the Chairman of the Advisory Committee as to whether the additional manpower for the Division of Human Rights which the Advisory Committee would consider in the context of the budget proposals for 1978-1979 was over and above the posts at the P-4 level which the Advisory Committee had recommended.

113. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) said that, as indicated in paragraph 7 of its report (A/31/3/Add.25), the Advisory Committee was not recommending the establishment of any additional posts. Such posts as were recommended by ACABQ were to be on a temporary-assistance basis. The need for transforming temporary posts into established posts would be considered in the context of the programme budget proposals for 1978-1979.

114. Miss FORCIGNANO (Italy) stressed her delegation's concern with the manner in which the Committee was proceeding in its consideration of the performance report. The report of the Advisory Committee had been issued only within the last 24 hours and her delegation had not been able to study it in sufficient detail. It would therefore abstain in the vote on the total gross revised estimates.

115. Mr. PIRSON (Belgium) said that his delegation would abstain in the vote on the revised estimates for the reasons stated by the representative of France.
116. He drew attention to the fact that actual and projected salary increases for the General Service category in 1976-1977 would amount to 9.5 per cent in New York and approximately 23 per cent at Geneva, although the annual rate of inflation in Switzerland was less than 1 per cent.
117. Mr. ABRASZEWSKI (Poland) said that his delegation would vote against the revised estimates because it disapproved of the conditions in which the Committee was considering the performance report and did not agree with the amount of the revised estimates. His delegation attached special importance to General Assembly resolution 3534 (XXX), referring to the termination of projects which were obsolete, of marginal usefulness or ineffective. It had intended to submit a draft resolution on that question, but in view of the exceptional circumstances it would refrain from doing so, on the understanding that the Secretariat would implement the resolution in question and make a comprehensive report on the results obtained. It wished to receive explicit assurances to that effect from the representative of the Secretary-General.
118. Mr. SEKYEI (Ghana) said that his delegation would vote in favour of the revised estimates, although it did not approve of the manner in which the Committee was considering them. It was prepared to do so because important requests for appropriations for ECA, ECWA and UNCTAD, bodies to which his delegation attached special importance, were included in the over-all recommendation.
119. Mr. BOUAYAD-AGHA (Algeria) said that his delegation was prepared to vote in favour of the recommendation of the Advisory Committee, and appealed to the representative of Japan not to press his proposal so that a decision could be taken promptly. His delegation would have preferred that the Advisory Committee should have studied more closely a number of aspects of the performance report. However, the Advisory Committee had managed to focus its attention on the important activities of the United Nations in the regional commissions. His delegation did not understand the attitude of some delegations, which frequently proclaimed the importance of activities to assist developing countries but abstained when the time came to approve the necessary appropriations.
120. Mr. AKASHI (Japan) withdrew his proposal, on the understanding that the Secretary-General would take it into account in the preparation of the budget proposals for 1978-1979.
121. Mr. DEBATIN (Assistant Secretary-General, Controller) said that he appreciated the difficulty of digesting the voluminous information contained in the first performance report. Nevertheless, the report had been circulated three weeks earlier, and there had thus been some time to study it. Precisely because of the kinds of objections that had been raised at the current meeting, the Secretariat had felt the need to explain its requests carefully, and that had resulted in a somewhat lengthy document. However, in planning the format of the document, every effort had been made to facilitate the task of delegations.

(Mr. Debatin)

122. The Secretary-General was mindful of the need to keep requests for additional appropriations to a minimum during a biennium. However, new decisions were sometimes taken after approval of the budget, and new situations arose from time to time. Furthermore, inflation and currency fluctuations were beyond anyone's control. In order to place the performance report in proper perspective, it should be borne in mind that the practice of programme budgeting adopted by the United Nations was concerned not only with costs but also with programme implementation.

123. The Secretary-General accepted the Advisory Committee's recommendation that the additional manpower approved should be on a temporary-assistance basis. He noted, however, that in the past the Secretariat had been overly restrictive in requesting established posts. In one instance, if additional manpower had not been approved the implementation of a programme approved by an intergovernmental body would have had to be postponed, and such a situation was detrimental to co-ordinated programme implementation.

124. With regard to the comment by the representative of Belgium it should be borne in mind, when comparing rates of inflation and United Nations salary requirements, that the rate of inflation measured cost movements for the entire economy whereas the United Nations was concerned only with salary movements.

125. Finally, the question of phasing out programmes was an extremely important one, perhaps best dealt with not in the context of the performance report but in an evaluation report covering the totality of United Nations programmes.

126. Mr. KIVANC (Turkey) said that his delegation shared the concerns expressed by a number of other delegations but, in view of technical and budgetary considerations, would vote in favour of the recommendations of the Advisory Committee.

127. The CHAIRMAN recalled that the Committee had agreed at the thirtieth session to dispense with voting separately on each section of the performance report and had voted only on the total proposal. If there was no objection, he would take it that the Committee wished to follow the same procedure at the current session.

128. It was so decided.

129. The CHAIRMAN proposed that the Committee should approve total gross revised estimates of \$756,983,400 under the programme budget for the biennium 1976-1977.

130. A recorded vote was taken on the proposal.

In favour: Afghanistan, Algeria, Argentina, Bangladesh, Benin, Brazil, Burma, Ecuador, Egypt, Finland, Ghana, Grenada, Guyana, India, Indonesia, Iran, Ireland, Ivory Coast, Kenya, Libyan Arab Republic, Malaysia, Mali, Mexico, Netherlands, Nigeria,

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Pakistan, Panama, Peru, Portugal, Senegal, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Sweden, Thailand, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, United Republic of Cameroon, United Republic of Tanzania, Upper Volta, Uruguay, Venezuela, Yugoslavia, Zaire.

Against: Bulgaria, Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic, China,* Cuba, Czechoslovakia, German Democratic Republic, Hungary, Mongolia, Poland, Romania, Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

Abstaining: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Federal Republic of, Italy, Japan, New Zealand, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America.

131. The total gross revised estimates of \$756,983,400 were approved by 46 votes to 12, with 12 abstentions.

132. The CHAIRMAN said he took it that the Committee also approved the revised estimates for income sections 1, 2 and 3 in the amount of \$118,009,000.

133. It was so decided.

134. The CHAIRMAN said he further took it that the Committee wished to take note of the performance report of the joint UNCTAD/GATT International Trade Centre annexed to document A/C.5/31/51.

135. It was so decided.

136. The CHAIRMAN said he took it, lastly, that the Committee wished to take note of chapter III, sections I and J, chapter VI, section D, and chapter VII, section F, of the report of the Economic and Social Council (A/31/3).

137. It was so decided.

The meeting rose on Wednesday, 22 December, at 1.15 a.m.

* The Chinese delegation informed the Secretariat that it had intended not to participate in the vote.