



Chairman: Mr. Max H. WERSHOF (Canada).

AGENDA ITEM 73

Budget estimates for the financial year 1971
(continued) (A/7822, A/7937, A/7968, A/7987 and
Add.1, A/8006, A/8008 and Add.1, A/8032,
A/8033, A/8072, A/8122, A/C.5/1296, A/C.5/
1298, A/C.5/1302 and Corr.1, A/C.5/1303,
A/C.5/1305, A/C.5/1307, A/C.5/1309, A/C.5/
1310, A/C.5/L.1041, A/C.5/L.1042)

General discussion (continued)

1. Mr. SERBANESCU (Romania) stressed the importance of the general discussion on the budget estimates. That document reflected, indeed, the entire spectrum of United Nations activity, and it was essential, if those activities were to proceed without serious obstacles, that the budget should be adopted on the basis of a broad consensus. The views, observations and suggestions of the various delegations should accordingly be given the closest attention.
2. His delegation had carefully analysed the budget estimates for 1971 (A/8006) and the report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (A/8008), as well as the statements made at the 1357th meeting by the Secretary-General (A/C.5/1309) and the Chairman of the Advisory Committee (A/C.5/1310). At the previous session (1301st meeting), it had drawn attention to the difficult conditions under which the Budget Division worked and which made the presentation of the budget estimates on schedule a far from negligible performance in itself. The budget estimates under consideration by the Committee had been simplified and the detailed information concerning the work programme and the statistical data had been eliminated and appeared only in a document submitted to the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination. The danger was that that might be the first sign of a divorce between programme analysis and budget analysis proper, and that that situation might hamper the Advisory Committee in its work.
3. The budget estimates for 1971 showed a massive increase, even if allowance was made for the Secretary-General's reduction of \$7 million, that proposal itself being eloquent proof of the possibilities open to the Secretariat for action towards a more rational use of human and material resources, as recommended by the Advisory Committee in its reports, although such

action should properly be taken before the budget estimates were submitted to the Advisory Committee and the General Assembly. But even more disquieting than the budget increase was the fact that the budget estimates had been prepared with a sense of uncertainty and inconclusiveness, so that it was not very clear what was happening in respect of "old" and "new" provisional posts, or what results the activities of the Administrative Management Service were having. The information so far supplied on that score was inadequate, as the Advisory Committee had itself pointed out. At the twenty-fourth session, his delegation had deplored the fact that it had not been found possible to carry out the survey in the main sectors simultaneously, since the set objectives might be lost sight of by a piecemeal survey. That assessment of the situation was unfortunately beginning to be confirmed in practice. However, if the Advisory Committee were supplied with all the necessary data, it would perhaps be able to reverse the trend and recommend to the General Assembly, with a full knowledge of the facts, measures which would enable the results of the Administrative Management Service's survey to be taken into account in the budget.

4. In view of those considerations, however, his delegation had difficulty in approving the amount of the appropriations requested by the Secretariat for staff costs, and had reservations regarding the Advisory Committee's recommendations on that section. Larger reductions could have been recommended, especially as certain expenses seemed to have been overlooked by the Administrative Management Service.
5. His delegation also wished to reiterate its reservations in principle regarding the financing of certain activities listed under some chapters of sections 12 and 17 from appropriations in the regular budget. The deletion of those expenditure items would have the additional advantage of eliminating sources of friction between Member States.
6. With regard to the United Nations budget cycle, his delegation wondered whether it would not be possible, starting in 1972, to go over, on a trial basis for a period of two or three years, to the new system of long-term estimates in respect of programme and budget, and perhaps, at the current session, to sketch out the guidelines and basic procedures of that system, proceeding particularly from the Bertrand report (see A/7822). His delegation appreciated the work of the Joint Inspection Unit and regarded its renewal for a further trial period as imperative. It proposed, however, to revert to that question when the relevant agenda item came up for consideration.

7. With regard to the constant increase in the Organization's budgets, which was a perennial cause for concern, he wondered whether that increase was inevitable, whether anything could be done about it, and if so, whether that depended on the Member States, or on the Secretariat, or on both. Romania favoured the continuous development of the United Nations, with the agreement and in the interest of the Member States. Indeed, the Organization was a reflection of the States desire to work together and to co-operate. It could only be what the Member States wanted it to be. Consequently, the Member States played a decisive role with regard to the Organization's lines of development, and also, of course, with regard to the budget. Moreover, it was their responsibility to take the necessary steps to rectify the negative factors apparent in the Organization's work. Meanwhile, the Secretariat was also in a good position to suggest the most effective means of implementing programmes. However, it apparently had not been sufficiently active in that respect, although its position enabled it to put forward proposals for effecting savings, utilizing resources to the best advantage, and finding compromise solutions.

8. In conclusion, his delegation wished to pay a tribute to the Advisory Committee, which was rendering the Organization tremendous services. It should continue to enjoy the full confidence and support of the General Assembly, and to be encouraged in its work.

9. Mr. BYKOV (Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic) was struck by the provisional nature of the budget estimates for 1971. The budget already was one and a half times higher than the budget for the preceding year, and there was nothing to show that it would not be increased still further in consequence of General Assembly decisions. His delegation welcomed the Secretary-General's proposal to reduce the initial estimates by \$7 million, and hoped that his recommendations would be implemented. Nevertheless, it had no illusions as to the volume of expenditures in 1971. Despite the steps envisaged by the Secretary-General, a detailed analysis of budget estimates revealed its close resemblance to those of the preceding years. It resolved none of the financial difficulties; it merely included requests for larger appropriations. Furthermore, it still featured a number of activities inconsistent with the purposes and principles of the United Nations.

10. The main reason cited to justify the increase in expenditure was the necessity of implementing authorized programmes. An improvement in planning those programmes and greater efficiency in their practical implementation might make it possible to reduce the costs. It was essential, therefore, to review previous methods of work so as to make optimum use of existing resources and redress the Organization's financial position. Staff costs were responsible for a large part of the budget increase, and the constant increase in establishment figures resulted in increased costs under all sections of the budget. In that connexion, his delegation was opposed to the excessive use of temporary staff, for that procedure was likely

to impair the efficiency of the Organization's work in general. It attached great importance to the work of the Administrative Management Service, whose specific proposals it was still waiting to hear, and was impatiently looking forward to the Secretary-General's report on the subject. It supported the Advisory Committee's recommendations to reduce the establishment in 1971 and noted that despite the recommendations for reductions, the cost in respect of conferences and documentation had likewise increased considerably.

11. It was high time to give more weight to the role of the Fifth Committee. The discussion at the three preceding meetings on section 10 of the budget has shown how difficult it was to make changes in the reductions in expenditure recommended by the Advisory Committee. The Fifth Committee's role seemed to be increasingly limited to approving the proposals submitted to it. At the 1363rd meeting of the Committee, the representative of Canada, supported by the representative of Brazil, had warned the Fifth Committee of the chaos which might engulf it if the various delegations submitted new substantive proposals in cases where the Advisory Committee had already submitted its recommendations for reductions. He personally was sorry to see a proposal like that of the Maltese delegation (A/C.5/L.1042), aimed at bringing about economies for the Organization and increasing its efficiency, meet with opposition. His delegation was against any attempt to diminish the role of the Fifth Committee, which should meet not simply and solely to exchange views and approve recommendations but to give serious consideration to the Organization's financial problems and find solutions to them.

12. The budget estimates once again contained certain chapters and sections concerning expenditure which had been undertaken in violation of the United Nations Charter and to which the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic could not agree to contribute for reasons of principle. Moreover, technical programmes should be financed exclusively through voluntary contributions.

13. The Ukrainian delegation considered that the reduction of \$7 million proposed by the Secretary-General was insufficient and it could not vote for the budget estimates as submitted. It recommended the Fifth Committee to make every effort to make a further reduction in the total submitted by the Secretary-General.

14. Mr. SARAMO (Finland) said that his country had always attached great importance to the work of the Organization and had therefore accepted its share of the financial burden it entailed. His delegation considered that no arbitrary ceiling could be set on the growth of expenditure without hampering the activities of the United Nations. Costs should not be regarded in isolation, but in relation to the services that Member States expected and received from the Organization. The highest standard of efficiency was in the interest of its Members, both as recipients of services and as contributors to the Organization's budget. It should also be noted that the rise in expenditure in real terms

in recent years had not been as great as it seemed at first sight. The rise in costs could be assumed to have remained in line with the increase in the general price level.

15. Nevertheless, the Finnish delegation considered that the budget estimates for 1971 gave cause for greater concern than those for preceding years. In view of the fact that the original estimates prepared in August already showed an increase of 9 per cent over the preceding year, the Secretary-General's revised estimates, showing an increase of 14 per cent, seemed high. Since it did not yet have all the relevant documents, however, the Finnish delegation did not wish to comment at that stage on the size of the total budget. Any proposals for economy ought to be accompanied by detailed suggestions as to where reductions might be feasible, but the general discussion was not the right occasion for such suggestions. His delegation considered that most of the recommendations of the Advisory Committee were acceptable, and intended to support them.

16. The Secretary-General and the General Assembly had little room for manœuvring in drawing up the budget estimates and making appropriations. Most expenditure arose from past decisions of the General Assembly, and apart from that it was difficult to reduce costs. Salaries and wages could hardly be reduced to a significant extent by general adjustments in pay scales without increasing the number of vacancies. The Finnish delegation hoped that the Secretary-General's proposal that the level of staff resources in 1971 should not exceed that authorized for 1970 would in no way affect vital programmes, especially those connected with the Second United Nations Development Decade. In that context, it hoped that the Administrative Management Service would soon be able to complete its manpower utilization survey, so as to avoid the loss in efficiency associated with the establishment and continuation of provisional posts.

17. Since the savings that could be made were in most cases marginal, it was essential to take advantage of all opportunities for economizing, however small they might be. With regard to administrative costs, for example, the accumulation of unimportant savings might finally result in a considerable reduction in total expenditure.

18. He emphasized the need for Member States to reduce considerably certain expenses which were under their direct control. In that connexion, the Advisory Committee had recommended that delegations avoid delaying and extending sessions, a practice which had contributed to the rapid rise in costs of conference services. Such self-discipline could also be expected to increase the cost-consciousness of the Secretariat.

19. Another reason for the steep rise in costs in recent years had been the accelerating rate of inflation in most countries, not least in those where the United Nations maintained some of its largest permanent installations. To remedy that situation, the United Nations might try to make more purchases in areas where costs had not risen so greatly.

20. The Finnish delegation believed that supplementary estimates were a distorting factor in financial planning. It therefore noted with satisfaction that the supplementary appropriation requested for 1970 was very small and hoped that the same would apply to the coming year.

21. With regard to the growing financial insecurity caused by withholding and late payment of assessed contributions, he stressed that, in accordance with the consensus of 1 September 1965,¹ every Member State should play its part in a concerted effort to eliminate the budget arrears.

22. Mr. KISOB (Cameroon) said that his delegation had always been against placing a ceiling on the budget and trusted the Secretary-General and the Advisory Committee not to propose any appropriations except those which were absolutely essential for the efficient operation of the Organization during the forthcoming year. Those proposals should reflect the needs and aspirations of the international community, especially at a time when the United Nations was about to establish the objectives of the Second United Nations Development Decade. Thus, it might well be asked whether the budget estimates for 1971 satisfied those criteria and whether the considerable increase in the estimates reflected those aspirations. He noted with satisfaction that the Secretary-General had proposed to reduce the total budget requirements by \$7 million, while maintaining staff resources in 1971 at the level approved for 1970 and reducing the cash requirements for various construction plans, without postponing them. The Secretary-General had also accepted the reduction of \$1.8 million recommended by the Advisory Committee. In spite of those measures, however, there was an unprecedented increase in the budget estimates. It was true, as the Secretary-General had pointed out, that the increase was partly due to growing expenditure in the economic and social sectors, particularly with regard to regional activities, international trade and industrial development, which was in keeping with the objectives of the Second Development Decade. The increase was also due to the growth in the membership of the United Nations. Moreover, it was gratifying to note that the growth rate of the United Nations budget was less than that of the national budgets of Member States contributing more than 1 per cent to the budget of the Organization.

23. In his statement to the Fifth Committee (A/C.5/1309), the Secretary-General had said that the two main factors contributing to the increase in expenditure were the high cost of maintaining the level of staff resources and the rise in wages and rates for utilities and other contractual services. With regard to the enlargement of Headquarters in New York and the distribution of staff between the various duty stations, his delegation remained convinced that a comprehensive study of the question should be made before authorizing the Secretary-General to undertake the proposed construction. In that connexion, it maintained the views it had expressed on several occasions

¹ See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Nineteenth Session, Plenary Meetings*, 1331st meeting, paras. 3 and 4.

at the twenty-fourth session of the General Assembly and in other United Nations bodies, such as UNDP and UNICEF. Moreover, the conclusions of the Jackson report² and the results of the survey on manpower utilization and deployment of staff should be taken into consideration in relation to that question.

24. In connexion with the increase in salaries, he pointed out that in document A/C.5/1303 the Secretary-General had proposed a new salary scale for the Professional and higher categories. He had also heard that provisional measures had been taken to change the General Service salary scale, and hoped that the problem of General Service salaries would be settled once and for all when the proposed restructuring exercise was completed. The solution of the United Nations staff salary problems did not lie in unilateral measures taken or contemplated by individual Member States in the interest of their nationals, for such action was contrary to Article 100 of the Charter and the recommendations of the International Civil Service Advisory Board and inconsistent with the universal character of the Secretariat, as that Board had pointed out (see A/C.5/1303, annex I, para. 14). In spite of those unilateral measures and the Secretary-General's proposals for salary increases, staff morale was deteriorating, as might be seen from certain letters in the *Secretariat News*, such in particular, as one from a staff member who had ventured to act as spokesman for the "silent majority", which comprised most General Service staff and staff in the lower Professional grades, who could not avail themselves of political considerations or influence in seeking promotion. There had also been cases of suicide and threats of strike action. While he hoped that the Secretary-General had tried to establish the causes of those incidents, which might also be studied by the Administrative Management Service, he suggested that a commission should be set up to study the causes of United Nations staff unrest, of which the recent absence on "sick call" of some of the security force was also an alarming symptom.

25. His delegation wondered whether the high priority given to environmental studies in the budget estimates was justified. It recognized that the problem was a universal one, but considered that the developed countries, which to a large extent had helped to create the problem, had the necessary financial resources and skills to solve it without imposing an additional burden on the United Nations. His delegation was aware that it had already been decided to convene a general conference on the subject at Stockholm in 1972 and that the Committee's attention had been drawn to the financial implications of that decision, but it was none the less necessary to modify the degree of priority accorded.

26. Mr. KEENLEYSIDE (Canada), exercising his right of reply, said that he had not, as the representative of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic believed, said that the Fifth Committee should not make specific proposals concerning the recommendations of the Secretary-General or the Advisory Committee; on the

contrary, he had said that the Committee should make precise and detailed proposals and indicate clearly the nature of the reductions involved.

First reading (continued) (A/C.5/L.1041)

SECTION 10. GENERAL EXPENSES (*concluded*) (A/8006, A/8008, A/C.5/L.1042)

27. Mr. VAUGHAN (Assistant Secretary-General for General Services) said that he wished to dispel any doubts that might exist as to the Secretary-General's efforts to reduce expenditure on communications. The Secretary-General had provided detailed supporting evidence for the estimates. He was fully aware of the Committee's concern over the estimates in section 10 and would do everything possible to keep them within limits. He considered, however, that the success of his efforts would depend on the discipline of all staff members and that it would be difficult to establish effective central control. He assured the members of the Committee that he would take all necessary steps to regulate the use of means of communication and avoid unnecessary expenditure.

28. Mr. STOBY (Guyana) said that he had carefully studied the proposal submitted by the representative of Malta (A/C.5/L.1042), bearing in mind the explanations given by the Secretary-General to justify his estimates. The increase in the estimates under section 10 did not seem excessive and he was ready to support the recommendation of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (A/8008, para.244). There was no point in asking the Advisory Committee to re-examine section 10, as proposed at the 1361st meeting by the representative of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, since it was unlikely that it would reach any different conclusions on that section. However, his delegation would like to stress as a point of principle that all members of the Fifth Committee were entitled to propose reductions in expenditure and such proposals should be considered on their merits. He did not foresee a chaotic situation arising from the exercise of a sovereign right. If the delegation of Malta would be prepared to change its proposal to a token reduction of \$1,000 over and above the reduction recommended by the Advisory Committee, his delegation would support it, as a reassertion of the authority of the Fifth Committee over the budget, and other delegations, such as the Maltese delegation, could consider supporting as an expression of their concern at the size of the appropriation under section 10.

29. Mr. GUPTA (India) congratulated the representative of Malta on his proposal: it was high time the Committee exercised its powers in budgetary matters. He thanked the Assistant Secretary-General for General Services for his assurances to the Committee. He opposed the proposal of the representative of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics to refer section 10 back to the Advisory Committee and supported the proposal of the representative of Guyana.

² *A Study of the Capacity of the United Nations Development System* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.70.I.10).

30. Mr. ESTEPHANOS (Ethiopia) said that he appreciated the praiseworthy intentions of the representative of Malta but could not support his proposal. He joined with the representative of the United Arab Republic in appealing to the Maltese representative not to press his proposal.

31. Mr. BARTUŠEK (Czechoslovakia) supported the Maltese proposal, which he thought was fully justified. The Canadian representative and a number of other representatives were against that proposal on the grounds that its adoption would set an awkward precedent by modifying a recommendation of the Advisory Committee. He himself appreciated the Advisory Committee's work but did not think that a reduction in the appropriation recommended would prejudice its authority. The Committee had the duty as well as the right to examine and discuss the Advisory Committee's recommendations and possibly to make new proposals. Denial of that right would remove the very reason for the Committee's existence.

32. Mr. SLIWKA (Poland) said that the Committee was always ready to show its confidence in the Secretariat, but such confidence should not be blind. It was the Committee's duty to look for the best solutions to all problems. He congratulated the Maltese representative on his initiative; his proposal, if adopted, would not necessarily result in a general attack on the budget estimates, for he was sure it would not influence delegations' views on the other parts of the budget. He did not agree with the tendency to support every appropriation recommendation at all costs, whatever it might be, and to view any effort at savings as an attempt to restrict development programmes.

33. Mr. WOSCHNAGG (Austria) said that the Maltese proposal did not involve any question of principle, since its adoption would not detract from the prestige of the Advisory Committee. Moreover, there was no danger of a precedent being set, since the Fifth Committee had already adopted in 1958 an Austrian proposal³ concerning the amount of the estimates recommended for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and had never made a similar decision since. Nevertheless, his delegation would not support the Maltese proposal, but would support the Advisory Committee's recommendation. Effective control of communication costs would be difficult, since it would necessitate the creation of new posts which would cost more than any savings made. His delegation hoped that the Secretariat would do everything possible to limit general expenses and that it would be able at the twenty-sixth session to report savings in section 10 of the budget.

34. Mr. MAKUFU (Democratic Republic of the Congo) congratulated the Maltese representative on his initiative: any effort to reduce the Organization's expenditure was to be encouraged. He agreed, however, with the Canadian representative that the Advisory Committee was the most competent body to decide

what reductions were necessary in the estimates. He saw nothing to justify the reduction proposed by Malta, nor did he see how it could be applied to the different chapters of section 10, since it concerned only the first. Consequently, he would not support the Maltese proposal but would support the reduction recommended by the Advisory Committee.

35. Mr. RAMBISSOON (Trinidad and Tobago) considered that the Fifth Committee had the right to propose cuts in the Advisory Committee's estimates, but that the size of the reduction proposed by the Maltese representative was not justified. He supported the proposal of the representative of Guyana and would favour an even smaller reduction.

36. Mr. REFSHAL (Norway) congratulated the Maltese representative on his initiative, which showed that delegation's conscientious approach to the task of budgetary control devolving on the members of the Fifth Committee. It was the Committee's duty to try to inform itself on all the activities for which estimates were submitted and to examine in detail the relevant information. Nevertheless, considerations of time and convenience made it impossible for the Committee to scrutinize and discuss every single item of expenditure. Moreover, the Advisory Committee existed for that very purpose; in doing its work, it maintained close contact with the Secretariat and obtained the additional information it needed to assess the Secretary-General's estimates and to make recommendations to the Fifth Committee.

37. It was true, as the Chairman of the Advisory Committee had admitted, that there was necessarily a subjective element in the evaluation of the reductions that the Advisory Committee considered it should recommend, but if that argument was valid for the Advisory Committee, it was equally valid for the Fifth Committee. The Advisory Committee was undoubtedly better equipped than any other body to evaluate the data on which the estimates were based and, if the Chairman of the Advisory Committee told the Fifth Committee that his Committee had made a very detailed study of the estimates in section 10, the prudent course was to believe him and to trust the sure judgement and intuition he had acquired through long experience.

38. In view of those considerations, he associated himself with those who had asked the Maltese representative to withdraw his proposal and to take the view that the desired aim had been achieved because the question of principle had been raised and discussed.

39. The Norwegian delegation would vote for the appropriation recommended by the Advisory Committee for section 10.

40. Mr. RHODES (United Kingdom) also congratulated the Maltese representative on having raised the subject dealt with in his proposal, and on having done so in such a clear and persuasive manner.

41. He recognized the cogency of the comments by the Maltese representative, although he did not agree

³ See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Thirteenth Session, Annexes*, agenda items 43 and 44, document A/4070, para. 106.

that there was any contradiction between the comments made by the Advisory Committee and the recommendations it put forward on the basis of those comments. The Advisory Committee was the best judge, and the only judge, of what recommendations were called for by the facts on which it had commented.

42. He went on to say that he, too, considered section 10 to be an item over which the Fifth Committee should exercise strict and continuing control. That was clearly no easy task, and as far as chapter I was concerned, the Governments themselves, which had tried every kind of system, knew how difficult it was to prevent increases in costs relating to communications, for example, in the case of diplomatic missions.

43. Nevertheless, he felt bound to join with those who would regret the Maltese proposal being pressed to a vote. The proposal would face the Committee with an invidious decision between two figures \$60,000 apart, both of which had been arrived at after the exercise of an element of subjective judgement. He therefore hoped that the Maltese delegation would not press its proposal and would be satisfied with the knowledge that the true aim of its action had been achieved, as had been amply shown in the discussion in the Committee at the two previous meetings.

44. Turning to the proposal by the delegation of Guyana, he said he needed time to study it further and form an opinion, and hoped that the representative of Guyana would be prepared to submit his proposal in writing.

45. Mr. YOGASUNDRAM (Ceylon) also asked the Maltese representative to be good enough to withdraw his proposal, particularly since the representative of Guyana had just made a new proposal embodying the question of principle that the Maltese delegation was defending. The delegation of Ceylon was prepared to support that new proposal.

46. Mr. PARDO (Malta) said that he wished to take the opportunity offered by the discussion resulting from his proposal on the expenses under section 10 to explain his delegation's general views on the nature and role of the United Nations budget.

47. His delegation would like to see a continuing and substantial increase in expenditure on some programmes that has a realistic possibility of benefiting the world as a whole and developing countries in particular; it was resigned to the inclusion in the budget of funds to finance a great number of other programmes whose real usefulness he considered doubtful, while his delegation frankly opposed expenditure relating to certain programmes whose proven usefulness was minimal.

48. In any case, whatever the nature of the substantive programmes for which funds were requested, he attached great weight to efficiency in their implementation and to the quality of the Secretariat's work. There should be no toleration of poor work, and there should be no hesitation in applying, where necessary, the

appropriate administrative sanctions to staff who could not meet the requirements of competency laid down in Article 101, paragraph 3, of the Charter. The fact was that, as a result of permissiveness, there had been a progressive decline of standards in work quality and output in some significant areas.

49. His delegation also believed that funds necessary for the smooth functioning of the Organization's activities, whatever and wherever they might be, should be used in accordance with high uniform standards of care that were effectively enforced. The nature of supporting expenditure was one useful indication of the efficiency of an office organization; the higher the supporting expenditure for a given volume of work, the more likely it was to indicate sloppiness in work practices and work habits, and it was possible to prove the existence of a statistically significant correlation on that point.

50. In other words, in economic and social matters, as well as in budgetary matters, the fundamental position of the Maltese delegation was based on the principle that it was essential that the limited resources available to the Organization should be devoted solely to carrying out clearly defined and achievable objectives, and that efforts must be made to increase the amount of funds allocated to such activities, and that aim could be more easily achieved by reducing expenditure on activities that did not meet those criteria.

51. Most of those who had spoken during the general discussion had emphasized the need for more economy and efficiency in United Nations operations and had declared themselves ready to do whatever was necessary to see that that approach was adopted, but so far the Committee had been unable to translate that determination into action. That impotence, and the fact that the Secretary-General had enough room for manoeuvre to enable him in some cases to propose reductions over and above those proposed by the Advisory Committee, or to suggest postponing a given item of expenditure, led to the unavoidable conclusion that the United Nations budget was escaping from the control and technical examination of Member States and becoming a matter essentially of more or less informal negotiation outside the Fifth Committee on the basis of criteria that were by no means clear.

52. In view of, among other things, the Canadian representative's objection to the principle of proposals to apply over-all reductions to sections of the estimates, he wished to submit to the Committee some figures that would give it an idea of the realities behind chapters I and V of section 10.

53. On the basis of the existing charges between New York and Geneva, and between New York and other offices, his delegation had calculated that the estimate of \$280,500 in the budget estimates for 1971 for cable expenditure would buy the dispatch of 3 million words by cable, and that was a low estimate, in view of a number of factors which need not be explored on the present occasion.

54. The estimate of \$639,600 submitted for telephone services was the equivalent of 6.5 million local calls, or approximately 2,500 for each staff member in the Professional category; in the case of one office, the corresponding figure was more than 6,200, which represented a daily average of approximately 17 local calls. Those figures were of course misleading to some degree; they included many long distance and some intercontinental calls which were apt to be expensive if they were not kept short and placed during hours when rate reductions were in effect.

55. The estimate of \$386,400 for postage corresponded to the cost of sending approximately 1,545,000 letters to foreign destinations, or more than 3.5 million letters if it was assumed that 25 per cent of the correspondence was to destinations within the country in which each office had its headquarters.

56. The sum of \$660,000 requested under chapter V for stationery and office supplies, a figure which was equivalent to the annual income of 10,000 people in several countries, would buy 33 million sheets of fine quality headed notepaper, or 40 million sheets if, for some of its requirements, the United Nations bought unheaded paper in bulk. Those figures were based on New York prices. Even allowing for the amounts requested in the estimates under chapter V for the purchase of office supplies, his calculations led him to conclude that letters despatched by the United Nations were of an average length of four pages each.

57. Those figures no doubt reflected the intense world-wide activities of the United Nations. Nevertheless, economies seemed to be possible and, without going into the details of the analysis his delegation had made, he said that it had reached the conclusion that it was possible to reduce by approximately 9.3 per cent the amounts given under chapters I and V and by a total of slightly over \$50,000 the amounts given under chapters II, III, IV and VI; that represented a total reduction of approximately \$280,000. Such a reduction was obviously only possible if uniform and effective methods of control and high standards of efficiency were applied. Since it felt that it was probably unrealistic to expect such standards to be applied, his delegation had confined itself to proposing an overall reduction of 2 per cent, or \$60,000 more than the amount of the reduction recommended by the Advisory Committee. It believed that those savings might be effected if outside telephone lines were restricted to heads of section and above, if long-distance telephone calls lasting more than six minutes or costing more than \$20 were not authorized without written justification, failing which the individual making the call would have to pay for it, if cables could not be sent without the prior approval of the head of the division, and if outgoing mail were examined from time to time.

58. The Committee did not, however, appear to be ready to take practical measures to give expression to its legitimate desire to reduce expenditure under that section of the budget. In the circumstances, believing that a vote on its proposal (A/C.5/L.1042) would be counterproductive, his delegation would not insist

on it being put to the vote. Moreover, although he was grateful to the Guyanese delegation for the proposal which it had just made, he thought it would be preferable not to insist that action should be taken on that either, since it might be interpreted as implying a lack of confidence in the Assistant Secretary-General for General Services. His delegation, however, proposed to revert to the question of expenditure under section 10 at the twenty-sixth session, in the hope that the Secretariat would then be able to provide the Committee with the necessary information to enable it to make a more informed judgement regarding that expenditure.

59. The CHAIRMAN said he was sure that the position and the observations of the Maltese delegation and of other delegations would be duly taken into account by all those concerned, by Member States, by the Secretariat and by the Advisory Committee.

60. He invited the Committee to approve, in first reading, the recommendation of the Advisory Committee for an appropriation of \$5,900,000 under section 10 for 1971.

The recommendation of the Advisory Committee (A/8008, para. 244) for an appropriation of \$5,900,000 under section 10 was approved, in first reading, by 62 votes to none, with 12 abstentions.

61. Mr. DRUMMOND (South Africa) said that his delegation had abstained in the vote because his Government disapproved of the activities for which an estimate had been submitted under chapter III (Public information supplies and services). It would have voted against that appropriation if the chapter had been put to the vote separately.

62. Mr. ARBOLEDA (Colombia) said that his delegation shared the concern which had prompted the proposal made by the Maltese delegation. It had, however, felt that it should support the Advisory Committee's recommendation because the latter had the necessary information to enable it to give an opinion on the various items of expenditure and because his delegation had full confidence in the Advisory Committee's judgement and in the competence of the studies and reports which it prepared.

63. The United Kingdom representative had rightly pointed out that it was the duty of the Fifth Committee to exercise vigilant and constant control over the expenditure set out in the budget. The Advisory Committee exercised that control on behalf of the Fifth Committee and carried out its task in an irreproachable manner, as could be seen from the observations made in paragraph 238 of its report (A/8008) on the budget estimates for the financial year 1971.

64. The Chairman of the Advisory Committee, at the previous meeting, had given his opinion on the reduction of \$60,000 which the Maltese representative had proposed in addition to that recommended by the Advisory Committee; his delegation bowed to that opinion. It had accordingly voted in favour of the

appropriation recommended by the Advisory Committee; it wished to point out, however, that in voting as it had, Colombia in no way waived its right, as a member of the Fifth Committee, to exercise control over the estimates submitted by the Secretary-General. If States had to forego proposing reductions which they considered necessary, the controlling function of the Fifth Committee would quickly become meaningless and the Committee itself would lose its *raison d'être*.

65. In the light of that fundamental consideration regarding the role of the Fifth Committee, his delegation would support any change in the total expenditure which would not affect the efficient operation and effectiveness of the Organization.

66. Mr. WEI (China) said that his delegation had abstained in the vote on the estimate submitted under section 10 because the Office of Public Information had taken no steps to ensure more effective dissemination of information concerning the United Nations among the Chinese people.

67. Mr. IWANAMI (Japan) said that, although he had voted in favour of the appropriation recommended by the Advisory Committee, he considered that the Maltese delegation's effort to seek ways of effecting economies through stricter control of expenditure had had the great merit of showing the Committee the course it should pursue.

The meeting rose at 1.5 p.m.