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ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL

Reporting to the Economic and Social Council

Further comments of the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General has the honour to submit herewith to the General Assembly and to the Economic and Social Council his further comments on the report of the Joint Inspection Unit entitled "Reporting to the Economic and Social Council" (A/39/281-E/1984/81, Corr.1 and Add.1, Add.2 and Add.2/Corr.1).

* A/40/50/Rev.1.

ANNEX

Further comments of the Secretary-General

INTRODUCTION

1. At its second regular session of 1984, the Economic and Social Council had before it a Joint Inspection Unit report on reporting to the Economic and Social Council (A/39/281-E/1984/81, Corr.1 and Add.1). The Secretary-General submitted initial comments on the report in order to facilitate its discussion by the Council, while noting the need for further examination within the Secretariat of the diverse and wide-ranging recommendations involved (A/39/281-E/1984/81/Add.2 and Add.2/Corr.1). The Economic and Social Council in its resolution 1984/62 of 26 July 1984 took note with appreciation of the report of the Joint Inspection Unit and the preliminary comments of the Secretary-General thereon, and requested the Secretary-General to finalize his comments on the report. In the same resolution, the Council also requested "the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination, at its twenty-fifth session, to study in depth the report of the Joint Inspection Unit in accordance with its mandate, taking into account the views expressed by Member States and the comments made by the Secretary-General, and to submit its proposals on the report to the Economic and Social Council at its second regular session of 1985 for full consideration".

2. As was observed in the initial comments of the Secretary-General (*ibid.*), the Joint Inspection Unit report presents a comprehensive critique of the structure and functioning of United Nations intergovernmental bodies and Secretariat support services. It seeks, through the example of the Economic and Social Council, to examine the broader question of the role of, and relationship between, the United Nations Secretariat and intergovernmental organs in the economic and social field.

3. The Inspector, while recognizing the political difficulties surrounding the economic and social work of the Organization in general, and the functioning of the Economic and Social Council in particular, suggests that "there are a number of technical problems [relating to the secretariat support services] whose solution is possible despite the difficult political context within which they exist" (A/39/281-E/1984/81, Corr.1 and Add.1, para. 3).

4. The Secretary-General shares the view of the Inspector that, in spite of the present political difficulties and other factors, solutions should be found to a number of technical problems relating to the provision of Secretariat support services. He is therefore ready, wherever feasible and appropriate, to introduce the necessary changes and improvements along the lines suggested by the Inspector in order to enable the Secretariat to respond in a more effective manner to the needs of intergovernmental bodies. Many of the difficulties identified by the Inspector require for their solution the close co-operation of Member States. The fortieth anniversary of the United Nations in 1985 is providing both Governments and the Secretariat an opportunity to reflect on ways and means to enhance the effectiveness of the United Nations as a forum and of the Secretariat for the

promotion of development and international economic co-operation. It is expected that the Council, at its second regular session of 1985, will have before it the initial outcome of those efforts.

5. Accordingly, the present report provides additional comments on specific observations and recommendations in the Inspector's report.

6. Since many of these observations related to the content, format, volume and timeliness of circulation of Secretariat reports, some general observations on the question of documentation may be in order before dealing with the specific recommendations of the Inspector.

7. It must be readily recognized that many Secretariat documents for consideration by economic and social bodies in the United Nations tend to be more descriptive than analytical. Key policy issues are not always precisely identified. Policy recommendations for consideration by Member States are often lacking. Particularly in the present situation of lack of progress in intergovernmental negotiations on basic aspects of international economic co-operation, there is a tendency to rely on established views within the Secretariat in the preparation of documentation. This tendency is in part also due to the complexity of issues to be dealt with, as well as the sensitivities relating to some of them. It must also be recognized that requests for additional documentation are sometimes used by intergovernmental bodies as a substitute for a search among members for compromise, concession and agreement. Many requests are repetitive over the years, although no new developments may have taken place that would substantively justify such requests. An improvement in the existing situation thus requires a parallel and joint effort by both Secretariat and Member States: an effort on the part of the Secretariat to bring about the necessary reorientation in its approaches to the preparation of reports; and an effort on the part of Member States to exercise restraint in requesting documentation, particularly annual or recurrent reports, to provide overall policy direction and to improve decision-making procedures in the relevant intergovernmental bodies.

8. The Secretary-General agrees in general with recommendation 2 of the report of the Joint Inspection Unit. As far as the Secretariat is concerned, efforts will continue with a view to:

- (a) Making documentation less descriptive and more analytical;
- (b) Highlighting the key policy issues for consideration by Member States and underlining, whenever appropriate, policy recommendations for national and international action in Secretariat documentation;
- (c) Improving substantive collaboration among the Secretariat entities responsible for the implementation of General Assembly or Economic and Social Council resolutions, and strengthening consultations and co-operation with the agencies concerned;
- (d) Preparing more concise and shorter reports and consolidating, to the extent possible, reports dealing with similar subject-matter;

- (e) Ensuring progressively the periodic monitoring of preparation and the timely circulation of reports;
- (f) Strengthening interaction with intergovernmental bodies in the context of requests for reports of the Secretary-General, particularly in the context of the mandate, timing and reporting procedure;
- (g) Identifying and highlighting, in the context of the annotated agenda for the General Assembly and Economic and Social Council, key issues and policy recommendations contained in reports;
- (h) Keeping delegations informed of progress made with the Secretariat in the implementation of major resolutions adopted by the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council and of key issues that the Secretary-General proposes to address in his reports to these bodies.

I. CONTRIBUTION TO THE DEFINITION OF POLICY

A. The general debate

9. The general debate of the Council provides a valuable opportunity for an exchange of views among Member States on the world economic situation and on emerging problems. As indicated by the Inspector, the general debate should enable participants to understand each other's views and positions better and to identify points of convergence and divergence. Above all, it should enable Governments and the Secretariat alike to determine what issues are regarded as fundamental by all or the majority of participants. The Secretary-General agrees with the Inspector that the documentation provided to the Council for this purpose can have an important impact on the effectiveness of the debate and that improvements in the content and timeliness of such documentation need to be introduced.

10. The general debate of the Council provides an opportunity for the Secretary-General to present his views on the world economic situation. In the past he has also utilized this opportunity to review progress achieved in international economic co-operation and development and to present specific proposals for the consideration of the Council. The Secretary-General finds this a useful channel to bring to the attention of the Council major issues that, in his view, require the attention of the international community and to formulate appropriate policy recommendations for the Council's consideration. This presentation is also helpful in preparation for the deliberations of the General Assembly. Ways will be explored to inform participants in advance of the issues to be covered in the Secretary-General's address, so as to facilitate a dialogue on those issues within the context of the general debate.

11. According to the Inspector, the main weakness of the general debate is that it fails to result in a set of agreed recommendations on the world economic situation. The Council, in resolution 1982/50, had decided that it might, as part of the general debate, "formulate appropriate conclusions and recommendations

thereon addressed to the General Assembly, States Members of the United Nations and organs, organizations and bodies of the United Nations system". However, efforts by the Council in this regard have not so far been successful.

12. The adoption of such conclusions and recommendations would be fully in line with the responsibilities vested in the Council by the Charter of the United Nations and with the provision of General Assembly resolution 32/197 of 20 December 1977. This, however, is extremely difficult, given the range and complexity of the issues that are addressed, the diversity of the interests involved and the need to take into account the responsibilities and competence of other relevant intergovernmental bodies. Nevertheless, the general debate provides a unique opportunity for Governments to exchange views on major issues relating to international co-operation in the economic and social fields and to address these issues and their interrelationships in an integrated manner. Governments can review, for example, development and adjustment policies, and address at the same time the social, environmental, cultural and other dimensions of these policies.

13. The general debate in the Economic and Social Council is, of course, only part of the Council's contribution to the definition of policies. The Council has, in recent years, endeavoured to identify issues for priority consideration at its second regular session, so as to "focus its attention on a limited number of carefully selected major policy issues, to be studied in depth with a view to elaborating concrete action-oriented recommendations" (Council resolution 1982/50, para. 1 (a)). The Council considered the comprehensive policy review of operational activities of the United Nations system in 1984 and the critical economic situation in Africa in 1985 a priority item. Advance agreement by Member States on the selection of issues to be addressed on a priority basis greatly facilitates the necessary preparatory work by the Secretariat, and can help focus the efforts of the Secretariat in the formulation of appropriate policy recommendations on those issues.

14. The Director-General for Development and International Economic Co-operation, at the organizational session of the Council for 1985, suggested that the Council might wish to extend this practice of identifying priority issues to agenda items allocated to its first regular session, particularly items in the social, human rights and related fields. The Secretary-General agrees in general with recommendation 3 of the report of the Joint Inspection Unit that the form to be taken by the general debate and the formulation of its conclusion should be reconsidered.

B. World Economic Survey

15. In his first comments on the report, the Secretary-General concurred with the Inspector on the need to continue to improve the quality, presentation and relevance of the World Economic Survey. It is important, in the view of the Secretary-General, that the Survey should have a flexible format that can be adapted to changing needs and circumstances.

16. The considerable evolution that the document has undergone over the past 40 years - from its initial emphasis on a comprehensive compilation of subregional, regional and world-wide economic data to its present-day concentration on the analysis of global economic trends and prospects - reflects the Secretariat's capacity for adaptation and change, taking into account developments in international economic relations, the evolving but consistently distinctive role that the United Nations and its central intergovernmental bodies are called upon to play within the United Nations system of organizations and the emergence of other regional and sectoral surveys and statistical publications.
17. In the view of the Secretary-General, the World Economic Survey should concentrate increasingly on the identification of emerging trends and global policy issues and analyse the significance and consequences of current economic developments for the world economy in both the short and medium term. Particular attention should be paid to interrelations not only among countries and economic and functional sectors, but also among various alternative policy actions and their impact.
18. In order to enhance the relevance of the Survey for policy-making at both the national and international levels and its usefulness to United Nations intergovernmental bodies, it is important to highlight the international consequences of alternative courses of independent or joint action. In an interdependent world, policy actions by individual countries, particularly the main actors in the world economy, have significant influence on overall developments; at the same time, feedback effects sometimes have a direct and significant impact on the country where the changes in policies originated.
19. The Survey should contribute to placing in a global perspective and in a short-term to medium-term framework the main economic issues raised in the Economic and Social Council, the General Assembly and in the relevant organs of the system. The Survey will not, however, review all issues being discussed in the economic and social bodies. It is a main task of the Secretariat to highlight the most relevant topics and to draw attention and give due weight to those that have special global significance.
20. The Survey, together with the Supplement, should also provide a channel to convey to intergovernmental bodies and the public at large the end results of relevant policy-oriented studies and analyses undertaken by the Secretariat as well as preliminary conclusions of the research in progress.
21. The Survey has, and should have, points of contact with reports from other organs or agencies; however, it should have some unique features that would make it especially useful for the United Nations and the public in general. The Survey covers all regions and attempts to address the main issues that have a bearing on the world's economy. Although the analysis may be of a short-term nature, special attention will be paid to the medium-term implications of current events and to the relationship between current developments and longer-term structural change.
22. In the area of policy analysis, the focus should, as noted above, be on issues affecting large segments of the population at the country or regional levels,

particularly in developing countries. The study of current economic and institutional developments and the identification of emerging trends should assist Governments in determining how such developments and trends are contributing to overcoming or intensifying obstacles for development.

23. The presentation should try to avoid technicalities in an effort to reach the audience for which it is intended and to provide an effective instrument in support of policy-making. By the very nature of the document, the process of preparation of the Survey should involve an effort of synthesis and integration through the use of studies and reports from a variety of organs and agencies in the United Nations and other institutions.

24. The format of the Survey is currently under active review in the light of the above orientations and considerations. It is expected that this review will result in changes in the structure and content of the Survey beginning with its submission to the Council in 1986.

C. Other general economic and social analyses and surveys prepared within the United Nations system

25. The existence of various periodic surveys or reports prepared by different United Nations organizations and agencies reflects the plurality in research and policy analysis on economic and social matters that has been built into the structures of the United Nations system. Those surveys or reports are prepared by organizations for their respective governing bodies and are tailored to the particular concerns of each of them. Though they may be drawing on the same basic data, they may reach differing policy conclusions, given different rankings or trade-offs between conflicting policy objectives.

26. The diversity of research and policy inputs offered by the system contributes to a better understanding of the implications of different policy options. At the same time, it should be a concern of the system as a whole to contribute effectively through its analyses, to promoting policy harmonization, taking into account the interdependence among sectors and nations that characterizes the world economy. To this end, a strengthening of exchanges and consultations among secretariats within the system is highly desirable, although it must be recognized that this is a time-consuming process.

27. As part of these consultations, efforts should be made to promote greater consistency in the sources of data and to expand the coverage and harmonize definitions of relevant international statistics, particularly financial statistics.

28. In addition to the World Economic Survey, other surveys and reports are prepared by the United Nations Secretariat, including a periodic "Report on the World Social Situation". Efforts will continue to be made to ensure that these regional and global studies fully take into account the interactions between economic, social and other issues.

29. In particular, efforts will also continue to be made to avoid overlapping or duplication by careful joint forward planning through technical consultations on the themes and contents of the World Economic Survey and the Trade and Development Report prepared by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD).

30. In the same context, attention should be drawn to the cross-organizational programme analysis (COPA) on economic and social research and policy analysis currently under preparation. A document on the scope and general approach to this COPA has been submitted to the Committee on Programme and Co-ordination at its twenty-fifth session (E/AC.51/1985/6). This analysis will serve to explore further some of the issues referred to above.

31. The question remains of the manner in which the Economic and Social Council could best be apprised of the policy conclusions of the various general studies and surveys of world economic and social problems prepared by the organizations of the United Nations system. This question is relevant to the issue of Secretariat preparations for the general debate in the Council and is also pursued in the section of the present report dealing with the Council's co-ordinating responsibilities.

D. The Committee for Development Planning

32. As he indicated in his preliminary comments, the Secretary-General fully agrees with the Inspector on the importance of the contribution of the Committee for Development Planning. The report of the Committee as an advisory body has a role distinct from that of the World Economic Survey. The roles of the Committee and of the Secretariat are complementary and supportive of each other. Regarding recommendation 4 of the report of the Joint Inspection Unit, the Secretary-General will, as in the present situation, continue to provide all the necessary support to the Committee's work, including the services of consultants, as required.

33. At the second regular session of the Council for 1984, arrangements were made for an informal exchange of views between members of the Committee and of the Economic and Social Council. It was generally felt that such exchanges were helpful to both bodies in their respective work and the Committee for Development Planning has indicated its readiness to contribute further to those exchanges. Similar arrangements will be made in the future for the continuation of such informal exchanges.

II. THE FUNCTION OF CO-ORDINATING SYSTEM-WIDE PLANS AND PROGRAMMES

A. Co-ordination role of the Council

34. There is wide recognition of the need for the Council to enhance its effectiveness in the exercise of its responsibilities for system-wide co-ordination. The Secretary-General concurs with the Inspector on the importance not only of strengthening the Council's role in co-ordinating programmes and activities, but also of enhancing its capacity to contribute to the harmonization

of policies within the United Nations system. The view of the Inspector that improvements need to be introduced in the documentation submitted to the Council in this regard is fully shared by the Secretary-General.

35. Any discussion of ways and means of further enhancing the capacity of the Council for system-wide co-ordination should take into account the polycentric character of the system and the respective responsibilities of the General Assembly and of the Economic and Social Council, on the one hand, and of the governing bodies and executive heads of the organizations of the system on the other. The aim of the Council within this structure should be to identify, in the context of the various objectives that guide the analyses and actions of the various organizations, common system-wide goals, and to endeavour to mobilize the resources of the system for their attainment.

36. The degree to which the Economic and Social Council may effectively carry out its co-ordination functions is also affected to some extent by measures adopted by Member States at the national level to enable consistent and concerted policies to be pursued in different organizations of the United Nations system. Effective co-ordination and harmonization of policies and activities by Governments at the national level would facilitate concerted action at the international level.

37. The Secretary-General considers, however, that the time has come again for the Council to undertake a broad review of its objectives and functioning with regard to its responsibilities for system-wide co-ordination. The review should include an examination of ways and means for the Council to make full use of the means available to it in the relevant provisions of the Charter for co-ordinating the work of the United Nations system, including making arrangements with the specialized agencies to obtain reports on the steps taken to give effect to its own recommendations and to recommendations on matters falling within its competence that may be formulated by the General Assembly.

38. Moreover, the Council has an important role to play in addressing the interrelationships among various substantive issues in the economic, social, environmental and other areas for which organizations of the system have sectoral responsibilities. The Council should also ensure that there is consistency among sectoral policies advocated for the development of developing countries. For that purpose, the Council would require periodic information on policy evolution in various organizations and policy recommendations and conclusions emanating from their studies and from the deliberations of their respective intergovernmental organs. While information on programmes and activities undertaken by the system in various areas is provided to the Council, particularly through the COPAs and the reports of the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination, the main source of information to the Council on policy recommendations and conclusions of various organizations is at present the statements made in the general debate by the executive heads of those organizations. The Council may therefore wish to consider, in the context of the review suggested above, how such information could be adequately provided to it.

39. An additional practical step may be for the Council, at its annual organizational sessions, to identify for in-depth consideration a limited number of

specific issues in which the organizations of the United Nations system have a direct interest and to the consideration of which they would be requested to contribute, in the light of their mandates. This would enable the Council to focus its deliberations better and would encourage more active involvement of the specialized agencies in its work. In this connection, the specialized agencies may again be invited to suggest possible topics for the Council's deliberation in this regard, bearing in mind that such a deliberation would contribute to their respective work.

40. The following comments on specific reports and mechanisms designed to support the Council in the exercise of its inter-agency co-ordination responsibilities should be read in the context of the foregoing general observations.

B. Annual overview reports of the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination

41. The annual overview report examined by the Inspector had been prepared on the basis of a new, experimental formula adopted at the request of the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination. In the light of its consideration of the report, the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination recommended further changes in the content and organization of the report. The report submitted by the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination the following year (1984) was commended by the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination for having adhered to that Committee's guidelines and was found to contain more detailed and useful information on the work of the machinery of the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination than before.

42. The Secretary-General believes that further improvements could be introduced in the presentation of the annual overview reports of the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination and concurs with the observation of the Inspector that those reports should go beyond providing a description of the activities of the Committee and its subsidiary bodies and should contain a more analytical treatment of the main issues confronting the system and the inter-secretariat co-ordination machinery. To this end, the Secretary-General will endeavour to consult and co-operate with his colleagues in the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination.

C. Cross-organizational analyses

43. Two types of cross-organizational analyses were examined by the Inspector: the cross-organizational reviews of medium-term plans (COREs) and the cross-organizational programme analyses (COPAs). The former are presented directly to the Council, while the latter are presented to the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination. Both are intended to assist the Council in fulfilling its system-wide co-ordinating function.

44. The Inspector noted that the cross-organizational reviews did not provide recommendations related "to the procedures for co-ordination between the organizations in the system or to possible methods of improving such co-ordination" (para. 33). With regard to the COPAs, while noting that they present "interesting

analyses of what the system is accomplishing in the fields studied," the Inspector considers that "considerable efforts remain to be made in order to make these documents more effective" (para. 35).

45. Cross-organizational analyses have benefited from experience, in both their approach and methodology. The CORE on women and development, to be presented to the Economic and Social Council at its first regular session of 1985 and the COPA-CORE on economic and technical co-operation among developing countries, to be presented to the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination at its twenty-fifth session, do contain some conclusions and recommendations along the lines suggested by the Inspector.

46. However, the issue of the level of specificity and pertinence of recommendations and, above all, the question of their follow-up remain unsettled. In this context, the Secretary-General sees a growing gap between the efforts put into the preparation of cross-organizational analyses and the results achieved through such analyses.

47. The Secretary-General concurs with the view of the Inspector that the analyses prepared for the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination and the Council to assist them in their review of system-wide activities can indeed be improved, but considers that the core of the issue is not documentation as such, but the prevailing approaches to inter-agency co-ordination. In a system where both sectoral and common objectives must be pursued, the identification of duplication and overlap can, by necessity, have only a limited meaning. Rather, COPAs and other means of inter-agency co-ordination should be seen as positive instruments to assist organizations of the system in performing with increasing effectiveness their diverse tasks, some common, some sectoral, within the resources available and in response to the needs of Member States. The future of cross-organizational analyses should be examined in the context of the comprehensive review of co-ordination functions and arrangements proposed above.

D. Joint Meetings of the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination and the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination

48. As noted by the Inspector, the ineffectiveness of the Joint Meetings of the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination and the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination has been a matter of concern for members of both Committees. Efforts have been made in recent years to improve the organization of those meetings and to ensure that conclusions reached were given proper follow-up. The Economic and Social Council, at its second regular session of 1984, noted the improvements made in the preparations for those meetings, but considered that further progress could be made in achieving a real dialogue between the two bodies. It further stressed that the Joint Meetings should highlight the problems and difficulties faced by the specialized agencies. The Council recommended in that context:

(a) That the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination should prepare background papers on the subjects chosen for discussion at the twentieth series of

Joint Meetings, that the background papers should be problem- and action-oriented and that they should include problems faced by organizations in the field of inter-organizational co-ordination;

(b) That interventions at the Joint Meetings should enable participants to focus on the problems faced and their solutions and should aim at improving the dialogue between the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination and the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination.

In the past two years the Council, in order to provide a better focus for the discussion at the Joint Meetings, has recommended specific topics for consideration. The Joint Meetings in 1985 will, at the recommendation of the Council, consider the effectiveness and co-ordination of United Nations organs and specialized agencies in relief efforts in Africa.

49. In order to enable better participation on the part of members of the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination in the joint meetings, the possibility of holding them in New York on an alternative date in the autumn is also being further explored.

E. Committee for Programme and Co-ordination

50. As noted in his initial comments on the report of the Joint Inspection Unit, the Secretary-General fully concurs with the emphasis placed by the Inspector on the important role of the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination and will continue to assist it in enhancing its effective functioning. The Secretary-General does not, however, agree with recommendations 5 and 6 concerning the provision of outside experts to the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination, for the reasons set out in his initial comments.

III. THE FUNCTION OF PLANNING AND PROGRAMMING IN THE UNITED NATIONS

51. As indicated in the initial comments of the Secretary-General, programme planning documents are the principal instruments available to Member States in guiding the activities of the Organization and the Secretariat for improving the design of programmes and to ensure their effective monitoring and implementation. The Secretary-General has indicated that he shares the view of the Inspector that programming instruments should be given wider distribution to the subsidiary bodies of the Economic and Social Council. Experience to date shows that several subsidiary bodies do not review those documents, others receive work programmes of a format different from the programme documents prepared centrally and submitted to the General Assembly and the Council and - perhaps most important - there is at present no requirement for the subsidiary bodies to receive the programme performance report. However, as indicated in the previous comments, chapter II of the report of the Joint Inspection Unit probably exaggerates the deficiencies of current practice, since quite a few subsidiary bodies do receive the relevant parts of the medium-term plan and the programme budget.

52. In recommendation 7, the Inspector urges, inter alia, that "a special part of all reports of the subsidiary bodies of the Economic and Social Council should be devoted ... to examination of the draft medium-term plan (or any amendments thereto), examination of the draft programme budgets, and examination of the programme performance reports, studies on operational activities, evaluation reports, and cross-organizational programme analyses".

53. In the preparation of the medium-term plan for the period 1984-1989, drafts of various sections of the plan were submitted to specialized intergovernmental bodies. Similarly, the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1986-1987 was submitted to several subsidiary bodies. In practice, whether the reports of those bodies to the Council can cover the draft plans or proposed programme budgets will depend on the calendar of meetings (see below); in some cases the reports may instead have to consist of an analysis of plans and budgets already adopted by the General Assembly. With this reservation, the Secretary-General is prepared to give this recommendation his careful consideration.

54. Recommendation 8 urges that "all documents prepared for the planning, programming and evaluation cycle should be distributed to the subsidiary bodies as soon as they become available". The Secretary-General will ensure that this recommendation is followed by the relevant Secretariat units.

55. The Inspector further recommends (recommendation 9) that "a very precise calendar should be drawn up so as to enable these documents to be produced and considered in good time". It is desirable for subsidiary bodies to receive and comment on programming documents prior to their consideration by the central review bodies (that is, the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination, the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly). However, the timing of meetings is often dictated by considerations other than those relating to programme planning, including those envisaged in General Assembly resolution 39/217 of 18 December 1984. Thus in some cases a subsidiary body would not be in a position to receive and examine the documents until after they had been considered and adopted centrally.

56. Programme planning regulations 3.12, 3.13 and 3.16 (ST/SGB/204) provide that the relevant subsidiary bodies should review the proposed medium-term plan, that the Secretary-General should provide proposals for the co-ordination of their calendar of meetings and that the subsidiary bodies, when reviewing the chapters of the proposed plan, should recommend priorities among subprogrammes in their field of competence. Rules 103.12, 103.13 and 103.16 lay down specific guidelines for the implementation of those regulations. On the other hand, articles 4, 5 and 6, on the programme aspects of the budget, monitoring of programme implementation and evaluation respectively, do not make any corresponding provisions for the participation of the subsidiary bodies, although regulation 5.2 does require the prior approval of an intergovernmental body, as well as that of the General Assembly, for the reformulation of an entire subprogramme or the introduction of a new programme in the programme budget.

57. With a view to facilitating the continuous improvement of the various programming instruments, recommendation 10 of the report proposes that "in particular, the rules and regulations approved by the General Assembly should be issued in a format comparable to that of the Staff Rules or the Financial Regulations and given wide distribution". As the regulations and rules governing programme planning have been issued as document ST/SGB/204, they have received wide circulation. There is great merit in the proposal contained in the same recommendation that the attention of the subsidiary bodies should be drawn to the importance of the rules and regulations, and the Secretary-General will ensure that this is done.

58. As regards recommendation 11, the Secretary-General will continue, as necessary, to have recourse to outside expertise in the development of programming and evaluation tools.

59. Recommendations 12 and 13 urge that "special instructions should be drawn up on the way in which recommendations in reports should be formulated and highlighted", and the "procedures should be defined concerning decision-making on recommendations". The Secretary-General agrees that it would be useful to develop a set format in order to highlight recommendations presented in evaluation reports. Recommendations of decision-making bodies on reports should be structured so as to show clearly whether they have been approved, approved with reservations, or not approved. It would also be useful to define procedures concerning decision-making on recommendations as a means of ensuring that recommendations are treated as requested when transmitted from one intergovernmental body to another.
