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FIFTH COMMITTEE

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held on

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at 10 a.m.

New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 46th MEETING

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

later: Mr. VAHER (Canada)

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

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The meeting was called to order at 10.25 a.m.

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

Programme budget implications of draft resolutions A/44/L.26, A/44/L.27, A/44/L.29 to L.34, A/44/L.36 and A/44/L.40 concerning agenda item 28 (Policies of apartheid of the Government of South Africa) (A/C.5/44/29)

1. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) said that, pursuant to draft resolutions A/44/L.33 and A/44/L.40, the Intergovernmental Group to Monitor the Supply and Shipping of Oil and Petroleum Products to South Africa and the Commission against Apartheid in Sports would hold sessions in 1990. Paragraphs 23 and 30 of the statement of the programme budget implications of the 10 draft resolutions concerning the policies of apartheid of the Government of South Africa (A/C.5/44/29) indicated that the conference-servicing requirements could be accommodated from within the permanent resources of the Department of Conference Services under section 29 of the proposed programme budget. The additional expenditures which would be incurred in 1990 for the implementation of the activities referred to in the draft resolutions were estimated at \$1,589,100. In view of the effective rate of resource utilization during the three preceding bienniums, that amount had been reduced to \$1,427,900; as it related mainly to continuing activities, it was assigned to the estimates for 1990 under sections 3 and 27 of the proposed programme budget. However, in view of the new activities, especially in the field of information, additional financing would be required in an amount of \$247,000: \$142,500 under section 3 (Political affairs, trusteeship and decolonization) and \$104,500 under section 27 (Public information). Since the Secretary-General proposed to finance the first amount by using in 1990 a part of the provision for 1991, no additional appropriation would be required under section 3. Nevertheless, there might be a need for subsequent recourse to the contingency fund if, at its forty-fifth session, the General Assembly authorized for 1991 activities at a level of cost higher than the available balance remaining under section 3A.3.

2. The provision for 1990 under section 27 would not be sufficient to accommodate the information activities requested in the draft resolutions. If the additional requirement (\$104,500) could not be financed from the contingency fund, the Secretary-General proposed, pursuant to the annex to resolution 42/211, to defer to the biennium 1992-1993 the activities referred to in paragraph 38 of document A/C.5/44/29.

3. The Advisory Committee had no objection to the estimates submitted by the Secretary-General. It recommended that the Committee should inform the General Assembly that, if it adopted the 10 draft resolutions, no additional provision under section 3 would be required at the present stage in view of the proposals made by the Secretary-General in paragraph 35 of his report. The additional expenditure under section 27 (\$104,500) could be financed in accordance with the guidelines relating to the contingency fund adopted by the General Assembly in section C of the annex to resolution 42/211. Accordingly, the additional requirement requested by the Secretary-General would be considered in the context

(Mr. Msalle)

of the consolidated statement of all programme budget implications to be submitted to the General Assembly at a later stage.

4. Mr. HILL (United States of America) said that, for reasons which it would explain in plenary meeting, his delegation had difficulty in supporting the substance of the draft resolutions concerning the policies of apartheid of the Government of South Africa. As to their programme budget implications, in view of the low utilization rate of the resources made available to the Special Committee against Apartheid, his delegation saw no need at the present stage for the special allocation of \$430,000 provided for in draft resolution A/44/L.32. With regard to information activities, in view of the difficulties which the information centres encountered with respect to dissemination, the travelling exhibit on issues of apartheid would hardly help to bring about any change in the policies of the South African Government.

5. Furthermore, his delegation did not understand why the General Assembly should pay particular attention to the relations between South Africa and another Member State; in fact, many States maintained economic relations with South Africa, including some of the sponsors of the draft resolution.

6. If the Committee merely took note of the draft resolutions, his delegation would have no objection. That would not, however, mean any modification whatsoever in its position on the question.

7. Mr. LADJOUZI (Algeria), referring to the activities to be deferred to the biennium 1992-1993 (A/C.5/44/29, para. 38), pointed out that in resolution 43/214 the General Assembly had decided to keep under review, during the implementation of the programme budget for the biennium 1990-1991 and in the light of the evolving situation, the appropriateness and adequacy of the level of the contingency fund. That provision must be taken into account before an activity was deferred to the following biennium. His delegation would make some proposals on the subject at a later stage.

8. Mr. ETUKET (Uganda) and Mr. GUPTA (India) endorsed the comments made by the representative of Algeria and stressed the need to comply with the provisions contained in the annex to resolution 42/211, which had been the outcome of lengthy negotiations.

9. The CHAIRMAN proposed that, on the basis of the statement submitted by the Secretary-General and the recommendations of the Advisory Committee, the Fifth Committee should inform the General Assembly that, if it decided to adopt draft resolutions A/44/L.26, A/44/L.27, A/44/L.29 to L.34, A/44/L.36 and A/44/L.40, no additional appropriation would be required under section 3, since the activities of the Special Committee against Apartheid and other bodies engaged in activities against apartheid were of a continuing nature and provisions in the amount of \$2,361,500 had been made under the section in the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1990-1991. The additional requirements under section 27 (\$104,500) would be financed from the contingency fund.

10. It was so decided.

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11. Mr. BOUR (France), speaking on behalf of the States members of the European Community, said that the Twelve had joined in the consensus in order not to jeopardize the spirit of co-operation prevailing during the consideration of the programme budget. They wished, however, to express their reservations concerning the request for an additional appropriation of \$104,500 for information activities. That request should be considered in the context of the consolidated statement of all programme budget implications which the Secretary-General was to submit to the General Assembly at a later stage. Acceptance of document A/C.5/44/29 would not alter the position of the Twelve on the substance of the 10 draft resolutions.

12. Mr. Vaheer (Canada) took the Chair.

AGENDA ITEM 137: ADMINISTRATIVE AND BUDGETARY ASPECTS OF THE FINANCING OF THE UNITED NATIONS PEACE-KEEPING OPERATIONS (continued) (A/44/605 and Add.1 and 2 and A/44/725)

13. Mr. BIDNY (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) noted that more and more calls were being made on the Organization in connection with the establishment and maintenance of peace. The costs of such operations had reached a level comparable to that of the regular budget; they were nevertheless infinitesimal in comparison with the military expenditures which they replaced.

14. His country was fulfilling and would continue to fulfil its financial obligations with respect to such operations. However, in view of the sharp increase in costs, there was an urgent need to find effective ways of reducing them. Generally speaking, the report of the Secretary-General (A/44/605 and Add.1 and 2) and the report of the Advisory Committee (A/44/725) analysed the problems clearly. But they merely marked the beginning of a dynamic process which should culminate in a systematic re-evaluation of the principles underlying the financing of the operations in question.

15. The various Secretariat units responsible for the peace-keeping operations should be streamlined structurally in order to ensure closer co-ordination between political and administrative bodies supervising a given operation. His delegation supported the recommendations made by the Advisory Committee in that respect, in particular the recommendation concerning the establishment of a Secretariat planning and monitoring group.

16. The Secretary-General's report focused specifically on the financing of operations during the start-up phase and concluded that the Working Capital Fund should be expanded to cover the corresponding costs. His delegation preferred the position of ACABQ, which recommended the consideration of other options. The necessary funds could come from contributions by States to cover their arrears under the regular budget or from voluntary and other types of contribution. A further means of reducing the costs would be to conclude the operations as quickly as possible.

(Mr. Bidny, USSR)

17. His delegation thought that the Secretary-General's proposal concerning the establishment of a reserve stock of materials and supply items would certainly not be justified from the financial point of view. In its opinion, attention should instead be focused on other possibilities, especially as the Special Political Committee had made recommendations along the same lines.
18. Since it had consistently advocated strengthening the role of the Advisory Committee in matters relating to the financing of peace-keeping operations, the USSR supported the proposal to increase to \$20 million the level of commitment authority provided to it in respect of unforeseen and extraordinary expenditures.
19. The increasing use of civilian personnel was a thoroughly positive trend and should be encouraged, because it would both permit the involvement of a greater number of Member States in peace-keeping operations and help to reduce costs if the Secretary-General negotiated favourable terms with those Member States. The Secretariat should make a careful study of experience gained in that context, for example in Namibia, in order to ensure maximum effectiveness.
20. There was a need to re-evaluate the procedure for reimbursements to troop-contributing States, the objective being to secure a wide range of choices in order that the Secretary-General might select the least expensive contingents. Regular rotation would also make it possible to involve a greater number of States in peace-keeping activities and to establish experienced reserve forces in many countries. Those issues could be the subject of immediate informal consultations.
21. The increased frequency of peace-keeping operations had been accompanied by a diversification of their objectives and functions. It was therefore necessary to develop clear-cut criteria by which the General Assembly might determine the modalities for financing any individual operation, taking account of its particular features and seeking a fairer apportionment of its costs.
22. With regard to the apportionment of costs, Poland should be transferred from group (b) to group (c) during the current session of the General Assembly, regardless of any other changes that might be made in the composition of existing groups and without prejudice to the position to be adopted by his delegation concerning conclusions drawn from the comprehensive review of the financing of peace-keeping operations.
23. The diversification of sources of financing was becoming increasingly important. With a view to encouraging such diversification, his delegation proposed: (a) that States parties to a conflict which had necessitated an operation, as well as States which derived economic benefits from such operations, should bear a greater financial responsibility; (b) that use should be made of external sources, including regional organizations which enjoyed appreciable benefits from United Nations operations; and (c) that a greater part should be played by the specialized agencies in the context of a comprehensive system-wide approach. His delegation was prepared to consider various options for the financing of operations. The essential point was to ensure that appropriations corresponded to actual needs and that they were used in a rational and cost-effective manner.

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24. Mr. BLANC (France), speaking on behalf of the 12 States members of the European Community, welcomed the enhanced role of the United Nations in the maintenance of international peace and security and hoped that its recent successes would lead promptly to peaceful and lasting solutions. In order to ensure that outcome, the necessary resources must be deployed in conditions which ensured maximum effectiveness.

25. The fact that certain Member States were not meeting their financial obligations, or doing so only partially and behind schedule, hampered operations and entailed unwarranted extra costs for the States taking part in them. With regard to the financial measures proposed in document A/44/605, he noted that it was not by requesting further advances from Member States - by means of an expansion of the Working Capital Fund or otherwise - that the fundamental question of arrears would be settled: there would be no arrears if all Member States fulfilled their obligations.

26. Although they had in the past opposed an increase in the Working Capital Fund because of the financial crisis, the States members of the Community recognized that the launching of new peace-keeping operations might justify reconsideration of that question. They took note of the Advisory Committee's comments on the Secretary-General's recommendations and would await the Secretary-General's proposals on specific modalities before adopting a definite position on that subject. They accepted the principle of an increase in the level of commitment authority provided to the Secretary-General, subject to the approval of the Advisory Committee, to meet unforeseen and extraordinary expenses. On the other hand, the proposals relating to the establishment of a reserve stock of equipment and supplies required more detailed consideration, as recommended by the Advisory Committee.

27. The administrative measures proposed in paragraph 55 (b) of document A/44/605 appeared interesting. The Twelve were prepared to continue considering those measures but reserved the right to express their opinion at a later stage as to whether they were justified in terms of effectiveness, cost and method of financing. They believed it was important to maintain proper co-ordination among the various Secretariat units and took note of the Advisory Committee's recommendation to establish a planning and monitoring group. They were prepared to consider the various options which might be proposed by the Secretary-General. They also endorsed the proposals concerning conditions for the provision of civilian personnel and the development of an inventory of resources, while warning the Secretariat against excessive zeal in terms of planning and standardization.

28. With regard to the reimbursement of sums due to troop-contributing States, the concerned States members of the Community had always endeavoured to provide the necessary data to the Secretariat and hoped that the current consultation procedure would be maintained. However, they regretted that the failure of certain States to meet their financial obligations and the lack of a sufficient response to the Secretary-General's appeals to make up the deficit resulted in a substantial reduction of the actual amounts reimbursed, causing them to bear a heavy and unjust financial burden.

(Mr. Blanc, France)

29. The Twelve were prepared to consider the requests submitted by Poland, Myanmar and the Central African Republic with respect to the apportionment of the costs of certain peace-keeping operations. Any reclassification exercise should be limited to well-established cases of anomaly. The composition of groups (b), (c) and (d) should not be considered as permanent: it should develop in parallel with States' capacity to contribute.

AGENDA ITEM 38: REVIEW OF THE EFFICIENCY OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE AND FINANCIAL FUNCTIONING OF THE UNITED NATIONS (continued) (A/44/665 and A/44/729)

30. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions), introducing the report of the Advisory Committee on the establishment and operation of a reserve fund (A/44/729), said that the Advisory Committee had some doubts about the solution proposed by the Secretary-General. Firstly, if the reserve was funded even before the actual needs had been determined, the result would be an additional, and needless, charge on Member States. Secondly, the failure to establish in advance the procedure to be followed if the reserve proved insufficient might cause confusion. Thirdly, Member States had indicated that they would like to have a precise idea, well in advance, of the total amount of resources that they might be called upon to provide. The solution proposed by the Secretary-General did not satisfy those criteria. Accordingly, the Advisory Committee believed that the question of the reserve fund warranted further consideration, especially as the new budgetary procedure was not yet run in. It recommended that the General Assembly should defer consideration of the item to its forty-sixth session, inviting the Secretary-General to submit a new report which would take into account the experience gained and present a new analysis of the ideas put forward by the Advisory Committee in paragraphs 17-41 of its 1988 report (A/43/929). Meanwhile, it was necessary to continue with the current arrangements for dealing with currency and inflation in accordance with paragraph 11 of annex I of General Assembly resolution 41/213.

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 Add.3, A/44/16 and Add.1, A/44/684 and Add.1; A/C.5/44/24)

First reading (continued)

Section 29. Conference and library services (continued)

31. Mr. MONTHE (Chairman of the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination) said that the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination (CPC) had not made any recommendations on section 29, partly as a matter of principle and partly owing to circumstances. As indicated in paragraph 30 of its report, CPC had decided to refer to ACABQ all non-programmatic sections of the proposed programme budget. Traditionally, section 29 fell within the purview of the Advisory Committee and rule 103.5 of the Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning and the Programme Aspects of the Budget stipulated that, in the case of conference services, medium-term plan proposals should be submitted to the General Assembly

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(Mr. Monthe)

through the Committee on Conferences and ACABQ. The second reason was connected with a delay in the publication of section 29, which CPC might well have had an interest in examining because of its impact on programmes. He had in mind particularly the proposals relating to the introduction of new technologies.

32. Mr. HENNES (Chairman of the Joint Inspection Unit), introducing the JIU report on the project for an optical disc system for the United Nations (JIU/REP/89/11), read but its most important paragraphs, starting with paragraphs 3, 6 and 7, describing the report's context and objectives, and paragraphs 19, 20, 22 to 24 and 32 to 33, on the pilot project at the United Nations Office at Geneva (UNOG). On the basis of the results obtained, the Inspectors recommended the installation of a fully operational optical disc system at the United Nations, starting with UNOG, during the 1990-1991 biennium. Turning to chapter III of the report, on the configuration of such a system, cost estimates and the benefits expected to accrue, he said that the estimated savings would more than offset recurrent expenditure on maintenance and even, over the long term, the initial purchase cost. Chapter IV of the report was devoted to the views and actions of the specialized agencies and chapter V contained the Inspectors' conclusions and recommendations.

33. On completing their study, the Inspectors had been convinced that the installation of an optical disc system at the United Nations would make it possible gradually to increase the Organization's efficiency and improve its financial situation as early as the next biennium. All the permanent missions could be hooked up to the system in a very short time. The total estimated expenditure for 1990-1991 to install and operate the system would be less than \$2.5 million. Savings would be at least \$4.2 million in 1981 dollars. Given that the sooner the operation was started the sooner it would be amortized, the Inspectors had suggested, in paragraph 63 of their report, that the General Assembly should provide in the 1990-1991 budget appropriate resources for the installation of the system. They also suggested that the inputting of all existing United Nations documentation should be contracted out. The \$5 million involved would be substantially offset by the advantages that would result (para. 61).

34. Mr. LOPEZ (Venezuela), referring to the ACABQ report and the documents provided by the Secretariat containing additional information on the technological innovations envisaged in sections 28 and 29, noted that the resources requested for office automation equipment by the Department of Conference Services were not subject to review either by the Technical Innovations Board or by the Electronic Services Division in the Office of General Services. However, in paragraph 29.31 of its report, the Advisory Committee had expressed the view that the programme of technological innovations should be implemented in a phased and orderly fashion and that appropriate mechanisms should be established to provide for thorough discussion by user units. His delegation therefore fully supported the reduction recommended by ACABQ in paragraph 29.33 of its report.

35. Since the question of technological innovations came up in several sections of the budget, his delegation intended to put forward proposals in that connection under agenda item 38 on the efficiency of the administrative and financial

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(Mr. Lopez, Venezuela)

functioning of the Organization. The General Assembly should be in a position to form an objective notion of their costs and benefits, just as it should be able to determine precisely whether the reductions in expenditures on personnel and external production of publications would offset the enormous investment involved in computerization. The latter also posed the problem of compatibility among various types of equipment. CPC and ACABQ should also have an opportunity to give their views on those programmes and make recommendations to the General Assembly at its next session.

36. Mr. HILL (United States of America) said that the introduction of new technologies would improve even further the efficiency of the Department of Conference Services, which, though absorbing 20 per cent of the Organization's total budget, had always provided high quality services through its highly competent and service-oriented staff. His delegation therefore did not object to providing the necessary resources to acquire such technology. However, it was surprised to learn, from the Advisory Committee's report that the Department had not revised its work-load standards since 1977. It strongly supported the Advisory Committee's position on that point and would like to know whether the information promised to the Committee would in fact be submitted by the end of 1989. The same was the case with the additional information to be supplied on the significant discrepancies between the initial and revised work-load estimates for the bienniums 1986-1987 and 1988-1989 and their impact on appropriations for section 29, which should have been reduced to take into account lower levels of output. His delegation hoped that the review of the Department's work-load statistics and standards would be completed as soon as possible and was prepared to take part in the review should the General Assembly assign the Committee on Conferences a role in the process, to which ACABQ would also undoubtedly make a substantial contribution.

37. The efficiency of the Department of Conference Services also depended on other Secretariat departments meeting the deadlines for submission of documents. The late submission of documents was particularly costly to the Organization and, in that regard, ACABQ had cited two examples which were probably not isolated cases. The Committee on Conferences might study that problem and request more complete information from all United Nations departments, including an estimate of the overall additional expenditure incurred as a result of the late processing of documentation. His delegation would consider making a proposal along those lines at the next session of the Committee on Conferences.

38. Taking note of the Joint Inspection Unit's conclusions and recommendations on the establishment of an optical disc system, his delegation felt that it would be desirable to finance the project through redeployment within the administrative and common services sections of the budget. It regretted that the Secretary-General had taken a more cautious approach since, according to document A/44/684/Add.1, no action would be taken on the project until the biennium 1992-1993. Unlike the integrated management information system, for which it was proposed to allocate \$28 million without any clear indication of savings, the optical disc project offered advantages that were very well explained in the JIU report. His delegation

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(Mr. Hill, United States)

therefore urged the Secretary-General to take steps to implement the project as soon as possible and recommended that the Committee endorse it at the current session, without necessarily having to make a separate appropriation for the time being. The Secretary-General could begin implementation in 1990 and report on the financing of the project in the context of the first budget performance report for the biennium 1990-1991.

39. JIU, ACABQ and the Fifth Committee had been considering the possibility of unifying the conference services at Vienna for several years, and yet little progress had been achieved towards rationalizing those services. His delegation believed that efforts to improve co-ordination between the Vienna-based organizations must continue, but it was not in favour of restoring the \$1.5 million which represented the amount of the reduction recommended by ACABQ under temporary assistance. More judicious management of the resource level recommended by ACABQ for the section as a whole would enable potential problems to be solved, for example by transferring any documentation overload by fax machines for processing elsewhere. Most of the established conference-servicing posts at Vienna would be filled by early 1990, thus reducing the need for temporary assistance. His delegation noted in that regard that current United Nations salaries were apparently not an obstacle to the recruitment of qualified candidates.

40. Mr. BOUR (France) observed that the demand for conference services was constantly increasing and yet the staffing level of the Department had been reduced by 10 per cent. It was to be hoped that the budget estimates for section 29, which showed a rate of real growth of -0.4 per cent, would prove to be realistic. Since the resources required had been estimated on a full-cost basis, they should make it possible to cover any conferences which might be decided upon at a later stage; if they proved insufficient, it would be necessary to consider making use of the contingency fund.

41. In paragraph 29.13 of its report, ACABQ expressed surprise that the Secretary-General had been unable to absorb the cost of 50 of the 100 posts restored by the General Assembly within the Department. In his delegation's view, it was clear that the Assembly meant that cost to be absorbed within the budget as a whole. In any event, even if the total budget estimates were slightly higher than the amount included in the budget outline, the reductions proposed by ACABQ offset that additional amount and his delegation therefore considered that the proposed budget met the conditions laid down in resolution 43/213. It was to be noted in that regard that, in paragraph 29.16 of its report, ACABQ had generally refrained from recommending reductions to the initial estimates under section 29 and his delegation unreservedly supported that position.

42. The Department of Conference Services was undoubtedly the one in which technological innovations were the most promising in terms of improving efficiency and reducing costs. His delegation commended the quality of the Joint Inspection Unit's report on the establishment of an optical disc system. Recalling that the Committee had been required in the past to take decisions on larger projects without being provided with such complete information, it regretted the extremely

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(Mr. Bour, France)

hesitant approach of the Secretariat regarding the timetable for installing such a system. Postponing the effective start-up of the project for at least two years would correspondingly delay the inputting of documents issued daily, and that was bound to have financial implications. His delegation therefore fully supported the recommendations of the Joint Inspection Unit, and in particular recommendation 1. It requested the Secretariat to install as soon as possible an operational system such as the one described by JIU and to link the missions of the Member States, first at Geneva and then in New York, to the system. It was regrettable that, disregarding the conclusions of the Working Group, the Secretariat had not included the necessary \$2.5 million in its budget estimates. The Fifth Committee, however, could either add that amount to the estimates under section 29, taking advantage of the savings proposed by ACABQ for other sections, or request the Secretary-General to report to it on the financing of the project in late 1990, as suggested by the representative of the United States. In any event, accepting the possibility of funding through redeployment did not mean that the Secretariat could advance financial arguments for delaying the installation of the system.

43. Ms. ZHANG Xian (China) said that the Department of Conference Services must be given the resources to meet the challenge entailed by the increasing role of the United Nations. For that reason, her delegation welcomed the fact that, despite the shortcomings noted in the proposed budget and the report issued by the Secretariat in document A/C.5/44/24, the Advisory Committee had recommended that the overall provision of \$3 million requested for temporary assistance for meetings should be reinstated in full. She was pleased to note, in paragraph 29.21 of the proposed programme budget, that a Chinese unit was to be established in the Official Records Editing Section. That proposal was consistent with resolution 42/207 C, which reaffirmed the principle of equal treatment of the official languages. She hoped that the necessary office space would soon be made available for its effective implementation.

44. It was essential, as the Advisory Committee recommended, for the Department to review its work-load standards and to seek a more rational use of temporary assistance resources and a closer co-operation with departments submitting reports to it in order to avoid delays. With a view to enhancing its efficiency, it should also review all aspects of its performance and suggest improvements. Her delegation had no objection to participation by the Committee on Conferences in that task but was not in favour of setting up an expert group.

45. Mr. BAZAN (Chile) noted with satisfaction that the report of the Joint Inspection Unit on the possibility of establishing an optical disc system gave a very complete evaluation of the pilot project which had proven successful at Geneva. Given the results obtained and the fact that the anticipated savings far outweighed the costs, his delegation supported the JIU recommendations in that regard. He hoped that very careful consideration would be given to the possibilities of a configuration that would make the system accessible to all the permanent missions.

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46. Mr. UPTON (United Kingdom) said that the presentation of section 29 could stand to be improved. Noting a tendency to consolidate funds for conference services, he said that his delegation reaffirmed its support for the idea of cost centres, which it viewed as essential to sound budgetary control. In paragraph 29.21 of its report, the Advisory Committee provided a good example of the problems caused by inadequate control.

47. It was clear from the report of the Advisory Committee and the proposed budget itself that there were still wide discrepancies between management practice and the intentions of the General Assembly with respect to conference services. The situation was particularly disturbing because the sums involved were huge. His delegation trusted that when the Secretariat conducted its promised review, the Committee on Conferences would continue its investigation of the points raised in the programme narrative. It was regrettable that several bodies which had agreed to meet on a biennial basis were contemplating a return to annual sessions. His delegation would oppose any proposal to increase the appropriations for major international conferences. The decisions taken by the General Assembly, particularly in resolutions 40/243 and 41/213, were clear and should be implemented within the context of a rationalization of the calendar of conferences. His delegation shared the view of the Advisory Committee (para. 29.16) that a negative impact on the provision of conference services should be avoided. None the less, an overall budget of \$357 million for the Department should suffice. It should even be possible to release resources for redeployment elsewhere if the Secretariat and intergovernmental bodies exercised greater discipline.

48. Referring to the recommendations formulated by the Advisory Committee in paragraphs 23.5 and 23.6 of its report and to the letter written by the Chairman of the Human Rights Committee on the subject, he wondered whether, taking into account the New York calendar of conferences, that Committee's winter and spring sessions could be held there using available services. He would also appreciate it if the Secretariat would provide a costing of the two alternatives, both on a full-cost and an expected actual cost basis, including the cost of temporary assistance.

49. Referring to the extrabudgetary funds, particularly the Trust Fund for German Language Translation, he said that his delegation wished to know whether the Organization was, in fact, reimbursed for the cost of all the facilities it provided (such as office space, telephones and documentation).

50. The establishment of a global provision for temporary assistance for meetings ran counter to the objective of global transparency and did not seem to be necessary, since the Secretary-General already had the option of redeploying resources within section 29. A change of that nature might also be contrary to the guidelines of the General Assembly stipulating that meetings should be held at the established headquarters of the body concerned.

51. Like the Advisory Committee (para. 29.13), his delegation regretted that the Secretary-General had been unable to present specific recommendations for absorbing the costs of the 100 language posts which had been restored or provide any explanation in that connection. Moreover, the Secretariat should have

(Mr. Upton, United Kingdom)

substantiated the request to reclassify four posts, mentioned by the Advisory Committee in paragraph 29.7 of its report.

52. It was regrettable that the work-load standards established in 1977 were apparently being revised downwards. In view of the proposed investment for new equipment, clarification was required. The Advisory Committee had requested the Secretariat to report to it on the matter by the end of the year. His delegation strongly endorsed that request and believed that the results should be transmitted to the Committee on Conferences.

53. The possibility of a duplication of editorial functions, raised by the Advisory Committee in paragraph 29.24, seemed to be borne out by the table provided by the Secretary-General. The problem could be resolved by applying work-load standards.

54. The vacant language posts in Vienna should be filled as early as possible in order to avoid having to resort to expensive temporary assistance. His delegation favoured the reduction of \$1.5 million in temporary assistance resources which had been proposed by the Advisory Committee in its first report, and the appropriation of the remaining \$1.5 million under departmental administration. There did not seem to be any need at the current stage to restore the former amount and, in any case, the Secretariat should respect the relevant recommendations of the Advisory Committee.

55. The objections raised to the establishment of unified conference services at Vienna were not convincing. His delegation noted with satisfaction that the prospects for setting up such an arrangement had improved. Correct apportionment of costs to the various users must be ensured.

56. It must be assumed that the \$3 million appropriation requested under section 29 in order to finance the purchase of modern equipment was justified by a cost/benefit analysis. His delegation would appreciate details on the subject in due course. It wished to reaffirm that any request for an appropriation in that area must be made in accordance with the technological innovations policy and the need to ensure the compatibility and effectiveness of the proposed equipment. His delegation noted the Advisory Committee's statement, in paragraph 29.33 of its report, that it found the explanation provided insufficient. His delegation joined the Advisory Committee in requesting more convincing justification.

57. Concerning the project for the installation of an optical disc system, he noted that the Secretariat did not wish to take a decision prematurely. In order to decide on that point, delegations would have to have a precise timetable and a statement of the investments planned and the benefits expected (savings, staff reductions).

58. Mr. INOMATA (Japan) said that in view of the importance of the Department of Conference Services in the overall budget, all delegations would appreciate more information on how it operated. Under agenda item 128, his delegation had requested quantitative information on projected conference-servicing activities (number of meetings with interpretation, volume of documents for translation, typing and publication). He had not yet obtained a response. In document A/C.5/44/24, the Secretary-General stated that the resources proposed for section 29 were based on the projected meeting work-load, without specifying how that work-load had been calculated. Nor had the questions of the Advisory Committee, which had underscored the need to review standards in that area, been satisfactorily answered. He therefore wished to remind the Secretariat of the requests formulated by the Advisory Committee in paragraphs 29.19 and 29.22 of its first report on the proposed programme budget.

59. The Advisory Committee had not received a convincing explanation either concerning the usefulness of an overall provision of \$3 million for temporary assistance for meetings. However, it had restored \$1.5 million which it had initially recommended eliminating, specifying that the amount could be utilized only with its concurrence and that it intended to take a decision on the basis of a careful review of the calendar of meetings and the revised standards for conference-servicing staff. His delegation doubted that the Secretariat could furnish such information. That was an important point which must be taken up during informal consultations.

60. In paragraph 29.21 of its report, the Advisory Committee furnished two striking examples of wastefulness which could result from late submission of documents to conference services. His delegation, which had proposed concrete measures for eliminating the problem when the Committee had considered the calendar of conferences, hoped that the point would also be taken up during informal consultations and supported the position of the United States in that regard.

61. As the Under-Secretary-General for Conference Services and Special Assignments had himself emphasized to the Committee, the Department of Conference Services played a major role in communications among Member States. It was therefore imperative for its mode of operation to be transparent, failing which it would not be possible to take fully informed decisions concerning meetings. To that end, it was essential for the Secretariat to provide the information requested.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.