

United Nations
**GENERAL
ASSEMBLY**

SEVENTEENTH SESSION

Official Records

**FIFTH COMMITTEE, 918th
MEETING**

Thursday, 4 October 1962,
at 3.10 p.m.



NEW YORK

CONTENTS

	Page
<i>Agenda item 61:</i>	
<i>Supplementary estimates for the financial year 1962 (continued)</i>	21
<i>Agenda item 62:</i>	
<i>Budget estimates for the financial year 1963 (continued)</i>	
<i>General discussion (continued)</i>	21
<i>First reading</i>	
<i>Section 1. Travel and other expenses of representatives, members of commissions, committees and other subsidiary bodies</i>	22
<i>Section 2. Special meetings and conferences</i>	22
<i>Section 5. Travel of staff</i>	23

Chairman: Mr. Jan Paul BANNIER
(Netherlands).

AGENDA ITEM 61

**Supplementary estimates for the financial year 1962
(A/5223, A/5239) (continued)**

1. Mr. TURNER (Controller) said he wished to state for the record that in the light of the action taken by the Committee on the supplementary estimates for 1962, and pending adoption of a revised appropriations resolution by the General Assembly, the Secretary-General, as in past years, would consider himself authorized to act within the limits of the revised estimates approved by the Committee.

AGENDA ITEM 62

Budget estimates for the financial year 1963 (A/5121 and Corr.1, A/5179, A/5205, A/5207, A/5243, A/C.5/919, A/C.5/925, A/C.5/926, A/C.5/L.726) (continued)
General discussion (continued)

2. Mr. PRICE (Canada) stressed that the responsibilities of the Fifth Committee were primarily to arrange for the provision of adequate funds to enable the United Nations to carry out its tasks as determined by the General Assembly and the Security Council, to co-ordinate the allocation of scarce resources for activities of demonstrated priority and to consider administrative questions relating to the organization and financing of the Secretariat. Thus, the work of the Committee was essentially non-political in nature; the only political consideration by which it should be guided was the need to maintain and increase the effectiveness of the Organization by ensuring that it was provided with the necessary resources for the implementation of the purposes

stated in the Charter. The increased demands made on the United Nations as a result of its increased membership and of the expansion in its peace-keeping operations forced it to strike a balance between the resources available and the benefits which could be expected to result from specific activities. That was a very difficult task and the failure of the United Nations to meet all the demands made upon it should not lead Member States to feel that the Organization was losing its ability to cope with new situations.

3. The United Nations was entering a period of stabilization when it was vitally important for it to evaluate and reappraise past performance and to plan for a financially sound Organization capable of maintaining its dynamic nature and of meeting future demands. That stabilization was a direct consequence of the stresses resulting from the need to meet the requirements of an increased membership for economic and social development and also to maintain international peace and security. In the view of his delegation, however, despite existing commitments, the demands on the United Nations were not likely to increase substantially within the next few years, as the growth in its membership would not be as great as in the past. Advantage should therefore be taken of the period of stabilization to evaluate past experience, to derive the maximum benefit from available resources by reappraising current activities and to consider the scope and direction of the Organization's future growth.

4. The financial difficulties of the United Nations were a matter of increasing concern to the Canadian delegation. The flow of funds from Member States for worthwhile activities was being reduced or limited and the Organization had been forced to borrow funds from other accounts, to sell bonds and to support a burden of arrears of over \$80 million. Those financial problems had arisen primarily because some Member States had refused to accept as binding decisions of the Assembly with respect to the financing of peace-keeping operations, and had questioned the legality of the expenses of the United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF) and the United Nations Operation in the Congo (ONUC). Now, however, that the question of the legality of those costs had been resolved by the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice (A/5161), which had found that they constituted expenses of the Organization within the meaning of Article 17, paragraph 2, of the Charter, it was to be hoped that all Members would pay their assessed shares of those expenses.

5. One of the most important functions of the Fifth Committee during the period of stabilization was to work out a practical and acceptable formula for financing future peace-keeping operations based on the principle of collective responsibility. A long-term solution of that kind would help to ensure that any future peace-keeping operations were adequately

financed and that the Organization's activities in the field of economic and social development were not jeopardized.

6. The Canadian delegation fully endorsed the view of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions that until the financial situation of the United Nations improved, plans for capital expenditure, particularly expenditure relating to the expansion of Headquarters facilities, should be postponed. Contractual leasing arrangements might be considered as a temporary expedient. It further agreed with the Advisory Committee that there should be no expansion of the staff for at least another year and that the Economic and Social Council should undertake a systematic review of its past decisions regarding programme priorities and early consideration of the financial implications of any new decisions. His delegation also hoped that the symptoms noted by the Board of Auditors of a certain slackening of administrative standards and discipline would be effectively checked. It agreed with the views expressed by previous speakers on the need for all United Nations bodies to follow proper budgetary procedures and for the establishment of a scale of priorities involving consideration of the alternative uses of funds.

7. The Canadian delegation had been gratified by the Secretary-General's efforts to achieve an equitable geographical distribution of posts in the Secretariat. Subject to the condition that better geographical distribution did not compromise the integrity, morale and efficiency of the staff, it hoped that all Member States would be adequately represented in the near future.

8. It further supported the report of the Committee on Contributions (A/5210) with regard to the scale of assessments and regretted that the expert body, which was to have met to consider certain highly technical matters, had been unable to do so because of the failure of some Member States to send representatives.

9. It endorsed the Advisory Committee's recommendations concerning the development of sound procedures for the scheduling and financing of international meetings.

10. Finally, he expressed his Government's appreciation of the manner in which the Acting Secretary-General and his staff had discharged their responsibilities as international civil servants.

First reading (A/C.5/L.726)

SECTION 1. TRAVEL AND OTHER EXPENSES OF REPRESENTATIVES, MEMBERS OF COMMISSIONS, COMMITTEES AND OTHER SUBSIDIARY BODIES (A/5205, A/5207)

11. Mr. KITTANI (Iraq) expressed regret at the failure of the functional commissions of the Economic and Social Council to implement the policy of holding biennial rather than annual sessions. Indeed, with the approval of the Assembly and the Council, certain functional commissions—the Social Commission, for example—had reverted to the undesirable pattern of annual sessions.

The Advisory Committee's recommendation (A/5207, para. 83) for an appropriation of \$1,114,000 under section 1 was approved on first reading by 76 votes to none, with 1 abstention.

SECTION 2. SPECIAL MEETINGS AND CONFERENCES (A/5205, A/5207, A/5243, A/C.5/919)

12. Mr. HODGES (United Kingdom), drawing attention to the revised estimate of \$25,000 submitted by the Secretary-General and recommended by the Advisory Committee for the proposed Conference on International Travel and Tourism to be held in August–September 1963 (A/C.5/919, para. 15 and A/5243, para. 13), expressed the hope that the Economic and Social Council would apply its system of priorities more strictly and reconsider the timing of the Conference so that no provision for the purpose would have to be made in the 1963 budget. With regard to the United Nations Conference on the Application of Science and Technology for the Benefit of the Less Developed Areas, he recalled that the Assembly had originally approved a total appropriation of \$2 million to be spent over a three-year period. He strongly supported the Advisory Committee's recommendation (A/5207, paras. 92 and 93) that the total cost of the Conference should be limited to \$2.1 million spread over three financial years, thus reducing the appropriation for 1963 to \$903,300, subject to the re-appropriation for 1963 of any unobligated balance of the 1962 appropriation. Finally, the Fifth Committee should make a special effort to draw the attention of the Council and the preparatory committees of special conferences to the recommendation made by the Advisory Committee at the sixteenth session^{1/} that the financial implications of printing the proceedings of conferences should be carefully anticipated and that printing programmes should be submitted for the approval of the Publications Board, as was the practice for regular conferences at Headquarters. It would be regrettable if the idea of printing the scientific papers for the Conference on the Application of Science and Technology in all four languages were to be revived (A/5207, para. 89) despite the conclusion reached by the Assembly on the matter at its sixteenth session. The Committee should not give way if a proposal to that effect was made.

13. Mr. KITTANI (Iraq) strongly endorsed the comments made by the previous speaker. In particular, he agreed that no appropriation should be approved for the translation and reproduction *in extenso* of all the papers of the Conference on the Application of Science and Technology for the Benefit of the Less Developed Areas, which would be contrary to the original decision on the holding of the Conference. The Advisory Committee expressed the same view in paragraph 89 of its report (A/5207). He endorsed the Advisory Committee's recommendations on section 2, on the understanding that any savings effected in 1962–1963 on the Conference on the Application of Science and Technology would be carried forward to the following year, as the original appropriation of the \$2 million had been voted for a period of three years.

14. He could not support the appropriation of \$25,000 recommended for the Conference on International Travel and Tourism (A/5243, para. 13). The Economic and Social Council's decision to hold such a conference was a striking example of its failure to establish priorities in its field of work. If the proposed appropriation was put to a separate vote, he would vote against it.

^{1/} See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Sixteenth Session, Supplement No. 7*, paras. 67–69.

The Advisory Committee's recommendation (A/5207, para. 114, and A/5243, para. 13) for a total appropriation of \$1,466,200 under section 2 was approved on first reading by 71 votes to none, with 1 abstention.

SECTION 5. TRAVEL OF STAFF (A/5205, A/5207, A/5243, A/C.5/919)

15. The CHAIRMAN pointed out that the Advisory Committee had recommended (A/5207, para. 191) an appropriation of \$1,979,700, a reduction of \$345,000 in the Secretary-General's estimate of \$2,324,700. In its recommendations, the Advisory Committee had assumed that the General Assembly would endorse its suggestion that the revised standards of travel accommodation adopted by the World Health Organization (WHO) should be adopted for the United Nations at the beginning of the 1963 financial year. He drew attention to the Advisory Committee's comments on that point in paragraphs 54 to 66 of its report (A/5207). In respect of requirements arising out of the decisions of the Economic and Social Council, the Secretary-General had submitted revised estimates (A/C.5/919, annex III) for an additional \$29,300, which the Advisory Committee had reduced to \$21,000 (A/5243, para. 13). The total appropriation for section 5 recommended by the Advisory Committee was therefore \$2,000,700.

16. Mr. TURNER (Controller) said that the Secretary-General had made it clear that he did not intend to contest any of the reductions in the 1963 budget estimates recommended by the Advisory Committee. He therefore accepted the reduction of \$353,300 recommended under section 5. However, the Secretary-General would like to be given a certain latitude with regard to the administrative implications of that recommendation. He was at present engaged in consultations with representatives of the staff and with the specialized agencies regarding the adoption of common travel standards throughout the United Nations family, and the question was on the agenda of the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination, which would be meeting the following week. The Secretary-General would like to have an opportunity of submitting his observations on the implementation of the scheme to the Fifth Committee after he had completed his consultations and before the Committee took a final decision. However, that need not prevent the Committee from considering the Advisory Committee's comments and recommendations in connexion with its first reading of section 5.

17. Mr. QUIJANO (Argentina), supported by Mr. KITTANI (Iraq), said that it would be difficult for the Committee to discuss the recommendations relating to section 5 without knowing the outcome of the Secretary-General's consultations. The Committee might wish to defer consideration of that section until a later date.

18. Mr. HODGES (United Kingdom) felt that the Committee might not wish to take a final decision on section 5 pending the outcome of the Secretary-General's consultations. It could, however, discuss the estimates and recommendations without formally approving an appropriation on first reading. Indeed, the views expressed by delegations regarding the introduction of the new travel standards might even be helpful to the Secretary-General in his consultations.

19. Mr. SOKIRKIN (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics), Mr. GANEM (France) and Mr. HUSAIN (India)

associated themselves with the view expressed by the United Kingdom representative.

20. Mr. ALEXANDRIDES (Cyprus) asked whether the Advisory Committee would have an opportunity of considering any suggestions put forward by the Secretary-General regarding the implementation of the new travel standards.

21. Mr. AGHNIDES (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) said that it would be for the Fifth Committee to decide whether any matter should be referred to the Advisory Committee. However, he felt that the Fifth Committee was under a misapprehension about the situation. The Secretary-General was discussing with the staff representatives and the specialized agencies a scheme which had already been agreed in principle. The Committee could discuss the matter and approve the budget estimates on first reading in the normal way. On the other hand, such minor administrative matters as the detailed application of the new scheme should be left to the Secretary-General. It would, however, strengthen the Secretary-General's position in the present negotiations to know the Committee's views and to receive its endorsement of his suggestions.

22. Mr. ALLOTT (United States of America) and Mr. MALHOTRA (Nepal) endorsed the views expressed by the Chairman of the Advisory Committee.

23. Mr. HODGES (United Kingdom) said that the Advisory Committee's recommendation that the United Nations should adopt the revised travel standards now being applied by WHO should in no way be construed as an attack on the reasonable rights of staff members; it was rather a logical consequence of the development of air travel in recent years. Nor would the United Nations be alone in taking such a step: Governments and business firms throughout the world were bringing the standards for official travel down to the economy class. Such a step would result in a substantial saving to the United Nations without in any way impairing the efficiency of any United Nations programme.

24. With regard to the relationship between United Nations travel standards and those applied by the specialized agencies, the Advisory Committee pointed out in paragraph 56 of its report (A/5207) that there had been no conflict with inter-agency consultative arrangements, since there had hitherto been no agreed inter-agency policy in that field. The General Assembly might possibly decide to reduce United Nations travel costs by methods other than those adopted by WHO; however, that organization's action had been a sensible one and it was to be hoped that all United Nations bodies would eventually adopt similar arrangements. The Advisory Committee had also pointed out in paragraph 66 of the same report that a further \$230,000 could be saved if similar standards were applied to the travel expenses of representatives, members of commissions, committees and other subsidiary bodies of the General Assembly provided for under section 1. He hoped that other delegations would be ready to consult informally about the feasibility of extending the economy class standard to official travel undertaken by their nationals in such capacities. Such an extension would be a welcome development and would have the further advantage of helping to reconcile Secretariat staff members to the new standards.

25. Mr. CISS (Senegal) thought that the Committee should avoid taking a hasty decision. The Secretariat had heavy responsibilities and travel constituted a vital part of its activities.

26. Mr. SHAHI (Pakistan) said that his delegation strongly supported paragraphs 54-66 and 179-192 of the Advisory Committee's report (A/5207). He agreed with the United Kingdom representative that it was not a question of following a precedent set by a specialized agency. It was for the Fifth Committee to consider the observations and recommendations of the Advisory Committee on their merits and act upon them as an autonomous body.

27. He pointed out that it would have been logical to consider paragraph 66 before taking a vote on section 1, since it dealt with the same subject.

28. The CHAIRMAN observed that section 1 had been approved on first reading only and was therefore still open to review in the light of the action taken on subsequent sections.

29. Mr. MYSLIL (Czechoslovakia) said that the Advisory Committee had made many useful recommendations in respect of section 5, some of which might help to reduce expenditure in other sections of the budget. He particularly welcomed the recommendation in paragraph 192 of its report (A/5207) that a voucher system for home leave travel should be introduced and the possibilities of administrative simplification offered by such a system. The re-deployment of staff resulting from such a system would presumably bring about a reduction in the appropriations for section 3—Salaries and wages. There was naturally less enthusiasm for WHO travel standards, but in the interest of economy they would have to be adopted. His delegation approved the Advisory Committee's observations and recommendations relating to section 5 as a whole, but considered that the United Nations travel programme should be still further curtailed.

30. Mr. SANU (Nigeria) said that his delegation endorsed the Advisory Committee's observations and recommendations concerning section 5 (A/5207,

paras. 54-66). He particularly welcomed the recommendation that the United Nations should adopt WHO standards of travel accommodation; if it was decided to do so, he hoped that the Secretary-General would apply those without substantial modification.

31. He drew particular attention to paragraph 182 of the Advisory Committee's report in which mention was made of the growing strain on the budget and the servicing capacity of the Organization resulting from the increasingly heavy annual conference pattern. He was not convinced that the Secretariat always did all it could to "achieve the most economical arrangements compatible with efficient substantive and technical servicing".

32. Finally, he believed the Committee should give serious consideration to any specific proposal which might be made in connexion with paragraph 66.

33. Mr. TEMPLETON (New Zealand) strongly supported the Advisory Committee's recommendation that the United Nations should adopt WHO travel standards. Those standards should be made applicable not only to United Nations staff, but also to Government representatives travelling on United Nations business.

34. The CHAIRMAN observed that the Committee was generally agreed that, as an autonomous body, it could take a decision on the question at issue without reference to any other body, while recognizing the desirability of consultation and co-ordination. It was also the consensus of opinion that WHO travel standards were in line with the general trend in world travel and that their adoption would greatly benefit the Organization. Although a decision taken at the present stage would be on first reading only and therefore open to revision, since a number of delegations had asked for the vote to be deferred, he suggested that the discussion should be re-opened at the following meeting and voted upon then, if the Committee was ready to do so.

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 5.45 p.m.