

UNITED NATIONS
General Assembly

FORTY-FOURTH SESSION

Official Records

FIFTH COMMITTEE
37th meeting
held on
Tuesday, 14 November 1989
at 10 a.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 37th MEETING

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

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

CONTENTS

AGENDA ITEM 130: PERSONNEL QUESTIONS (continued)

(b) RESPECT FOR THE PRIVILEGES AND IMMUNITIES OF OFFICIALS OF THE UNITED
NATIONS AND THE SPECIALIZED AGENCIES AND RELATED ORGANIZATIONS (continued)

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

(a) REPORT OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON ADMINISTRATIVE AND BUDGETARY QUESTIONS

AGENDA ITEMS 123 AND 124: PROPOSED PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 1990-1991 AND
PROGRAMME PLANNING (continued)

First reading (continued)

Section 27. Public information

This record is subject to correction.
Corrections should be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned
within one week of the date of publication to the Chief of the Official Records Editing Section, Room DC2 750,
2 United Nations Plaza, and incorporated in a copy of the record.

Corrections will be issued after the end of the session, in a separate corrigendum for each Committee

Distr. GENERAL
A/C.5/44/SR.37
20 November 1989

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 130: PERSONNEL QUESTIONS (continued)

(b) RESPECT FOR THE PRIVILEGES AND IMMUNITIES OF OFFICIALS OF THE UNITED NATIONS AND THE SPECIALIZED AGENCIES AND RELATED ORGANIZATIONS (continued)
(A/C.5/44/11)

1. Mr. FLEISCHHAUER (Under-Secretary-General, The Legal Counsel) introduced the Secretary-General's report (document A/C.5/44/11) on respect for the privileges and immunities of officials of the United Nations and the specialized agencies and related organizations, which covered the period from 1 July 1988 to 30 June 1989 and was presented on behalf of the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination.
2. Under the Charter of the United Nations, it was recognized that officials of the Organization must enjoy such privileges and immunities as were necessary for the independent exercise of their functions. That basic provision had subsequently been developed, so that privileges and immunities were now extended to officials throughout the United Nations system. At a time when the United Nations and other organizations were being entrusted by their Member States with important new responsibilities, including peace-keeping operations and activities in the economic, humanitarian, ecological and other fields, respect for such privileges and immunities continued to be of the utmost importance, and it was in that spirit that the General Assembly had, at its forty-third session, urged that they be scrupulously respected.
3. The report of the Secretary-General devoted particular attention to cases of arrest, detention and abduction of officials. The number of such cases, particularly those involving staff members of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), had remained extremely high during the reporting period, and the Middle East had constituted an area of major concern. The still uncertain fate of Lieutenant-Colonel William Higgins had served to highlight the seriousness of the situation, as had one additional case which occurred after the reporting period. On 18 October 1989, Israeli security forces entered an UNRWA distribution centre in the Gaza Strip and examined official files. Staff members who protested against that action were forcibly arrested, and one of them was badly assaulted. Meanwhile, the United Nations and other organizations continued to encounter serious difficulties both in securing access to arrested or detained officials and in obtaining adequate and timely information on the reasons for their arrest or detention.
4. Detailed information regarding cases of arrest, detention, abduction or loss of life was contained in paragraphs 8, 9, 10, 12 and 13, and annex II of the report. Annex I provided a consolidated list of staff members under arrest and detention or missing, at 30 June 1989, with respect to whom the United Nations, its specialized agencies and related organizations had been unable to exercise fully their right of protection. Incidents similar to those concerning staff members of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), referred to in paragraph 13, had recently also occurred in connection with three staff members of

/...

(Mr. Fleischhauer)

the International Labour Organisation. A team of four officials had, however, finally been granted access, on 8 September 1989, to Ms. Guenet Mebratu, whose case was mentioned in annex II, paragraph 5, of the report. It had, indeed, as a result of persistent efforts, including those of the staff unions, been possible to achieve the release of many staff members previously reported as being under arrest or detention.

5. With regard to travel restrictions, there had been no improvement in the situation with regard to the official travel of certain UNRWA and UNCTAD staff members into and out of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Meanwhile, restrictions imposed by the United States authorities on travel beyond a 25-mile radius of Columbus Circle, New York, by staff members of particular nationalities had been extended to non-official travel of nationals of China. Such discriminatory treatment of staff members on the basis of their nationality ran counter to the concept of the international civil service, and it was to be hoped that current improvements in the international political climate would lead to the prompt lifting of those restrictions.

6. Despite the insistence of the Secretary-General that attempts by certain Member States to tax the salaries of staff members of their nationality were incompatible with existing international instruments, there had been new instances of such attempts during the reporting period, as indicated in paragraphs 17 to 21 of the Secretary-General's report.

7. Cases of disregard for the privileges and immunities of officials continued to be closely monitored, with the United Nations Security Co-ordinator serving as a focal point for the exchange of relevant information. The Secretary-General and the executive heads of the organizations concerned had intervened personally where the situation so required. It was essential, if organizations of the system were to function properly, that all Member States refrain from action impeding staff members in the performance of their functions and that the staff of the United Nations and the other organizations concerned strictly comply, while performing such functions, with the obligations resulting from the relevant staff regulations and rules.

8. Mr. GEBREMEDHIN (Ethiopia) said that his country fully shared the Secretary-General's concern for the safety and security of staff and had fully co-operated with him in that regard. It had even, in response to his appeals, released individuals guilty of acts incompatible with their status as international civil servants. The release in June 1989 of an Ethiopian staff member of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees was a further example of such co-operation. However, note should be taken, when urging that Member States respect the privileges and immunities of officials, of the need for staff members to uphold the principles of the Charter and to abide by the Staff Regulations and Rules.

9. Mr. Tesfamariam Zeggae had been sentenced to life imprisonment on charges of espionage. Nevertheless, he had been allowed visits by members of his family and

/...

(Mr. Gebremedhin, Ethiopia)

Secretariat officials and had been provided with medical services. The last sentence of annex II, paragraph 3, of the Secretary-General's report was misleading: a meeting with the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Resources Management had been arranged, but the Ethiopian authorities were informed by the Economic Commission for Africa that it would not be possible to fit the meeting into the Assistant Secretary-General's schedule. The repeated use of the phrase "under detention" was unacceptable to his Government: Mr. Zeggae had been found guilty of the charges against him by due process of law. The Secretary-General had been fully informed of the situation in a note dated 27 August 1987. With regard to the deplorable incident reported in annex II, paragraph 4, of the Secretary-General's report, his country's Ministry of Foreign Affairs had at no stage received any communication from the United Nations.

10. His delegation reserved the right to offer further clarification of related issues upon receipt of instructions from its Government.

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

(a) REPORT OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON ADMINISTRATIVE AND BUDGETARY QUESTIONS (A/44/711 and Add.1)

11. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) said that the Advisory Committee, in accordance with the procedure introduced in 1982, was submitting statistical material on various subjects addressed in its biennial detailed reports. The regular budgets of the United Nations, the specialized agencies and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) for 1990 would amount to \$2,306,839,721. In addition, assessments for peace-keeping operations, which totalled \$720.7 million in 1989, were likely to approach \$770 million. The decrease (by 1,132) in the number of established posts was largely related to the current reform process. Paragraph 9 of the Advisory Committee's report indicated the amount contributed by the regular budgets to the support costs of technical co-operation activities. Regular programmes of technical co-operation in 1990 would amount to a total of \$380,116,800, of which the bulk would be provided under the regular budget of the World Health Organization.

12. The total number of staff, indicated in the table under paragraph 10, amounted to 50,264 although, as a result of the application of different criteria, there were 54,006 participants in the Joint Staff Pension Fund. He drew the Committee's attention to table E, in the light of the likelihood that the United Nations Working Capital Fund would be the subject of subsequent discussions. The amount shown for that Fund (\$100,000), related only to the regular budget and excluded peace-keeping operations. If peace-keeping operations were to be included, the percentages shown in the final columns of table E, in respect of the United Nations, would be considerably smaller. As indicated in table G, the total of all contributions outstanding to the United Nations as of 30 September 1989 was quite substantial.

(Mr. Mselle)

13. The procedure endorsed by the General Assembly allowed the Advisory Committee to submit studies of special topics as necessary. Document A/44/711/Add.1 concerned the relationship between the World Food Programme (WFP), FAO and the United Nations. The Advisory Committee had submitted its recommendations to the Committee on Food Aid Policies and Programmes of WFP, as well as to the General Assembly. It intended to pursue the subject further and to report to the General Assembly as necessary.

AGENDA ITEMS 123 AND 124: PROPOSED PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 1990-1991 AND PROGRAMME PLANNING (continued) (A/44/3, A/44/6/Rev.1, A/44/7 and Corr.1 and 2, A/44/16)

First reading (continued)

Section 27. Public information (A/44/329 and Add.1, A/44/433 and Add.1; A/C.5/44/CRP.3)

14. Mr. BAUDOT (Director, Programme Planning and Budget Division) said that the budget proposals for section 27 differed from the revised estimates approved by the General Assembly at its forty-third session in that they called for the elimination of the Bureau of Programme Operations and the Division for Committee Liaison and Administrative Services, and the transfer to the Office of the Under-Secretary-General of the functions of the Executive Office and some of the functions of the two eliminated units. The revised structure was depicted in the figure accompanying paragraph 27.6 of the revised programme budget. The Committee for Programme and Co-ordination (CPC) had called for a clear identification of the unit dealing with the question of Palestine: it was the Central Programmes Unit in the Radio Section of the Electronic Magazines and Features Service. The Unit concerned with anti-apartheid activities was in the same Service, and had a total of 18 posts.

15. In response to a request from CPC, the Secretariat had provided information on proposed priorities in document A/C.5/44/CRP.3; the volume of resources associated with highest-priority and low-priority activities was roughly in line with the Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning. The section contained the same number of subprogrammes as in the previous biennium, but the number of programme elements had increased by one, since the old element 1.4 (Self-determination) had been subdivided into programme element 1.4 (The struggle against apartheid, The question of Namibia and Palestine) and 1.5 (Self-determination and decolonization).

16. A reduction of approximately 1 per cent in recurrent resources was proposed. About \$1.6 million in non-recurrent costs was requested, roughly half of that sum to support the Africa Recovery newsletter and the other half for the acquisition of computer equipment. Extrabudgetary resources were estimated at \$4.7 million, of which \$3.4 million were for Development Forum and almost \$1 million represented contributions from the host countries of United Nations information centres.

/...

(Mr. Baudot)

17. The vacancy rate in the Department of Public Information was 1.5 per cent overall, a 6 per cent vacancy rate in the Professional and higher category being offset by a slight surplus of General Service staff.

18. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) said that the Advisory Committee believed that there was room for improvement in the presentation of information how resources within the Department of Public Information were distributed among the various subprogrammes. Additional information it had requested on that subject was presented in paragraph 27.5 of its report.

19. Once again, the Advisory Committee had provided information, under the heading of section 27, on public information resources under other sections of the budget. In total, they amounted to roughly \$15.2 million and 63 posts, as shown in the table following paragraph 27.6 of the Committee's report. He pointed out that the Advisory Committee had called on the Secretary-General to conduct a further review of the consolidation of public information activities within the Department of Public Information no later than 1992.

20. The Committee discussed structural changes in the Department of Public Information in paragraph 27.9. It noted that there was no accompanying description of changes to programmes of activity under executive direction and management, and hoped that that omission would be rectified in future submissions.

21. As indicated in paragraph 27.10, the Advisory Committee had accepted the Secretary-General's requests for the production of Africa Recovery and the information kit on African economic recovery.

22. The Advisory Committee did not feel that training in public speaking and television presentation was a priority activity: if officials knew their subject, they ought to be able to speak on it. Accordingly, it recommended a reduction of \$12,800, as detailed in paragraph 27.13.

23. As recorded in paragraphs 27.15 and 27.16, the Advisory Committee felt that policy for the timely production of the Yearbook of the United Nations had not yet been finalized. It noted that the Secretariat intended to undertake a comprehensive review of the matter and report to the Committee on Information in 1991.

24. The Committee discussed Development Forum in paragraphs 27.17 and 27.18, also referring in that context to World Development, which was now being produced by UNDP. It felt there was a need for the United Nations and UNDP to clarify the respective roles and target audiences of those two publications.

25. The Advisory Committee had not, in its consideration of section 27, taken up the related JIU reports (A/44/329 and 433).

/...

26. Mr. MONTHE (Chairman of the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination) said that over the past two years CPC had been deeply involved with the structure of the Department of Public Information, its composition and allocation of resources, and had made a number of recommendations on those subjects. At its most recent session, it had been particularly concerned with monitoring how the Secretary-General had followed up on its earlier recommendations. Thus it had taken note of the real efforts made to improve the presentation of section 27. On the other hand, it found that resources and activities were still being presented in terms of administrative units instead of programmes and subprogrammes, in contravention of rule 104.1 and regulation 3.6 of the Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning. Accordingly, it recommended that efforts should be made to present programmes of activity on the basis of programmes.

27. CPC had noted some omissions in priority orientations under the section, notably in respect of peace and security, self-determination and decolonization, the problems of development - especially the debt question - Namibia, apartheid, Palestine and human rights. Fortunately, the Department had now provided some details of its structure and its priorities were beginning to become clearer. CPC recommended simply that when the structure of the Department was formalized, improvements in the reflection of priorities should be actively pursued.

28. Language being the vehicle of communication, linguistic diversity within the Department was most important. CPC therefore stressed the need to strengthen radio programmes in Portuguese, Dutch-Papiamentu and French Creole. It recommended caution in the transfer of resources within the Department in order to avoid adverse effects on programme execution.

29. Geographical balance within the Department was most important. Concrete expression needed to be given to assurances previously offered in that regard, especially where senior posts were concerned.

30. The comments made by CPC in paragraph 267 of its report, on the subject of information centres, needed to be read in conjunction with the recommendation it made in paragraph 19. Resources must be allocated judiciously among the various centres.

31. Information provided by the Secretariat in document A/C.5/44/CRP.3 had remedied the lack of information on priorities under section 27 on which CPC had commented in paragraph 268 of its report.

32. CPC recommended approval of the programme narrative for section 27, subject to an understanding spelled out in paragraph 269 of its report. The Secretariat needed to systematize its follow-up of recommendations concerning the Department of Public Information.

33. Mr. GUPTA (India) said that the implementation of resolution 41/213 had had adverse consequences in a number of cases, including the manner in which the Department of Public Information was being restructured. His delegation did not oppose restructuring of the Department on principle, merely the manner in which it

(Mr. Gupta, India)

was being done. In most other cases, the staff reductions called for by the Group of High-level Intergovernmental Experts had been accomplished through attrition; in the Department of Public Information there had been wholesale redeployments and transfers of staff and responsibilities. The reorganization was not consistent with the mandates given to the United Nations. For example, roughly half the mandates in the medium-term plan were concerned with economic development, and a further 20 per cent with social development. Under section 27, however, they were covered in a single programme which also embraced activities such as human rights and disaster relief. The structure of the Department should reflect the mandates given to the Organization in the fields of economic and social development. According to the organizational chart in annex III to document A/C.5/44/CRP.3, one section under the Communications and Project Management Division was responsible for economic and social development and human rights programmes. Why were human rights not treated separately? As the Joint Inspection Unit had noted in its report (A/44/433, para. 201), the reorganization of the Department appeared to have replaced one form of incoherence with another.

34. In conclusion, he endorsed the Advisory Committee's recommendation against approval of the funds requested for training in public speaking.

35. Mr. ETUKET (Uganda) endorsed the comments by the representative of India; his delegation had always made its position clear on the restructuring of the Department of Public Information, not in a spirit of criticism but to help the Department in the restructuring process.

36. At its forty-third session the General Assembly had approved 18 posts for the anti-apartheid unit, but it was not clear whether those posts had been filled. His delegation would like the Secretariat to provide updated information on the human and financial resources allocated to the unit. The General Assembly had also endorsed the recommendation of CPC and ACABQ that a separate unit on Palestine should be identified in the Information Products Division. In his introductory remarks the Director of the Budget Division had seemed to say that the unit had been set up in the Electronic Magazines and Features Service. That would be a source of concern because it would mean that a specific decision of the General Assembly had not been properly addressed.

37. His delegation would also welcome information about what was being done to increase the representation of the developing countries in the Department, especially at senior levels, in accordance with recommendation 37 of the Group of High-level Intergovernmental Experts. It appreciated the Department's work in publicizing the Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development, particularly its bimonthly publication of Africa Recovery. It hoped that sufficient resources would be allocated to that publication in the 1990-1991 work programme.

38. The United Nations information centres played a critical role, especially in the developing countries. At the forty-third session of the General Assembly there had been intensive discussion of the number and distribution of the information

(Mr. Etuket, Uganda)

centres; as the United Nations approached the 1990s and recognition of its achievements was increasing, the Secretariat must make every effort to enhance the centres' performance, subject to the availability of resources. His delegation did not believe, for example, that having one centre for two countries was the most effective way of reaching people. It hoped that the Secretariat would give that view some attention.

39. The JIU reports contained pertinent comments which should be construed not as criticism but as an objective assessment of the results of the Department's restructuring. Unfortunately the Secretary-General's responses covered only the recommendations made in the JIU reports, disregarding other important issues concerning which Member States needed responses from the Secretariat.

40. Mr. HILL (United States of America) reiterated his delegation's support for the efforts of the Under-Secretary-General for Public Information to restructure his Department. But it was concerned by the JIU conclusion that the restructuring had not resulted in a substantial improvement. It hoped that the Secretariat would provide a full response to that conclusion.

41. It was also a matter of concern that 150 DPI staff members remained unassigned - a situation which must be corrected as soon as possible. The United States delegation wished to know what tasks those staff members were currently performing. Some of the posts could possibly be abolished.

42. His delegation strongly supported the ACABQ recommendation that the review of the consolidation of United Nations information activities should be completed by no later than 1992 and it would like to know how that recommendation was being implemented. It also agreed with the Advisory Committee's comments on the continuing difficulties in publication of the Yearbook of the United Nations. The further slippage in the publication schedule, despite provision of additional staff resources and the decision to publish an abbreviated version, was particularly distressing. The United States did not accept the Secretary-General's view that resolution 40/252 constituted only a "recommendation" in that connection; it was a decision of the General Assembly which should have been implemented. It also agreed with ACABQ that publication of Development Forum should be reviewed, especially with respect to a possible overlapping with the UNDP World Development. The Secretariat was requested to provide information concerning Development Forum, such as recent trends in subscriptions and results of evaluations.

43. Paragraph 27.14 of the ACABQ report indicated that telecommunications services for DPI continued to be provided by B. Eichwald and Company. In view of the financial regulations and rules concerning competitive bidding, his delegation would like to know how long that company had provided the services in question and whether steps had been taken to open the contract to competitive bidding.

44. The United States delegation reiterated its strong reservations concerning the Department's information activities on the question of Palestine, many of which involved United Nations analysis of political developments in the region and were

/...

(Mr. Hill, United States)

not limited to reporting of United Nations activities. His delegation would not request a recorded vote on the matter but that should not be taken to indicate any change in its position of principle.

45. Mr. WU Gang (China) said that his delegation attached great importance to the work of the Department of Public Information. It noted the significant reorganization of the Department and hoped that the incorporation of the former Bureau of Programme Operations and the Division for Committee Liaison and Administrative Service into the Office of the Under-Secretary-General would facilitate the Department's executive direction and management and programme co-ordination capacity. But it shared the Advisory Committee's concern that the Secretary-General had not described the consequent changes to the programmes of activity under executive direction and management.

46. The Secretary-General's proposal to convert 21 temporary posts to an established basis should strengthen the Department's work and alleviate the impact of the higher-than-average post reduction of 14 per cent. The principle of equitable geographical distribution must be respected with regard to both post reductions and transfers of staff. In particular, the representation of the developing countries in senior posts needed to be further improved.

47. The designation of priorities set out in the Secretary-General's note (A/C.5/44/CRP.3) should facilitate a consensus on section 27. Several matters did indeed warrant priority, such as peace and security, the struggle against apartheid, and the questions of Namibia and Palestine. It was particularly satisfying that the latter two questions were given separate listing and emphasis in the programme budget. The Chinese delegation shared the view of many CPC members that the Department should give more attention to the question of the development of the developing countries. It was also concerned about the reduction of resources for programme activities and the considerably increased programme support costs. That trend was found in other sections as well and it must not be allowed adversely to affect programme implementation.

48. Mr. RUSTICO (Benin) said that his delegation appreciated the Secretariat's efforts, timid as they were, to carry out the CPC recommendations on the restructuring of the Department of Public Information and it endorsed the views just expressed by other delegations, in particular the delegation of Uganda.

49. Annex III of CRP.3 showed a Central Programmes Unit, which apparently produced radio programmes on the important question of Palestine. His delegation would like to know whether the Unit produced programmes on Palestine exclusively. If so, its title should be changed to reflect the importance of the activity. The importance which the United Nations attached to the question of Namibia, especially in the present situation, was not apparent from the documents before the Committee. It was not sufficient to deal only with the elections in Namibia; other developments would follow and they must receive due attention.

(Mr. Rustico, Benin)

50. The Secretariat had given many assurances concerning the geographical distribution of posts, especially at the senior level. His delegation would welcome an updated statement on the current situation.

51. Mrs. INCERA (Costa Rica) said that her delegation was concerned about the reduction proposed in paragraph 27.32 of the budget document in fellowships for broadcasters and journalists selected for the annual training programme. That measure would adversely affect the dissemination of information about the United Nations in poorer countries which could not afford to send correspondents to New York. Her delegation would like to know the reasons for and the size of the proposed reduction.

52. Subparagraph (ii) of the intermediate activities listed for subprogramme element 3.2 in the programme narrative had exactly the same wording as subparagraph (ii) of the intermediate activities listed for subprogramme element 3.2 of the Dissemination Division under resource requirements. That indicated a duplication of programmes and misuse of human and material resources.

53. Paragraph 27.51 of the proposed programme budget referred to an amount of \$30,600 for expert services in connection with production of the 1990 Film and Video Catalogue. Her delegation could not understand why such an amount was needed merely to update an existing publication. Furthermore, it shared the Advisory Committee's lack of conviction of the need for the training sessions in public speaking and television presentation referred to in paragraph 27.25.

54. Mr. SHEK (Israel) requested the Committee to note his delegation's strong reservations concerning DPI activities on the question of Palestine, a topic to which it might return during the second reading.

55. Mr. UPTON (United Kingdom) said that his delegation shared in the general disappointment that, despite making a big effort, the Department was still not yet fully satisfying the concerns of Member States. In particular, the assurances given to the Committee in 1988 concerning the backlog in the publication of the Yearbook of the United Nations had not been made good, and the Secretariat's responses to the Committee through ACABQ were less than satisfactory. His delegation would like information on the progress which had in fact been made in improving circulation and sales and on the current staffing level of the unit concerned. There must be more behind the difficulties than the Secretariat would have the Committee believe. The Publications Board might be requested to submit a report on the subject to the Committee on Conferences, perhaps with a view to transferring the publication of the Yearbook to Conference and Library Services.

56. Mr. ABDULLAH (Iraq) said that the question of Palestine warranted first priority in the United Nations. Public information activities connected with Palestine must therefore receive due support, especially with respect to the publication of booklets describing the activities of the Zionist entity and the production of audio-visual materials on the situation of the Arab population. His delegation also attached importance to the anti-apartheid programmes, which required speedy implementation.

/...

57. Mr. LAOUARI (Algeria) said that his delegation supported the comments, especially those of the representative of Uganda, concerning the representation of developing countries in the Department. It also attached particular importance to the public information activities arising from the decisions of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People.

58. Mr. BOUR (France) welcomed the Department's efforts to improve the dissemination of information on United Nations activities in accordance with the recommendation of the Group of High-level Intergovernmental Experts and the improvement effected in press releases, especially those concerning the Fifth Committee.

59. His country had always supported the restructuring of the Department and maintained that it fell within the competence of the Secretary-General, but the restructuring had not proved as easy as expected. The documents before the Committee demonstrated that the Department's programme and structure were still complex and hard to understand and that some important elements had not been taken into account in the reorganization. However, the Department must be allowed sufficient flexibility to adapt to the changing international situation.

60. Some of the JIU recommendations for further improvement in the structure and operations of the Department and the United Nations information centres were being implemented, and the Department must keep those recommendations in mind in the future. Some of the negative results of the restructuring exercise were worrying, in particular the situation of staff members whose posts had been eliminated but who had not been reassigned. Given the Organization's financial difficulties, it was unacceptable that a number of high-level staff members should not be usefully employed for such a long period. The situation indicated vacancy-management shortcomings which must be corrected as soon as possible.

61. His delegation endorsed the comments concerning the backlog in the publication of the Yearbook of the United Nations and the requests for further information.

62. Mr. VAHER (Canada) said that DPI had a unique role to play as the main interface between the United Nations and the world media and public and between the Secretariat and Member States. The size of the requested appropriation attested to the importance of activities under section 27. His delegation was disappointed, however, by the proposed 14 per cent reduction in the number of posts in the Department. That figure compared unfavourably with the average 12 per cent post reduction targeted and did not take account of the growing public and media interest, or the renewed faith of Member States, in the Organization.

63. His delegation was closely following the restructuring in DPI and believed that the Secretary-General was directing that exercise in a manner consistent not only with his prerogatives but also with the mandate and instructions of the General Assembly and the recommendations of CPC. His delegation fully supported the Secretary-General's programme budget proposals as modified by CPC. He had also read the relevant reports of the Joint Inspection Unit with interest and was pleased to note the Secretary-General's comments thereon (A/44/329/Add.1 and

(Mr. Vaher, Canada)

A/44/443/Add.1). Those comments reflected his delegation's own views and helped to resolve the issues which had been raised in the JIU reports.

64. The Secretary-General's response in document A/C.5/44/CRP.3 to the requests expressed in the CPC report concerning the designation of priorities was to be welcomed. His delegation endorsed the highest priority designations that had been given to five programme elements but questioned the lowest priority designation accorded to programme element 3.4 (Visitors and public services) particularly in view of the fact that public tours had doubled in the past four years, clearly making it necessary to enhance facilities and services, including those for children. Lastly, regarding capital expenditures, DPI was perhaps the one sector in the Secretariat that above all needed advanced communications equipment in order effectively to deliver its message to the world. Since existing facilities were now well out of date, the purchase of new capital equipment was a matter of priority and the cost could surely be absorbed without exceeding the amount included in the programme budget outline.

65. Mr. TSOKODAYI (Zimbabwe) agreed with the representatives of Uganda and India that the Secretariat needed to provide precise information on the geographical distribution of posts in DPI, as well as answers to the concerns expressed in paragraphs 256 and 258 of the CPC report (A/44/16). Considering DPI's important role in disseminating information about the situation in South Africa and Namibia and on the anti-apartheid struggle, he would welcome clarification as to the proposed staffing level in the anti-apartheid unit. Similarly, he would appreciate more information about action being taken by the Secretary-General to implement paragraphs 1 (b) and (e) of General Assembly resolution 43/50 H.

66. Mr. MONGELLA (United Republic of Tanzania) said that his delegation associated itself with the views of previous speakers regarding the strategic role of DPI in promoting United Nations activities and efforts throughout the world and concerning the importance, in that regard, of the current reorganization of the Department. It was particularly vital to strengthen DPI's information centres in the field. The practice of extending the operations of certain centres to more than one country and of placing some field centres under other United Nations agencies created more problems than it solved and reduced operational effectiveness. That situation should be remedied as soon as possible. Like other speakers, he would welcome more information about radio broadcasts to South Africa and about the geographical distribution of posts in DPI, particularly at the higher levels. With a more equitable composition, the Department would be able to draw upon broader-based national experience and benefit from the wider regional support that such a distribution of posts would create. He wondered whether adequate consideration was being given to the need for greater linguistic diversity in radio broadcasting and whether programmes were being transmitted in all the languages that were expected to be covered. Lastly, more attention should be given by DPI in its information activities to African development issues.

/...

67. Mr. McBARNETTE (Trinidad and Tobago) said that his delegation supported the recommendations of the CPC on section 27 and welcomed the Secretary-General's response to the requests expressed in the CPC report regarding the definition of priority areas. He noted the Advisory Committee's observation in paragraph 27.9 of its first report (A/44/7 and Corr.1 and 2) that the incorporation of posts within DPI was not accompanied by a description of the consequent changes to the programmes of activity under executive direction and management and he, too, trusted that the omission would be rectified in future submissions. There was clearly room for improvement in the presentation of the programme budget proposals under section 27, which did not reflect the totality of resources available for public information activities.

68. With a view to improving programme execution, DPI's activities must be better co-ordinated with those of the other United Nations public information organs and more attention should be paid to annual training programmes for radio broadcasting, to the DPI information centres and to making effective use of highly skilled staff. The recommendations of the Group of High-level Intergovernmental Experts must be consistently applied under section 27, without causing any negative impact on programmed activities. His delegation was seriously concerned by the criticisms made in the JIU reports and would be grateful for a fuller response by the Secretariat.

69. Mr. MONAYAIR (Kuwait) said that his delegation attached particular importance to effective promotional activities under section 27 and therefore hoped that the reorganization of DPI would be completed at the earliest possible date. Priority, in his view, should be given to such sensitive issues as the question of Palestine, the struggle against apartheid, the independence of Namibia and human rights in general. Given the major role DPI had to play in promoting United Nations activities and efforts throughout the world, he hoped that all delegations would join in a consensus on the appropriation under section 27.

70. Ms. GOICOCHEA ESTENOZ (Cuba) said that her delegation shared the concerns expressed by earlier speakers on such matters as the restructuring of DPI, the designation of priorities, the presentation of the programme budget proposals for section 27 and, not least, the question of the representation of developing countries in higher-level posts. With regard to subprogramme 1 (Promotional services), she asked whether the resources requested for output (ii) of programme element 1.1 would be tied to co-sponsorship of special events or might also be used for other activities and whether the non-governmental organizations concerned were in consultative status. Programme element 1.3 should include outputs relating to matters such as nuclear disarmament, the peaceful settlement of disputes and non-interference in the internal affairs of States. In programme element 1.4, DPI would do well to contemplate outputs relating to an independent Namibia. Concerning programme element 1.5, the provision of just one output did not reflect the importance of the issue of self-determination. Moreover, DPI should begin planning activities in preparation for the International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism. Finally, programme element 1.6 should also cover efforts to implement major instruments such as the International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid and the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination.

71. Mr. KHANI (Syrian Arab Republic) said that his delegation supported the views expressed by the representative of Kuwait, especially concerning the priority to be given to the question of Palestine and the struggle against apartheid.

72. Mr. HAMED (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) agreed that priority should be given to the anti-apartheid struggle, the question of Palestine and also to activities in support of African economic recovery. Like other speakers, he was concerned about the geographical distribution of posts in DPI, especially at the higher levels. In addition to clarifying that matter, the Secretariat might wish to indicate whether it was proposed to issue the publications described in annex II of document A/C.5/44/CRP.3 in languages other than English, French and Spanish.

73. Mr. ETUKET (Uganda) said that he wished to complain about DPI's coverage of the statement he had made at the previous meeting, during the first reading of section 32, regarding the construction of additional conference facilities at Addis Ababa. He would like the record to show that he was by no means satisfied with the revised project timetable outlined in paragraph 6 of document A/C.5/44/7.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.