



Twentieth session  
Agenda item 76

BUDGET ESTIMATES FOR THE FINANCIAL YEAR 1966

Revised estimates under section 7, Buildings  
and improvements to premises

Twenty-sixth report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary  
Questions to the General Assembly at its twentieth session

1. The Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions has considered a report of the Secretary-General (A/C.5/1047) submitting revised estimates under section 7, Buildings and improvements to premises, of the budget estimates for 1966. The proposals relate to chapter II (1) (a) of section 7, covering the alteration and improvement of premises and facilities at Headquarters, in respect of which the Secretary-General requests additional funds totalling \$345,200.

Extension of emergency electric power and  
lighting facilities (\$248,000)

2. In his initial budget estimates for 1966 under section 7, the Secretary-General provided for certain items resulting from an architectural and engineering survey conducted in 1963, of the safety, fire prevention and alarm systems of the Headquarters buildings. This survey, while generally confirming the adequacy of the existing installations, recommended certain additional safety and emergency provisions, in which the Advisory Committee concurred,<sup>1/</sup> and provided for the replacement of smoke detectors, the installation of an emergency lighting system in certain of the meeting rooms and areas of public assembly of the Conference

1/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Twentieth Session, Supplement No. 7  
(A/6007), para. 227.

and General Assembly buildings, and the installation of an electronic fire-alarm system. The first two items are included in the 1966 budget estimates and the third is scheduled for inclusion in the estimates for 1967.

3. The Secretary-General now reports that as a result of the extensive electric power failure on the east coast of the United States of America and Canada on 9 November 1965, which blacked-out the United Nations complex and New York City, he has made a detailed re-examination of the emergency power and lighting facilities available in the Headquarters buildings, and has concluded that the responsibility of the United Nations for the safety and welfare of the delegates, staff and visitors calls for a considerable expansion of the proposals already made for 1966.<sup>2/</sup>

4. The Secretary-General states that in determining the nature of the facilities to be installed, he has endeavoured to recommend the most economical arrangements for meeting the minimum essential needs. The plans do not provide for continued operation of the building during a prolonged power failure but assume that in such circumstances the premises would be evacuated. The proposals would ensure that sufficient electric power and lighting would be available to effect an orderly and safe evacuation of the buildings and the protection of the buildings until normal power was restored. Power would also be available for certain essential building operation services and for telephone and cable facilities. The Secretary-General does not consider it practicable to provide for the continuance of most other operations, in that the cost of a standby power plant of sufficient capacity to keep the building in even partial use would be extremely costly.<sup>3/</sup> In arriving at the basis for his proposals the Secretary-General has taken into account the existing electric power facilities installed to minimize the effect of a localized power failure in New York City, and therefore the emergency provisions now recommended would be required only in the event of either a power breakdown of very short duration or one of such widespread effect as was recently experienced.

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<sup>2/</sup> Ibid., Supplement No. 5 (A/6005), part III, section 7, para. 7.5.

<sup>3/</sup> The Committee was informed that the cost of such a system being contemplated by a comparable building complex in New York City indicated an expenditure of approximately \$2.5 million.

5. In order to meet the minimum requirements described above, the Secretary-General proposes that the emergency lighting system approved for installation in the meeting rooms and certain areas of public assembly be expanded, not only in the General Assembly and Conference buildings but in areas in the Secretariat and Library buildings as well. The plan provides that in the event of a power failure limited emergency lighting would automatically be made available in the following areas:

- (a) Conference and meeting rooms;
- (b) Corridors, stairs and exits;
- (c) Clinic;
- (d) Telephone switchboard and equipment rooms;
- (e) Refrigeration plant and rooms containing important mechanical equipment;
- (f) Rooms containing electric switchboards and emergency control panels; and
- (g) Security booths at main gates.

The emergency lighting equipment to be installed would be in the nature of self-contained battery and charging units, connected to the normal power supply in order to maintain the batteries at full charge. In case of a power failure they would automatically turn on and provide emergency light for up to an average of seven hours, depending upon the area and its use.

6. In addition, the Secretary-General considers that emergency electric power should be provided by means of standby generator units to allow for the operation and servicing of the following equipment:

(a) Elevators

With the equipment proposed, it would be possible to operate in each of the main buildings one elevator which could stop at every floor and also modify the control panels to enable the switching of the power supply to any other elevator in order to eliminate stalling.

(b) Telephone system

Standby power would be provided to extend the operating period of the present emergency system beyond eight hours.

(c) Cable facilities

Sufficient power would be available to maintain communication lines to the local offices of the cable and wireless companies if the power failure was localized within the Headquarters building. It would not, however, prevent interruption of cable traffic in the event of a total power failure in the area, unless the communication companies had emergency power.

(d) Fire and other building alarm systems; sump, water and ejector pumps

The Secretary-General points out that, for reasons of economy, he has limited his proposals to protecting the safety and welfare of the occupants of the building and to maintaining certain essential services in partial operation. Thus, he has not included in his proposals the installation of emergency power for such equipment as the heating and air distribution system and the food refrigeration equipment in the main kitchen.<sup>4/</sup>

7. The Secretary-General estimates that the cost of purchasing and installing the necessary equipment to provide these emergency facilities would amount to \$248,000. He states that the need to take urgent action with regard to these emergency lighting and power needs precludes the possibility of basing the estimates on detailed engineering plans, and that the estimates must therefore be considered to be of a provisional nature.

Expansion of seating facilities in the Economic and Social Council Chamber and the Security Council Chamber (\$97,200)

8. The Secretary-General advises that on 27 September 1965 he communicated to the Members of the General Assembly the "Protocol of Entry into Force of the Amendments to Articles 23, 27 and 61 of the Charter of the United Nations adopted by General Assembly resolutions 1991 A and B (XVIII) of 17 December 1963" (A/6019). As a consequence of the adoption of these amendments to the Charter, effective

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<sup>4/</sup> The Committee inquired whether consideration had been given to providing emergency lighting for the garage and was informed that it was not thought essential in that guards with flashlights would be stationed at all entrances and levels and that automobile headlights would facilitate egress from the garage.

1 September 1965, the membership of the Security Council will increase from eleven to fifteen and that of the Economic and Social Council from eighteen to twenty-seven as from 1 January 1966. It will therefore be necessary to adapt the seating arrangements in the Security Council and Economic and Social Council chambers accordingly.

9. As regards the Economic and Social Council Chamber, the Secretary-General states that as a result of the modification several years ago to permit its use as a conference room, adequate seating arrangements exist and the alterations necessary could be confined to such changes in the telecommunications wiring system as may prove necessary.

10. The present seating arrangements in the Security Council Chamber, however, will need to be expanded to accommodate the increased membership, and other participants in the work of the Council. Although all the members could be seated at the table, only two places would remain for other participants, and experience has shown that this would not be sufficient to meet the requirements of the Council. The Secretary-General proposes, therefore, to add an additional table position at each end of the table, thus providing facilities for four invited participants.

11. The Secretary-General also recommends action to alleviate the overcrowding on the floor of the Security Council Chamber, which is occasioned by the attendance of senior representatives of Member States, and with the growth of the Organization there are not enough seats to accommodate all who wish to be present. It is therefore proposed to extend the delegates' seating into the present area used at present by the Press, and to relocate the seats for the correspondents in the balcony area. These changes would increase the number of delegates' seats on the floor from 137 to 235 and reduce the number of balcony seats for the public from 402 to 232.

12. The Secretary-General considers that it would also be desirable in the course of these proposed alterations to replace the sound reinforcement and simultaneous interpretation telecommunications system, much of which was originally a part of the installation at Lake Success and is no longer considered entirely dependable for normal meeting requirements and broadcasting and television use. It would also be necessary to replace the basic installations for the telecommunications control room as well as the listening devices and switches on the floor of the

Chamber and in the proposed Press area. The equipment in the public area forms part of the long-range replacement programme and would not therefore be replaced at this time.

13. The estimated cost of the Secretary-General's proposed alterations to the Security Council Chamber is \$97,200. The report mentions that no provision has been made for temporary seating arrangements as may be required from 1 January 1966, pending completion of the alterations, and that ad hoc arrangements will be necessary in the Security Council Chamber or elsewhere. These temporary arrangements can be accomplished without additional budgetary provision.

Observations and recommendations of the Advisory Committee

14. In examining the Secretary-General's revised estimate of \$345,200 under section 7 for 1966, the Advisory Committee took into account the provisional nature of the figures relating to the proposed extension of the emergency electric power and lighting facilities, amounting to \$248,000, and the fact that the estimate had been determined on the basis of a study by the electrical contractor serving the United Nations, comparing installation costs of similar equipment in other buildings in New York City, rather than on the basis of detailed engineering plans.

15. The Committee inquired of the Secretary-General's representatives whether they had been in a position to ascertain the extent of the measures proposed or being taken by local and Federal authorities to obviate a recurrence of an extensive power failure in the future, measures which might conceivably have a bearing on the proposals of the Secretary-General for the Headquarters buildings. The Committee was informed that, although the Secretary-General's representatives were unaware of the measures being taken by the various power companies and appropriate governmental authorities, they had doubts whether such action as might be taken would lead to an absolute assurance of immunity from any such failures in the future and that it was the Secretary-General's firm view that his proposals constituted the minimum measures essential to the safety and security of delegates of Member States, the Secretariat and the public.

16. The Advisory Committee recognizes that it is incumbent upon the Secretary-General as Chief Administrative Officer of the United Nations to propose to the General Assembly all practical measures to ensure that the necessary safeguards

of persons and property are effected consonant with the need and at minimum cost. In view of the technical character of the problem, the Committee must perforce rely upon the Secretary-General and his advisers in such matters. The Advisory Committee would expect, however, that the Secretary-General will take into account any developments which might make it possible to reduce the expenditures at present envisaged.

17. The Committee therefore, taking into account the provisional nature of the estimates under this heading, and the fact that a more detailed examination of the component items by the Secretary-General may require some modification of his initial plans, is of the view that it may not be possible to effect all the desired measures in 1966.

18. With regard to the proposals for the expansion of seating facilities in the Economic and Social Council Chamber and the Security Council Chamber, the Committee notes that the largest part of the estimate of \$97,200 relates to the replacement of simultaneous interpretation telecommunications equipment and other changes which are not really attributable to the need for an expansion of the seating arrangements. The Committee feels that it may be possible to postpone certain items and include them under the normal long-range replacement programme.

19. The Advisory Committee, therefore, taking into account its foregoing observations, suggests that the General Assembly at this time may wish to approve a total additional credit of \$300,000 under section 7 for 1966 for emergency lighting and power and for alterations to the Security Council Chamber, representing a reduction of \$45,200 in the estimate of \$345,200 proposed by the Secretary-General. Should the Assembly approve the Committee's recommendation of \$300,000, the Secretary-General would be able to proceed in 1966 with those items which he considers to be of highest priority. The Committee would also suggest that, following re-examination of the component items and estimated costs relative to his proposal for emergency lighting and power facilities, the Secretary-General submit revised proposals and estimates for consideration by the Advisory Committee at its summer session in May/June 1966.

#### Automation of elevators in the Secretariat building

20. During its examination of the initial budget estimates for 1966 in May and June of this year, the Advisory Committee noted that, due to the inability of the

General Assembly at its nineteenth session to act on the Secretary-General's proposal for automation of the elevators in the Secretariat building, scheduled to commence in 1966, it was decided to postpone the time-table for this project by one year. On this basis, work would commence in 1967 and be completed in 1968, and no budgetary provision would be required before then.

21. Under the original proposal, the Secretary-General had requested General Assembly authorization to sign the necessary contract on or before 15 February 1965 as required by the contractor, and the Advisory Committee concurred in the Secretary-General's proposal.<sup>5/</sup> However, due to the circumstances described in the preceding paragraph, no action was taken and the Secretary-General now renews his request for authority to sign the necessary contract in 1966. The Advisory Committee therefore recommends that the General Assembly authorize the Secretary-General to sign a contract in 1966 committing the Organization to undertake the work of automating the elevators in the Secretariat building at a cost of \$344,235 in 1967 and a similar amount in 1968.

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