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FIFTH COMMITTEE  
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held on  
Friday, 20 October 1989  
at 10 a.m.  
New York

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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 15th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. DANKWA (Ghana)

later: Mr. AL-MASRI (Syrian Arab Republic)

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

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The meeting was called to order at 10.30 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 126: ADMINISTRATIVE AND BUDGETARY CO-ORDINATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS WITH THE SPECIALIZED AGENCIES AND THE INTERNATIONAL ATOMIC ENERGY AGENCY

(b) HARMONIZATION OF THE STATUTES, RULES AND PRACTICES OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE TRIBUNALS OF THE INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANISATION AND OF THE UNITED NATIONS (A/42/328 and A/43/704; A/C.5/44/1 and Add.1)

1. Mr. FLEISCHHAUER (Under-Secretary-General, The Legal Counsel), introducing the report of the Secretary-General (A/C.5/44/1 and Add.1), said that the replies from Member States had indicated a divergence of views. While the Soviet Union considered that the proposals contained in document A/43/704 should not be adopted without extensive discussion of the amendments by all Member States, other States - in particular, the Federal Republic of Germany, Italy, the United Kingdom and the United States - supported conclusion of the item on the basis of the proposed reforms. The Netherlands considered that all harmonization efforts should lead to an eventual merger of the administrative tribunals of the International Labour Organisation and of the United Nations. He went on to recapitulate further specific points of difference between the views of Member States, as set forth in the report under consideration.

2. Mr. GUPTA (India) asked, in view of the evident need for further consultations on the subject, whether a formal meeting would be devoted to discussion of the agenda item under consideration.

3. The CHAIRMAN confirmed that at least one formal meeting would be devoted to that item.

AGENDA ITEM 123: PROPOSED PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 1990-1991 (continued)

AGENDA ITEM 124: PROGRAMME PLANNING (continued)

AGENDA ITEM 38: REVIEW OF THE EFFICIENCY OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE AND FINANCIAL FUNCTIONING OF THE UNITED NATIONS (continued)

General debate (A/44/3, A/44/6/Rev.1, A/44/7 and Corr.1, A/44/16 and Add.1, A/44/222 and Corr.1, A/44/233, 234 and 272; A/C.5/44/CRP.1)

4. Mr. BROCHARD (France), speaking on behalf of the member States of the European Community, said that the Twelve had always shared the view that programme planning was a difficult exercise but one which was essential to co-ordinated action by the different components of the United Nations system. They accordingly supported the efforts of the Secretariat to develop the planning procedure, to simplify the format and to improve the presentation of the medium-term plan. Much however remained to be done in order to strengthen the linkage between planning, programming, monitoring and evaluation; evaluation was of particular importance because any planning exercise must be based on a precise evaluation of the existing situation based on the experience which had been acquired.

(Mr. Brochard, France)

5. On the issue of monitoring and evaluation, the Twelve welcomed the increased attention given to self-evaluation as a tool for improving programming. They hoped that the results of the self-evaluations would be available to the relevant Secretariat units when they were preparing their budget performance reports and in time for the intergovernmental bodies concerned to consider them.

6. They noted the measures taken by the Central Evaluation Unit to solve the problems which had arisen during the first self-evaluations. Evaluation must not, however, become a goal in itself and absorb excessive resources; nor should it be carried out in too rigid and restrictive a manner. It should leave programme managers with the flexibility to adapt methods and procedures to their particular situations. In that connection, training meetings and seminars should emphasize the objectives of self-evaluation and its relationship to the overall planning and programming process.

7. Pursuant to the request of the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination (CPC), the evaluations submitted in 1989 had been prepared on the basis of broader data, so that it had been possible to evaluate the extent to which United Nations studies and publications had been used. The Twelve approved such an approach which took into account the views of non-governmental users, thus reinforcing the objectivity of the information gathered. Those comments applied in particular to the in-depth evaluation of the human rights programme (E/AC.51/1989/2), which contained an excellent analysis of United Nations activities in the human rights field, based on a complete and detailed survey of the views of end-users as a whole, including non-governmental organizations, and reflected the interest of the international community in United Nations activities in that field. The Twelve would encourage the Secretariat to use that new approach in future evaluations.

8. In connection with the recommendation of the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) that the programme performance report should be replaced with a report which analysed progress made and results achieved against the established objectives for each United Nations subprogramme, CPC pointed out (A/44/233, para. 23) that certain practical difficulties had been encountered in its implementation. The examples of reporting given in annex IV seemed to be too descriptive and lacked the qualitative elements necessary to appraise the degree of implementation of the programmes concerned. The issue merited further consideration, bearing in mind the recommendations of JIU and the many suggestions made by CPC at recent sessions.

9. Statements of programme budget implications, on which the Secretary-General had reported in document A/44/234, were useful on two counts: for the representatives of Member States, who were able to use them to assess the consequences of their draft resolutions on the Organization's programme, and for the Secretariat, whose planning and programming task was thereby facilitated. Programme preparation and co-ordination was facilitated by such statements, which improved the implementation process; they would be even more necessary in the context of the new budget procedure. The Twelve strongly supported the further development of that practice which, had also recently been adopted by the Economic and Social Council.

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(Mr. Brochard, France)

10. The Twelve accepted the recommendations of CPC regarding statements of programme budget implications (A/44/16, para. 277-284) of the CPC. Efforts to improve the procedure should, in the first place, focus on harmonizing the rules of procedure of the various United Nations bodies, in particular, the regional commissions. The Secretariat should also endeavour to prepare more precise analyses suggesting, where appropriate, various possible responses. The Twelve regretted that the statements of the budget implications of the decisions of the Economic and Social Council provided for the systematic carrying forward of activities if the contingency fund should prove insufficient, when in fact two other possible solutions - the modification or deferral of programme elements of lower priority - existed (A/44/234, para. 25). The Twelve hoped that statements of budgetary implications would explore all financing possibilities, including possible redeployment.

11. It was the view of the Twelve that the report on all aspects of priority-setting and future outlines of the proposed programme budget (A/44/272) was very useful and that further consideration should be given to the possibility of identifying major priorities when the medium-term plan, the outline and the budget itself were introduced. The identification of priorities in the budget was of increasing importance with the implementation of the new budget procedure and the use of the contingency fund. The simplification of the structure and presentation of the medium-term plan would in time facilitate the establishment of such priorities.

12. In conclusion, the Twelve supported the conclusions and recommendations of CPC on co-ordination questions. It was their understanding that paragraph 25 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1989/144 authorized CPC, in the exercise of its mandate, to continue to assist the Council in considering the programmatic and co-ordination aspects of the new thematic analyses established by the Council. In that connection, CPC, as a subsidiary organ of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council, was, and must continue to be, the central organ for the programming and co-ordination of the activities of the United Nations, pursuant to its mandate.

13. Mr. HILL (United States of America), addressing the subject of programme planning, said that much remained to be done before General Assembly resolutions concerning the provision of statements of programme budget implications to all United Nations bodies were fully implemented. Further efforts were also needed to improve the content and timely issuance of such documents. Paragraphs 7 and 19 of document A/44/234 indicated that regulation 4.9 of the rules and regulations governing programming planning had not been applied in all cases or was subject to varying interpretations, particularly by the regional commissions. The Secretary-General must take immediate steps to ensure full implementation of that regulation. He should also amend rule 104.9, in order to ensure that all United Nations subsidiary bodies received such statements, and harmonize the rules of procedure of the various governing bodies. In particular, the Economic Commission for Europe must amend its rules to provide for statements of programme budget implications at the earliest opportunity.

(Mr. Hill, United States)

14. All too often, statements of programme budget implications were issued very shortly before the Main Committees of the General Assembly took action on draft resolutions, so that delegations were informed of the extent of additional costs only at that late stage. With the establishment of the contingency fund, it was most important that delegations should have all the information required for the adoption of informed decisions at the earliest possible stage of the negotiating process.

15. His delegation accepted the format, as outlined in paragraph 25 of document A/44/234, for the provision of alternative funding solutions in statements of programme budget implications and looked forward to the inclusion of such alternatives in all statements and revised estimates submitted to the General Assembly. It regretted that alternatives had not been included in the revised estimates resulting from decisions of the Economic and Social Council in 1989 (A/C.5/44/5) and expected the Secretary-General to correct that situation.

16. The Secretary-General's report on monitoring, evaluation and management information (A/44/233) was a useful summary of progress made so far in efforts to establish a fully integrated system of programme evaluation. The semi-annual Evaluation Newsletter, referred to in paragraph 13, was also useful and informative and should continue to be published. However, his delegation disagreed with certain proposals contained in paragraphs 24 and 25 of the report. There was no reason to limit analytical summaries to those subprogrammes for which a recent self-evaluation report had been completed. Reports on programme performance should refer directly back to the objectives of the programme concerned, as stated in the medium-term plan, and provide at least some current information on action taken during the biennium to promote those objectives. There should be a trial period during which evaluation reporting would cover all the subprogrammes in a given area of activity rather than subjects scattered throughout the programme budget.

17. The lack of substantive information in the examples contained in annex IV was a cause for concern, especially in view of the fact that they were based on a self-evaluation exercise which was "perhaps the best established in the United Nations". The major weakness lay in the general nature of the intergovernmental and Secretariat objectives against which results were to be measured. The medium-term plan did not provide sufficiently specific goals. In the first example given, it was incorrect to describe the intergovernmental objective of the subprogramme as "examination of the economic situation of developing countries". That was a process, and a very preliminary process, rather than an expected result. Neither did the Secretariat objective meet the standard whereby objectives were to be specific in terms of what was expected to occur and formulated with a definite time-frame in mind. In order to be more specific, the evaluation for programme element 3.1 must state exactly what had been achieved and how many objectives had been met. If two projects had had to be postponed, it was difficult to understand how all the planned activities could have been achieved. The reference in the evaluation for programme element 2.1 to a report which could not be issued on time due to budgetary constraints required amplification of the general subject-matter of the report and a more complete explanation of how budget

(Mr. Hill, United States)

constraints adversely affected the completion of the output. It would also be useful to know the priority accorded to the output and the impact, if any, of the failure to produce the report.

18. It was surprising that such evaluation reports should be deemed too complicated for Secretariat officials to produce on a regular basis, since they would appear to require a minimal amount of time and effort. It was the hope of his delegation that the quality of future reports would be vastly superior to the examples given in annex IV.

19. With regard to the provision of management information, the implication in the Secretary-General's report that reports on management improvement actions and results could not be provided until the integrated management information system became fully operational was unsatisfactory. His delegation urged the Secretary-General to reconsider his position and to begin issuing annual management improvement reports at the forty-fifth session of the General Assembly. The Assembly itself must take strong action to ensure that its decisions in that regard were carried out. It should express its concern at the lack of progress achieved to date and urge the Secretariat to undertake a serious effort to provide Member States with the information needed for them to make informed judgements about the Organizations's programmes and budget.

20. Mr. Al-Masri (Syrian Arab Republic) took the Chair.

21. Mr. BADAWI (Egypt) expressed the hope, in view of the unprecedented financial difficulties faced by the Organization in recent years, that Member States would help to ensure the financial and administrative stability required if the United Nations was to perform its role in the most effective manner. Document A/44/222 illustrated numerous aspects of the progress made so far. However, reform was an ongoing process, implying not only financial savings and staff reductions but, essentially, an improvement in programme performance. In that connection, he looked forward to the analytical report to be submitted by the Secretary-General to the General Assembly at its forty-fifth session. At a time when hopes were high for an expansion of the role of the United Nations role in many spheres yet financial resources remained limited, the need for a continuation of the reform process was particularly evident.

22. It was to be hoped that the proposed programme budget would, after minor amendments, serve as a basis for broad agreement among Member States. The slight decline, in real terms, in the level of the programme budget was to be welcomed, provided that programme activities were not negatively affected. The extremely small difference between the levels of the budget outline and of the proposed programme budget was acceptable, given the preliminary character of the outline and the fact that the new budget process was at an experimental stage of its development. Indeed, the improvement in the budget procedure was indicated by the low incidence of conflict between the budget proposals and the recommendations of the Advisory Committee. However, it was the hope of his delegation that future budget proposals would indicate to what extent the proposals for specific programmes diverged from the level of funding for those programmes in the current budget.

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(Mr. Badawi, Egypt)

23. Given the political nature of priority-setting, it was unreasonable to expect the Secretariat to take difficult decisions in that area on behalf of intergovernmental bodies. His delegation therefore agreed with the Advisory Committee that a new mechanism should be established to monitor extrabudgetary expenditure and believed that it was extremely important to strengthen the role of intergovernmental bodies in such monitoring. With regard to peace-keeping activities, his delegation looked forward to studying the Secretary-General's proposals during consideration of the related agenda items. It would do the same with respect to questions of personnel and their conditions of service, but needed first to hear how the Secretary-General reviewed the budgetary implications of recommendations made by the International Civil Service Commission. In that context, his delegation supported the continued efforts of the Secretary-General to implement, with the necessary flexibility, the recommendation of the Group of High-level Intergovernmental Experts relating to the reduction of higher-level posts and emphasized the importance of adherence to the principle of equitable geographical distribution in effecting such a reduction.

24. The atmosphere of financial crisis which had prevailed in recent years should not blind Member States to the fact that it was in the interests of all to ensure the continued health of the Organization. General Assembly resolution 41/213, and the related resolutions which had succeeded it, constituted a sound basis upon which the United Nations might be enabled to fulfil its responsibilities more effectively. It was essential to ensure that reforms were not put at risk by continued anxiety over the Organization's financial future.

25. Mr. GALGAU (Romania) said that his delegation attached great importance to the preparation of the United Nations programme budget as an important component of the ongoing reform process. The budgeting process should not aim at limiting the resources for substantive decisions adopted by the General Assembly but should provide the means needed for the full implementation of those decisions.

26. His delegation had noted with satisfaction that there had been a negative rate of growth of 0.4 per cent, in real terms, in the proposed budget for 1990-1991, compared with the revised estimates for 1988-1989. The fact that the reduction had been accomplished without a negative impact on the Organization's activities proved the validity of the reform measures adopted and the need for their full implementation. It was, however, disturbed at the discrepancy of \$1.3 million between the level of the outline approved by the General Assembly in resolution 43/214 and the final estimates for the next biennium. He hoped that such a discrepancy did not signal a slackening of the Organization's efforts to curtail expenditure.

27. His delegation strongly supported the recommendation in paragraph 54 of the report of CPC (A/44/16), that the Secretary-General should adhere to the provisions of General Assembly resolution 43/214 regarding the total amount of resources requested for the biennium 1990-1991. It also urged the Secretary-General to implement the recommendation in paragraph 60 calling for the continuation of the effort to reduce administrative costs and the costs associated with the use of

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(Mr. Galgau, Romania)

experts and consultants, travel, external printing and equipment, for the benefit of substantive programmes.

28. His delegation supported the reductions proposed by the Advisory Committee in its report and it welcomed the Secretary-General's statement that the financial implications of further reforms and new programmatic initiatives that might be agreed upon at the current session by the General Assembly would have to be accommodated within the boundaries of the budget proposals, including the contingency fund.

29. The Secretary-General's report on the implementation of resolution 41/213 (A/44/222) clearly indicated the significant progress achieved in implementing many of the recommendations of the Group of High-level Intergovernmental Experts. His delegation was, however, disappointed that little progress had been achieved in reducing the number and duration of meetings, as well as the volume of documentation, and in setting in motion the reform process in the economic and social areas. It hoped that the current session would advance the process of reform in the economic and social sectors in line with the agreement already reached in the two resolutions on the revitalization of the Economic and Social Council.

30. His delegation was satisfied with the reforms made in the political and administrative sectors and the measures being implemented in the budget process and the management of human resources. Further serious efforts were, however, needed to prevent any unnecessary expansion of the Organization's activities and budget in coming years and to achieve the staff reductions mandated by resolution 41/213. His delegation shared the concern of other delegations that the staff retrenchment measures implemented so far had not yielded the best possible results. The lack of work-related standards, the preferential and uneven distribution of staff cuts, and the failure to give due consideration to the principle of equitable geographical distribution were only some of the issues that needed to be given serious consideration by the Secretariat. It therefore urged the Secretary-General, in implementing the mandated programmes, to give due consideration to the need to rejuvenate the staff structure, improve staff performance and ensure equitable geographical distribution at both senior and junior levels.

31. On the issue of programme planning, his delegation hoped that the various intergovernmental bodies would become more closely involved in the entire planning and programming process so that Member States could have a greater say in translating legislative mandates into planned activities and in establishing programme priorities and alternative courses of action. His delegation was encouraged to learn that the Secretariat would ensure that the findings of the monitoring and evaluation exercise served as the basis for formulating future medium-term plans and programme budgets.

32. In the area of priority-setting, his delegation supported the view expressed by the Secretary-General in his report (A/44/272, para. 42 (b)) that the primary focus of priority-setting should be the medium-term plan, which would then form the



(Mr. Galgau, Romania)

basis for defining priorities both in the outline and in the draft programme budget. Otherwise the issue of priority-setting threatened to create increasing tension between Member States and the Organization. In regard to the appropriate level and modalities of priority-setting, his delegation agreed that the Secretary-General's recommendations should be implemented on a trial basis, subject to final review and approval by CPC.

33. Mr. SANGA (United Republic of Tanzania) commended the Secretary-General on having presented a proposed programme budget which exceeded the budget outline by no more than \$1.3 million, thus reflecting the realities of the circumstances and his flexibility in carrying out the demands of the General Assembly. His delegation noted that the methodology used needed further refinement and that the disparity between the outline and the programmatic content of the budget might narrow as the reforms progressed. Furthermore, the appropriateness and adequacy of the contingency fund would have to be reviewed.

34. His delegation noted that, while some activities in the regular budget were being curtailed, others were being replenished from extrabudgetary resources. It expressed its appreciation to those countries which continued to provide such funds, but wished to make it clear that extrabudgetary resources should in no way distort the priority decisions for regular budget activities. It was greatly concerned at the criteria being used to earmark extrabudgetary resources for different activities and wished to emphasize that Member States should become more involved in deciding the placement and utilization of those funds.

35. His delegation noted the difficulties which had arisen in defining the word "priority", difficulties which were compounded by conceptual and methodological problems. In that connection, his delegation had difficulties with the statement made by the Secretary-General in his report (A/44/272, para. 42 (a)) to the effect that the objective sought should be of a nature that multilateral action was demonstrably important to its achievement. As a matter of principle, it would like to adhere to the existing regulations governing programme planning, the programme aspects of the budget, the monitoring of implementation and the methods of evaluation adopted in General Assembly resolution 37/234. As for the principal criteria to be used in establishing priorities, General Assembly resolution 36/228 A continued to be as valid as it had been when it had been adopted.

36. In connection with the implementation of recommendation 15 of the Group of High-level Intergovernmental Experts regarding staff reductions, his delegation sympathized with the Secretary-General who, on the one hand, was required to implement the recommendation and, on the other hand, must ensure that, in so doing, no negative programmatic impact would arise. In balancing those seemingly conflicting directives, the Secretary-General must take into consideration the views of Member States on the reforms and their implementation. In that connection, his delegation intended to raise some issues related to the reforms in the Department of Public Information when section 27 was taken up.

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37. Mr. LADJOUZI (Algeria) remarked that, despite the formidable challenges facing the United Nations and the action taken in response to resolution 41/213, the Organization was still in a financial crisis. His delegation shared the Secretary-General's concerns about the effects on United Nations efforts to solve regional conflicts and cover its budget; it believed that the obvious way to end the crisis was for all Member States to honour their financial obligations within the deadlines set by the financial rules. Member States should also work harder at paying their arrears as soon as possible. Despite an economic crisis of its own, his country was up to date with its contributions to the regular budget, and beginning to pay its arrears for the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL).

38. The United Nations was increasingly being called on to deal with conflicts that threatened world peace and security; development efforts were facing serious obstacles, such as the external debt problem; the economic situation of the entire continent of Africa was more critical than ever; and yet, for the second time running, the proposed budget showed a negative real rate of growth. It was regrettable that the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination had been unable to verify the impact of negative growth on programmes and activities. Every care must be taken to avoid adverse repercussions on mandated activities.

39. The Secretary-General was to be congratulated on keeping his formal budget proposals so close to the amounts forecast in the budget outline. Maintaining, as some delegations did, that the preliminary forecasts should not be exceeded was tantamount to saying that, by adopting the new budget procedure, the General Assembly had put a cap on the expenses of the Organization. His delegation was emphatically not of that view, believing that programmes must not be forced to conform to any arbitrary limit on resource growth. Before rendering a final opinion on the Secretary-General's estimates, the Fifth Committee should bear in mind that the budget was more up to date and comprehensive than the outline; that resolution 41/213 called for preliminary estimates not definitive appropriations; and that the insignificant extra amount was more than covered by the reductions recommended by the Advisory Committee.

40. By recommending only eight further posts for deletion, as against the 50 called for by the General Assembly in resolution 43/213, the Secretary-General had reminded Member States that he could not cut more than 12 per cent of the posts in the budget without seriously endangering some of the basic activities of the Organization. The Advisory Committee's recommendation to restore two posts to the Joint Inspection Unit should be proof enough that a 15 per cent cut simply was not possible. On the other hand, his delegation shared the Advisory Committee's views on the Secretariat's failure to explain its reasons for trimming only 10 instead of 14 posts at the Under-Secretary-General and Assistant Secretary-General levels. It would favour a solution to that question which upheld the prerogatives of the Secretary-General as far as possible.

41. His delegation was deeply disappointed at the lack of haste to comply with recommendation 15 of the Group of 18 shown by bodies financed by extrabudgetary contributions. If applied, that recommendation would have enabled them to redeploy resources from the administrative sector to operational and development activities.

(Mr. Ladjouzi, Algeria)

42. At the forty-third session his delegation had voiced doubts as to whether the United Nations could meet any additional expenditure approved over a possible three-year period out of a reserve fund amounting to 0.75 per cent of total resources. Its doubts had been increased by the prospect of special meetings and session of the Assembly during the biennium 1990-1991. The extent of the additional activities approved at the current session should guide the action taken under paragraph 7 of resolution 43/214. It must be borne in mind that the purpose of the contingency fund was to strengthen budgetary discipline, not artificially restrict the growth of United Nations activities. Pending the feasibility study on a reserve, additional outlays occasioned by currency fluctuations, inflation in non-salary costs and statutory increases in personnel costs should be covered in accordance with current practice and procedures, as the Advisory Committee recommended.

43. The report of the Secretary-General on statements of programme budget implications (A/44/234) was an important supplement to resolution 41/213. Improved programme presentation in the medium-term plan would make detailed programme studies easier. The past emphasis on financial implications alone amounted to a biased application of resolution 38/227 A, which still afforded a valid framework for the preparation of statements of programme budget implications. More satisfactory implementation of that resolution need not mean changing the medium-term plan or rejecting proposals with budget implications, or even an indirect priority-setting procedure.

44. The Fifth Committee should review current provisions on unforeseen and extraordinary expenditure so as to enable the Secretary-General to act and react to events in the light of their importance, not the availability of resources. The Advisory Committee had also decided to review the question of extrabudgetary funds. Besides the need for proper budgetary control, the United Nations needed to be able to forecast extrabudgetary contributions and allocate them in accordance with the priorities set by its legislative bodies.

45. What was missing from the outline and proposed programme budget was any attempt to set priorities. Some features of the budget proposals, however, showed the importance of priority-setting. Paradoxically, the proposed budget for UNCTAD continued to decline although the interlinked problems of trade, debt, currencies and finance was highly topical and the situation of the least developed countries were more precarious than ever. As official development assistance and voluntary support for United Nations operational programmes stagnated and shrank, the tiny increase in the budgets for the regional commissions, notably the Economic Commission for Africa, hardly seemed to promise the requisite stimulus for development or to reflect the priority attached by the United Nations to the economic situation in Africa. Priority-setting among programme elements and subprogrammes must remain the prerogative of intergovernmental bodies. Some of the guidelines and criteria set forth in resolution 36/228 A should be reviewed in the light of the Organization's discouraging experience. Priorities must be set with due regard for the interests and concerns of all parties. His own country's priorities were still development, the right of peoples, in particular the

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(Mr. Ladjouzi, Algeria)

Palestinian people, to self-determination and independence, and the abolition of the system of apartheid.

46. His delegation continued to feel that the recommendations of the Group of 18 had not been given balanced implementation. A number of recommendations designed to produce greater transparency in personnel management had still not been put into effect. His delegation firmly supported the CPC recommendation for increased staffing for the activities of United Nations Information Centres, and emphasized the importance it attached to Department of Public Information activities relating to Palestine, Namibia and the campaign against apartheid.

47. Mr. ARROSPIDE (Peru) said that reform should be understood as a process designed to make the United Nations more efficient. Given the changes which had occurred over the past three years and the new tasks the Organization faced, the Fifth Committee should be flexible and allow resolution 41/213 to be applied harmoniously.

48. Although the Special Commission of the Economic and Social Council had not yet agreed on the restructuring of the economic and social sectors of the Organization, his delegation did not believe it would be appropriate for reforms in those areas to be discussed elsewhere. The recommended 15 per cent cut in staff had not been achieved, but the Secretariat had made great efforts, and much of the burden of the reforms had been borne by the staff. The progress made on travel and the use of consultants must be acknowledged; on the other hand, he wondered what progress had been made in ensuring that no post was regarded as the preserve of any one country or regional group.

49. Reform could not proceed amidst financial uncertainty. Despite its current difficulties, his country had made a significant effort, based on its belief that the Organization required unqualified support. Given the method by which assessments were calculated, all Member States faced roughly the same difficulties in paying their contributions: those who believed that, because they paid more in absolute terms, they had more rights over or say in the Organization were mistaken.

50. The procedures for budget formulation and execution were tending to become more rigid, limiting the ability of the Organization to respond to new mandates. The trend could be corrected by setting flexible standards for the operation of the contingency fund and the fund designed to cover the costs of inflation and currency fluctuations. On the other hand, his delegation agreed on the desirability of an integrated programming system which would allow both the growth of the programme and the financial implications of that growth to be clearly seen.

51. The Secretary-General's budget proposals should be considered in the light of the comments by the Advisory Committee. His delegation had never regarded the budget outline as a limit, but merely as a preliminary frame of reference. When the international community was expecting so much of the United Nations, it was regrettable that the proposed budget should show negative real growth of nearly 1 per cent. The trend must be reversed, otherwise it would be very difficult for

(Mr. Arrospe, Peru)

the Organization to accomplish the purposes set forth in the Charter. In the long run, his delegation believed, there was a direct relationship between the size of the Secretariat and the growing role of the Organization.

52. On the subject of priority-setting, his delegation felt that the method proposed by the Secretariat was a step forward, and it agreed that priority-setting in the context of the medium-term plan should focus on the subprogramme level.

53. Mr. LOPEZ (Venezuela) said that the difference of 0.06 per cent between the proposed programme budget and the budget outline was acceptable, given that the latter was intended to be only a preliminary estimate of resources. The explanations given by the Advisory Committee in paragraphs 3 to 9 of its report (A/44/7) illustrated the need for flexibility. His delegation accordingly endorsed the views expressed by the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination in paragraphs 55 and 68 of its report (A/44/16), and was in favour of an approach aimed at perfecting the methodology on the basis of experience in putting into effect the various new aspects of the budget process.

54. As the Secretary-General had reminded the Committee when introducing the proposed programme budget, some factors on which decisions would have to be taken at a later stage and which would affect the total amount of the budget were not covered. His delegation would in due course make known its views on those factors, in particular the fund for unforeseen and extraordinary expenditure and the adjustments for inflation and currency fluctuation. With that in mind, his delegation noted that in real terms the proposed programme budget represented a negative rate of real growth of 0.4 per cent over the revised appropriations for the biennium 1988-1989. As the Secretary-General stated in his introduction, the variation resulted, on the one hand, from increases, notably the construction of new premises and technological innovations, and, on the other, from decreases, in particular the 12 per cent post reduction.

55. In his delegation's view, technological innovations were necessary in a reform process aimed at improving the efficiency of the administrative and financial functioning of the United Nations. At the same time, it hoped that those innovations would be conceived as part of a well-considered plan that would result, once the level of staff was stabilized, in improved productivity and savings in costs. The introduction of new technologies was not in itself a panacea. It implied additional costs, which would have to be amortized, and the availability of additional skills if full effects were to be enjoyed. His delegation would therefore appreciate more detailed information in that connection, in particular the way in which the requirements for new technologies had been determined, the studies that had been carried out, including cost benefit analyses, and the expected results, all within the context of the proposals in the proposed programme budget.

56. His delegation was also concerned about the possible negative impact of post reductions on programmes. General Assembly resolutions 43/213, 42/211 and 41/213 had all established that such measures should have no negative impact on

(Mr. Lopez, Venezuela)

programmes, and CPC made the same point in paragraph 66 of its report (A/44/16). His delegation would accordingly like information from the Secretariat on cases in which there had been, or was expected to be, a negative impact on programmes as a result of the post reductions, and on the remedial action that was being taken or was planned. In his view, major negative effects would be postponements and delays in outputs or a decrease in their quality or quantity that was wholly or partly the result of post reductions.

57. A number of delegations, as well as the Advisory Committee, had drawn attention to the need to improve the format of the budget in order to facilitate review and analysis. For that purpose, it would be useful for the Committee to have before it a table comparing the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1990-1991 and the budget and revised estimates for the biennium 1988-1989, section by section.

58. Mr. KLETT (German Democratic Republic) said that the enhanced role of the United Nations in international relations meant that both Member States and the Secretariat must assume greater responsibility for making the best possible use of the Organization's potential and the human, material and financial resources available to it. The action set in motion by the review of the efficiency of the administrative and financial functioning of the United Nations was aimed at further enhancing the Organization's capacity to serve the purposes and principles of the Charter. That was also the yardstick by which the results of the changes of the past three years - in the structure and tasks of the Secretariat, in financial and staff policies and in co-operation between the organs and bodies of the United Nations - should be measured.

59. His delegation noted with satisfaction that considerable progress had been made in such areas as the restructuring of the political sector, clearer statements of goals, more rational approaches, and staff reductions. His delegation also welcomed the positive changes in the budget process, including the introduction of the programme budget outline and the contingency fund, as well as progress in improving co-operation among units of the Secretariat and United Nations organs dealing with planning and budgeting matters. The process was, however, still at the introductory stage and new decisions might need to be taken as a result of experience. Moreover, some important tasks remained to be tackled, for example, the reorganization of the economic and social sector of the United Nations.

60. With regard to staff reductions, his delegation supported the conclusions and recommendations of CPC as contained in paragraph 17 of its report (A/44/16). It trusted that, in preparing and carrying out policies concerning the staff, the decisions taken would be implemented to the full and any biased emphasis on certain aspects avoided.

61. The continuous updating of all programme activities was essential, and greater efforts must be made to identify and terminate outmoded programmes more quickly. His delegation endorsed the recommendation of CPC, in paragraph 28 of its report, that the Secretary-General should submit an update on the implementation of General Assembly resolution 41/213 to the Assembly at its forty-fifth session.

(Mr. Klett, German Democratic Republic)

62. Economy and efficiency should remain the yardstick of the Organization's spending policies. While his delegation would not question the need for a solid funding of the Organization's activities, as set out in the Charter, it stressed that the amount required must always be carefully reviewed by the competent bodies and by the General Assembly, and subsequently established by mutual agreement among the Member States.

63. Despite the efforts that had been made to fulfil the mandates relating to the budget, and to implement resolution 41/213, the proposed programme budget for 1990/1991 revealed a number of deficiencies. The proposed programme budget exceeded the budget outline for 1990-1991 agreed upon in resolution 43/214 by \$US 1.3 million. That outline, which had been adopted after lengthy and thorough negotiations based on a balance of interests, should be taken very seriously and should be exceeded only if special circumstances arose. According to paragraph 11 of the introduction to the proposed programme budget (A/44/6/Rev.1), perhaps 20 per cent of outputs were not strictly mandated. In future, Member States should consider carefully such outputs were required or justified.

64. His delegation felt that the Office of Programme Planning, Budget and Finance should exert a more consistent influence to ensure a unified format for the programme budget and the soundness of arguments with regard to expenditures. In the circumstances, his delegation was in favour of the changes recommended by ACABQ. It was essential, given the existing difficulties, that priorities should be set, but the proposed programme budget for 1990-1991 did not offer a fundamental solution to the problem of priority-setting. It was hard to understand how a thorough review of possible financing for new activities could be made in a short space of time in the event that the contingency fund was exhausted, if even during the protracted process of drawing up the proposed programme budget, the value of individual programmes was not assessed.

65. As ACABQ stated in paragraph 9 of its report, the whole budget process was still in its formative stage and the Secretary-General had been fully justified in asking Member States for further advice on the methodology to be used in preparing the proposed programme budget. His delegation wondered whether the revised appropriations, as approved by the General Assembly at the mid-point of a biennium, might not set limits that were too narrow for constructive work aimed at focusing more closely on the current tasks of the United Nations in the budgetary period in question and giving more consideration to altering priorities.

66. Recent events had shown how important it was for the United Nations to be able to rely on a solid financial basis. The Secretary-General had pointed out that the difficulties were continuing: 77 per cent of the assessment for 1989 was still outstanding. It was urgent that all States should meet their obligations and pay their full assessed contribution in good time. States which were in arrears, in particular those with the greatest amounts outstanding, should respond to the Secretary-General's appeal as soon as possible.

67. Mr. DANKWA (Ghana) said that his delegation attached great importance to the cluster of agenda items under discussion. The various instruments involved in the effort to lay the foundation for an efficient administrative and financial structure of the United Nations - the medium-term plan, the programme budget outlined the programme budget, priority-setting, and the review envisaged in General Assembly resolution 41/213 - were all designed to enhance predictability and offer increased opportunities for evaluation.

68. The excess of only 0.06 per cent in the proposed programme budget over the budget outline was a significant achievement. Such a small increase over a 12-month period should normally be welcome. It should be pointed out, however, that the methodology currently employed was likely to continue to produce a programme budget that exceeded the resources predicted in the outline and until a methodology was found that enhanced predictability, the outline should not, and could not, be regarded as a ceiling. Such a position would adversely affect the Secretariat's ability to implement mandated programmes.

69. The contingency fund was another instrument that required consideration. According to the guidelines annexed to General Assembly resolution 42/311, any programme activity based on a decision taken in the year preceding the biennium, in other words in 1989, and during the biennium, 1990-1991, would be chargeable to the contingency fund, for which a sum of \$US 15 million had been appropriated. In his delegation's view, the fund's operations would have to be carefully monitored to ensure that mandated programmes were not financially starved into premature termination or deferment. In that connection, it would be advisable for the Committee to pay particular attention to any statements of programme budget implications that might be submitted. His delegation would find it difficult to accept the usual practice of according approval with the proviso that the activity should be funded from available resources, but would require a clear indication of the source of funding, whether at the programme, subprogramme or programme element level. It would revert to the issue of the proposed reserve fund to cover charges for unforeseen and extraordinary expenditures outside the scope of the proposed budget and on the contingency fund at a later stage, but wished to state at the present stage that if the reserve fund was to be a credible alternative to the existing arrangement its liquidity must be guaranteed.

70. The role of priority-setting in programme planning could not be overstated. His delegation had examined the Secretary-General's report (A/44/272) with care and endorsed his diagnosis of the ailment of the existing legislative framework and its application. It did not, however, believe that his prescription would have the desired effect. The additional criterion proposed would merely add to the current confusion. The concept of "multilateral action" lacked clarity and was unhelpful as a guide. Priority-setting need not be related to the importance of multilateral action. Priority should be rooted in the effect of an activity on the realization of the Organization's objectives as spelled out in the Charter.

71. First and foremost, priority needed to be properly defined. The current definition whereby it was expressed in terms of claims on resources, with 10 per cent of resources being allocated in the programme budget to programmes of



(Mr. Dankwa, Ghana)

"high priority" and 10 per cent also to programmes of low priority, was contradictory. Priority-setting should be the result of political dialogue rather than any mathematical equation or set of rules. In any event, CPC should be requested to consider the Secretary-General's proposal and submit recommendations on it to the General Assembly at its forty-fifth session.

72. Referring to the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of resolution 41/213 (A/44/222), he said his delegation had noted the recurrent concern about possible adverse effects on mandated programmes, particularly if the projections in the medium-term plan went wrong. The Joint Inspection Unit had submitted two important documents in that connection, relating respectively to the reorganization of the Department of Public Information and the restructuring of the economic and social sectors of the United Nations system (A/44/433 and A/44/486). Those reports should be resubmitted to the General Assembly at its next session together with the analytical report requested under resolution 43/213.

73. Until the Assembly had reviewed the effect of the reforms on the efficiency of the administrative and financial functioning of the United Nations, caution was advisable in respect of further staff reductions. While the reform process could be expected to continue, it was proper that the review mandated under resolution 41/213 should be formally brought to an end.

74. Mr. OUTLULE (Botswana) said that the proposed programme budget before the Committee was an important part of the reform process currently under way, since it was the first to have been prepared following the procedures set forth in resolution 41/213 and in resolution 43/214 which had established the outline for the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1990-1991. The proposed programme budget exceeded the outline by some \$US 1.3 million. While he understood the concern expressed by some delegations on that score, it should be remembered that the procedures were new and that, as they were refined and as experience was gained, excesses might not recur. It was, moreover, his delegation's understanding that the outline was a guide and should therefore provide room for flexibility. In that regard, it supported the position of ACABQ as expressed in paragraph 5 of its report (A/44/7) and the similar conclusion reached by CPC in paragraph 32 of its report (A/44/16). In his delegation's view, the Secretary-General was to be congratulated on having prepared a budget proposal which was as close to the outline as possible.

75. While his delegation appreciated the need for reform, it believed that it should not be seen merely as a cost-saving measure or as an end in itself. It hoped that the 12 per cent cut in posts would not seriously hamper the work of the regional commissions or such important departments as the Department of Public Information. His delegation had studied the work programmes of those bodies and looked forward to their results. It endorsed the remark of CPC, in paragraph 15 of its report, that the purpose of the reforms was to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the United Nations.

(Mr. Outlule, Botswana)

76. He noted that the report of ACABQ (A/44/7) dealt at some length with the issue of extrabudgetary resources. His delegation was deeply concerned that there was no mechanism for recording and controlling such a large pool of resources and accordingly supported the recommendations in paragraphs 88 and 89 of that report.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.

UNITED NATIONS  
**General Assembly**  
FORTY-FOURTH SESSION  
*Official Records*

FIFTH COMMITTEE  
16th meeting  
held on  
Friday, 20 October 1989  
at 3 p.m.  
New York

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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 16th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. DANKWA (Ghana)

later: Mr. AL-MASRI (Syrian Arab Republic)

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

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- AGENDA ITEM 124: PROGRAMME PLANNING (continued)
- AGENDA ITEM 38: REVIEW OF THE EFFICIENCY OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE AND FINANCIAL  
FUNCTIONING OF THE UNITED NATIONS (continued)
- General debate (continued)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.20 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 123: PROPOSED PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 1990-1991 (continued)

AGENDA ITEM 124: PROGRAMME PLANNING (continued)

AGENDA ITEM 38: REVIEW OF THE EFFICIENCY OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE AND FINANCIAL FUNCTIONING OF THE UNITED NATIONS (continued) (A/44/3, A/44/6/Rev.1, A/44/7, A/44/16 and Add.1, A/44/222 and Corr.1, A/44/233, A/44/234, A/44/272; A/C.5/44/CRP.1)

General debate (continued)

1. Mr. MAKAREVITCH (Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic) said that the proposed programme budget marked an important new stage in the implementation of the reforms undertaken by the United Nations and was a good reflection of the main trends in the political, economic and social spheres on the threshold of the 1990s. The regrouping of certain programme elements was a happy initiative, inasmuch as it allowed for a more flexible utilization of resources and for the elimination of overlapping.

2. With regard to the setting of priorities, his delegation supported the idea of designating them at the output level (A/44/272, para. 54). It was in favour of discontinuing the "10 per cent rule", and noted with satisfaction the Secretariat's intention of reviewing the question later on, in the context of programme budget implementation and preparation of the next medium-term plan. The Secretary-General was right in noting that priority-setting for the medium-term plan was a prerogative of the Member States. Nevertheless, where budget planning was concerned, it was up to him to indicate the cost of the different activities that might be eliminated and to indicate how the resources thus freed would be reallocated.

3. Considering that the total approved by the General Assembly for the budget outline appeared to be adequate, the \$1.3 million increase envisaged in the proposed budget did not seem to be fully justified. As the Chairman of ACABQ had noted, the controversy regarding that discrepancy could have been settled more easily if the Secretariat had offered some detailed explanations in the budget proposals.

4. The Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic shared the concern expressed by CPC with regard to the increase in administrative costs and in the costs associated with the use of experts and consultants, travel, external printing and equipment (A/44/16, para. 60). Further efforts must be made to reduce those costs. Moreover, decisions concerning the reduction in the number of permanent posts taken by the General Assembly at its forty-third session had not been fully implemented. Finally, the intention was to continue with the reclassification of posts; however, in a great majority of cases, that meant classification at a higher level. The Committee should carefully examine the justifications given to support the proposals made in that regard.

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(Mr. Makarevitch, Ukrainian SSR)

5. It would also be necessary to examine the phenomenon of the increase in extrabudgetary funds in order to find out to what extent that was compatible with the mandates regarding the administrative and financial reorganization of the Secretariat. In that context, his delegation endorsed the Advisory Committee's recommendation regarding the establishment of a mechanism for monitoring extrabudgetary expenses, particularly in the case of funds whose utilization was not currently being supervised by any intergovernmental body.
6. The Secretariat had tried to draw up a detailed and moderate programme budget which would reflect the wishes of Member States. However, as CPC indicated in its report, it should have indicated more clearly the relationship between the 0.4 per cent negative rate of growth envisaged and the programmatic content of the budget (A/44/16, para. 58). His delegation hoped that the General Assembly would adopt a balanced budget that would enable the Organization fully to discharge the responsibilities entrusted to it by the Charter and to respond to the new expectations of the international community.
7. Mr. AKHTARUZZAMAN (Bangladesh) noted with satisfaction that despite the unfavourable circumstances, the Secretariat had applied a substantial number of the recommendations made by the Group of 18, particularly those relating to the distribution of responsibilities among the different administrative units. Recalling the different stages in the reform process, he noted that, while considerable progress had been made in the political sector, the task had proved more difficult in the economic and social fields. The work of the Special Commission of the Economic and Social Council had not resulted in recommendations in those two fields.
8. As noted by the Secretary-General, reform was not an end in itself but a means of improving the services the Organization rendered to Member States. At a time of rising expectations of Member States, it would be paradoxical if the Organization continued to face financial uncertainties. With regard to recommendation 15 of the Group of 18, his delegation would like to reiterate the statement made by CPC at its twenty-ninth session that the recommendation should be implemented with flexibility to avoid negative impact on programmes. The overall target of 13.2 per cent in post reduction to be achieved by the end of 1989 as proposed by the Secretary-General together with the adjustments in the staffing of conference services, appeared to be a reasonable one. Implementation of that recommendation could also serve to improve the representation of developing countries in higher-level posts, in observance of General Assembly resolution 35/210. Full implementation alone, however, would not make the United Nations more effective; it was also important to ensure a secured future for the staff. Recalling the concern expressed at the high vacancy rate in the regional economic commissions, he called upon the Secretariat to provide a timetable to fill those vacancies. He noted with satisfaction the measures that had already been taken to implement recommendation 37 of the Group of 18 concerning the Department of Public Information, and said he would like to receive a copy of the study on the new organization of the Department. He stressed the importance of addressing the fundamental problems (structure, programmes and the level and distribution of resources allocated to priority items, especially apartheid, Namibia and Palestine).

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(Mr. Akhtaruzzaman, Bangladesh)

9. Although it was very interesting, document A/44/272 had such serious shortcomings that it limited the scope for decisions on implementation of the modified system proposed in section IV, even on a trial basis. Although at the twenty-ninth session of CPC, the Bangladesh delegation had asked the Secretariat to take into account Economic and Social Council resolution 1988/77, there was no mention of it in the document under consideration. So far, CPC had been the prime actor in priority-setting and the Economic and Social Council had been endorsing the recommendations of CPC without engaging in any in-depth study. Resolution 1988/77 appeared to have changed that procedure by making the Economic and Social Council responsible for submitting some recommendations on priority-setting to the General Assembly. However, that was the case only for the economic and social fields; in other spheres, priority-setting would still be the responsibility of CPC. Resolution 1988/77 also implied changes in regulation 3.2 of the Regulations Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation. Indeed, all the implications of resolution 1988/77 should be studied in depth before the Committee considered adopting the modified system proposed by the Secretary-General. The Secretariat should not have assumed that resolution 1988/77 would not change anything in connection with priority-setting. It should be mindful of developments in the intergovernmental machinery which affected mandates of CPC and of the points raised by various delegations.

10. The significance of co-ordination in the United Nations system could hardly be over-emphasized. The aim of co-ordination exercises should be to identify shortcomings, to make the activity of the organizations of the United Nations system more responsive to the needs of Member States, to eliminate duplication and to improve cost-effectiveness. The joint meetings of CPC and ACC could play a crucial role by offering a regular forum for exchanges of views between the organizations of the system and the Member States, which would help in coming up with action-oriented recommendations amenable to follow-up by the Secretariat and the governing bodies. All the co-ordination instruments should be so conceived as to enable Member States to carry out co-ordination in an effective manner.

11. Stressing that reform measures were an ongoing process, he expressed the hope that the analytical report to be submitted by the Secretary-General in 1990 would review the entire gamut of measures taken, bearing in mind the views expressed by delegations.

12. Mr. AMIRKHIZI (Islamic Republic of Iran) welcomed the fact that the Secretary-General's proposed programme budget represented a reduction of 0.4 per cent in real terms, but only in so far as that did not have a negative effect on the programmes mandated by the legislative bodies, especially programmes of assistance to developing countries. Likewise, the total estimate in the budget outline should not be regarded as a limit that it was forbidden to exceed in the proposed programme budget. It was necessary to show flexibility and give the Secretariat more time to gain experience with the new budget process. His delegation hoped that, with the advantage of experience, the Secretariat would be able to ensure that all the resources necessary to attain the objectives of the

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(Mr. Amirkhizi, Islamic  
Republic of Iran)

Organization were available in the budget outline. It also hoped that the Member States and intergovernmental bodies would be more closely involved in the preparation of the programme budget. It noted with satisfaction that international control of narcotic drugs and the United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development were among the major objectives of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1990-1991.

13. Given the fact that the volume of extrabudgetary resources exceeded the regular budget, it was obvious that they were important for the activities of the United Nations. As recommended by ACABQ, the procedures for managing those resources should be more clearly defined and the Secretary-General should undertake a review of the extrabudgetary programmes as soon as possible, in order to define their relationship with the regular budget and take into account the priorities for the allocation of resources to different programmes. Implementation of the General Assembly resolutions calling for a 15 per cent staff reduction had made substantial progress, since a reduction of 12 per cent had already been achieved. There too, however, it was necessary to show flexibility so that programme implementation would not be negatively affected. With regard to the target of 25 per cent set for the reduction in the posts of Under-Secretary-General and Assistant Secretary-General, his delegation wished to point out that the principle of equitable geographical distribution should be maintained and measures should be taken to guarantee the adequate representation of developing countries in such posts.

14. Mr. VISLYKH (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics), speaking on agenda item 38, said that his delegation was on the whole satisfied with the results achieved in the area of administrative reform, in particular with regard to the reorganization of the United Nations executive apparatus. On the other hand, the restructuring of the intergovernmental structure in the economic and social fields had not progressed. In that regard, the Soviet Union shared the concerns expressed by most Member States and hoped that the Secretary-General would propose effective corrective measures in the report that he would submit in implementation of resolution 43/174. Although the report on the implementation of resolution 41/213 was entitled "Final report", the Secretary-General still had to provide the information requested by CPC and, inter alia, an analytical report for the forty-fifth session of the General Assembly.

15. With regard to the recommendations of the Group of 18, there were a number of gaps to note. Although implementation of the recommendations concerning the Committee on Conferences and the organization of conference services was practically complete, the situation in that area had scarcely improved. The Committee was not justifying the hopes placed in it and was refusing to settle certain extremely important questions pertaining to its new mandate. With regard to conference services, the considerations on which the Group of 18 had based itself should be re-examined. In the current period of revitalization, it was no longer justified to place an artificial limit on growth in one of the United Nations main areas of activity. It might become necessary to review the rules

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(Mr. Vislykh, USSR)

governing the holding of conferences and meetings, in particular the one which stipulated that bodies must meet at their headquarters. In certain cases, that rule was perhaps not justified; on the other hand, the dispensations from that rule granted to other bodies, such as the International Law Commission and the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law, should be reconsidered.

16. Recommendations 9 and 10, dealing with inter-agency co-ordination, were of particular importance in the current circumstances. Member States were conscious that United Nations bodies had to combine their efforts if solutions were desired to major world problems, such as disarmament, protection of the environment, and elimination of underdevelopment. That was why the Soviet delegation supported the recommendations of CPC, which advocated making the annual report of the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination (ACC) an effective instrument of co-ordination and strengthening the role of ACC and of its Chairman and secretariat. On the other hand, his delegation considered that the secretariat of ACC should be attached, not to the Office of the Director-General for Development and International Economic Co-operation, but to the Executive Office of the Secretary-General.

17. Recommendation 13 on harmonizing the format of the programme budgets of United Nations bodies was being implemented too slowly. The JIU report could certainly play a useful part but its impact should not be overestimated. The best way of speeding up the harmonization process would be to ask ACABQ to take a more active interest in the question.

18. With regard to the changes made to the structure of the Secretariat, much work had been done, especially in the area of administration. Nevertheless, it might perhaps be necessary to take additional steps in the light of the recommendations of CPC and the conclusions reached by joint meetings of CPC and ACC on questions of inter-agency co-ordination. The Soviet delegation was in favour of carrying out a study of the productivity and efficiency of the Department of Conference Services and noted that the Committee on Conferences intended to take part in it. Although, in general, the Soviet delegation had no objections to make concerning the reorganization of the Secretariat's political services, it thought that the Secretary-General was drawing a rather premature conclusion when he affirmed in paragraph 50 of his report that the restructuring was complete. The changes that had taken place in international relations and the new prospects opening up for multilateral diplomacy in the areas cited by the Secretary-General in his report on the activities of the United Nations could require the adoption of additional measures at a later date. Restructuring was also far from complete in the economic and social sectors. Results there would depend to a great extent on the changes made in the intergovernmental structure.

19. His delegation had already stated its position on recommendation 15 concerning the reduction in Secretariat staff: it trusted that the Secretary-General would continue to take the necessary steps to ensure the recommendation's complete implementation.

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(Mr. Vislykh, USSR)

20. The process of reform implied its continuation into the long-term future; its content had to be changed if circumstances so required. The immediate priority was to co-ordinate the efforts and resources of all United Nations bodies so that they could solve the major problems faced by mankind in their respective spheres of competence. At the current stage, it was far more important to decide the main directions in which to pursue reform than to engage in interim stocktaking. His delegation hoped that the question would receive the necessary attention.

21. Mr. AHMED (Pakistan) said that since the proposed programme budget submitted by the Secretary-General was the first prepared in accordance with the new budget procedures, it was appropriate to treat the product with flexibility, as the General Assembly had affirmed in its resolution 43/214. Certain features would have to be refined, in particular the question of the relationship between the budget outline and the subsequent proposed programme budget. He had no problem with the fact that the latter slightly exceeded the former. The outline was simply intended to provide a greater level of predictability of the necessary funds and it was only a preliminary figure. That was all the more so because the deadline for finalizing the outline might not be conducive to the quality of its predictions. The important point was that Member States should agree on the reasons for the discrepancies between the outline and the proposed programme budget. In that regard, his delegation shared the views expressed by ACABQ in paragraphs 5 and 10 of its report.

22. He noted that the real rate of growth was negative and emphasized that the reform process should not have any adverse effect on programme delivery. Some delegations had stressed the need to implement certain recommendations of the Group of 18 to the letter, especially those on the reduction of posts. His delegation firmly believed that to be a most sensitive matter which required further study. The elimination of so many posts in the highest echelons of the United Nations should be seen in its broad political context, as CPC had emphasized at its twenty-ninth session. His delegation therefore wholly endorsed the recommendation made by CPC in paragraph 67 of its report.

23. On the subject of extrabudgetary resources, the estimates for which were higher than the amount requested for the regular budget, his delegation shared the opinion of ACABQ that they could have an impact not only on the work programme but also on the ordering of priorities. It was therefore appropriate that methods for the adequate control of extrabudgetary expenditures should be devised with the participation of the Secretary-General and the intergovernmental bodies. That was simply to ensure that programmes funded by extrabudgetary resources remained consistent with the priorities set by the General Assembly.

24. With regard to the implementation of resolution 41/213, he agreed with the Secretary-General that reform was a continuing process which must not become an end in itself. Some Member States had expressed concern that specific recommendations of the Group of 18 had not been implemented in full. But among its other objectives, the resolution had addressed the vital necessity of restoring the financial viability of the Organization. It was therefore inconsistent that

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(Mr. Ahmed, Pakistan)

Member States continued not to pay their dues on time as required by the Charter, which could not be regarded as being less important than a resolution. Given the progress already achieved and the increased responsibilities entrusted to the Organization, it was imperative for Member States to honour their financial obligations.

25. Mr. IRUMBA (Uganda) said that the outline approved by the General Assembly should not be considered as fixing the overall level of budgetary resources definitively. It was obviously not a budget that had been considered on a section-by-section basis.

26. It was clearly inconsistent that the rate of growth was negative at a time when the Organization was playing an ever-increasing role in the international sphere. His delegation hoped that the matter would be given due attention during the section-by-section consideration of the proposed programme budget. It welcomed the recommendations of both ACABQ and CPC on the question of the contingency fund. It also awaited with interest the results of the study being undertaken by ACABQ on the possible establishment of a reserve fund to cover additional expenditures arising from currency fluctuations and inflation; in any event, such a fund should not be raised from resources appropriated for mandated programmes and activities.

27. On the subject of extrabudgetary resources, his delegation had already had occasion to express its concern about the disproportions observed in their allocation, which raised the question of the accepted criteria for their distribution; it therefore hoped that the Secretariat would submit a conference room paper on the subject.

28. The process of reform initiated by the implementation of resolution 41/213 should remain integrated and balanced. In order to be able to assess its results, it was important that the analytical report to be submitted by the Secretary-General in 1990 should indicate clearly both its successes and its negative effects on programmes or on the geographical distribution of staff. The reform should not be reduced to budget cuts. While supporting the proposed 12 per cent reduction in posts, his delegation found it difficult to understand the way in which the reduction was being carried out and hoped that the matter would be clarified during future negotiations.

29. The restructuring of the Department of Public Information was a cause of concern for many delegations, in particular because of the imbalances noted both in the geographical distribution of staff in senior level posts and in the allocation of resources within units. His delegation wished to have information about the distribution of posts in the Anti-Apartheid, Namibia and Palestine Programmes Section. It recalled that JIU had concluded, in its report on the Department (A/44/433, para. 48 and para. 217), that the preparatory work for the reform had not been conducted as coherently as might have been wished and that the new administrative machinery seemed to be no more efficient than the one that it had replaced.

(Mr. Irumba, Uganda)

30. He regretted that CPC and ACABQ had not had the opportunity to comment on the report of the Secretary-General on the reform of the intergovernmental structure in the economic and social fields. He fully subscribed to the recommendation of CPC that the General Assembly, when considering the report requested in resolution 43/174, paragraph 2, should keep in mind the mandate of CPC in implementing resolution 41/213 and should allow CPC to review the proposals to be presented by the Secretary-General concerning the restructuring, in order to examine their effects on programmes.

31. The process of reform must not serve to reorient the Organization towards certain areas to the detriment of others. It was with that consideration in mind that his delegation would continue to monitor the work of the Committee on Conferences closely. His delegation recalled that the Fifth Committee had informed the General Assembly that it had expressed its opinion on the status of the Committee on Conferences on the understanding that nothing in it could be construed as giving that Committee any role in the budgetary process or any power to disregard decisions duly taken by United Nations bodies concerning programmes, meetings and conferences. His delegation was therefore surprised that some people were trying to call in question that interpretation of the mandate given to the Committee on Conferences.

32. He welcomed the improvement noted in the preparation and presentation of JIU reports and hoped that they would include the progress achieved as well as the problems encountered in the implementation of programmes. JIU should also indicate where follow-up action should be taken.

33. His delegation attached particular importance to the question of priority-setting and was disappointed that CPC had not had time to address substantive aspects of that question. It hoped that the General Assembly would be able to provide the necessary guidelines during its current session.

34. Mr. Al-Masri (Syrian Arab Republic) took the Chair.

35. The CHAIRMAN stated that the Committee had concluded its general discussion of agenda items 123, 124 and 38.

The meeting rose at 4.50 p.m.