

United Nations
**GENERAL
ASSEMBLY**
FIFTH SESSION



FIFTH COMMITTEE 246th

MEETING

Thursday, 12 October 1950, at 3 p.m.

Official Records

Lake Success, New York

C O N T E N T S

Page

Budget estimates for the financial year 1951: (a) Budget estimates prepared by the Secretary-General (A/1267); (c) Reports of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (A/1312 and Corr.1 and Add.1) (<i>first reading, continued</i>)	53
--	----

Chairman: The Maharaja Jam Saheb of NAWANAGAR (India).

Budget estimates for the financial year 1951:
(a) Budget estimates prepared by the Secretary-General (A/1267); (c) Reports of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (A/1312 and Corr.1 and Add.1) (*first reading, continued*)

[Item 39]*

PART III, SECTION 13. DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INFORMATION (*continued*)

1. Mr. ELLIOTT (Canada) supported the statements made at the previous meeting by the representatives of Australia, Denmark and the Netherlands, and agreed that a survey should be made of the value of the services rendered by the Department of Public Information. A study group should be set up during the coming year to ascertain the effects and costs of information furnished by the Department.

2. His government was not so much concerned with the money spent on the dissemination of information as it was with the value received from the expenditure of that money. The reports to be examined by the suggested study group should be submitted not only by experts in the field of public information but also by government officials. By comparing such reports the study group would be able to evaluate the services rendered by the Department. He felt that such an inquiry might bring out the fact that a large quantity of printed material of no great value was being distributed and shelved by the recipients.

3. His delegation supported the recommendations of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions as regards the Department of Public Information, but suggested that the Secretary-General should submit a report to the Fifth Committee in 1951 on the question whether expenditure on public information should rightly amount to such a high percentage of the total budget.

4. Mr. MACHADO (Brazil) wished to emphasize that while larger countries, which had their own well-developed information systems, might be able to dispense with the information services of the United Nations, there were many smaller countries which had to rely to a great extent on such services. He suggested, therefore, that the money now spent on sending information material to the more developed countries should be diverted to supplying such material to the smaller or less developed countries. Brazil, for instance, would welcome improvements in the United Nations Information Centre in that country and in the services rendered direct by the Department of Public Information.

5. Mr. KAHANY (Israel) said that as his country was one of those which greatly appreciated the services of the Department of Public Information, his delegation would vote for the recommendations made by the Advisory Committee and accepted by the Secretary-General.

6. As the representative of Norway had emphasized, the needs of the various Member States varied considerably in so far as the information services of the United Nations were concerned. The larger and well-developed countries had little need of such services, whereas the smaller and less developed countries suffered from the fact that the funds at the disposal of the Department of Public Information were not used to provide information services in those countries. It was for that reason that he supported the suggestion that a small group should be set up to review the budget of the Department of Public Information. He felt that the findings of such a group would result in a reduction of funds spent on information services in some countries and an increase of those funds spent in other areas where the information services rendered were inadequate.

* Indicates the item number on the General Assembly agenda.

7. Mr. COHEN (Assistant Secretary-General in charge of the Department of Public Information) said that, as the members of the Fifth Committee were aware, the budget estimates for established posts in the Department of Public Information for 1951 had been reduced to \$2,726,000 by the Advisory Committee and the Secretary-General had accepted that figure. That was only \$16,690 more than the amount approved for 1950, which meant that the increase of \$68,000 in salaries and wages resulting from increments and the introduction of the new salary scheme had largely been absorbed.

8. As regards the reduction of \$78,000 recommended by the Advisory Committee and accepted by the Secretary-General, that would be applied generally, although the Department would endeavour to follow the Advisory Committee's suggestions and effect such saving in the Radio Division and in the Films and Visual Information Division. The estimates for both those operations had, however, been made on the basis of present operations and exactly the same amounts as authorized for 1950 had been requested. A reduction in radio funds would therefore mean a reduction of broadcasting in non-official languages and of coverage of meetings of United Nations organs.

9. Referring to the remarks of certain representatives regarding the percentage distribution of all costs for the whole of the Secretariat on a project basis, (A/1267, p. 319) he pointed out that it was only after those calculations had been made by the Bureau of Finance, that the Secretary-General had accepted considerable reductions in the estimates relating to public information activities, amounting approximately to \$150,000. Neither did he feel that the increased revenue from the sale of the Department's publications and films, which amounted approximately to \$100,000 had been fully taken into account. He considered, therefore, that the percentage cost of the total public information programme had decreased and was continuing to do so.

10. Referring to the USSR representative's proposal he pointed out that no new posts had been requested in the final estimates now before the Committee. The number of those posts was still 302 as authorized by the Fifth Committee for 1950. The Advisory Committee had recognized, however, the need for more clerical help at certain peak periods of production and an increase of \$12,000 in the provisions for temporary assistance had been proposed by that Committee in paragraph 134 of its report (A/1312). Any further reduction in personnel would reduce the efficiency of the information services, and some of them might have to be abolished.

11. As regards the suggested reduction of radio services, he pointed out that more and more radio stations were anxious to devote more time to United Nations programmes and the Department had been greatly encouraged by the interest shown. Altogether forty-three countries now regularly relayed programmes produced by the United Nations. The Department also made transmission facilities available to accredited radio correspondents without cost. Radio services in Arabic had been increased from fifteen to thirty minutes a day, and it was hoped that such services might be

continued on the same scale. Three bulletins in Arabic were issued by the Cairo Information Centre each week, and a number of posters and pamphlets had also been issued in the Arabic language.

12. Referring to the remarks of certain representatives regarding the delay in the delivery of Press releases, he pointed out that such releases were issued primarily for the use of the Press but that delegations could obtain them immediately by applying direct to the Press Counter. He was sure that the Department responsible for distribution to delegations would be glad to remedy any delays in delivery.

13. Every endeavour would be made by the Department of Public Information to increase sales revenues. It should be remembered, however, that much of the material published by the Department was not primarily produced for sale but was intended to fill important gaps in the public's knowledge of United Nations activities.

14. Referring to the statement of the Norwegian representative at the previous meeting, he pointed out that in the spring of 1950 Norway had been represented on an expert advisory group of users of information material supplied by the United Nations. That group had urged that more and better information material should be supplied by the United Nations. There was proof that Norway needed such material and the Department was sorry that it had not been able to meet all such requests.

15. An International Experts Advisory Committee on Public Information had met at Lake Success in 1948 in order to survey the work and programme of the Department. Their recommendations had been submitted to the third session of the Fifth Committee (A/C.5/223¹, annex I). The recommendations made by the International Experts Advisory Committee and the reports received from the Regional Advisory Groups which had met in various parts of the world last spring, would certainly prove of great value to any group of experts appointed by the Fifth Committee to survey the Department's programme.

16. Mr. GANEM (France) said that his delegation supported the Advisory Committee's recommendations which had been accepted by the Secretary-General.

17. Referring to the impending move to Headquarters in Manhattan, he pointed out that greater demands might be made on the Department of Public Information as larger numbers of newspaper men and others might attend the meetings of United Nations bodies.

18. His delegation supported the suggestion that a survey should be made in 1951 of the activities of the Department of Public Information.

19. Referring to the USSR delegation's proposal, the French delegation would support the reduction suggested in the funds of the Films and Visual Information Division as it felt that photographic agencies and film companies had become more interested in United Nations activities since the incidents in Korea. His delegation could not, however, support the other parts of the USSR proposal.

¹ See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Third Session, Part I, Fifth Committee, Annexes.*

20. Mr. HAMBRO (Norway) said he had listened with great attention to the statement made by the Assistant Secretary-General in charge of the Department of Public Information.

21. Referring to the statement he had made at the previous meeting, Mr. Hambro pointed out that Norway wished to receive information regarding the activities of the United Nations, but preferred to obtain it from its own Press attachés and from its representatives at Lake Success.

22. He supported the views expressed by the representatives of Brazil and Israel, and asked the Assistant Secretary-General in charge of the Department of Public Information to comment on the suggestions made by the representatives of Canada and the Netherlands.

23. Mr. COHEN (Assistant Secretary-General in charge of the Department of Public Information) said that the Secretary-General and the Department of Public Information would, of course, be interested in having a new survey made by internationally known experts. No provision had, however, been made in the budget estimates for the expenses which such a survey would involve.

24. Mr. AGHNIDES (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) welcomed the speeches made in the Fifth Committee, which were the only policy statements by which the Advisory Committee could be guided. He noted with satisfaction that the majority of representatives did not propose any reductions over and above those recommended by the Advisory Committee. A few representatives, however, had been somewhat critical of those recommendations, and had proposed larger reductions. He wished, therefore, to point out that the General Assembly in 1948 had rejected a proposal of the Netherlands delegation to the effect that the total provision for public information—including both direct and indirect costs—should be limited to \$5 million or 10 per cent of the total budget of the Organization, whichever figure might be the lower.²

25. It was gratifying to note that on the eve of the move to the permanent Headquarters the Fifth Committee had, as it appeared, decided to take a new position in the matter.

26. As regards the proposed committee to consider the general policy of public information, he emphasized that, if the General Assembly decided to proceed by setting up such a committee, it would be of paramount importance to select a completely independent body.

27. Referring to the observation of the Saudi Arabian representative that the reduction of \$63,000 on radio services, recommended by the Advisory Committee, was excessive, Mr. Agnides pointed out that the reduction was a global one applicable to radio services, photographic supplies and services, and motion picture supplies and services.

28. Mr. ROSHCHIN (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) asked that a separate vote should be taken on each of the five items comprising article (i)—Es-

tablished posts—of the Soviet Union proposal. In his opinion, it would be practical to take the initial steps in decreasing the Department's budget as from 1951, rather than from 1952 as the Australian representative had suggested. The emphasis should be not on reducing the activities of the Department, but on rationalizing and eliminating redundant posts.

29. The CHAIRMAN put the USSR proposals to the vote.

(i) *Established posts*

The proposed reduction of \$7,000 (2 posts) in respect of the Sales and Circulation Section was rejected by 28 votes to 10, with 10 abstentions.

The proposed reduction of \$8,000 (2 posts) in respect of the Press and Publications Bureau was rejected by 26 votes to 7, with 13 abstentions.

The proposed reduction of \$42,000 (5 posts) in respect of the Radio Division was rejected by 29 votes to 7, with 12 abstentions.

The proposed reduction of \$39,000 (6 posts) in respect of the Films and Visual Information Division was approved by 18 votes to 16, with 17 abstentions.

The proposed reduction of \$26,000 (5 posts) in respect of Special Services was rejected by 27 votes to 6, with 16 abstentions.

(ii) *Consultants*

The proposed reduction of \$4,000 was rejected by 26 votes to 7, with 18 abstentions.

(iii) *Temporary assistance*

The proposed reduction of \$24,000 was rejected by 29 votes to 7, with 18 abstentions.

30. After a discussion as to the exact figure to be voted upon, the CHAIRMAN put to the vote the combined reductions of \$39,000, as proposed by the USSR delegation, and \$78,000, as recommended by the Advisory Committee, from the Secretary-General's estimate of \$2,804,000.

The estimate for section 13 was approved at the figure of \$2,687,000 by 32 votes to 13, with 6 abstentions.

31. Mr. MACHADO (Brazil) remarked that the confusion as to the exact amount of the reduction had arisen out of a departure from the Committee's normal procedure, which was to base any amendments on the figures recommended by the Advisory Committee.

32. Mr. CHENG (China) explained that he had abstained from voting on the various parts of the Soviet Union proposal because the Secretary-General and the Advisory Committee had reached agreement on the figures, and it appeared improbable that the Fifth Committee could make a better appraisal of the requirements. In the final vote, he had opposed the reduction because the calculation of the figure was, in his opinion, open to question.

33. The CHAIRMAN agreed with the representative of Brazil that in future the Committee should adhere to its normal procedure.

² *Ibid.*, Third Session, Part I, Fifth Committee, 130th—134th meetings.

PART V, SECTION 21. INFORMATION CENTRES

34. The CHAIRMAN called attention to the relevant paragraphs of the Advisory Committee's report (A/1312, paras. 238-244) and noted that the Secretary-General had agreed to accept the Advisory Committee's recommendations.

35. Mr. ROSHCHIN (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) introduced a proposal that the estimates submitted by the Secretary-General should be reduced by a total of \$92,000.

36. He recalled that, at the second session of the General Assembly, the Fifth Committee, after exhaustive consideration of the question, had decided that Information Centres in the various countries should fall into three categories, having a staff of six, four and two persons respectively.³ In the budget estimates under consideration, there were departures from that policy in the cases of Buenos Aires, London, Mexico, Moscow, Paris and Washington, and the USSR delegation accordingly proposed reductions, amounting to eleven posts in all, in the staffing of those establishments in order to conform to the decision he had cited.

37. In the case of London, there was also a travel unit involved, but it would seem adequate to have a staff of six persons for the Information Centre and two for the Travel Unit, and the latter might call upon the Information Centre staff in case of need. For Buenos Aires, Mexico and Moscow, it was proposed to cut the establishment by one post in each case, and for Paris, the reduction proposed amounted to three posts. The case of the Washington Centre was rather different, in that the United Nations Headquarters was comparatively near and the full services of the Department of Public Information were therefore available to it. Moreover, United States information services were themselves in an advanced stage of development. So it would seem that a staff of two persons there would be adequate for the purpose.

38. Further reductions of \$5,000, \$10,000 and \$5,000, respectively, had been proposed in the items, temporary assistance, casual labour and supplies for internal reproduction—reductions which did not bring the items below the level of 1950.

39. He also criticized as unnecessary much of the expenditure in the past in sending news items and surveys by cable to the Information Centres and accordingly proposed a reduction of \$5,000 in the items, postal services and communications services, together with a reduction of \$5,000 in miscellaneous supplies and services.

40. He requested that voting on the proposal should be section by section, and, in reply to a point raised by the CHAIRMAN, stated that his delegation had not had the necessary time to base its proposals on the Advisory Committee's figures.

41. Mr. DICKEY (Canada) suggested that, in the interests of clarity, the USSR proposal should be submitted to the Committee, together with comparative data on the Advisory Committee's recommendations and the Secretary-General's estimates.

³ *Ibid.*, Second Session, Fifth Committee, 71st meeting.

42. The CHAIRMAN noted that there was general agreement on the Canadian suggestion. Time would be required to carry it into effect, however, and he proposed that, in the meantime, the Committee should proceed to consideration of section 8.

It was so agreed.

PART III, SECTION 8. MILITARY STAFF COMMITTEE SECRETARIAT

43. Mr. FOURIE (Union of South Africa) said his delegation was not yet satisfied that the staff of this secretariat was fully occupied. He cited paragraph 91 of the Advisory Committee's report (A/1312), in which an assurance was given that, to the extent that the work of the Military Staff Committee permitted, the members of its secretariat would at all times be at the disposal of other Departments. He asked that special attention should be given to the point by the Advisory Committee.

44. Mr. AGHNIDES (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) undertook to convey the request to the Advisory Committee. He further explained that the difficulties in regard to greater integration of that secretariat with other Departments was the extreme importance which the Military Staff Committee attached to security. With the move to Manhattan, the possibilities in that direction might be greater. He himself felt that the language staff of the Military Staff Committee might well be used to wipe out some of the backlog of translation work in the Language Services Division.

45. Mr. BRENNAN (Australia) recalled that the previous year his delegation had suggested that the work of the Military Staff Committee secretariat might be performed by the Department of Security Council Affairs. Some objection had been taken to the proposal on the grounds that one of the draft rules of procedure of the Military Staff Committee would appear to preclude such an arrangement.⁴ He himself did not interpret the rule in question in that way and he asked for the views of the Principal Secretary of the Military Staff Committee on the point and also on paragraph 153 of the Advisory Committee's report (A/1312).

46. Commander ALLEN (Secretariat) replied that, in the event of the present secretariat being reduced to a point where it would be unable adequately to service the Military Staff Committee, it was his view that the Committee should be able to call upon the services of other Departments. For the time being, that question did not, however, arise.

47. In regard to the reverse suggestion concerning the backlog of translation work, the Military Staff Committee had faithfully carried out its part of the bargain and statistics could, if required, be supplied. His staff would be ready, as always, to co-operate, wherever possible.

48. The CHAIRMAN put to the vote the Advisory Committee's recommendation that the estimate of \$129,600 for section 8 should be approved.

⁴ *Ibid.*, Fourth Session, Fifth Committee, 197th meeting, (paras. 55-60), 199th meeting (paras. 28-44) and 232nd meeting (paras. 37-64).

The recommendation was approved by 40 votes to none, with one abstention.

49. Mr. FOURIE (Union of South Africa) proposed that next year a report should be submitted on the extent to which the services of members of the Military Staff Committee secretariat have been made available to other Departments.

It was so agreed.

SECTION 14. LEGAL AFFAIRS

50. The CHAIRMAN called attention to the relevant paragraphs of the Advisory Committee's report (A/1312, paras. 139-146) and noted that the Secretary-General had accepted the Advisory Committee's recommendations.

51. Mr. KERNO (Assistant Secretary-General in charge of the Legal Department), referring to a point raised by Mr. BRENNAN (Australia), stated that agreement had already been reached for the Legal Department to take over the tasks noted in paragraph 106 (ii) of the Advisory Committee's report, without the provision of additional staff. With regard to the suggestion in paragraph 116 (iv) of the Advisory Committee's report, however, no final solution had yet been found, but efforts to that end were continuing.

52. The CHAIRMAN put to the vote the Advisory Committee's recommendation that the estimate for section 14 should be reduced by \$1,800, and approved at a figure of \$430,000.

The recommendation was unanimously approved.

The meeting rose at 5.10 p.m.