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PROGRAMMES OF TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Administrative and operational services costs of the Technical Assistance Board secretariat for the year 1959

Twentieth report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions to the thirteenth session of the General Assembly

1. Under the arrangements envisaged by the General Assembly in resolution 1037 (XI) of 26 February 1957, the Technical Assistance Committee (TAC) has requested (E/3175, para. 91)^{1/} the comments and observations of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions on the estimates of the administrative and operational costs of the Technical Assistance Board (TAB) secretariat for 1959, and on any related matters.
2. The Advisory Committee has accordingly considered these estimates, which have been submitted by the Executive Chairman of TAB in document E/TAC/79.

Budgetary situation in 1958

3. The Advisory Committee, in its report on the 1958 estimates of the TAB secretariat (A/3738, para. 8) recommended that, in addition to the saving of \$50,000 over the two years 1957 and 1958 as envisaged by the Executive Chairman, there should be a further saving in 1958 of at least \$25,000. Actual expenditure in 1957 amounted to \$1,781,209 (net), or \$67,341 less than the approved estimate. For 1958 the estimate was reduced from \$1,991,600 to \$1,966,600; however, the

^{1/} Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, Twenty-sixth Session, Annexes, agenda item 8.

Advisory Committee understands that it will be difficult to hold 1958 expenditure to the latter figure, mainly because the cost of the participation in the Pension Fund of local staff in the field offices is expected to exceed the provision for this purpose in the 1958 estimates.

Estimates for 1959

4. The total of the estimates proposed for 1959 amounts to \$1,992,300 (net of staff assessment), an increase of \$25,700, or about 1.3 per cent, above the amount approved for 1958. The Advisory Committee notes that the change in these estimates, as compared with 1958, is thus relatively small. Inasmuch as the Committee had commented in detail on the 1958 estimates, it confines its present observations on the 1959 estimates to a few points of special interest. As regards the monetary provision for 1959, the Committee generally agrees that the amount proposed is reasonable.

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Part I. Headquarters secretariat

5. The estimates under part I for the headquarters secretariat are set at the same net amount as for 1958, i.e., \$498,400. This has been made possible, despite an increase of three posts in the establishment, because the resulting increases are offset by reductions which are expected to occur in 1959 under certain heads of expenditure, such as home leave, travel on appointment and transfer, installation, separation and repatriation payments and temporary assistance.

6. The Advisory Committee understands that it is necessary to add a post of Senior Officer to continue the functions of the European Liaison Officer, as these functions have been detached from the Secretary of the Board, whose post at the Second Officer level is now located at headquarters.

7. Two other new posts are proposed at headquarters for improving and maintaining the Project Handbook. This Handbook, which has been published in four loose-leaf volumes, one for each geographical region, describes the status of every project under the Expanded Programme, grouped by recipient countries. The initial compilation of this Handbook, which has just been completed, was undertaken by the area officers of the Programme Division as a by-product of their normal work. The maintenance of the Handbook on an up-to-date basis is stated to require the services of two additional staff members.

8. Although the Advisory Committee is not entirely convinced that additional staff is necessary in respect of the Handbook, the Committee understands that the Handbook is perhaps the most important new feature in the arrangements for central information and control in the TAB secretariat in respect of the totality of the Expanded Programme. The Committee would stress two points in this regard. First, every effort should be made to make the Handbook a useful device for information and control not merely at the headquarters of TAB but in all the participating organizations and in the field. This would call for a great measure of co-ordination among the organizations and promptness in reporting changes in the status of individual projects. Secondly, while the additional staff proposed would assist in the central functions relating to the maintenance of the Handbook, the area officers would probably need to be relied on for ensuring the up-to-date accuracy and completeness of the information in the Handbook.

9. It is proposed to reclassify the post of the head of the Programme Division from the Principal Officer (D-1) to the Director (D-2) level. The Advisory Committee would normally have some doubts regarding such a reclassification, especially having regard to the fact that, in addition to the Executive Chairman, there is already a Senior Director with over-all responsibility for the Programme and Administrative Divisions. The Committee is however informed that the work of the Programme Division has grown in importance in recent years and has been directed to a more effective and central co-ordinating function than in the past when the operation was relatively more decentralized. Furthermore, it has been suggested that the Division has now been asked, as part of its normal work, to devote special attention to a continuing evaluation of the programme. The Advisory Committee believes that, inasmuch as these considerations involve a judgement of the programme responsibilities of the TAB secretariat, the TAC is in the best position to appraise the validity and relevance of the justification that has been offered in support of the proposed reclassification.

Part II. Other joint administrative costs

10. The Advisory Committee does not desire to offer comment on the estimate of \$32,600 (net) under part II in respect of other joint administrative costs.

Part III. Field offices

11. The 1959 estimates for field offices amount to \$1,461,300 (net), or an increase of \$25,700 by comparison with 1958, despite a decrease in the number of established posts (including casual labour) from 261 to 240. This is due mainly to increases under such items as post adjustments, local salaries and normal salary increments.
 12. It is seen from table III of E/TAC/79 that not all host Governments contribute equally towards the costs of maintaining TAB field offices. The Advisory Committee hopes that the TAB will explore further the possibilities of improving the situation in this regard.
 13. The Advisory Committee takes special note of the statement in the introductory text to the estimates under part II to the effect that "the field offices provide assistance in the form of services in varying degrees to regular budget activities of the Participating Organizations, including programmes of technical aid carried out by UNESCO and United Nations, and the public information activities of the United Nations". The Advisory Committee would emphasize in this regard that with the growing integration of the different types of programmes in each participating organization, the available field machinery - whether it is the network of TAB field offices or of regional offices of individual organizations - should be utilized to the fullest possible extent in the service of field programmes.
 14. From a purely administrative point of view, it may also be noted that the TAB secretariat and its field offices can offer substantial facilities in respect of operations under the Special Fund.
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