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PROPOSED PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 1980-1981

Arabic language services

Financial implications of the draft resolution
contained in document A/C.5/34/L.16

Statement of the Secretary-General in accordance with rule 53
of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly

1. Under the terms of the draft resolution contained in document A/C.5/34/L.16 the General Assembly would request the Secretary-General to bring Arabic language services to an equal level with those provided in respect of the other official and working languages of the General Assembly and its Main Committees through the adoption of effective measures, including:

(a) The immediate reinforcement of the Arabic translation establishment at Headquarters by a sufficient number of permanent posts so as to ensure the translation of all pre-session, in-session and post-session documentation of the General Assembly and its Main Committees within the specified time-limits and simultaneously with their issuance in the other official languages;

(b) The establishment at Headquarters of an Arabic interpretation unit with a sufficient number of permanent posts to provide interpretation services to the General Assembly and its Main Committees.

Arabic documentation

2. A number of documents 1/ has recently been submitted in respect of the provision of Arabic documentation for the General Assembly and its Main Committees, including a conference room paper (A/C.5/34/CRP.11) prepared for the Fifth Committee.

1/ A/C.5/34/28, A/C.5/34/L.9, and A/C.5/33/L.49.

3. Discussion has centered on the uneven flow of the General Assembly workload, the difficulties that have been experienced in recruiting fully qualified temporary assistance staff during General Assembly sessions and the excess staff capacity that would be generated during the balance of the year if the staff required to meet the General Assembly workload were to be appointed on a permanent basis.

4. It is the Secretary-General's understanding of the draft resolution that it is the intention that any strengthening of the existing Arabic language establishment which would be involved, should be by means of the addition of established posts, rather than by temporary assistance during certain periods only.

5. As was indicated in conference room paper A/C.5/34/CRP.11, a solution along these lines would require the establishment of 62 posts, breaking down by type and by grade as follows:

Translation	26	(22 P-3 and 4 P-2/1)
Revision	10	(2 P-5 and 8 P-4)
Typing	26	(1 G-5 and 25 G-4/1)
Total	62	

The estimated cost of these 62 new posts on the basis of the standard salary rates on a full biennial basis would be \$3,958,000. For the biennium 1980-1981, the application of the standard deduction for new posts to allow for delays in recruitment would reduce the requirements under section 29A to a total of \$2,231,700 under established posts (\$1,738,300) and common staff costs (\$493,400).

6. In this connexion, it should be noted that while a competitive examination for Arabic translation staff is already scheduled to take place early in 1980, it is considered that it will be extremely difficult to recruit such a large number of qualified candidates promptly. Consequently, it is unlikely that all the new posts would be filled by the next session of the General Assembly.

7. The estimated requirements of \$2,231,700 under section 29A in respect of salaries and common staff costs would be reduced by \$275,000 as the result of the elimination of temporary assistance (4 translators, 2 revisers and 6 typists) currently provided for in the proposed 1980-1981 programme budget for the General Assembly. Any further savings which might arise from reductions in the need for Arabic temporary assistance for the servicing of special conferences and meetings would be taken into account in the context of the consolidated statement on conference servicing requirements to be submitted towards the end of the current session which will indicate the net additional conference servicing requirements in the light of the 1980 calendar of conferences as finally approved by the General Assembly.

8. An additional provision of \$471,100 would be needed under section 28D in respect of common services costs. This amount, which includes a non-recurrent amount of \$156,600, comprises \$294,400 for accommodation, \$97,200 for office furniture and equipment and \$79,500 for other expenses, including communications.

9. The impact of the full production of documents, records, annexes and supplements by the Publishing Division within a considerably shorter period is difficult to predict at this time. The Secretary-General would intend to defer a possible request for further temporary assistance in respect of composition, reproduction and distribution until after it has been possible to assess fully the effect of the concentration of work during the General Assembly period.

Arabic interpretation

10. The draft resolution also calls for the establishment at Headquarters of an Arabic interpretation unit.

11. A total of 24 Arabic interpreters is required throughout the session in order to service the General Assembly and its Main Committees at the current level. Since the staffing table of the Interpretation Unit at Geneva already contains 17 permanent posts on which the General Assembly has first call, it would be necessary to establish an Arabic interpretation unit in New York consisting of seven posts (1 P-5, 3 P-4 and 3 P-3).

12. The full biennial cost for these seven posts would be \$589,900. However, the application of the standard deduction for delays in initial recruitment would result in the need for an appropriation under section 29A for the biennium 1980-1981 in the amount of only \$310,500 in respect of established posts (\$235,000) and common staff costs (\$75,000). In addition, a further provision of \$55,000 would be required under section 28D in respect of common services costs, including a non-recurrent amount of \$16,800.

13. According to the calendar of conferences as foreseen at this stage, during 29 weeks of 1980 there will be a need at Headquarters for fewer than seven Arabic interpreters. On the other hand, savings might be made under temporary assistance in respect of special conferences and meetings for which Arabic is required. This aspect will also be taken into account in the context of the consolidated statement referred to in paragraph 7 above.

Summary

14. Should the General Assembly adopt the draft resolution contained in document A/C.5/34/L.16, additional appropriations of the total amount of \$2,793,300 would be required under sections 29A (\$2,267,200) and 28D (\$526,100). A further provision of \$494,900 would be required for staff assessment under section 31, offset by an increase in the same amount in the estimates of income from staff assessment under income section 1.
