General Assembly

Forty-fifth session

PROPOSED MEDIUM-TERM PLAN FOR THE PERIOD 1992-1997*

MAJOR PROGRAMME X.   ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES

Programme 43.   General services

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*   The present document contains programme 43 of the proposed medium-term plan for the period 1992-1997. The complete medium-term plan will subsequently be issued in final printed form as Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-fifth Session, Supplement No. 6 (A/45/6/Rev.1).

PROGRAMME 43.   GENERAL SERVICES

A.   Programme

1.   General orientation

43.1   The legislative authority for the present programme derives from General
Assembly resolution 13 (I) of 13 February 1946, in which the Conference and General
Services was designated as a principal unit of the Secretariat.   Secretary-General
Bulletin ST/SGB/Organization, P (III), dated January 1974, established the Office
of General Services for the purpose of implementing the programme at Headquarters
and describes its responsibilities.   Within their respective areas, corresponding
organizational units at United Nations offices away from Headquarters have been
assigned comparable responsibilities as and when they were established.

43.2   The primary objective of the programme is to provide essential support
services to substantive programmes and conference and other common services
programmes.   That support takes the form of security and safety services,
electronic support, including telecommunications, field operations support,
procurement and transportation services, facilities management, and archives and
records management services.   While general services are of a continuing nature,
they need to be adjusted to the changing requirements of the substantive and other
programmes that they are designed to support.   That is apparent when the particular
problems to be addressed in each of those areas are considered at the outset of the
medium-term plan period.

43.3   As part of the efforts to widen further knowledge and appreciation of the
Organization, as well as its goals and methods of work, the public at large has
wide access to United Nations premises at Headquarters and other locations.   At the
same time, delegates, visiting dignitaries and staff must have adequate security
and safety in the performance of their functions for the Organization.   Reconciling
those two objectives in an environment that can easily become a target in a world
increasingly prone to acts of violence and terrorism constitutes the main problem
that security and safety services have to address.

43.4   Advances in technological innovations in the 1980s have allowed the
Organization to meet an increased workload without prejudice to the implementation
of General Assembly resolution 41/213 of 19 December 1986, in which the Assembly
mandated, inter alia, a reduction in personnel and changes in the organizational
structure of the Secretariat.   The increased use of office automation equipment,
such as word processors, microcomputers and other new technologies, in the
electronic and communication fields has facilitated the work of the Organization.
In particular, the expanded use of new technologies, such as high-speed facsimile
machines, satellite earth stations and electronic transmission of data has allowed
a faster response by the Organization to the needs of peace-keeping operations and
related activities.   Rapid developments in technology, however, create a constant
need to update existing equipment.   Furthermore, in order to develop the necessary
applications, skills that differ from those readily available in the Secretariat
are often required, with a resulting reliance on external expertise.   Also, the
absence of a comprehensive training programme seriously limits the use and benefits
to be derived from technological innovations.

43.5 The significant and unprecedented expansion of peace-keeping and related
activities through the establishment of a number of field missions during recent
years has strained the ability of the Secretariat to provide the services required
and to administer the increased number of peace-keeping operations with the degree
of attention that those demand. Difficulties have been encountered, owing to the
necessary unpredictable timing of new operations and the particularly short
lead-time allowed for their establishment. A wide range of concerns needs to be
addressed if administrative and logistical support to peace-keeping operations is
to be provided in the future in a timely, complete, efficient and cost-effective
manner.

43.6 Another continuing challenge is to ensure that the United Nations obtains the
required goods and services on time and from the lowest acceptable bidders in areas
of procurement and transportation.

43.7 Over the past few years, the impact of the current financial crisis on major
maintenance has increased the need to renovate and modernize existing facilities.
Aging structures and technical installations in most of the older buildings have
suffered in recent years from a piecemeal approach to major maintenance,
alterations and improvement. It is now imperative to establish a major maintenance
programme capable of bringing electrical and mechanical systems to optimum
performance levels, introducing modern energy-saving systems, adapting existing
facilities to new uses as the Organization's needs change, and, most importantly,
preventing further deterioration of United Nations facilities. An overall
integrated facilities management policy for the principal properties needs to be
formulated and executed to meet functional demands, owing to the magnitude of
properties currently occupied and maintained by the Organization and those under
construction.

43.8 With regard to archives and records management, the rapid evolution of
information and communication technologies is gradually making reliance on
paper-based information obsolete. New methods for preserving the full content of
records and archival materials in machine readable files, including the optical
disc, must be introduced to provide access to fragile archive documents without the
necessity of handling those documents.

2. Overall strategy

43.9 Activities under the programme will be carried out by the Office of General
Services at Headquarters. Within their respective spheres, the organizational
units of United Nations offices away from Headquarters and at the regional
commissions undertaking general services support will also carry out the activities
under the programme. Those units include, inter alia, the General Services Service
within the Division of Administration at the United Nations Office at Geneva and
the Division of Administrative Services and Common Services at the United Nations
Office at Vienna, Common Services, Nairobi, and the divisions of administration at
the regional commissions. In carrying out those functions, a co-ordinated and
systematic approach to the problems of common concerns related to security and
safety, electronic support, procurement and transportation and facilities
management will be pursued. The Office of General Services at Headquarters will
continue to develop policies and provide guidance to overseas offices on policies
and practices concerning those issues.

43.10 In the area of security and safety services, staff training and increased reliance on modern technology are expected to generate a higher quality of services and best use of limited staff resources in the face of increasing demands.

43.11 Electronic support will be geared toward the provision of a technological environment of broad applicability to many substantive programmes. The upgrading of the telecommunications capacity of the Organization and the installation of an organization-wide electronic mail system will receive priority. To ensure organization-wide compatibility and thus maintain maximum effectiveness, the policy consisting in the establishment of global standards for hardware, software and communications will be continued and expanded. While reliance on outside expertise will continue for projects of a one-time nature, the internal development of which would be costly and unproductive, increased emphasis will be placed on staff training to ensure that skills necessary for ongoing work are kept up to date.

43.12 For field operations support, it is expected that appropriate arrangements will be authorized to set in place reserve stocks of commonly used equipment and stores for peace-keeping operations. Subject to adequate funding, procedures will be established to ensure that an available cadre of core personnel skilled and trained in the required disciplines can be mobilized quickly into new mission locations.

43.13 In the area of procurement and transportation, efforts will be pursued to establish a centralized procurement system for all United Nations offices and the specialized agencies, with a view to increasing potential for price reduction and improving delivery of items.

43.14 An integrated and co-ordinated global facilities management policy for premises owned and leased by the United Nations at Headquarters, Geneva, Vienna, Nairobi, The Hague and at the seat of the regional commissions at Addis Ababa, Baghdad, Bangkok and Santiago will be formulated and implemented during the medium-term plan period, including the establishment of long-range programmes for major maintenance, alterations and improvements at those locations. Modernization of space accommodation and technical support systems in line with current requirements for meeting and programme activities, inter-linked communications and energy conservation are the objectives for the medium-term plan period.

43.15 Records management programmes based on new technologies will be developed to permit systematic storage and retrieval of information. The possibility of implementing new technologies such as optical disk storage will continue to be explored with a view to determining the most suitable technologies for United Nations applications.

3. Subprogramme structure and priorities

43.16 The following six subprogrammes are proposed under the programme:

Subprogramme 1. Security and safety

Subprogramme 2. Electronic support services

Subprogramme 3. Field operations support

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Subprogramme 4. Commercial, procurement and transportation services

Subprogramme 5. Facilities management, maintenance and construction

Subprogramme 6. Archives and records management

Priority will be given to subprogramme 3 (Field operations support) and subprogramme 5 (Facilities management, maintenance and construction).

B. Subprogrammes

SUBPROGRAMME 1. SECURITY AND SAFETY

(a) Objectives

43.17 The legislative authority of the subprogramme derives from Secretary-General Bulletin ST/SGB/Organization, section P (III).

43.18 The subprogramme will continue to aim at ensuring the security and safety of visiting dignitaries, delegates, staff and visitors as well as the security and safety of properties within the complex of United Nations offices both at Headquarters (Secretariat building and outside premises) and at other locations. The objective is to create a safe and secure environment in which the Organization can carry out its work effectively. To that end, periodic inspections of offices away from Headquarters will be undertaken in order to ensure that uniform procedures are in effect. Training programmes for security officers at those offices will be initiated and rotation of security staff between stations will be encouraged, when required.

(b) Course of action of the Secretariat

43.19 The subprogramme is carried out by the Security and Safety Service of the Office of General Services at Headquarters, corresponding units in the divisions of administration at locations away from Headquarters and Common Services, Nairobi.

43.20 In the course of the medium-term plan period, in addition to continuing activities, the following improvement programmes will take place:

(a) Mandatory training courses will be organized in the areas of investigation, patrolling and first-aid and in the related fields of safety, such as fire emergencies and electronic security systems, including closed circuit television alarms;

(b) Physical training facilities for security and safety services will be improved;

(c) The infrastructure for security services will be rationalized and modernized with a view to achieving savings in manpower and improvements in efficiency;

(d) At Headquarters, a complex-wide access control system will be installed, following a feasibility study on the extent of its usefulness and its adaptability to the specific needs of the Organization. Experience in the increased use of

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access control systems by hospitals, large corporations and business entities indicates that it not only provides a higher level of access control with its positive security and safety implications but also has features that have proven extremely useful to management;

(e) The pass and identification systems will be upgraded;

(f) Further expansion of the closed circuit TV system will continue during the plan period at Headquarters. Mobile cameras will be equipped with time recorders to facilitate the task of surveillance.

SUBPROGRAMME 2. ELECTRONIC SUPPORT SERVICES

(a) Objectives

43.21 The legislative authority for the subprogramme derives from General Assembly resolution 2611 (XXIV) of 16 December 1969 and Secretary-General Bulletin ST/SGB/Organization P (VI), dated March 1976.

43.22 The activities under the subprogramme will aim at providing efficient, reliable and cost-effective mainframe computer operations to all offices in the Organization whose work programme requires computer support, assisting programme offices in the development of electronic applications necessary to fulfil their programme of activities, providing an efficient and reliable electronic communications network globally, not only for the United Nations but also for the specialized agencies, participating in inter-agency programmes relating to electronic services, such as the Advisory Committee for Co-ordination of Information Systems and the International Computing Centre, and exploring new technologies and their applicability to the work of the Organization.

43.23 The office automation programme, which has been developed at Headquarters over the past decade, has not progressed at the same pace at other duty stations. Arrangements will have to be made to provide those offices with facilities and capabilities similar to those available at Headquarters and a replacement programme for office automation will need to be developed and implemented at those locations. Compatibility of hardware and software will need to be ensured. Interfaces between computer configurations at different duty stations should allow direct input to the facsimile and telex switches.

(b) Course of action of the Secretariat

43.24 In the implementation of General Assembly resolution 41/213, the activities of the subprogramme, which were previously under the direct responsibility of the Under-Secretary-General for Administration and Management, have been transferred to the Office of General Services.

43.25 In the course of the medium-term plan period, the following activities will be carried out by the Office of General Services and in particular its Electronic Services Division at Headquarters, the Division of Administration at the United Nations Office at Geneva and the regional commissions, the Division of Administrative Services and Common Services at the United Nations Office at Vienna and Common Services, Nairobi:

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(a)   In the area of office automation:

(i)   Expansion of the current programme whereby microcomputers, capable of
        word and data-processing functions, are installed in all offices in which
        they are required and linked via local areas networks (LAN) capable of
        communicating with larger processors and of performing functions, such as
        electronic mail, word processing, desk-top publishing and data base
        spreadsheet;

(ii)   Replacement or upgrading mainframe computers;

(iii) Assistance to substantive programmes in replacing obsolete data bases, so
        that access can be provided to a large number of users;

(iv) Monitoring the information systems in order to ensure that the data
        communications network is fully functional and expanding as the
        integrated management information system is implemented and as additional
        agencies use the facilities;

(b)   In the area of telecommunications:

(i)   Upgrading of telecommunications capabilities to provide world wide
        electronic communications services and network facilities at
        Headquarters, the major duty stations, peace-keeping operations and
        specialized agencies;

(ii)   Enhancement of telephone communications to accommodate data transmission.

43.26 A shift in the major activities of the applications analysts and programmers
will begin, centring on consulting rather than on systems maintenance. Systems
maintenance will, thus, be transferred to user departments. In that way, a smaller
staff will be able to provide design and implementation assistance to more
programmes. Modern development tools and techniques, such as computer-aided
software engineering (CASE) technology and prototyping, will be introduced.
Initial steps will be taken to expand access to data bases, not only world wide.
To that end, new data base management packages will be installed for
administrative-type data and for text. Computer security will be enhanced.

SUBPROGRAMME 3.   FIELD OPERATIONS SUPPORT

(a) General orientation

43.27 The legislative authority of the subprogramme derives from Secretary-General
Bulletin ST/SGB/Organization, section P (III). Its purpose is the support of
peace-keeping operations and other field missions established by the Security
Council or by the Secretary-General.

43.28 The general aim of the subprogramme is to provide managerial,
administrative, financial, personnel and logistics support to peace-keeping
operations, special missions, relief operations and other missions as the
Secretary-General may decide. In the execution of those functions, close
co-operation and co-ordination is maintained with the Office for Special Political
Affairs and the divisions of administration of offices away from Headquarters.

43.29 A specific objective during the period under review will be to rationalize, regularize and streamline procedures for the start-up of new peace-keeping operations and other field missions, while, at the same time, enhancing the capacity to maintain an acceptable level of ongoing activity within the subprogramme in the support and monitoring of all the field operations being administered.

(b) **Course of action of the Secretariat**

43.30 By General Assembly resolution 41/213, the administrative functions of the Office for Field Operational and External Support Activities were transferred to the Department of Administration and Management and, in the reorganization that followed, field operations was re-established as a division within the Office of General Services.

43.31 In the course of the medium-term plan period, the Office of General Services and, in particular, its Field Operations Division will pursue measures to develop and maintain a high degree of operational readiness and capability to mount new peace-keeping operations and other missions in response to resolutions and decisions aimed at preserving and maintaining peace and security in troubled areas of the world.

43.32 In order to satisfy the more immediate operational requirements associated with the establishment of new missions, the Field Operations Division will undertake the following activities:

     (a) Identify a qualified pool of specialized civilian personnel, both individuals and organized units, that may be called upon at short notice to supplement core staff;

     (b) Establish a reserve stock of commonly-used equipment and supplies and develop an inventory of resources available at short notice from Member States;

     (c) Review current arrangements for the provision of technical and administrative services with a view to identifying alternative methods of providing such services.

43.33 In response to the increasingly complex nature of peace-keeping operations and the introduction of more sophisticated technologies, the Field Operations Division will undertake the following activities:

     (a) Develop training programmes to enhance the skills of staff already on board, as well as for the orientation of new staff, both military and civilian;

     (b) Develop an expanded and more technologically-advanced communications capability supported by more highly trained communications personnel for both inter- and intra-mission communications;

     (c) Pursue the concept of standardization, with a view to ensuring optimum compatibility between missions and to facilitate procurement and maintenance;

(d) Within the general framework of the integrated management information system, develop and expand computer capability for the missions and the Field Operations Division, with a view to integrating and standardising data and text-processing capabilities to ensure interchangeability of information.

SUBPROGRAMME 4. COMMERCIAL, PROCUREMENT AND TRANSPORTATION SERVICES

(a) Objectives

43.34 The legislative authority of the subprogramme derives from Secretary-General bulletins ST/SGB/Organization, section P (III) and ST/SGB/Organization, section B.

43.35 The major aim of the subprogramme is to plan, provide, manage and administer the commercial, procurement and transportation activities and support services for other programmes and for peace-keeping operations in the most efficient and cost-effective manner.

43.36 Greater co-ordination between the procurement programmes of the various substantive offices is needed to meet the latter's needs quickly and effectively. New technologies have yet to be applied systematically to all aspects of the Organization's procurement and travel-related operations.

(b) Course of action of the Secretariat

43.37 In the course of the medium-term plan period, the Office of General Services at Headquarters and, in particular, its Commercial, Purchase and Transportation Service, as well as the corresponding units at locations away from Headquarters, will continue their efforts for:

(a) The establishment of a centralized procurement system in the United Nations;

(b) The linking of the materials management information system, a new system package introduced at Headquarters that allows greater efficiency and productivity in the procurement process, to third-party computer systems using the electronic data interchange, which will enable fast and accurate exchange of purchase orders and freight-forwarding information between the United Nations and the vendors;

(c) The application of the materials management information system in the procurement activities of other offices;

(d) The issuance of the United Nations laissez-passer as a machine-readable document in accordance with the rules and procedures formulated by the International Civil Aviation Organization on the standardization of verification of passports by national authorities;

(e) The computerization, in conjunction with the implementation of the integrated management information system, of travel authorizations, claims and other travel-related internal documents;

(f) The establishment of a dedicated system linking all duty stations in order to avoid duplication of work and to facilitate the issuance, renewal and cancellation of travel authorizations.

SUBPROGRAMME 5. FACILITIES MANAGEMENT, MAINTENANCE AND CONSTRUCTION

(a) Objectives

43.38 The legislative authority for the subprogramme derives from General Assembly resolutions 39/236 and 37/14; and Secretary-General bulletins ST/SGB/Organization, section P (III) and ST/SGB/Organization, section B.

43.39 The objectives of the subprogramme are: to provide effective and efficient planning, management, maintenance and operation for all existing physical facilities of the Organization and electronic communication expertise for all meeting facilities; to plan, in particular for offices away from Headquarters, new facilities and technical installations required for intergovernmental and inter-agency meetings and conferences and for other mandated activities of the Organization; and to provide an efficient, reliable and cost-effective means of transmitting official correspondence and material by providing a pouch and postal service world wide and a messenger service within each United Nations complex.

43.40 Advances in the sciences of building and technical support systems have accelerated in the past decade. While the Organization has begun to incorporate many of those changes, the programme of maintenance, modernization and improvements was affected by the necessity to defer previously approved projects during the medium-term plan for the period 1992-1997. The value and number of existing properties of the Organization and those under construction require the development of data bases for all major properties; guidelines on space standards; a review of long-range space requirements and master-development plans at all locations; technical and management manuals for the maintenance of buildings; and the formulation of long-range maintenance programmes at principal locations and its implementation. Many of the activities of the subprogramme should be directed toward facilitating significant operational improvements in either one or more of the continuing activities of the subprogramme or other activities under the major programme of general services.

(b) Course of action of the Secretariat

43.41 In the course of the medium-term plan period, the Office of General Services at Headquarters and the Overseas Property Management and Construction Unit and the Building Management Service, in particular, acting in close co-operation with its counterparts at offices away from Headquarters, will undertake the following activities:

(a) Develop an integrated and co-ordinated management policy for the principal facilities owned by the Organization, including the establishment of comprehensive data bases for all major properties and long-range programmes for major maintenance and the documentation of standards and guidelines for the maintenance and operation of facilities. That will require the modernization of operating and administrative procedures for facilities management, including the computerization of preventive maintenance and operating procedures, and the establishment of computer-based graphic and data base systems for computer-assisted facilities management;

(b) Continue the modernization and improvements of existing facilities, which will include: the renovation and restoration of building exteriors and surrounding grounds; the updating of building systems for energy efficiency and safety; the

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expansion of the programme of replacement of elevators and of building automation and telephone systems; and the introduction of more efficient space planning concepts;

(c) Implement projects for capital improvements and new construction, which will include management and direction of new construction and major alterations financed by the Organization or provided by host Governments and other entities; and conduct studies on the cost-effectiveness of leased properties;

(d) Continue, at the Headquarters complex, the modernization of premises and the reconfiguration of office space, using open space-planning concepts to improve work environment and to increase space utilization, thus facilitating the accommodation at the Headquarters complex of the archives and records management, which is currently housed in rented premises in Park Avenue South;

(e) Review, on a regular basis with a view to improving their efficiency and effectiveness, the following activities: conference room electronic support, including radio and television broadcast operations; heating, ventilating, air-conditioning; architectural and engineering services; reception and information services; electrical maintenance; elevator operation and maintenance; cleaning services; office space planning; property management and control; facilities operation and repair; and mail management.

SUBPROGRAMME 6. ARCHIVES AND RECORDS MANAGEMENT

(a) Objectives

43.42 The legislative authority of the subprogramme derives from Secretary-General Bulletin ST/SGB/Organization, section P (III).

43.43 The major aim of the subprogramme is to obtain the most efficient and economical use of the Organization's records resources. The Office of General Services provides guidance on all phases of the management of paper-based and electronic records; preserves and services archive materials; and provides advice to other offices on matters pertaining to current and archival records. A specific objective for the medium-term plan period is to integrate the archives and records management activities into an automated United Nations information system as an element in the information resources management system.

(b) Course of action of the Secretariat

43.44 In the course of the medium-term plan period, a number of continuing activities will be carried out by the Office of General Services and the Archives and Records Management Section, in particular, as well as by the corresponding units at offices away from Headquarters. Those activities include monitoring and controlling of the records management systems; maintaining custody of non-current records and archives of the United Nations; providing reference services to external and internal users; carrying out the arrangement and description of permanent records and their transfer from originating offices; and maintaining custody of the sound archives and providing reference services to users.

43.45 In addition, the Office of General Services will undertake the following activities:

(a) Continue to explore the possibility of introducing optical disk and other technologies for automated information storage and retrieval to selected information process;

(b) Utilize local area networks to increase exchange and sharing of information;

(c) Develop guidelines and directives under the new life-cycle management concept to ensure that departments and offices assume records management responsibilities; undertake records surveys of paper-based and electronic records, with a view to establishing a comprehensive disposition programme; and introduce automated control of records throughout their life-cycle;

(d) Participate in the development of an information-management process that stores electronic information for record keeping on electronic media, instead of converting those to paper;

(e) Undertake a study of all United Nations offices away from Headquarters on the feasibility of concentrating all non-current records and archives in a central repository.

43.46 In carrying out those activities, the subprogramme will interface closely with the Electronic Services Division to enhance the systematic and orderly development and introduction of new technologies.