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BUDGET ESTIMATES FOR THE FINANCIAL YEAR 1959

Economic Commission for Africa

Twenty-fourth report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions to the thirteenth session of the General Assembly

1. The Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions has considered a report of the Secretary-General (A/C.5/755) containing details of the 1959 budget estimates for the Economic Commission for Africa, in respect of which a global sum of \$500,000 had been included in the Secretary-General's initial budget estimates for 1959 (A/3825),^{1/} and provisionally recommended by the Advisory Committee (A/3860, para. 46).^{2/}

General considerations

2. In its approach to these estimates, the Advisory Committee has taken account of the deep interest, evident in the discussions on this subject both in the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council, which Member States have evinced in the establishment and progressive development of the Economic Commission for Africa.^{3/} It is to be expected that, with the experience already gained in respect of the existing regional economic commissions, there will be a general desire to put the new commission on a reasonably full working basis in a relatively short period of time. Such a speedy pace of development will entail substantial

^{1/} Official Records of the General Assembly, Thirteenth Session, Supplement No. 5.

^{2/} Ibid., Supplement No. 7.

^{3/} See General Assembly resolution 1155 (XII) of 26 November 1957 and Economic and Social Council resolution 671 (XXV) of 29 April 1958.

budgetary provisions even in the earliest years; it will at the same time call for a studied effort to ensure that a sound basis is laid at the beginning for a rational and economic use of resources towards the attainment of well-defined objectives of the greatest importance and urgency.

3. The first step in such an orderly development of the activities of the Commission is, in the Advisory Committee's view, the formulation of a clearly-stated programme, including the application to that programme of a system of priorities to take account of available resources. While Economic and Social Council resolution 671 (XXV) sets out the terms of reference of the Commission, the details of its programme of work will only be established when the Commission holds its first session beginning 29 December 1958. The Advisory Committee, which must relate its consideration of budget proposals to the programme reflected in them, is confident that the Commission will formulate its plan of work having regard both to the essential and urgent needs of the region and to the practical possibilities in regard to the pace at which the United Nations can fulfil those needs.

4. The pace of development will involve, apart from budgetary limitations, the question of the practicability of recruiting well-qualified and suitable staff for the secretariat of the Commission. In the initial organization of a secretariat, while recruitment must be geared to the development of the work and to needs as they emerge, any hasty effort to fill a large number of posts may result in the creation of a group of staff of less than the highest competence and suitability. This may not only prove disadvantageous to the programme but may involve the Organization in unnecessary costs. It may therefore be necessary in the first several months, pending the gradual setting-up of the permanent establishment, to rely on the services of short-term consultants and to resort to fixed-term appointments of staff.

Estimates for 1959

5. The Secretary-General has now submitted detailed estimates for 1959 which total \$700,000, or an increase of \$200,000 over the global sum included in his initial estimates. In addition to the proposed estimate of \$700,000, there is already included in the 1959 budget estimates (under sections 6 and 7) an estimated

amount of \$92,000 covering six Professional and five General Service posts in the Africa Studies Unit at Headquarters, which will eventually be transferred to the secretariat of the Commission.

6. The estimate of \$700,000 is based, inter alia, on a Professional complement of twenty-seven posts (excluding that of the Executive Secretary of the Commission) for which the Secretary-General specifically seeks the approval of the General Assembly. Actual financial requirements will depend, of course, on the speed at which recruitment to this authorized establishment proves possible. To take account of this element of contingency, the Secretary-General has suggested two alternatives:

(a) That the General Assembly should appropriate \$500,000 at this stage, and authorize the Secretary-General to incur obligations in excess of that amount, as necessary, up to \$200,000; or

(b) That the General Assembly should increase the initial appropriation for staff costs and the Secretary-General would undertake to administer the total appropriations for the Commission in such a way that transfer of credits between staff costs and other costs would be made only with the prior concurrence of the Advisory Committee.

Advisory Committee's recommendations

7. In the light of the considerations set out in paragraph 4 above, the number of Professional staff proposed by the Secretary-General for 1959 may be considered somewhat on the high side.^{4/} Nevertheless, in deference to the general desire of Member States to organize the Commission on a full working basis as rapidly as possible, the Advisory Committee would agree that the General Assembly should approve, in principle, an initial establishment of twenty-seven Professional posts, excluding the post of the Executive Secretary and the six Professional posts located at present in the Africa Unit at Headquarters. As to the budgetary procedure to be followed, the Committee would prefer an arrangement which includes certain elements of both alternatives (a) and (b) suggested by the Secretary-General. Specifically, the Advisory Committee recommends that the Assembly should

^{4/} During the first complete year of its operation, the Economic Commission for Africa and the Far East (1948) had 17 Professional posts, and the Economic Commission for Latin America (1949) 20 Professional posts.

appropriate \$500,000 at this stage under a separate section, section 6 (a), on the understanding that the Committee would review the situation in 1959 and authorize additional funds as necessary. In the Advisory Committee's view, such a procedure would facilitate an administrative and budgetary review of the secretariat of the Commission in the light of such decisions and recommendations as the Commission may adopt at its first session.

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Specific comments

8. The Advisory Committee offers below comments on certain specific points in the 1959 estimates submitted by the Secretary-General.

9. As regards staff, the Committee understands that the arrangements envisaged will cover, in addition to the preparation of special studies and reports, the short-term assignment of specialists for direct assistance to Governments. The Committee trusts that on this latter point there will be effective co-ordination between such assignments and projects under the technical assistance programme.

10. The Advisory Committee is informed also that the question of a Deputy Executive Secretary will be the subject of some further study; the Committee believes that an appointment to this post may be deferred without disadvantage until an appropriate stage is reached in the setting-up of the secretariat and in the development of its work.

11. Although the amount authorized for 1958 in respect of the Commission included provision for eight junior professional trainees for the period from 1 September 1958, it is understood that no trainee has so far been recruited. On the other hand, a similar training programme has been in progress at Headquarters under the technical assistance programme. While hoping that the programme of training junior officers for the Commission secretariat will meet with greater success in 1959, the Advisory Committee trusts (a) that the training programmes under the Commission's budget and under technical assistance will be properly and effectively co-ordinated; and (b) that the training of junior officers will not be undertaken entirely at Headquarters and that some of these candidates will receive their training in the secretariats of the other regional commissions.

12. It may be recalled that, in connexion with the initial budget estimates under section 8 for travel of staff, the Advisory Committee stated that it had no

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objection to the inclusion of \$30,000 in those estimates for special studies in the Middle East and Africa, "on the understanding that the \$20,000 provided in this figure for Africa is taken into account in considering the details of the 1959 estimates for the Economic Commission for Africa".^{5/} The Committee now understands that in the context of administering the several travel credits as an integral whole, rather than as separate amounts "earmarked" for specific purposes, the actual amount that is expected to be available for Africa from the appropriations under section 8 would be of the order of \$10,000 which, together with the \$40,000 proposed under the new section 6 (a), would make a total of \$50,000 for travel on official business in respect of ECA. While travel costs may be expected to be substantial in the first year of the life of the Commission, especially because of the need for establishing initial contacts and for selecting and recruiting staff, the Advisory Committee will keep this expenditure under review.

^{5/} A/3860, para. 152.