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Official Records

FIFTH COMMITTEE
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at 3 p.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 56th 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.56
18 December 1989

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

The meeting was called to order at 3.20 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 130: PERSONNEL QUESTIONS (continued)

(a) COMPOSITION OF THE SECRETARIAT (continued) (A/C.5/44/L.10)

1. The CHAIRMAN invited the Committee to resume its consideration of the draft resolutions contained in document A/C.5/44/L.10.
2. If there were no objections, he would take it that the Committee wished to adopt draft resolutions in document A/C.5/44/L.10, as orally revised, without a vote.
3. It was so decided.
4. Ms. GOICOHEA ESTENOZ (Cuba) said that her delegation had joined the consensus on the draft resolutions despite its serious reservations on a number of points. During the informal consultations attempts had been made by a number of delegations to disregard the inadequate representation of the developing countries in the Secretariat. In particular, the provisions relating to the employment of women from developing countries were discriminatory. In that connection, it was the hope of her delegation that the references to efficiency, competence and integrity in paragraph 4 of draft resolution A and paragraph 2 of draft resolution C did not imply that candidates from the developing countries, women in particular, did not meet those requirements. Any such suggestion was unacceptable.
5. The world situation had changed radically since the adoption of the Charter of the United Nations. It was the understanding of her delegation that, where applicants for vacancies were equally qualified in all other respects, those from unrepresented countries should be given preference.
6. On the issue of integrating the vacancy management programme, paragraph 7 of draft resolution A could be implemented only after the Secretary-General had fully complied with the terms of paragraph 8.
7. The mandate of the Fifth Committee must be clearly defined, particularly with respect to the issues of the status of women and the prerogatives and immunities of international civil servants, so as not to encroach upon the prerogatives of the Third Committee and the Sixth Committee.
8. Mr. LADJOUZI (Algeria) supported the representative of Cuba, particularly on the issue of the representation of women from developing countries in the Secretariat.
9. For some years past, there had been a lack of coherence in the resolutions adopted by the Fifth Committee on personnel matters and the situation was worsening. The problem arose because there was a lack of specific information

(Mr. Ladjouzi, Algeria)

regarding the employment of women in the Secretariat and also in regard to the vacancy management programme. His delegation hoped that in future complete information on personnel management would be provided to the Fifth Committee so that it could consider such issues in depth and from the correct perspective.

10. His delegation had reservations, in particular, with regard to paragraphs 3 and 4 of draft resolution A, paragraph 2 of draft resolution C and paragraph 1 of draft resolution D. Paragraphs 7 and 8 of draft resolution A addressed the issue of the development of a comprehensive career development plan for all staff by integrating the vacancy management programme. The information requested in paragraph 8 would enable the Committee to see the operation of the promotion system in a transparent manner and would thus permit the General Assembly to correct any anomalies in the rules and criteria governing the promotion of staff and to develop effective recourse procedures.

11. Mr. NASSER (Egypt) said that his delegation had joined in the consensus on the understanding that, in accordance with paragraph 10 of draft resolution A, the Secretary-General would pursue efforts to have the Middle East region specifically defined.

12. Mr. ABDULLAH (Iraq) said that his delegation had joined the consensus but had reservations on paragraph 10 of draft resolution A.

13. Mr. DE CLERCK (Belgium) said that it had become clear during the informal consultations that the General Assembly must define more clearly the respective responsibilities of the Fifth Committee and the Third Committee.

(b) RESPECT FOR THE PRIVILEGES AND IMMUNITIES OF OFFICIALS OF THE UNITED NATIONS AND THE SPECIALIZED AGENCIES AND RELATED ORGANIZATIONS (continued)
(A/C.5/44/L.7 and L.8)

14. Ms. OLDFELD (Sweden), introducing draft resolution A/C.5/44/L.7 and draft decision A/C.5/44/L.8, said that the former was based on previous resolutions on the same subject, particularly General Assembly resolution 43/225. New developments in the situation were referred to in the first preambular paragraph. Paragraph 1 drew attention to the increased number of arrests of United Nations officials.

15. Draft decision A/C.5/44/L.8 reflected the concern which had been expressed during the general debate and would request the Secretary-General to intensify his efforts to make his report on respect for the privileges and immunities of officials of the United Nations and the specialized agencies and related organizations available to Member States well in advance of their consideration of the subject.

16. Her delegation hoped that both the draft resolution and the draft decision could be adopted by consensus.

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17. Mr. NASSER (Egypt) said that his delegation was fully prepared to join in a consensus. However, with regard to the reference in the Secretary-General's report to the collection by the Egyptian authorities of dues on working permits, his Government held that the collection of such dues was not contrary to the general agreements on respect for the privileges and immunities of officials of the United Nations. Nevertheless, the matter was under review in the Egyptian Parliament.

18. Mr. GEBREMEDHIN (Ethiopia) said that his delegation could go along with adoption of the draft resolution and the draft decision. However, before action was taken, his delegation wished to receive replies to the questions it had asked at an earlier meeting. It would also welcome clarification concerning the incorrect information regarding his country contained in the Secretary-General's report on privileges and immunities.

19. Mr. GORITZA (Romania) said that draft resolution A/C.5/44/L.7 must be interpreted in the light of the position of the Romanian delegation on the Secretary-General's report on privileges and immunities (A/C.5/44/11) as presented at the 42nd meeting of the Fifth Committee.

20. The CHAIRMAN, referring to the points raised by the representative of Ethiopia said that the Legal Counsel had informed the Bureau that the representative of the staff had made a statement before the Fifth Committee after the latter had authorized him to do so in pursuance of a resolution of the General Assembly. Any delegation could have raised a point of order at the meeting in question to protest remarks made by the staff representative. No delegation had done so at that time and the staff representative had therefore continued his statement. The views of delegations on the matter would, of course, be reflected fully in the official records.

21. The CHAIRMAN said that, if there were no objections, he would take it that the Committee wished to adopt draft resolution A/C.5/44/L.7 and draft decision A/C.5/44/L.8 without a vote.

22. It was so decided.

AGENDA ITEM 123: PROPOSED PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 1990-1991 (continued)

General Assembly resolution on unforeseen and extraordinary expenses (continued)
(A/44/7/Add.5)

23. The CHAIRMAN said that, if he heard no objection, he would take it that the Fifth Committee wished to recommend that the General Assembly adopt the draft resolution put forward by the Advisory Committee in its report (A/44/7/Add.5).

24. It was so decided.

25. Ms. BERENQUER (Brazil) said that her delegation had joined in the consensus decision on the understanding that the Advisory Committee would keep the question of limits on the commitment authority granted to the Secretary-General under review, with a view to determining whether a cumulative limit should be imposed in addition to the limit "per decision" which it had recommended.

Extrabudgetary resources (continued) (A/44/7/Add.7)

26. The CHAIRMAN said that, if he heard no objection, he would take it that the Fifth Committee wished to approve the conclusions and recommendations of the Advisory Committee contained in its report (A/44/7/Add.7).

27. It was so decided.

AGENDA ITEM 136: FINANCING OF THE UNITED NATIONS TRANSITION ASSISTANCE GROUP
(A/44/856 and A/44/875)

28. Mr. AHTISAARI (Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Namibia) said that the United Nations, through its Transition Assistance Group in Namibia (UNTAG), had once again demonstrated that it could run an efficient and economical operation provided that it was given the means to do so by Member States. The performance report on the financing of UNTAG in document A/44/856 showed estimated expenditures of \$366.9 million as at 31 March 1990, against an original appropriation of \$416.1 million. It thus projected a saving of some \$49.2 million.

29. Part III of the report listed the voluntary contributions which had been received from Governments in cash and in kind. The voluntary contributions received in kind covered items which had been originally budgeted; they thus had a direct impact on the projected savings. The total value of such contributions was \$10.1 million.

30. The original financial projections had been based on the assumption that all military personnel would stay in Namibia for 386 days. Instead, it had been possible to deploy the main body of each contingent only in late April, thus resulting in an underexpenditure compared to the estimate.

31. Paragraph 3 of the report indicated that certain components of UNTAG were expected to be reduced before the end of the 12-month mandate of the mission, producing savings which were reflected in the projected surplus. A saving of \$7.2 million had been achieved through the local purchase of pre-fabricated structures and caravans. Savings in air operations amounted to \$21 million. Moreover, no expenditures had been incurred by UNTAG against the appropriation of \$15 million to cover the cost of the operation of airports in the northern part of the Territory.

32. International and locally recruited staff salary costs had been lower than estimated. Eleven out of 32 districts could be catered for from regional centres with reduced personnel.

(Mr. Ahtisaari)

33. Certain expenditure headings reflected over-runs as compared with the original estimates. Most of the over-runs were associated with the need for additional human resources as UNTAG operations proceeded, including an extra 1,000 civilian police monitors to monitor the activities of the South West African Police, and extra election supervisors provided by Governments and from the United Nations system. The civilian police reinforcements had required the provision of additional equipment and facilities. Additional costs had also been included under the general heading of civilian staff costs.

34. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) said that the Advisory Committee's comments on the expenditure performance of UNTAG were contained in paragraphs 2 and 3 of its report (A/44/875). The Committee felt that the Secretary-General's reports on the financing of UNTAG and other peace-keeping operations should be presented more clearly and hoped that the views expressed in paragraphs 4 to 8 of its report would be taken into account in the compilation of future reports.

35. The Advisory Committee agreed in principle with the Secretary-General's plan concerning the disposition of UNTAG property upon completion of its mandate. However, it recommended that any agreement between the United Nations and the duly recognized Government of Namibia for the transfer of equipment be submitted to the Advisory Committee for its review prior to signature. It also recommended that it be provided, at its spring 1990 session, with a precise schedule of the equipment to be placed in reserve and the related value of each category of equipment and that the transfer of equipment referred to in annex III, paragraph 4 (b), of the Secretary-General's report be effected with its prior concurrence.

36. Recognizing that a number of uncertainties existed regarding the actual costs of liquidating the operation, the Advisory Committee believed that the Secretary-General's estimate of \$6,469,000 was reasonable. It recommended that those costs be met from the appropriations already approved for UNTAG and concurred with the Secretary-General's view that the General Assembly should defer taking any further action that might be called for in consequence of the performance report until its forty-fifth session.

AGENDA ITEM 137: ADMINISTRATIVE AND BUDGETARY ASPECTS OF THE FINANCING OF THE UNITED NATIONS PEACE-KEEPING OPERATIONS (continued) (A/C.5/44/45 and A/44/868)

37. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) said that paragraphs 2 and 3 of the annex to the Advisory Committee's report (A/44/868) dealt with the Secretary-General's intention to establish a senior planning and monitoring group for the purpose of planning and monitoring of all peace-keeping operations, together with a subgroup on logistics planning. The Advisory Committee welcomed that proposal, which it felt would address some of the concerns raised in its earlier report (A/44/725). The proposal to establish a separate account for support of peace-making and peace-keeping operations, while attractive, involved a number of technical problems, some of which were discussed in paragraph 6 of the annex to the Advisory Committee's report. In particular, the

(Mr. Mselle)

means of future financing had not yet been precisely worked out, and there was a need for a mechanism by which the account could be scrutinized by the Advisory Committee and the General Assembly.

38. For various reasons outlined in paragraphs 7 and 8 of the annex to its report, the Advisory Committee was unable to endorse the Secretary-General's proposal to establish a support post at the level of Assistant Secretary-General in the Office for Special Political Affairs. However, it welcomed the proposal to streamline budget services for good offices, peace-making and peace-keeping and looked forward to receiving further information in that regard.

39. Mr. CONMY (Ireland) wholeheartedly endorsed the establishment of a senior planning and monitoring group, as well as the Secretary-General's proposed arrangements for the financing, backstopping and support of peace-making and peace-keeping operations. The establishment of an additional post at the Assistant Secretary-General level was also fully justified. While fully supportive of the continued reform process at the United Nations, his delegation was nevertheless aware that the Organization must be able to respond flexibly to the evolving demands placed upon it.

40. Ms. FRIESSNIGG (Austria) said that her delegation would also welcome the establishment of a senior planning and monitoring group, together with a subgroup on logistics planning. It noted with interest the proposal to establish an account for support of peace-making and peace-keeping operations and looked forward to further elaboration of the proposal, as requested by the Advisory Committee. It fully supported the intention of the Secretary-General to strengthen the Office for Special Political Affairs and understood that a post at the Assistant Secretary-General level had existed until 1986, since which time an enormous number of new peace-keeping operations had been launched.

41. Ms. OLDFELT HJERTONSSON (Sweden), speaking on behalf of the five Nordic countries, said that the establishment of a senior planning and monitoring group would enhance the effectiveness of the Secretariat in the important area of peace-keeping operations, while its logistics planning subgroup would create a sound basis for co-ordinated contingency planning and the achievement of economies of scale. The proposal to create a separate account, while interesting, should be more fully developed and resubmitted at a later stage. There was, however, every justification for establishing a new senior post in the Office for Special Political Affairs, and her delegation hoped that the necessary financial arrangements could be made at the earliest opportunity.

42. Mr. CONMY (Ireland), noting that informal consultations on agenda item 137 were continuing, requested that the Committee defer a decision on the recommendations of the Advisory Committee until those consultations were concluded.

43. The CHAIRMAN said that a decision would be deferred until a later meeting.

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AGENDA ITEMS 40 AND 125: CURRENT FINANCIAL CRISIS OF THE UNITED NATIONS AND FINANCIAL EMERGENCY OF THE UNITED NATIONS (A/44/857 and A/44/873; A/C.5/44/27)

44. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) said that the report of the Secretary-General on the current financial crisis of the United Nations (A/44/857) indicated that, as at 8 December 1989, \$261.9 million, or 33.7 per cent of the regular budget assessments of \$777 million, remained unpaid. The arrears totalled \$267.3 million, while total assessed contributions outstanding amounted to \$529.2 million. That situation indicated that the United Nations was continuing to face considerable financial uncertainty. The combined short-term deficit had decreased, as noted in paragraph 6 of document A/C.5/44/27.

45. The report of the Secretary-General on the financial emergency of the United Nations (A/C.5/44/27) also raised the question of an increase in the Working Capital Fund. As outlined in paragraph 29, the Secretary-General's proposal was that the Fund should be increased from its present level of \$100 million to a level of not less than \$200 million for the biennium 1990-1991.

46. The Advisory Committee had addressed the question of the Fund and requested the Secretary-General to submit proposals which would enable it to submit definitive recommendations as to the actual level of such an increase and the means of financing it. The Secretary-General had also been requested to provide alternatives, which were briefly summarized in paragraph 11 of document A/44/873.

47. The Advisory Committee had considered the options and concluded that the analysis submitted in the report of the Secretary-General did not provide sufficient basis for the Advisory Committee to formulate and submit definitive recommendations concerning increasing the level of the Working Capital Fund and modalities for financing such an increase. The Advisory Committee therefore proposed that the matter should be deferred to the forty-fifth session of the General Assembly. The Advisory Committee would consider the question at its session to be held in spring 1990 and prepare a comprehensive report attempting to address all major aspects of the issue and submit definitive recommendations on the subject. He therefore recommended that no action should be taken.

48. Mr. GUPTA (India) drew attention to the report of the Secretary-General in document A/C.5/44/27, which indicated that the short-term deficit, while showing a small improvement over 1988, remained quite high, as did the percentage of unpaid assessed contributions to peace-keeping operations. As noted in paragraph 9 of the report, the brunt of the effect of the unpaid contributions had been borne chiefly by those Member States which had contributed troops. While all Member States had an obligation to pay their assessed contributions to the regular budget and peace-keeping operations on time, he also believed that the Secretary-General had a responsibility to make timely payments to Member States which contributed troops or provided other assistance to peace-keeping operations. The Secretary-General's report contained no information on the period for which Member States had been reimbursed for the provision of troops to peace-keeping operations. That was an important omission which should be corrected in the future.

(Mr. Gupta, India)

49. In recent years, and particularly in 1988, the General Assembly had requested the Secretary-General to approach the Governments of Member States with a view to encouraging the expeditious payment in full of all assessed contributions. He would like to know what efforts had been made by the Secretary-General in that regard, and whether any communications had been addressed to those Member States which had not paid their assessed contributions for various United Nations peace-keeping operations, including the United Nations Emergency Force (1956) and the United Nations Operation in the Congo.

50. He endorsed the option outlined in paragraph 39 of the report, which would encourage Member States to pay their contributions in full and on time.

51. Mr. ELLEFSEN (Norway), speaking on behalf of the Nordic countries, said that those countries were deeply concerned that a prolongation of the financial crisis would threaten the stability and orderly functioning of the Organization. The figures in documents A/44/857 and A/C.5/44/27 spoke for themselves. One third of the 1989 assessed contributions were still outstanding. Only 72 countries had fulfilled their obligations, as compared with 79 at the same time in 1988. Twenty-two Member States had made no payments at all, compared to 14 Member States the previous year. The general decline in payment discipline had led to an unprecedented shortfall under the regular budget, estimated at \$456 million by the end of 1989, of which one third was attributable to one Member State. The total deficit, including unpaid contributions to peace-keeping operations, amounted to more than \$1 billion.

52. That situation was in stark contrast to the optimism voiced earlier in the current session with regard to the role and prospects of the United Nations in the building of world peace. It was indeed regrettable that the hopeful signs of a fresh start might again be threatened by a shortage of financial resources. The only real and lasting solution to the financial crisis was the payment by all Member States of their assessed contributions in full and on time.

53. In 1988, the Organization had welcomed the announced intention of the largest contributor to pay its assessments for 1989 in full and to work out a plan for repayment of its arrears. Regrettably, neither of those intentions had been fulfilled to date. All members of the United Nations had accepted their obligations under the Charter and must stand prepared to share the expenses.

54. With regard to the various suggestions made by the Secretary-General for remedying the difficult cash-flow situation of the Organization, the Nordic countries had already touched upon the question of the need for an increase in the Working Capital Fund, and favoured apportioning the amount of the increase among all Member States as part of their assessment. The Nordic countries could also support the procedure outlined in paragraphs 35 and 39 of document A/C.5/44/27.

(Mr. Ellefsen, Norway)

55. As an expression of their belief in the Organization, the Nordic countries intended, as in previous years, to pay their assessed contributions for 1990 at the beginning of January.

The meeting rose at 5.25 p.m.