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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 59th MEETING

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

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

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DISTR. GENERAL
A/C.5/44/SR.59
22 December 1989

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

The meeting was called to order at 10.35 a.m.

AGENDA ITEMS 40 AND 125: CURRENT FINANCIAL CRISIS OF THE UNITED NATIONS AND FINANCIAL EMERGENCY OF THE UNITED NATIONS (continued) (A/C.5/44/L.21)

1. Draft resolution A/C.5/44/L.21, as orally revised, was adopted without a vote.
2. Mr. IRUMBA (Uganda) said it was the understanding of his delegation that items 40 and 125 were distinct agenda items and that the adoption of draft resolution A/C.5/44/L.21 implied no merger of them. The General Committee had seen fit to keep the two separate, and his delegation would endeavour at the forty-fifth session to ensure that they remained separate.
3. Mr. UPTON (United Kingdom) said that agenda items 40 and 125 had in fact been merged and that any distinction between them was purely artificial, a fact which the General Assembly ought to recognize. His delegation believed that 1990 would be the last year in which the Committee considered two separate items and reports.

AGENDA ITEM 128: PATTERN OF CONFERENCES (continued) (A/C.5/44/L.22)

4. Mr. VAHER (Canada) noted that the Secretariat had edited the text of paragraph 10 of draft resolution A in document A/C.5.4/L.22. However, as the original text more accurately reflected the views of the Committee, that wording should be restored by deleting the words "General Assembly" and inserting the phrase "as approved by the General Assembly" at the end of the paragraph.
5. As revised, the draft resolutions contained in document A/C.5/44/L.22 reflected the agreements reached after a paragraph-by-paragraph review of the text submitted by the Committee on Conferences. The first two paragraphs of draft resolution A dealt with the adoption of the calendar of conferences and the possibility of adjusting the calendar. During consideration of the draft calendar, some concern had been expressed at the fact that the dates for the meeting of the Legal Sub-Committee of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space had not been finalized. However, the Secretariat had given assurances that it would intensify its contacts with the substantive secretariat of the Legal Sub-Committee to ensure that the required level of servicing for the Sub-Committee's forthcoming session would be provided, taking into account all views expressed on the matter by Member States.
6. Paragraph 4 of draft resolution A, on the new methodology on conference-servicing utilization rates to be employed by the Committee on Conferences, reflected the priority which a number of delegations had attached to that issue during the general debate on the pattern of conferences. Paragraph 5 also addressed that issue, although in a more positive tone than had been employed in previous resolutions adopted on the subject.
7. Paragraphs 6 to 8 contained wording similar to that used in previous resolutions, whereas paragraph 9, dealing with the medium-term plan for conference and library services, was new. Paragraph 10 was also new and took note of the

(Mr. Vahe, Canada)

intention of the Committee on Conferences to play a role in the review of the Department of Conference Services envisaged by the Secretary-General. The final paragraph invited the Committee on Conferences to adopt a more comprehensive programme of work.

8. Draft resolution B, on the control and limitation of documentation, was quite similar to previous resolutions on the subject, with some slight modifications. Particularly important was paragraph 4, which requested the Secretary-General to analyse the printing requirements of the Organization.

9. Draft resolution C was identical to earlier resolutions on the implementation of General Assembly resolution 42/207 C and reiterated the recommendations of the Committee on Conferences. It had been agreed during informal consultations that the three draft resolutions should be adopted by consensus.

10. The draft resolutions contained in document A/C.5/44/L.22, as orally revised, were adopted without a vote.

11. Mr. IRUMBA (Uganda) said that his delegation supported the work of the Committee on Conferences. However, he understood that the reference in paragraph 10 of draft resolution A to General Assembly resolution 43/222 B did not imply any infringement by that Committee upon the mandates of other committees.

12. With regard to draft resolution B, he stressed that summary records were important in ensuring efficiency, and he therefore welcomed paragraph 1. He was surprised, however, that summary records would not be provided to the Board of Trustees of the United Nations Institute for Training and Research, and believed that such an omission did a disservice to both the Institute and developing countries.

13. Mr. UPTON (United Kingdom) said that informal consultations on the draft resolution ought to have been unnecessary. The mandate of the Committee on Conferences was clear, and he hoped that in the future the Committee would be allowed to play its role without outside interference.

AGENDA ITEM 131: UNITED NATIONS COMMON SYSTEM (continued) (A/C.5/44/L.19)

14. Mr. FONTAINE ORTIZ (Cuba), introducing draft resolution A/C.5/44/L.19, said that a serious effort had been made to produce a balanced draft resolution on the item. While no delegation had succeeded in obtaining everything it wanted in the text, the positions of all delegations were reflected to some extent. The draft resolution consisted of three sections and an annex; the fact that it was long should come as no surprise, as the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC) had reached a great many conclusions regarding the comprehensive review of the conditions of staff in the Professional and higher categories.

15. The negotiations on the draft resolution had involved several phases. Initially, a question-and-answer period had been held with the participation of

(Mr. Fontaine Ortiz, Cuba)

representatives of secretariats of various bodies represented in New York. Delegations had had an opportunity to seek clarifications that would enable them to determine what issues could be negotiated. Special issues had then been put forward for negotiations, including the general increase in salaries for staff in the Professional and higher categories as well as a series of measures aimed at meeting the specific needs of staff in the field.

16. Two main concerns had been identified during the consultations: the need to correct disparities in compensation at various duty stations and the need to minimize the financial implications of the draft resolution. Consequently, in accepting the ICSC proposal to increase salaries, it had been decided to implement the decision as of 1 July rather than 1 January 1990. In addition, paragraphs 1 and 2 of section I of the draft resolution referred to the need to absorb a significant portion of the additional costs that would arise if the resolution was adopted. The several references in the draft resolution to executive heads should be interpreted as referring not only to the specialized agencies but to all organizations and bodies in the common system.

17. Although the draft resolution represented a delicate compromise, it was one which all delegations should be able to support. A number of delegations had informed him that they could accept the draft text only provisionally, as they were awaiting further instructions from their capitals. However, as no delegations had come forward with comments, it was his feeling that no major objections to the draft resolution existed. He therefore appealed to the Committee to adopt the text without a vote.

18. Mr. NASSER (Egypt) said his delegation would join in a consensus on the draft resolution, but wished to draw attention to two errors in the Arabic version of the draft text which he hoped that the Secretariat would rectify.

19. Mr. SEIGNEURIN (France) said his delegation was happy to join in the consensus, but wished to draw attention to the fact that, in section I C of the draft resolution, the margin of remuneration was expressed in points in the English version but in percentages in the French version. A standardized format for presentation for such data should be used in the future.

20. The CHAIRMAN assured the representatives of Egypt and France that the Secretariat would take note of their observations.

21. Draft resolution A/C.5/44/L.19 was adopted without a vote.

22. Mr. VILLADSEN (Denmark) said that the justification for an increase in the base salary scale had not been convincingly demonstrated. Denmark granted only modest salary increases to members of its civil service, and expected to see a similar approach taken at the United Nations. Nevertheless, his delegation had joined in the consensus because it supported the other provisions of the draft resolution.

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23. Mr. UPTON (United Kingdom) said that his delegation had joined in the consensus with significant misgivings. ICSC had yet to complete the comprehensive review, of the remuneration structure. Moreover, the stipulation that the costs arising from the Commission's recommendations should be comparable to those arising under the existing system had been disregarded. The constant reference to an across-the-board of 5 per cent was seriously misleading: it had influenced staff expectations and placed the management of the organizations of the common system in a difficult position. The adjustments made in the draft resolution should have been more radical.

24. His delegation's support for the text was based not on the merits of the resolution but on concern for staff morale and its respect for the Secretary-General as chief administrative officer of the Organization. He attached particular importance to the last preambular paragraph and the first two operative paragraphs of section I of the draft resolution, stressing that the measures adopted should not be considered as constituting acquired rights. His delegation expected the increase in costs to be absorbed to the fullest extent possible. It was also his delegation's understanding that the reference to executive heads in paragraph 2 of section I applied to the heads of all organizations within the system.

25. Mr. LADJOUI (Algeria) said that his delegation had accepted the recommendations of ICSC because it believed that a salary increase was fully justified, particularly for staff in hardship duty stations, which were playing an ever more important role in the activities of the Organization. Its acceptance also indicated full support for the Secretary-General in his efforts to improve conditions of service throughout the United Nations system.

26. Mr. INOMATA (Japan) said that his delegation was concerned at the adoption of measures whose exact budgetary implications remained unknown. It was not fully persuaded of the need for a 5 per cent across-the-board increase in salaries but had joined in the consensus decision out of respect for the competence of ICSC and concern to preserve the conditions of service of the staff. It hoped that the increase would be conducive to improved morale and productivity and that the process of recruiting and retaining talented staff and promoting the highest standards of efficiency, competence and integrity would thus be facilitated. Staff members should be reminded, at a time when the financial situation of the Organization was particularly precarious, of the need to maintain a high sense of responsibility in the performance of their duties.

27. While understanding the importance of restoring the actuarial balance of the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund, his delegation had experienced great difficulty in agreeing to an increase of the mandatory age of separation. The problem of the actuarial imbalance should continue to be addressed primarily within the framework of the pension system itself, by means of a review of the levels of pensionable remuneration and rates of contribution to the Pension Fund, taking due account of prevailing conditions in Member States. Future discussions concerning the mandatory age of separation should take full account of the imperative need for organizations of the system to develop and conduct clear, coherent and transparent

(Mr. Inomata, Japan)

personnel policies, as recommended by the Group of High-level Intergovernmental Experts.

28. Ms. BROINOWSKI (Australia) said that her delegation, while joining in the consensus decision, was concerned that no precedent should be established for further increases in net remuneration. It had agreed to a measure which would entail substantial additional costs only on the understanding that a significant portion of those costs would be absorbed; that the comprehensive review would be completed; and that the decisions covered in section I of the resolution would not be regarded as final. Ideally, the comprehensive review should lead to the establishment of a system of remuneration which would operate rationally in response to indicators already in place, thus avoiding the need to resort to any further ex gratia increases.

29. Mr. FONTAINE ORTIZ (Cuba) said that his delegation would have preferred to see the recommendations of ICSC approved in toto, both as a means of supporting the Secretary-General's position as the chief administrative officer of the United Nations and Chairman of the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination and in order to strengthen the morale and productivity of the staff of the common system. However, the draft resolution just adopted met most of its requirements and should lead to an improvement in the work of the Secretariat. It was pleased, in particular, that the draft resolution did not impinge upon the mandated responsibilities of ICSC and thus served to strengthen the important work of the Commission.

AGENDA ITEM 132: UNITED NATIONS PENSION SYSTEM (continued) (A/C.5/44/L.20)

30. Mr. GUPTA (India), introducing draft resolution A/C.5/44/L.20, said that some delegations had, in the course of informal consultations, strongly urged against addressing the actuarial imbalance of the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund by increasing the normal retirement age. Others had expressed the view that the increase formed part of the package proposed by the Pension Board and should be seen in that context. The Fifth Committee would recall that it had already taken a decision in that connection under draft resolution D concerning agenda item 130, contained in document A/C.5/44/L.10. It was his hope that the draft resolution now under consideration, which was the result of an agreement reached after lengthy informal consultations, would be adopted by consensus.

31. Mr. NASSER (Egypt) said that his delegation, which had supported the proposal to increase the normal retirement age, did not consider it appropriate to refer to that increase in the text of the draft resolution under consideration. The impression might otherwise be given that the conditions of service of staff could be adjusted in order to compensate for mistakes in actuarial projections by the Pension Board. His delegation would, in a spirit of co-operation, join in the consensus decision but hoped that the Board would not submit any further requests for an increase in the normal retirement age simply for the purpose of restoring the actuarial balance.

32. Draft resolution A/C.5/44/L.20 was adopted without a vote.

33. Mr. LADJOUZI (Algeria) said that his delegation's position on both the normal retirement age and the mandatory age of separation was well known. It had, however, decided not to insist on that position in the higher interests of the Organization.

AGENDA ITEM 129: SCALE OF ASSESSMENTS FOR THE APPORTIONMENT OF THE EXPENSES OF THE UNITED NATIONS (continued) (A/C.5/44/L.18)

34. Mr. KABIR (Bangladesh), introducing the draft resolutions contained in document A/C.5/44/L.18, reviewed their salient points and said that they represented a delicate compromise achieved after long and difficult negotiations. He therefore hoped that the draft resolutions would be adopted by consensus.

35. Draft resolutions A, B and C contained in document A/C.5/44/L.18 were adopted without a vote.

36. Mr. LADJOUZI (Algeria) said that his delegation looked forward to the completion of the comprehensive review of all aspects of the existing methodology, as requested in General Assembly resolution 43/223 B, with particular reference to the issues addressed in paragraph 3 of that resolution, for submission to the forty-fifth session of the General Assembly. It also understood the intention of draft resolution C as being to ensure greater transparency and fairness in the work and recommendations of the Committee on Contributions.

37. Ms. BERENQUER (Brazil) said that her delegation had joined in the consensus decision in spite of its reservations with respect to draft resolution C. It had done so on the understanding that recommendations in that regard were to be submitted by the Committee on Contributions to the General Assembly. At the same time, it expected the Committee on Contributions to be able to devote the majority of its time and efforts to the substantive work called for in draft resolution A, and in particular, to the specific recommendations requested under paragraph 4.

38. Mr. BAZAN (Chile) said that his delegation wished to emphasize the need for transparency and objectivity in establishing the scale of assessments: any improvement in the methodology would reduce the need for frequent adjustments. It looked forward to receiving the recommendations of the Committee on Contributions at the forty-fifth session.

AGENDA ITEM 124: PROGRAMME PLANNING (continued) (A/C.5/44/L.23)

39. Mr. DANKWA (Ghana), introducing draft resolution A/C.5/44/L.23 and reviewing its salient points, said that it covered all stages of programme planning, from legislative mandate to evaluation. He hoped that it would be adopted without a vote.

40. Draft resolution A/C.5/44/L.23 was adopted without a vote.

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AGENDA ITEM 38: REVIEW OF THE EFFICIENCY OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE AND FINANCIAL FUNCTIONING OF THE UNITED NATIONS (continued) (A/C.5/44/L.24)

41. Mr. VAHER (Canada), introducing the draft resolutions contained in document A/C.5/44/L.24, pointed out that they were closely related to agenda item 123 on the programme budget. Draft resolution A dealt with the implementation of General Assembly resolution 41/213, draft resolution B with the budget process, and draft resolution C with technical innovations. He noted in particular that in draft resolution A, paragraphs 7 to 11 referred to specific recommendations in resolution 41/213 which had been singled out for comment, and paragraphs 13 and 14 to the Secretary-General's co-ordinating role, while paragraphs 15 and 16 laid the groundwork for the future handling of the item by calling for an analytical report assessing the effect of the implementation of resolution 41/213. He felt that consensus should be possible on the draft resolutions as a package.

42. Draft resolutions A, B and C contained in document A/C.5/44/L.24 were adopted without a vote.

43. The CHAIRMAN invited delegations wishing to do so to speak in explanation of position.

44. Ms. GOICOCHEA ESTENOZ (Cuba) said that her delegation was in general agreement with the provisions of the draft resolutions just adopted and would be especially interested in the information requested in draft resolution A, paragraph 14, since it believed that the administrative and budgetary area was one in which the recommendations of the Group of High-level Intergovernmental Experts had not been fully applied. While meaningful reforms had been carried out, the report that was to be submitted pursuant to paragraphs 15 and 16 should allow the General Assembly to assess the overall results of the reform process.

45. Mr. LADJOUZI (Algeria) underscored the importance his Government attached to certain provisions of the draft resolutions, particularly paragraph 15 of draft resolution A calling for an analytical report, and paragraph 6 regarding a balanced and flexible implementation of the recommendations of the Group of High-level Intergovernmental Experts, some of which - such as recommendations 42 and 47 - needed to be implemented immediately. Also, Algeria understood paragraph 14 as in no way restricting the sovereign right of Members to bring up the question of the composition of administrative and budgetary bodies, especially in relation to the geographical distribution of posts.

46. Mr. KINCHEN (United Kingdom) said that it was of critical importance to pursue reform and renewal so that the administrative and budgetary arrangements of the United Nations could command confidence. The matter had been dealt with as early as in the very first session of the General Assembly and it was noteworthy that the current session was the first since then at which such broad agreement had been reached on administrative and budgetary questions. His delegation believed that paragraph 14 of the draft resolution must be considered as a whole and construed in its plain meaning.

47. Mr. IRUMBA (Uganda), stressing the importance of paragraphs 6 and 15 of draft resolution A, said that the analytical report requested in the latter paragraph should make clear the impact of reform - negative and positive - and the manner in which recommendations 41, 46, 47 and 54 of the Group of High-level Intergovernmental Experts had been implemented. Also, it was his understanding that in paragraph 14 the Secretary-General was being asked to give information, and the paragraph was not to be construed as a request for a review of administrative and budgetary bodies.

48. Mr. HAMEDA (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya), referring to the questions regarding Professional staff dealt with in draft resolution A, observed that recommendations 15, 54 and 55 of the Group of High-level Intergovernmental Experts were aimed at political renewal, especially in the stipulations that Under-Secretary-General and Assistant Secretaries-General should not serve for more than 10 years, and that, in accordance with the principle of equitable geographical distribution, no post should be considered the exclusive preserve of any State or group of States.

AGENDA ITEM 123: PROPOSED PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 1990-1991 (continued)
(A/44/7/Add.6; A/C.5/44/L.25)

49. The CHAIRMAN pointed out that the Advisory Committee's report on an optical disc system for the United Nations (A/44/7/Add.6) was covered in section XVI II of the draft resolution on questions relating to the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1990-1991 (A/C.5/44/L.25).

50. Mr. VAHER (Canada), introducing the draft resolution, said that the text had been agreed upon after consultations which had been long and difficult but pervaded by a willingness to achieve consensus. Not since 1945 had a proposed regular budget been adopted without a vote, and the draft resolution should provide the basis for the adoption by consensus of an enabling resolution on the whole programme budget. The draft resolution was an omnibus text which sought to resolve the issues raised by delegations during the first reading. Those issues were sensitive ones, and the text represented a delicate balance. It had been agreed upon in the informal consultations on an ad referendum basis so that delegations could consult their authorities before its adoption. Some delegations had indicated that they had had to exercise great flexibility in order to accept the draft resolution, but no delegation had said that it could not join in the consensus.

51. Mr. CHOWDHURY (Bangladesh) said that recommendation 37 of the Group of High-level Intergovernmental Experts had called for a thorough review of the Department of Public Information (DPI) before any restructuring was undertaken. In the light of that intergovernmental mandate, his delegation had asked in CPC and in the Fifth Committee over the past two years whether such a review had in fact been carried out, but the Secretariat had not given a satisfactory response. It therefore still had serious reservations about the new structure of DPI as reflected in section 27 and about the functioning of DPI, and it noted with regret that its concerns had not been accommodated in draft resolutions A/C.5/44/L.24 and L.25. It had stated at an earlier stage that it would be unable to join in the

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(Mr. Chowdhury, Bangladesh)

consensus but it now understood that a review of the functioning of DPI would be carried out in 1990 and that the Secretary-General would provide an analysis of all aspects of the Department. Therefore, in a spirit of compromise his delegation would not stand in the way of the adoption of the draft resolutions by consensus but it reserved the right to pursue the issue in the Committee on Information, CPC and other forums.

52. Mr. HILLEL (Israel) said that his delegation had reservations about section XII of the draft resolution: since many DPI activities did not reflect the views of all Member States in a balanced manner, it would be wrong to strengthen the information centres.

53. Draft resolution A/C.5/44/L.25 was adopted without a vote.

54. Ms. GOICOHEA ESTENOZ (Cuba) said that her delegation would state its position on the item during the second reading of the proposed programme budget.

55. Mr. GOMEZ (Controller) said that, with regard to section I of the draft resolution as it applied in particular to section 2A.C of the proposed programme budget (Special missions), it was the Secretary-General's understanding that the nature and importance of the programme under that section would require the services of a senior official at the level of Assistant Secretary-General. Nevertheless, given the current circumstances and the serious budgetary constraints, resources were required at the present stage at the level shown in the section.

56. Ms. FRIESSNIGG (Austria) said that her delegation had joined in the consensus on the draft resolution because of an overriding wish for the whole programme budget to be adopted by consensus, thus realizing a basic objective of the new budgetary procedure. However, it had reservations concerning section II. It had supported the Secretary-General's proposals concerning sections 6 and 8 of the proposed programme budget and therefore regretted that the proposed transfers of functions and posts related to global social development issues, especially with respect to the drafting of the Report on the World Social Situation, could not be accepted for the coming biennium. Those proposals would have contributed to the implementation of the decision to make the United Nations Office at Vienna a nucleus for social development activities.

57. The Austrian delegation hoped that the review requested from the Secretary-General in paragraph 2 would be completed as soon as possible and that the proposals requested in paragraph 3 would be comprehensive and address the concerns expressed by Member States.

58. Mr. KARBUCZKY (Hungary) said that his delegation had joined in the consensus on the draft resolution although it had serious difficulties with section II, which did not make clear the rationale behind the rejection of the Secretary-General's proposals on activities related to global social development issues. Those proposals were in fact appropriate and in keeping with the relevant decisions of the General Assembly.

59. Mr. GUPTA (India) said that his delegation was surprised at the statement made by the Controller on behalf of the Secretary-General concerning the level of the post of Chief of Mission of the United Nations Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP). A very different picture was presented in paragraph 2A.70 of the proposed programme budget, which talked of the downward reclassification of the post and therefore reflected the reality of the situation. For nearly 40 years the post had been generally at the P-5 or D-2 level. No change in the circumstances warranted an upgrading, and experience showed that there was no need for it or for the statement by the Controller. Furthermore, no resolution of the General Assembly or Security Council referred to the level of Assistant Secretary-General for the post. Since the statement made by the Controller had not been considered by the Committee and did not form part of its agreement on the item, the Indian delegation could not endorse the Secretary-General's understanding.

60. Ms. ABBAS (Pakistan) said that her delegation had not stood in the way of consensus despite its objections to section I of the draft resolution. Its concerns were well known and it expected that the Secretary-General would continue to exercise his prerogative as chief administrative officer in accordance with the Organization's needs and the high priority which the international community attached to peace-keeping activities. The delegation of Pakistan noted the Secretary-General's understanding concerning section 2A.C. and expected that the necessary appointment would be made in due course.

61. Mr. BOUR (France) said that his delegation welcomed the historic consensus on the draft resolution and hoped that the whole programme budget would be adopted in the same way. It also welcomed the decision reflected in section XVI II to implement the optical disc project, on the understanding that the system in question was the one described in the JIU report and that the General Assembly was giving the Secretary-General a mandate to begin the project immediately. In accordance with the ACABQ recommendation, the French delegation expected that the Secretary-General would find the necessary funds for implementation of the project by redeployment and other savings. In paragraph 3 the phrase "a full implementation of this system" should be translated into French as "pour une mise en oeuvre globale du système".

62. With regard to section IX of the draft resolution, his delegation hoped that, in accordance with the request of the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), as approved by the General Assembly, the Secretary-General would make available the necessary resources for the provision of conference services for the UNEP Committee of Permanent Representatives.

63. Mr. LADJOUZI (Algeria) said that his delegation was generally satisfied with the draft resolution but had reservations concerning sections VIII and XII. It understood paragraph 1 of section VIII to mean that the resources of the Economic Commission for Africa would be increased; it should also be relatively easy for the Secretary-General to prepare a plan to fill the vacant posts. Paragraph 1 of section XII was understood to mean that the Secretary-General should include in the structure of DPI a separate radio unit on questions relating to Palestine in accordance with the recommendations of CPC and the General Assembly.

The meeting rose at 1.15 p.m.