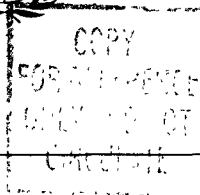


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THIRTY-EIGHTH SESSION

Official Records*



FIFTH COMMITTEE
46th meeting
held on
Wednesday, 23 November 1983
at 10.30 a.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 46th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. KUYAMA (Japan)

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

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The meeting was called to order at 10.55 a.m.

AGENDA ITEMS 109 and 110: PROPOSED PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 1984-1985 AND PROGRAMME PLANNING (continued) (A/38/3 (Part II) and Corr.1, A/38/6, A/38/7, A/38/38; A/C.5/38/2 and Corr.1; A/38/7/Add.3; A/38/172 and Add.1)

Expansion of the conference facilities of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific at Bangkok (A/C.5/38/34, A/38/7/Add.5)

1. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) said that ACABQ had considered the report of the Secretary-General on the expansion of the conference facilities of ESCAP at Bangkok (A/C.5/38/34). The report which he was presenting (A/38/7/Add.5) contained the relevant recommendations of ACABQ. The proposals on construction had been submitted to ACABQ in 1982 in accordance with the procedures outlined in paragraphs 13 or 14 of the ACABQ report (A/36/643) on the report of JIU on building construction procedures (A/36/297) submitted to the General Assembly at its thirty-sixth session.
2. After it had studied the Secretary-General's proposals ACABQ had set forth its conclusions in a letter, dated 4 October 1983, addressed to the Secretary-General. As indicated in that letter and in the body of document A/38/7/Add.5, ACABQ agreed with the Secretary-General that there was a need for a study to be made concerning additional conference facilities at ESCAP headquarters. It had therefore authorized the Secretary-General to submit to the current session of the General Assembly a proposal for an architectural and engineering study so that the Assembly could decide on the scope of the work to be done and the construction costs involved.
3. The Secretary-General had requested an appropriation of \$400,000 for the study and ACABQ was recommending approval of that amount in paragraph 6 of its report. In so doing, ACABQ had not taken a final decision on the number of conference rooms to be made available to ESCAP. It had suggested several alternatives to the Secretary-General which he might wish to include in the architectural and engineering study.
4. The second topic in document A/38/7/Add.5 concerned major maintenance and alterations and improvements. The amount indicated in paragraph 7 (\$374,200) had been temporarily deleted from the Secretary-General's initial estimates for 1984-1985 on the recommendation of ACABQ, which had considered that it should be discussed at the same time as the Secretary-General's report on the expansion of conference facilities for ESCAP. After reviewing the amount requested by the Secretary-General for major maintenance and alterations and improvements, ACABQ had concluded that it was necessary whatever the proposals for expanding the conference facilities might be. Major maintenance, alterations and improvements constituted an ongoing programme which should not be delayed.
5. ACABQ therefore recommended that the amount which it had temporarily deleted from the initial estimates be reinstated and that a total of \$774,200 be appropriated under section 32, as indicated in paragraph 8 of document A/38/7/Add.5.

6. Mr. MA Longde (China) said that his delegation had carefully studied the report of the Secretary-General on the expansion of the conference facilities of ESCAP and the related report of the Advisory Committee. It felt that the expansion of the conference facilities of ESCAP and the major maintenance and alterations and improvements were necessary. The current conference facilities were highly inadequate, to the extent that more than 60 per cent of meetings had to be held outside Bangkok, which hampered the smooth running of ESCAP and wasted resources. His delegation therefore urged the Committee to approve the appropriations requested by the Secretary-General and the relevant recommendations of the Advisory Committee.

7. Mr. PEDERSEN (Canada) said that he had read with great interest the report of the Secretary-General and the related report of the Advisory Committee. The conference facilities at Bangkok should be maintained and repaired; his delegation therefore fully supported the Secretary-General's proposal on the subject. His delegation did, however, have some reservations on the Advisory Committee's recommendation concerning the architectural and engineering study. The Secretary-General indicated in paragraph 14 of his report that, in 1982, 46 per cent of conferences had been held outside of Bangkok and that, with more adequate facilities in ESCAP, major savings could have been made. He also pointed out in paragraph 27 that, in the past, the annual sessions of the Commission had occasionally been held away from Bangkok in various countries of the region, entailing considerable costs both for the host countries and for the Organization, and that, to a certain extent it was precisely because of the inadequate facilities for holding the annual sessions at Bangkok that various member States of ESCAP had extended such invitations in the past. The Secretary-General did not, however, guarantee that, should the General Assembly decide to set up additional conference facilities at ESCAP, no more conferences would be held away from headquarters. In view of the considerable amount of money that such facilities would cost the Organization, his delegation expected all annual sessions of ESCAP to be held at headquarters if the expansion work was undertaken and, on that condition, was prepared to support the recommendation of the Advisory Committee to approve the appropriation requested for the architectural and engineering study. In the interests of economy, his delegation would like the study to be undertaken with a modular design in mind.

8. Mr. GIDLEY (United States of America), expressing his delegation's gratitude to the Thai Government for having made available to the Organization land adjacent to the existing ESCAP buildings, said that there were two aspects to the question of the conference facilities of the Commission. All Member States knew that the major maintenance, alteration and improvement of the existing buildings, for which the Secretary-General had requested an appropriation of \$374,200, should go ahead, and the Advisory Committee had recommended that that appropriation should be approved. As to the preliminary study on the expansion of the conference facilities, his delegation had noted with great concern that paragraph 25 of the report of the Secretary-General referred to "overdue increases in the office space". That reference was not to conference rooms but to offices. Yet the Advisory Committee had clearly stated that the architectural and engineering study should deal only with the expansion of conference facilities. It would also have

(Mr. Gidley, United States)

been useful if the Secretary-General had promised to ensure that ESCAP sessions would all take place at headquarters once the Commission's facilities had been expanded. In conclusion, he said that the expansion of the delegate's lounge, dining facilities and parking areas mentioned in the table at the end of paragraph 26 of the report of the Secretary-General would entail prohibitive expense, and he therefore requested that the appropriation of \$400,000 for the architectural and engineering study should be put to a vote.

9. Mr. MURRAY (United Kingdom) endorsed the comments of previous speakers and said that the appropriation of \$400,000 requested for the architectural and engineering study might be only the first of a number of much larger outlays. He also feared that staffing levels might increase with the space available, thus leading to additional expenditure on staff. His delegation would also like to know the final cost of the construction, and it wondered what rent would be paid by the users of the proposed accommodation, the estimated rental income being relatively small. In conclusion, he noted that there was no guarantee that there would not be a large number of conferences held away from ESCAP headquarters, even if the construction took place.

10. Mr. LAHLOU (Morocco) said that he was grateful to the Thai Government for its offer to make available to the United Nations additional land for the construction of new conference facilities for ESCAP, and his delegation supported the recommendations made by the Advisory Committee with respect to those facilities, particularly the recommendations concerning the architectural and engineering study. It did, however, feel that the United Nations should beware of adopting too limited a perspective, which might lead to technical difficulties and exorbitant expense, and that the study should deal not only with the architectural aspects but also with the way in which the conference rooms would be used and the support facilities that would be established parallel to the expansion of the premises.

11. Mr. TIMBRELL (Assistant Secretary-General for General Services), replying to the questions raised by the representative of the United Kingdom, said that he could not at the moment indicate the estimated cost of the construction work for various reasons, particularly because the United Nations did not yet have the plans at hand and did not know the requirements or the cost of demolishing existing buildings. Indeed, one of the purposes of the preliminary study was to provide estimates of the cost of the expansion, which would be dependent on the alternative designs considered. As to the rental to be paid by organizations of the United Nations system occupying premises within the ESCAP complex, he said that the rent collected in cities such as Bangkok and Addis Ababa included not only operating costs but also a component related to the initial cost of construction, so that the users contributed retroactively to those costs. It should be noted that the estimated income, for the biennium 1984-1985, from the rental of United Nations premises at Bangkok to a number of specialized agencies and connected bodies had decreased in relation to the previous biennium because one of those bodies had moved elsewhere.

12. Although he could not guarantee that ESCAP would not meet away from its

(Mr. Timbrell)

headquarters - that was the responsibility of the Committee on Conferences and the deliberative organs - he thought that the expansion of conference facilities at Bangkok would help settle the matter. As for the concerns of the representative of Morocco, he referred to paragraph 6 of the report of the Advisory Committee, according to which the preliminary study to be undertaken would include estimates and assessments of support facilities necessitated by the expansion of conference facilities.

13. The CHAIRMAN recalled that the United States representative had requested a vote on the proposed appropriation of \$400,000 for an architectural and engineering study.

14. Mr. TRUSCOTT (Australia), explaining his vote before the vote, said that in spite of its earlier reservations because of the size of the amount requested, his delegation would vote for the Advisory Committee's recommendation owing to the importance which it attached to ESCAP activities. The efforts of the Executive Secretary of ESCAP to increase the efficiency of the Commission deserved support and the construction of more comfortable permanent facilities would contribute to the success of those efforts.

15. Mr. KHALEVINSKY (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that his delegation attached great importance to the efficiency of ESCAP activities. However, it regarded the proposal for the architectural and engineering study and the related cost estimates as presumptuous. It had the impression that provision was made for superfluties and some points were not clear in the evaluation of the necessary facilities. It would therefore vote against the amount of \$400,000 requested under section 32.

16. The recommendation of the Advisory Committee for the inclusion of a provision of \$400,000 in section 32 to defray the cost of a preliminary architectural and engineering study for new construction at ESCAP was approved by 74 votes to 12, with 4 abstentions.

17. Mrs. de HEDERVARY (Belgium) said that her delegation was not opposed to the expansion of ESCAP conference facilities at Bangkok but that it would not be able to vote for the appropriation of funds for such a purpose as long as there were resolutions of the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly authorizing the regional commissions to hold their meetings away from headquarters. She therefore hoped that those resolutions would be rescinded.

18. Mrs. DEREGIBUS (Argentina) explained that she had cast an affirmative vote but that the green light of the electronic voting machine had failed to come on.

19. Mr. MERIEUX (France) said that his delegation was in favour of expanding the ESCAP premises but had abstained from voting because the cost estimate for the architectural and engineering study was too high.

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20. Mr. PEDERSEN (Canada) said that his delegation had cast an affirmative vote on the understanding, first, that the provisions authorizing the regional economic commissions to hold their annual sessions away from headquarters would be reconsidered before the decision on the actual construction of the facilities was taken and, second, that, if the expansion was decided on, the host country would be required to finance the cost of all ESCAP meetings held away from headquarters.

21. Mr. TAKASU (Japan) stressed that his delegation attached the greatest importance to the sound functioning of ESCAP and that, after reading the relevant reports, it was persuaded of the need to expand the conference facilities. It had therefore voted for the Advisory Committee's recommendation. It considered none the less that it was necessary to select the most economical plan for the construction of new conference facilities and to make rational use of the existing facilities.

22. Mr. GODFREY (New Zealand) said that his delegation had voted for the Advisory Committee's recommendation because it supported ESCAP activities and regarded as reasonable the proposal for a preliminary study; that did not, however, imply any commitment on its part regarding the actual scale of the expansion. It would be for the General Assembly to take a decision concerning construction, on the basis of the results of the preliminary study.

23. His delegation had already, at the current session, expressed its concern at the practice whereby the cost of meetings of the regional commissions held away from headquarters was borne by the United Nations. If the expansion was carried out, it expected that practice to be abandoned and the host country to finance the cost of any ESCAP meeting held away from headquarters.

24. He drew attention to the second paragraph of the letter from the Chairman of the Advisory Committee to the Secretary-General (A/38/7/Add.5, annex), in which it was stated that: "... the architectural and engineering study should be independently carried out in accordance with established United Nations procedures as has been the case in all other recent major construction projects".

25. Mr. HOLBORN (Federal Republic of Germany) said that his delegation had voted not to include an amount of \$400,000 in section 32 because it felt that it was unwarranted to spend such a large sum on a study of the kind envisaged when the Fifth Committee was supposed to exercise the utmost restraint.

26. Mr. AKHTAR (Bangladesh) said that he would have voted for the provision if he had been present for the vote, because he was convinced of the need to expand ESCAP premises and firmly supported the observations made in the Secretary-General's report.

27. On the proposal of the United States representative, a vote was taken on the recommendation of the Advisory Committee for an additional appropriation of \$774,200 under section 32 for the biennium 1984-1985.

28. The recommendation of the Advisory Committee for an appropriation of \$774,200 under section 32 for the biennium 1984-1985 was approved by 81 votes to 1, with 11 abstentions.

29. The CHAIRMAN said that, if there was no objection, he would take it that the Committee wished to recommend to the General Assembly that it take note of the Secretary-General's report on expansion of the conference facilities of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific at Bangkok (A/C.5/38/34), that it concur in the observations made by the Advisory Committee in its report (A/38/7/Add.5) and that it accept with appreciation the offer of the Government of Thailand to make available to the United Nations additional land for the construction of new conference facilities at ESCAP.

30. It was so decided.

Revised estimates under section 27 (Yearbook of the United Nations) (continued)
(A/C.5/38/38; A/38/7/Add.8; A/C.5/38/L.11)

31. Mr. FORAN (Controller), replying to the request for additional information made by the United States representative at the 44th meeting, said that 6,000 copies of the Yearbook of the United Nations had been published annually since 1980, when the 1977 edition had been published; 5,200 copies of that edition had been sold and 755 distributed free of charge, at an estimated cost of \$116,000 as against estimated net earnings from sales of \$143,600. In 1981, 4,600 copies of the 1978 edition had been sold and 800 distributed free of charge, and the estimated publication cost had amounted to \$123,000 as against net sales earnings estimated at \$152,700. In 1982, 3,800 copies of the 1979 edition had been sold and 800 distributed free of charge, and the estimated publication cost had been \$122,200 as against net sales earnings estimated at \$151,400. In 1983, 4,710 copies of the 1980 edition had thus far been sold and 900 distributed free of charge, and the estimated publication cost was \$151,500 as against net sales earnings estimated at \$187,600. Those amounts did not include the staff costs for the Yearbook charged against the Department of Public Information, which were estimated at approximately \$400,000 a year.

32. Mr. LAHLOU (Morocco) proposed two amendments to draft decision A/C.5/38/L.11, submitted by the United States delegation, comprising the deletion of the third preambular paragraph and the replacement, in paragraph 1, of the words "with a view to developing a new format which reduces its complexity, length and cost" by "in order to make it more usable and accessible".

33. Mr. MICHALSKI (United States of America) said that his delegation had no objection to the amendments proposed by the representative of Morocco.

34. Mrs. de HEDERVARY (Belgium) asked why the representative of Morocco wished to delete the third preambular paragraph of the draft decision under consideration.

35. Mr. LAHLOU (Morocco) said that he had proposed the deletion of that paragraph since he saw no reason to extend by six months the delay in publication of the Yearbook which had been decided on in 1976.

36. The CHAIRMAN invited the Committee to take a decision on the recommendation of the Advisory Committee for an additional appropriation of \$150,400 under section 27 for the biennium 1984-1985.

37. Mr. MICHALSKI (United States of America) said that his delegation wished the Advisory Committee's recommendation to be put to a vote.

38. The Advisory Committee's recommendation was approved by 76 votes to 17, with 1 abstention.

39. Mr. PEDERSEN (Canada), speaking in explanation of vote after the vote, said that his delegation agreed with the Advisory Committee that merely to add staff to the Yearbook Unit was to attempt to cope with the results of the problem without getting at its cause and that effective means had to be devised to ensure that submissions from departments and offices were timely and well prepared. His delegation also wondered whether the current format of the Yearbook was the best which could be devised, and welcomed the fact that the Secretary-General was requested in paragraph 1 of the draft decision submitted by the United States delegation, to undertake a comprehensive review of the matter.

40. Mrs. de HEDERVARY (Belgium) said that her delegation was perfectly willing to accept the draft decision submitted by the United States and the amendments proposed by Morocco, which should lead to some improvement in the regrettable situation which had prevailed for some years concerning the Yearbook.

41. The CHAIRMAN said that, if he heard no objection, he would take it that the Fifth Committee wished to recommend to the General Assembly that it should take note of the report of the Secretary-General in document A/C.5/38/38 and of the related report of the Advisory Committee (A/38/7/Add.8), and that it should endorse the conclusions contained in the Advisory Committee's report.

42. It was so decided.

43. The CHAIRMAN said that, if he heard no objection, he would take it that the Committee wished to adopt the draft decision in document A/C.5/38/L.11, as amended by the Moroccan delegation.

44. It was so decided.

Administrative and financial implications of draft resolution A submitted by the Committee on Conferences in document A/38/32 under agenda item 114 (Pattern of conferences) (A/38/7/Add.10; A/C.5/38/31)

45. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions), introducing the eleventh report of the Advisory Committee, concerning the statement in document A/C.5/38/31, said that the Advisory Committee had recommended acceptance of the Secretary-General's estimates of the additional resources required for ECLA and ECA, but had felt that the additional requirements indicated for ESCAP should be slightly reduced for the reasons given in paragraphs 6 and 7 of its report.

46. Mr. MICHALSKI (United States of America) said that his delegation took strong exception to the implications for the programme budget of the Economic and Social Council's decision to approve the proposed changes of venue for the regular sessions of ECA, ESCAP and ECLA. The way in which those implications had been submitted to the Fifth Committee was equally regrettable. The matter should have been referred to the Second Committee before the Fifth Committee considered its administrative and budgetary aspects.

47. While General Assembly resolution 31/140, in section I, paragraph 4 (f), stated that regular sessions of the regional commissions could be held away from their respective headquarters, his delegation did not understand the argument that had been put forward by some delegations that the provisions of paragraph 5 were not applicable to the case in point. The exceptions provided for in paragraphs 4 (a) to (e) were quite specific: the organs authorized to meet away from their headquarters had to meet at other United Nations headquarters cities, which was not so in the case of the exception provided for in paragraph 4 (f). Since that exception was based on by political and not technical grounds, Member States should not be expected to defray the resulting costs. The general principle contained in paragraph 5, to the effect that a Government which invited a body to hold a session away from its headquarters should defray the additional costs involved, remained perfectly valid, and it was unfortunate that it had not been observed in the case before the Committee. Furthermore, with regard to the decision taken to construct new conference facilities at Bangkok and the decision which the General Assembly might take to expand conference facilities at ECA, his delegation felt that the Economic and Social Council should reconsider its application of the exception provided for in paragraph 4 (f).

48. Mr. DITZ (Austria) said that the changes concerning the venue for the regular sessions of the regional commissions had been approved by the Economic and Social Council, and that their financial implications were clearly within the competence of the Fifth Committee, which his delegation deemed fully empowered to take a decision on the matter.

49. The CHAIRMAN suggested that the Committee should take a decision on the recommendation of the Advisory Committee that it should inform the General Assembly that, should it adopt draft resolution A recommended by the Committee on Conferences, additional amounts of \$611,900 (comprising \$181,300 under section 11, \$143,300 under section 12 and \$287,300 under section 13) would have to be appropriated for the biennium 1984-1985.

50. Mr. MICHALSKI (United States of America) requested that the Advisory Committee's recommendation should be put to a vote.

51. Mr. KHALEVINSKY (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics), speaking in explanation of vote before the vote, said that as his delegation had already spoken on the substance of that complex matter, he would simply point out that it was clear from General Assembly resolution 31/140, part I, paragraph 5 that host countries were required to defray the additional costs involved. His delegation would therefore vote against the appropriation requested.

52. Miss ZONICLE (Bahamas) said that her delegation would abstain from the vote on the Advisory Committee's recommendation since the way in which General Assembly resolution 31/140 was to be applied was still not clear to her.

53. Mr. GODFREY (New Zealand) said that his delegation would vote against the proposed appropriation because it believed that the host country should pay additional costs incurred. It was nevertheless grateful to the Advisory Committee for having reviewed the amounts requested and welcomed the fact that it had recommended a slight reduction in one of the cases examined.

54. Mr. TAKASU (Japan) pointed out that the exception provided for in General Assembly resolution 31/140 was not new, since a similar one had been provided for in resolution 2609 (XXIV), paragraph 9 (i). The practice followed by the General Assembly since then was known to all, and the meetings of the regional commissions should not be confused with those of other United Nations bodies for which the General Assembly did not authorize exceptions.

55. The Advisory Committee's recommendation was approved by 69 votes to 19, with 12 abstentions.

56. Mrs. van DRUNEN LITTEL (Netherlands) explained that the Netherlands delegation had voted against the Advisory Committee's recommendation because it believed that sessions of the regional commissions should be held at their established headquarters, and that, when there was a departure from that rule, the host country should assume any additional costs.

57. Mr. PEDERSEN (Canada) said that his delegation, also, had voted against the Advisory Committee's recommendation because the situation had changed considerably since 1976, when General Assembly resolution 31/140 was adopted; new conference facilities had been, or were shortly to be installed at a number of headquarters. He added that the Canadian delegation intended to propose at the current session that the General Assembly should request the Economic and Social Council to review the exceptions provided for in resolution 31/140 in the light of the changed situation.

58. Mr. ROY (India) said that he had been absent when the vote was taken on the Advisory Committee's recommendation but if he had been present he would have voted for it.

59. Mr. HOLBORN (Federal Republic of Germany) said that his delegation had voted against the Advisory Committee's recommendation because it thought it was inconsistent to appropriate funds for expanding conference facilities on the one hand, and for holding sessions of regional commissions away from their headquarters on the other.

60. Mrs. DORSET (Trinidad and Tobago) said that her delegation had voted for the Advisory Committee's recommendation on the basis of General Assembly resolution 31/140, part I, paragraph 4 (f). Nevertheless, she looked forward with interest to the proposal which the Canadian delegation intended to submit in that connection.

61. Mr. TOMMO MONTHE (United Republic of Cameroon) said that many of the facilities that had been referred to were still in the project stage and that it was understandable that in certain cases the regional commissions were obliged to hold their sessions away from their headquarters. His delegation had therefore voted in favour of the Advisory Committee's recommendation.

62. Mr. MURRAY (United Kingdom) said that the Advisory Committee's eleventh report had been distributed only in the course of the meeting and he hoped that that annoying situation would not occur again.

First reading (continued)

Section 31. Staff assessment

Income section 1. Income from staff assessment

63. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) said that the Secretary-General's initial estimate for section 31 had been \$227,511,100, whereas the estimate for income section 1 had been \$229,787,900. In its first report ACABQ had recommended a reduction of \$1,817,300 in the total for staff assessment, an equivalent amount being deducted from income section 1. The decisions adopted by the Fifth Committee on the basis of the various recommendations of ACABQ concerning in particular budget sections 2, 3, 9 and 28 would, however, necessitate a supplementary estimate of \$63,800. ACABQ was therefore recommending an appropriation of \$225,757,600 for staff assessment. The estimated income from staff assessment would amount to \$228,034,400, the difference between the two figures being attributable to the supplementary income in income section 3 (revenue-producing activities).

64. The CHAIRMAN asked the Committee to decide on section 31 as a whole.

65. The recommendation of the Advisory Committee for an appropriation in the amount of \$225,757,600 under section 31 for the biennium 1984-1985 was approved in first reading without a vote.

66. The CHAIRMAN asked the Committee to decide on income section 1 (income from staff assessment).

67. The estimate of \$228,034,400 recommended by the Advisory Committee under income section 1 for the biennium 1984-1985 was approved in first reading without a vote.

AGENDA ITEM 116: PERSONNEL QUESTIONS (continued) (A/38/347 and Corr.1; A/C.5/38/10 and Corr.1; A/C.5/38/17 and Corr.1 and Add.1; A/C.5/38/18 and A/C.5/38/29)

68. Mr. NKOUNKOU (Congo) said that he would speak on two points: composition of the Secretariat, and respect for the privileges and immunities of officials of the United Nations and the specialized agencies and related organizations. The principle of equitable geographical distribution was a source of problems and

(Mr. Nkounkou, Congo)

divergencies, sometimes difficult to reconcile, between delegations and the Secretary-General. It would appear, from the introductory statement of the Assistant Secretary-General for Personnel Services, that the Secretary-General himself did not have all that was needed to enable him to deal with the matter effectively. His delegation believed that countries which were already overrepresented or whose nationals had occupied certain high-level posts should agree to give them up, particularly when their nationals reached retirement age. To allow for the widest possible political and social spectrum to be represented in the Secretariat, on the basis of competence, of course, a system of rotation should be installed in order to dispel the impression that some posts were "private property". His delegation also criticized the tendency to accord so much importance to Anglo-Saxon university degrees and observed that the pride of place given to the English language in the Organization was a source of unfairness in the selection of candidates.

69. Despite the Secretary-General's efforts and although they had produced some improvement, Africa was still underrepresented in posts at the decision-making level, as could be seen from table 11 in the report on the composition of the Secretariat (A/38/347). His country considered itself very much underrepresented in the Secretariat, particularly in respect of senior posts. Moreover, there seemed to have been very little improvement in the situation of women in the Secretariat and they were still subject to discrimination in appointment and promotion. His delegation noted that the proportion of women in posts subject to geographical distribution had increased by only one-tenth of one per cent, from 22.2 per cent in 1982 to 22.3 per cent in 1983. At that rate, it would take 27 years to reach the target set by the relevant General Assembly resolutions. He could not understand why in certain offices, departments and committees of the Secretariat there was not a single woman in a post at the level of D-1 and above.

70. With regard to the privileges and immunities of officials of the United Nations, his delegation noted that despite the Secretary-General's efforts, attacks on the security and independence of those officials continued to increase in number. The attitude of Governments which flouted their obligations under international treaties and arrested or detained United Nations officials, pretending to be unaware of their obligations towards them, could only be condemned. At the same time international civil servants must be reminded that their status did not absolve them from observing the laws of the host country, and their rights and privileges were not unlimited. The People's Republic of the Congo, as host to a number of regional co-operation bodies and United Nations system organizations, intended to continue to respect the privileges and immunities of United Nations officials posted in its territory and to provide them with all necessary facilities, provided that they avoided, as far as possible, interfering in its internal affairs. His delegation could assure the Secretary-General of its complete support in his efforts to improve the climate of co-operation between host countries and United Nations officials.

71. Mr. KUTTNER (United States of America) said that the arrest and imprisonment of United Nations staff members was an issue of major concern to his delegation.

/...

(Mr. Kuttner, United States)

There were Secretariat officials imprisoned, detained or missing in Afghanistan, Burma, Ethiopia, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Poland and Syria. His delegation strongly supported the conclusions in the Secretary-General's report that a reversal of the deterioration of the principles governing the privileges and immunities of United Nations personnel was essential; there was an established law and practice and it should be fully observed by all Member States. His delegation regretted that there had been no developments in the cases of Alicia Wesolowska or Percy Stulz, despite intervention by personal representatives of the Secretary-General. It was also concerned about the detention of UNRWA staff members by Governments in the Middle East. His Government believed that the responsible authorities should take prompt action to ensure rapid adjudication of the cases of staff members thus detained, who should have the right to legal representation and to visits by representatives of the Red Cross and the Secretary-General.

72. The United States delegation looked with favour on the establishment by the Secretary-General of an interdepartmental advisory committee which would report directly to him on a case-by-case basis. The designation of a co-ordinator to act as a focal point and the dispatch of a special representative to the country concerned were actions of great importance. It might also be very helpful if the Secretary-General would co-opt certain members of permanent missions to the United Nations to serve on the interdepartmental advisory committee and other appropriate bodies. The United States called on the Secretary-General not only to monitor the situation but to ensure that arrested and detained staff members in all countries were accorded the rights due to them as officials of the United Nations. He called on the international community to pressure the States which had detained United Nations personnel to release them without further delay.

73. With regard to the composition of the Secretariat, his delegation noted that as a result of the Secretary-General's efforts to recruit staff from unrepresented and underrepresented countries, the number of Member States which had no staff members at all in the Secretariat had declined from 17 to 14. It was regrettable however that the recruitment of young people for junior professional positions from countries which had reached their desirable range had virtually ceased, thus depriving the Organization of a potential source of renewal. His delegation was also concerned at the length of time it took the Office of Personnel Services to reach a decision on the selection of candidates after the closing date in the vacancy notice; some candidates had waited for more than a year for a decision. Better co-ordination between the Office of Personnel Services, the office to which the candidate would be attached and the Appointment and Promotion Board should produce speedier action. The Office of Personnel Services should fix an adequate period of time for the selection of candidates and see to it that the necessary procedures were completed within that time.

74. The United States delegation was convinced that human resources planning was very important. The creation of a system-wide computerized roster of skills and of individuals possessing those skills would facilitate recruitment and career development planning. The ICSC had already begun work on a human resources

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(Mr. Kuttner, United States)

planning system and his delegation looked forward with interest to the progress report to be submitted by Mr. Akwei to the General Assembly at its thirty-ninth session.

75. He drew attention to the slow progress made in the recruitment and promotion of women. During the past year, only 44 women had been recruited to posts subject to geographical distribution, the majority of them to P-2 and P-3 posts. However, he noted with satisfaction that 7 additional women had been promoted to the D-1 level, making a total of 21 women at that level. His delegation was particularly concerned, however, at the discrimination practised against women who took the internal examination for promotion to the Professional category. He believed it was unjust for the Office of Personnel Services to assign women thus promoted to posts away from Headquarters in the regional economic commissions or in developing countries, when many of them were long-time employees of the United Nations in New York and had family responsibilities. There were too many cases where promotion was linked to a transfer away from Headquarters. His delegation believed that the Office of Personnel Services should reconsider its position on such transfers and should make a strong effort to take account of the family responsibilities of staff members who had passed the promotion examination.

76. His delegation considered the grievance machinery at the United Nations cumbersome and time-consuming, and it urged the Secretary-General to designate an ombudsman, assisted by a small staff of volunteers, to try to solve problems at their very beginning. Noting that the present division of staff into Professional and General Service categories had created a caste system and was one of the greatest sources of conflict within the Secretariat, he wondered whether a unified personnel structure, as in the United States Federal Civil Service, might not be considered. It would be extremely useful if the ICSC were to conduct a study of the advantages and disadvantages of a unified personnel structure and report thereon to the General Assembly at its next session. Finally, he wished to stress the very important role of the United Nations Child Care Centre and the need for the centre to support itself financially.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.