



**SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 31st 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 3.25 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 109: PROPOSED PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 1984-1985 (continued)  
(A/38/6, A/38/7 and Add.4)

AGENDA ITEM 110: PROGRAMME PLANNING (continued)

(a) REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE FOR PROGRAMME AND CO-ORDINATION (continued) (A/38/38)

(b) REPORTS OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (continued) (A/C.5/38/28)

First reading (continued)

Section 27. Public information (continued)

1. Mr. AKASHI (Under-Secretary-General for Public Information), replying to a question asked at the previous meeting by the representative of France, said that 12 of the 29 feature and short films included in subprogramme 2, information in-depth, were co-productions of 30 minutes duration on national questions concerning women and development (A/38/6, section 27, programme element 2.7 (viii)). Those 12 films, which were financed from outside the regular budget through voluntary contributions, formed part of the series entitled "Agenda for a Small Planet". It was an extremely cost-effective programme since although production was entrusted to an international consortium of television studios and producers the content of the films accorded with a conceptual and moral framework established by the United Nations. In general, the films were produced in English and then adapted to other official languages. Those remarks also applied to the 17 other films.

2. Mr. ELIASHIV (Israel), referring to programme element 2.16 (vi), said that the publication and distribution of a booklet on the results of the International Conference on the Question of Palestine would serve the propaganda interests of the political war which was being waged against Israel. He was thus opposed to the inclusion of that programme element and to the corresponding appropriation. He requested a separate vote on that appropriation.

3. Mr. GARRIDO (Philippines) asked whether it was envisaged that new information centres would be opened; he considered that they were the most important instrument of the information activities of the United Nations.

4. Mr. AKASHI (Under-Secretary-General for Public Information) said that, in accordance with the decision adopted by the General Assembly at its previous session, two new centres were to be established: one at Brazzaville (Congo) and the other at Luanda (Angola). The Committee on Information had also recommended to the General Assembly in 1983 that a centre should be established at Jakarta (Indonesia). Moreover, various member States had requested that new centres should be established or that full-time centre directors should be appointed in countries in which the resident representatives of UNDP served as part-time directors of

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(Mr. Akashi)

centres. However, he felt that the budgetary restrictions applicable to the Secretariat must be taken into account and that requests for appropriations under that heading should be kept down to a minimum.

5. The CHAIRMAN said that, if there was no objection, he would take it that the Committee wished to endorse the conclusions and recommendations appearing in paragraphs 374 to 376 of the report of the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination (A/38/38 (part II)).

6. It was so decided.

7. The CHAIRMAN asked, in relation to Israel's proposal for a separate vote on the appropriation of \$41,100 for programme element 2.16 (vi), relating to the booklet on the question of Palestine, whether any delegations wished to explain their votes before the vote.

8. Mr. EL SAFTY (Egypt) said that the Committee should confine itself to considering the financial aspect of the question of the booklet, without analysing its virtues or defects. The Secretary-General had acted correctly in requesting an appropriation for an activity which had been provided for by the General Assembly. His delegation would vote in favour of the appropriation since it accorded great importance to the information activities carried out by the United Nations.

9. Mr. OULD EL GHAOUTHE (Mauritania) said that his delegation agreed that the small sum required for the booklet should be appropriated, since the cause involved was a just one. The fact that a separate vote had been requested demonstrated that Israel wished to use the Committee to continue to exercise pressure on the oppressed people of Palestine. Speaking on a point of order, he proposed that a vote should be taken on whether Israel's proposal was in order, in other words whether a vote should be taken on the appropriation for programme element 2.16 (vi) separately or on section 27 as a whole.

10. The CHAIRMAN said that, since the process of explanations of vote had started, he could not accept Mauritania's proposal.

11. Since there was no other delegation wishing to explain its vote before the vote, he announced that the Committee would proceed to vote on the appropriation of an amount of \$41,100 for the booklet on the question of Palestine (section 27, programme element 2.16 (vi) of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1984-1985).

12. An appropriation of \$41,100 for programme element 2.16 (vi) was approved by 62 votes to 2, with 12 abstentions.

13. The CHAIRMAN announced that the Committee would proceed to vote in first reading on the appropriation under section 27 of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1984-1985.

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14. An appropriation of \$69,210,600 under section 27 of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1984-1985 was approved in first reading by 65 votes to 11, with 4 abstentions.

15. Mr. HOLBORN (Federal Republic of Germany), referring to the discussion at the previous meeting on section 27, said that he fully shared the concerns expressed by many delegations, and in particular the statement made by the representative of the United Kingdom.

16. It was regrettable that there was still no information service in German which could provide the people of his country with the necessary information about the activities of the United Nations. In theory there was a small service of that type at Vienna provided by personnel from UNIDO. However, no staff member of the United Nations was specifically assigned to public information services in German. Thus 75 million people in Europe were being deprived of the possibility of receiving such information in their own language.

17. Resolution 13 (I) of the General Assembly, approved in 1946, under which all peoples in all parts of the world should receive the fullest and most accurate information possible about the United Nations, had still not been implemented. The posts for information services in German could be filled through reallocation, taking into account the funds allocated to the Department of Public Information. For those reasons, his delegation could not support the appropriation under section 27 in the form proposed.

18. Mr. DITZ (Austria) agreed with the comments of the representative of the Federal Republic of Germany and said it was essential to establish a complete information service in German in order to keep the German-speaking public informed of the activities of the United Nations. The competent intergovernmental organs had recognized the need to strengthen the public-information function in the agencies headquartered at Vienna; moreover, it had been requested that specific action should be taken in the matter. Accordingly, the time had come to reinforce the small nucleus of information services now existing in Vienna and convert it as quickly as possible into an information centre capable of providing all the necessary services.

19. Mr. MASARWEH (Jordan) said that his delegation had been absent during the vote on the appropriation for the booklet on the question of Palestine. If it had been present, it would have voted in favour.

20. Mrs. KNEZEVIC (Yugoslavia), Mr. ALI (Bangladesh), Mr. BA (Senegal) and Mr. BANGURA (Sierra Leone) said that they had been absent during the votes but that if they had been in the meeting room, they would have voted in favour in both cases.

21. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) said that the amount requested by the Secretary-General for section 28 was \$312,307,100. The Advisory Committee was recommending an amount of \$308,989,200, or a reduction of \$3,317,900. Paragraph 28.192 of the Advisory Committee's report (A/38/7) gave a breakdown of the proposed reduction by each subsection.

(Mr. Mselle)

22. The Secretary-General had later submitted revised estimates (A/C.5/38/28) for subsection 28L.1, International Civil Service Commission. Initially the Secretary-General had requested \$6,740,900 for ICSC; the revised estimate was \$7,107,100, an increase of \$366,200. The Advisory Committee recommended acceptance of the increase.

23. Moreover, in connection with the Secretary-General's proposals in document A/C.5/38/28, the Advisory Committee also recommended a small reduction of \$15,900 in section 31, Staff Assessment, and an increase of \$218,000 under income section 2, General Income.

24. Most of the reductions recommended under the initial estimates for section 28 were under subsection D, Office of General Services, Headquarters, subsection I, General Services, Geneva, and subsection M, Administrative Services, Vienna.

25. The Secretary-General requested \$135,607,900 for the Office of General Services in New York, and the Advisory Committee was recommending a reduction of \$1,585,100. In paragraph 28.50 of its report, the Advisory Committee recommended a small reduction in the amount for staff travel under subsection D.

26. In paragraph 28.52, the Advisory Committee indicated that the request for a new Manual Worker post for the Buildings Management Service should not be approved, with a consequent reduction of \$38,600.

27. But the largest reduction for the Office of General Services related to requirements for utilities and communications. The estimates for utilities were discussed in paragraph 28.58, and the Advisory Committee had reached the conclusion that, as it was not always possible to forecast precise requirements for steam, the estimate for that item should be reduced by \$336,000.

28. The Advisory Committee had considered in detail the Secretary-General's proposals on communications (A/38/6, vol. III, para. 28D.69). Their main feature was the request to set up two communications circuits: one between New York and Vienna and the other between New York and Baghdad. The proposals were discussed in paragraphs 28.61 to 28.67 of the Advisory Committee's report (A/38/7), which pointed out that in the biennium 1982-1983 the Secretary-General had requested a second circuit between New York and Geneva, and that request had not been approved by the Advisory Committee. The Committee had indicated that if the Secretary-General wished to pursue his request he should supply the information referred to in its first report on the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1982-1983 (A/36/7). However, for the 1984-1985 estimates the Administration dispensed with a further circuit between New York and Geneva, and instead requested a line between New York and Vienna. The Advisory Committee had decided to give priority to the circuit between New York and Baghdad. Owing to the deficiencies in the information submitted to justify the circuit between New York and Vienna, the Advisory Committee had been unable to accept that request.

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(Mr. Mselle)

29. The report of the Advisory Committee (A/38/7) also recommended other reductions under subsection 28D for the computerized message-switching system (para. 28.68), the diplomatic pouch (para. 28.70), and the acquisition of furniture and equipment (para. 28.76).

30. The estimates under section 28I, General Services, Geneva, were discussed in paragraphs 28.118 to 28.142 of the Advisory Committee's report. Overall the Advisory Committee was recommending a reduction of \$954,700. The Advisory Committee could not agree to the reclassification of two posts, as explained in paragraphs 28.120 and 28.121. It was not the first time the requests had been submitted to the General Assembly; the Advisory Committee had considered them in the past two bienniums and had decided to keep to its former position. The Committee was also not convinced of the need for another telephone operator post, as explained in paragraph 28.125.

31. A significant feature of the request under subsection 28.I was the proposal for an increase in staff for security duties in Geneva, for which 22 additional posts were requested. Some of the posts would come from converting temporary assistance posts, some from redeployment within the subsection, and others from the creation of new posts. The justification for the request was the study conducted by the Administrative Management Service. The Advisory Committee accepted the need for some additional requirements for security in Geneva, but questioned the tendency to compare requirements in Geneva with those in New York. As explained in paragraph 28.131 of its report, it had modified the administration's estimate accordingly.

32. Other recommendations modified by the Advisory Committee under subsection 28I were for communications, miscellaneous expenditure, supplies and materials, furniture and equipment, as indicated in paragraphs 28.139, 28.140, 28.141, and 28.142 of its report.

33. Under subsection 28M, Administrative Services, Vienna, the Advisory Committee recommended a reduction of \$653,400 in the Secretary-General's total estimate of \$37,818,400.

34. The Committee had applied criteria similar to those used for the corresponding estimates in New York and Geneva, and had made reductions in the estimates for Vienna relating to communications, supplies and furniture and equipment, as indicated in paragraphs 28.186 to 28.188 of its report. Other, smaller reductions of some \$21,000, relating to the Division of Administration, Geneva, required no further explanation.

35. The Advisory Committee had made a reduction of \$103,700 under subsection C, Office of Personnel Services, and accepted the remainder of the Secretary-General's proposals.

36. He had not explicitly mentioned various subsections such as the Office of the Under-Secretary-General itself, the Office of Financial Services, the

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(Mr. Mselle)

Administrative Management Service, the Internal Audit Division, the Electronic Data Processing and Information System Division, staff training activities, miscellaneous expenses, or jointly financed administrative activities other than ICSC, but pointed out that in accepting the Secretary-General's proposals the Advisory Committee had made a number of comments of interest to delegations.

37. The CHAIRMAN, after pointing out that section 28 was one of those which the Committee on Programme and Co-ordination had decided not to consider owing to lack of time and to the fact that it had no substantive programme content (A/38/38 (part II), para. 377), proposed that the Committee should abide by its practice of allowing the delegations concerned to make comments on the section in its entirety, leaving the detailed study of each subsection until later.

38. Mr. MONTHE (United Republic of Cameroon) said that with section 28, the Committee had now reached part VII, Common Support Services, of the proposed programme budget. Such services arose from the totality of substantive services and followed their movements, and consequently, the Committee on Programme and Co-ordination had felt that section 28 and the subsequent sections did not have any true programme content. If CPC had gone into more detail, it might perhaps have found that the Secretary-General would have been able to programme some of the activities mentioned in those sections. Indeed in conformity with articles 3 and 4 of the Regulation Governing Programme Planning (A/RES.37/234), all activities could be programmed, according to their nature. Consequently, it was possible that if CPC studied sections 28 through 33 in the future, it might change its opinion.

39. His delegation would give careful consideration to each of CPC's recommendations, weigh the reasons for determining whether they were acceptable and see to what extent adjustments should be made.

40. Mr. KELLER (United States of America) said that the resources requested under section 28 represented the largest single appropriation under the proposed programme budget for 1984-1985. In the general debate, some delegations had suggested that restrictions should be placed on common services in order to divert a larger share of resources to secondary activities. As the Secretary-General had pointed out, such proposals, while seemingly desirable, would not be practical. However, some economies could be achieved through proper and efficient management of resources. The various Secretariat units financed under budget section 28 were managed by highly competent officials, who would be able to make economies in administrative costs without any need to impose maximum limits or introduce percentage reductions.

41. His delegation would raise several specific questions as each subsection was considered. For the present, it would confine itself to making some general comments.

42. Firstly, it strongly endorsed the recommendations of the Advisory Committee, in particular those which reduced the number of proposed conversions of temporary to permanent posts, since such conversions reduced the administrative flexibility

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(Mr. Keller, United States)

open to the Secretary-General. If the number of temporary posts was kept unchanged, there were greater possibilities for matching expenditures to the actual needs.

43. Secondly, it should be pointed out that about half of the entire amount budgeted for overtime in the proposed programme budget fell within section 28. While the nature of the services provided for did require such expenditures, the amount budgeted for that section as a whole was so large as to permit reductions without substantially reducing the quality or level of services.

44. With regard to other objects of expenditure, such as communication, travel, office supplies and equipment, he said that the estimated requirements had been determined on the basis of past rates of utilization. He urged the Secretary-General and his staff to do all they could to change and improve the manner in which the Secretariat carried out its work. In his view, Member States desired greater efficiency and should be informed of efforts in that connection.

45. Mr. KHALEVINSKY (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that the appropriations requested by the Secretary-General under section 28 exceeded by \$48 million, or 17 per cent, the corresponding expenditures for the current biennium. His delegation regarded such an accelerated rate of growth as unacceptable. Moreover, it was surprising that in that section - which included subsections whose primary function was to maintain financial discipline in the Secretariat and limit the increase of the Organization's expenditures - the funds requested were more than double the amount requested in all the rest of the budget. Of those funds, \$23 million was intended to cover the effects of inflation. In addition, 72 new posts were requested in the section.

46. The Advisory Committee had reduced by \$3.3 million the amount requested by the Secretary-General and had rejected the establishment of a number of posts, but his delegation believed that those recommendations, although interesting and well-founded could be expanded even more. It was unacceptable in principle that the Secretariat should continue expanding the Organization's manning table. Such an approach was inherently wrong and would lead to an irrational and unjustified increase of budgetary expenditures.

47. He also wished to confirm once again his delegation's position of principle concerning the reclassification of Secretariat posts and concerning the ways to overcome the unfavourable impact of inflation of the Organization's budget. In its view, at a time when the Secretariat should take active steps to limit the budget and increase the efficiency and economy of the work of the United Nations, it was impossible to understand why there should be proposals to make increases in connection with the secondary activities of the Organization, especially an increase in administrative costs, to the detriment of operational activities.

48. His delegation believed that under present circumstances, it was necessary not only to freeze but to reduce administrative costs under the regular budget. Accordingly, it would be unable to support the appropriations proposed for that section if the question was put to the vote.

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49. Mr. OKEYO (Kenya) said that his delegation had noted that the appropriation requested for section 28 was the highest in the budget, since approximately 70 per cent of the estimate was for staff costs of support services. In that connection, it should be stated that the delegations of developing countries attached great importance to appropriations for staff services to the extent that the personnel concerned contributed directly and indirectly to field programmes.

50. His delegation considered it vital that the Secretariat should be aware that human resources per se did not suffice and that the number of personnel should be in relation to their potential contribution to the aforementioned field programmes. Thus, every increase in staff costs should be directly or indirectly related to practical activities in the field.

51. Generally speaking, his delegation supported the recommendations of the Advisory Committee, whose proposals on the individual subsections of section 28 appeared reasonable and fair. In the case of two or three subsections, however, it considered that the Advisory Committee had been too harsh towards the Secretariat, which must have the necessary means to perform its task, namely, to carry out the programmes requested of the Secretary-General. His delegation therefore intended to propose certain changes when the individual subsections of section 28 were taken up.

AGENDA ITEM 117: UNITED NATIONS COMMON SYSTEM: REPORT OF THE INTERNATIONAL CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION (continued) (A/38/30, A/C.5/38/23, A/C.5/38/40)

52. Mr. McLURG (President, Federation of International Civil Servants' Associations), speaking on behalf of the more than 30,000 staff represented by the Federation, thanked the Fifth Committee for deciding to allow him to introduce orally the Federation's comments in document A/C.5/38/23 on the ninth annual report of the International Civil Service Commission (A/38/30), a decision which was further evidence of the growing recognition by decision-making bodies in the common system of the need to hear the views of the staff representatives before pronouncing on matters directly affecting the interests of the personnel.

53. Regarding the security of United Nations system staff, which could be a life or death issue, FICSA was pleased to note a significant decline in the number of cases of violation by Member States of the Convention on the privileges and Immunities of the United Nations. In particular, it welcomed the measures, originally proposed by FICSA, which had been adopted by the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination in its decision 1983/14.

54. That having been said, FICSA considered that the report of the Secretary-General on cases where executive heads had been unable fully to exercise their responsibilities under the Convention was deficient. One organization of the common system, which had started to apply more than a year earlier the policies recently adopted by ACC, had reported that all nine cases arising in 1983, which included staff members ranging from senior international Professional staff to locally recruited General Service staff, had been resolved in a manner satisfactory to the Government concerned without detriment to the rights recognized under the

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(Mr. McLurg)

Convention. In that connection, FICSA trusted that the Fifth Committee would reaffirm its commitment, as it had in each of the past few years, by welcoming the new measures approved by the common system, calling for their improvement and urging Member States to provide all staff members with due protection.

55. In so far as the major issue of conditions of service in the field was concerned, FICSA was less than satisfied with the response of ICSC to a comprehensive review conducted by its secretariat and to the request for urgent action by FICSA and the Consultative Committee on Administrative Questions. Staff working in the field were in the vanguard of the United Nations effort to attain its goals, and it was in the prime interest of the Member States that that effort should not be hampered by a failure to attract, retain or reassign staff of the requisite calibre. With a view to arresting the trend whereby organizations faced difficulty in the assignment of staff to certain duty stations, FICSA and CCAQ had made a series of detailed proposals, virtually all of which had been turned down by ICSC. Since the ultimate cost in terms of reduced programme effectiveness far outweighed the minimal cost of the reforms currently proposed, FICSA urged the Fifth Committee to instruct ICSC to complete its studies on conditions of service in the field and to introduce the necessary improvements in benefits without further delay.

56. In resolution 37/126 the General Assembly had approved the ICSC recommendation that, upon completion of five years of continuing good service, staff members on fixed-term appointments should be given every reasonable consideration for a career appointment. That resolution had been roundly applauded by FICSA members; however, to date, no other governing body in the common system had followed that laudable initiative. FICSA therefore urged the Fifth Committee to request ICSC to review the situation in other organizations and to make appropriate recommendations for the adoption of similar decisions.

57. FICSA was also requesting urgent action on the recruitment of women, young people, disabled persons and nationals of unrepresented or underrepresented countries, and it reiterated its view that the injection of political considerations into the recruitment process was in direct conflict with the provisions and purposes of the United Nations Charter.

58. Regarding the vexed question of salaries and allowances, FICSA drew the Committee's attention to the collective discontent of Professional staff throughout the common system at the General Assembly decision in December 1982 not to accede to a unanimous request by staff and administrations for an adjustment of the base salary. FICSA renewed its plea for an interim adjustment, and it requested the Fifth Committee to address the issue at the current session, thereby acknowledging that each year's delay would exacerbate the difficulties already faced by organizations in recruiting and retaining staff.

59. FICSA welcomed the recommended adjustments to the education grant, which, although falling short of the improvements which it had proposed, would alleviate

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(Mr. McLurg)

the situation of the staff concerned. The latest review had demonstrated once again that there was a crying need for a continuous monitoring procedure to keep the grant in line with rising education costs, and the increase currently recommended - which was less than the real increase in education costs - clearly demonstrated that a three-year cycle was not sufficient for that purpose.

60. As to the possibility of extending the education grant to all staff, FICSA urged the Fifth Committee, as a first step, to instruct ICSC to formulate proposals for the extension of the grant to all internationally recruited staff, whatever their duty station. Such an initiative would be in line with the Committee's previous request to ICSC to review the situation of officials subject to rotation.

61. On the subject of health insurance, FICSA urged the Fifth Committee to request ICSC to review all aspects of health insurance in the United Nations system, from premiums to after-service coverage, with a view to submitting to the General Assembly at its thirty-ninth session recommendations for improvements in areas where action was urgently needed.

62. In conclusion, he drew the Committee's attention to a matter which should be of the utmost concern to all representatives, namely the erosion of the confidence of staff throughout the common system in the workings of ICSC, owing to a number of its initiatives during the preceding year. It was obvious that, without the confidence of the staff, ICSC would find it difficult to carry out its mandate, and FICSA would not be able constructively to fulfil its role as a link between the staff and ICSC unless the latter did not seek to impose arbitrary decisions against the will of the staff.

63. The growing reluctance of ICSC to take any decisions at all was another source of concern to the staff, especially when such vital questions as conditions of service in the field and professional salaries were at stake. In the staff's view, ICSC was in danger of failing to fulfil its rightful role as the technical and independent adviser of the General Assembly and the other legislative bodies of the common system, and FICSA urged the Fifth Committee to request that the Secretary-General, as Chairman of ACC, should, in consultation with FICSA, review the workings of ICSC and report back to the General Assembly at its thirty-ninth session.

64. The CHAIRMAN recalled that he had informed the Committee at its twenty-eighth meeting that he had received a communication from Mr. George Irving, who had requested, on behalf of the Co-ordinating Committee for Independent Staff Unions and Associations of the United Nations system (CCISUA), permission to make a statement before the Fifth Committee, and that ACC, CCAQ and ICSC had allowed the Co-ordinating Committee to participate in their work on an equal footing with FICSA. Since the Secretary-General supported the request, he assumed that the Committee would not object if the representative of the Co-ordinating Committee were invited to make an oral presentation of document A/C.5/38/40.

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65. Mrs. de HEDERVARY recalled that ACC had accepted the second group in question because it had occupied the meeting room and had refused to leave it. Nevertheless, she saw no reason why the Fifth Committee should not hear the statement of the representative of the second union, which represented the same electorate as the New York Union since it had been decided to hear the latter. At the same time, it went without saying that such questions should be resolved within the Secretariat, and it was to be hoped that just as, in 1983, there had been greater co-ordination in the administrative sphere and the presentation of problems by representatives of the Secretary-General, there would in future also be better co-ordination among the representatives of the unions.

66. Mr. RUEDAS (Under-Secretary-General for Administration and Management) pointed out that the two existing groups did not represent the same electorate since there were two unions in each organization of the United Nations system which had decided to be represented either by FICSA or by CCISUA. The Secretary-General had supported the proposal to hear both groups only in order to ensure that all staff members of the United Nations system had access to the various bodies dealing with their conditions of service.

67. Mr. OKEYO (Kenya) said that he was not opposed to the Fifth Committee's hearing the second union group mentioned, but he felt that there was a danger that such groups would proliferate in future and in that case it would be necessary to check the practice so as not to impair the dignity and even the legislative authority of the Committee.

68. Mr. RUEDAS (Under-Secretary-General for Administration and Management) pointed out that, in the case of ICSC, a staff group must meet three conditions to be invited to participate in its meetings, namely: (a) its constituent organizations should meet the criteria of recognition set out in the ICSC rules of procedure under rule 1 (f); (b) it should represent staff preferably in more than one organization and definitely at more than one duty station; and (c) it should represent at least 25 per cent of the staff of the common system (A/38/30, para. 177). It was on that basis that ICSC had decided to issue an invitation to CCISUA, as long as it continued to meet those criteria (*ibid.*, para. 178). He was not in any way suggesting, however, that the Fifth Committee should be governed by the ICSC rules; he had simply wished to indicate that the question raised by the representative of Kenya had been considered by ICSC.

69. Mrs. de HEDERVARY (Belgium) asked how the percentage of staff represented by CCISUA was determined. She wished to know, for example, whether elections had been held.

70. Mr. RUEDAS (Under-Secretary-General for Administration and Management) replied that there had never been a general election in the United Nations system in which every staff member had been able to indicate which of the two groups - FICSA or CCISUA - should represent him. Nor was there a uniform procedure for the adoption of such decisions by the staff; each duty station had developed its own procedures in the course of time. At some duty stations, the decision to belong to one or the other group had been adopted by a vote of the entire staff; in others, the decision

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(Mr. Ruedas)

had been taken directly by the body representing the staff. The Secretary-General had considered the question the previous year and had arrived at the conclusion that CCISUA represented a considerable proportion of United Nations staff.

As to the other organizations of the common systems, CCISUA had informed the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination of the specialized agencies in which it represented all or part of the staff. It was on the basis of those considerations that ICSC had adopted its decision.

71. The CHAIRMAN said that, if he heard no objections, he would take it that the Committee wished a representative of CCISUA to be invited to present document A/C.5/38/40 at the appropriate time.

72. It was so agreed.

73. Mr. MERIEUX (France) expressed surprise that the International Civil Service Commission should have instructed its secretariat to study the possibility of eliminating the language incentive and to examine alternative approaches to the question, such as enhanced training facilities. He did not understand what had impelled ICSC to concern itself with a question regarding which it had received no instructions from the General Assembly. It should be borne in mind that it had been the General Assembly and not ICSC which had established the existing scheme by resolution 2480 B (XXIII), and that that resolution had reflected the will of the Member States to preserve the pluricultural character of the United Nations and to achieve a linguistic balance. The three arguments on which the ICSC proposal was based (A/38/30, paras. 52-54) were not convincing.

74. First, according to ICSC, the conditions under which the language incentive had been considered necessary had changed over time: it was claimed that the linguistic imbalance had lessened and that the Organization would increasingly need specialists whose work did not necessarily require particular language qualifications. He pointed out that, despite the application of the principle of geographical distribution, the language situation had not improved since there were many officials whose mother tongue was not an official language of the Organization. Although some specialist posts did not involve particular language requirements, such qualifications continued to be indispensable for the career of regular staff in an international organization which demanded a certain geographical mobility of its officials.

75. Secondly, it was argued that the language incentive was an anomaly and was also applied restrictively. In his view, it was an anomaly in the opposite sense, in that the incentive was not being applied in the other organizations of the system. The incentive operated more satisfactorily for the General Services than for the Professional category: the lump sum granted to General Service staff had proved to be an effective instrument. In the case of the Professional staff, the acceleration of increments was also a positive measure. Unfortunately, the second rule relating to the Professional category in General Assembly resolution 2480 B (XXIII), under which promotion from P-1 to D-2 was conditional upon knowledge of a second language, was not being strictly observed. In that connection, he would

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(Mr. Merieux, France)

like the Secretariat to indicate how that rule had been applied in the preceding three years, both at Headquarters and at the other major duty stations. In view of the fact that over the preceding 10 years the Secretariat had had considerable resources available for language teaching, it would be reasonable to begin to apply that rule more strictly, particularly in cases of promotion to the more senior-level posts (P-5 to D-2) in the more numerous and less technical Professional services, such as those concerned with administration, economic matters and political affairs.

76. Thirdly, according to ICSC, the best solution lay in enhanced language training facilities. However, such enhancement should supplement rather than replace the language incentive scheme, which, to a great extent, had been responsible for the success of the language courses given in the Organization.

77. What was needed was not to end the incentives but to ensure that they operated effectively and to improve them. At the same time he agreed with ICSC that more importance should be given to the language qualifications of candidates at the time of recruitment. In particular, and subject to the rule of equitable geographical distribution, when persons were recruited from outside the Organization for senior-level posts, preference should be given to those candidates who, in addition to possessing the necessary qualifications for the post, knew two official languages. So far, the General Assembly had not imposed such linguistic requirements upon recruitment, but the French delegation would welcome a study by the Secretary-General on the subject and the adoption of concrete measures in that regard.

78. Mr. DITZ (Austria) said that his delegation had examined with great interest the report and recommendations of the International Civil Service Commission (A/38/30), and noted with satisfaction that the 1982 report was limited to 61 pages, a fact which had made it easier to study it. Analysis of the report had also been helped by the summary of recommendations calling for decisions by the General Assembly and the corresponding legislative organs of the other organizations, and by the summary of the financial implications of the Commission's recommendations and decisions for the United Nations and participating organizations. His delegation was indebted to the Chairman of ICSC for his comprehensive and illuminating introduction of the Commission's report.

79. His delegation noted that the average ratio of net remuneration of United States officials to that of United Nations officials at matching grades and adjusted for cost-of-living differential was 116.5, or slightly less than during the preceding year, when the figure had been 118.2.

80. The determination of proper levels of post adjustment was quite an important issue from the financial point of view. Surveys conducted by the ICSC secretariat at various headquarters cities seemed to indicate that at some duty stations the present levels of post adjustment were too high. The Advisory Committee on Post Adjustment Questions was currently meeting at Headquarters to consider the problem, and ICSC itself might hold a special session on the matter from 21 to 23 November.

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Should the findings of the preliminary surveys be confirmed, the question of transition to the new post adjustment levels would have to be given careful consideration.

81. Another recommendation which had been supported by a majority in ICSC was an increase in the level of the education grant. His delegation supported the proposed liberalization of the grant, which reflected the higher cost of education, particularly university education, but felt that the Commission should undertake a review of the basic purpose and scope of the grant. Originally the education grant had been designed to assist expatriate officials to maintain closer ties with their home country through the possibility of having their children educated there. That had subsequently been broadened to cover education in a country other than the home country, if appropriate facilities were not available there. The third step had been to include education in the country of the duty station. That had led to great dissatisfaction among officials serving in their home country, since when they sent their children to a university in their home country they were not entitled to the education grant, whereas their expatriate colleagues sending their children to the same university received it.

82. That had led to demands for broadening the scope of the grant to cover all officials, regardless of their expatriate status or whether they served in the Professional or the General Service category. His delegation did not pretend to have all the answers to that vexed question, but it was convinced that the issue deserved to be studied by ICSC.

83. His delegation supported the ICSC proposals to liberalize the subsidy formula for health insurance at those duty stations where contributions to the insurance scheme significantly exceeded a given percentage of the salaries of the officials insured. The method proposed by the Commission was quite ingenious, since it concentrated assistance on those areas where there was the greatest need and avoided unnecessarily liberal provisions where the cost of health insurance was relatively low.

84. ICSC should further pursue the development of basic principles applicable throughout the system and examine, for instance, whether health insurance coverage should be made compulsory, as in the case of membership in the United Nations pension scheme. If health insurance coverage were made part of the conditions of employment, that would tend to reduce average costs and might ultimately lead to lower expenditure on subsidies than the existing voluntary schemes. His delegation agreed with FICSA that a comprehensive review of health insurance questions, including benefits and after-service coverage should be carried out, and that the problems of insurance coverage for locally recruited staff in field duty stations should also be examined. At present coverage of local staff by voluntary schemes deprived such staff members of health insurance protection when they retired.

85. ICSC, in co-operation with the Joint Staff Pension Board, had also dealt with the question of retirement policy in the United Nations system and, in particular, within the Organization itself. In 1982 and before, his delegation had stated its

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generally favourable attitude towards a more liberal and more flexible retirement policy. Present United Nations practice permitted very few exceptions for the continuation of service beyond the age of 60.

86. In earlier statements, his delegation had pointed out that a liberalization of retirement policy would be in accordance with the recommendations of the World Assembly for the Aging and would have no adverse effect on the objective of attaining a more balanced geographical distribution as recommended by the General Assembly. That view had been corroborated by the findings of the study carried out on the subject by the ICSC secretariat. After noting that ICSC was not recommending at that stage any change in the existing mandatory retirement age, he welcomed the statement of the Chairman of ICSC that it was expected that executive heads would continue to use their discretionary authority liberally to extend appointments beyond age 60 where an employee's services were required and the employee wished to continue working. It should be pointed out, however, that the Secretary-General of the United Nations had far less discretionary authority in that respect than most of the heads of the other organizations in the system.

87. As far as the special index for pensioners was concerned, his delegation took note of the work in progress but would like to know to what extent the impact of zero or of lower rates of taxation had already been taken into account in determining the level of supplementary payments to pensioners residing in high cost-of-living countries.

88. He was also pleased to note that, in the light of the previous year's discussion, ICSC had extended the rental subsidy scheme to headquarters and other duty stations not previously covered. That again was an example of concentrating assistance on those who were in greatest need of it, namely newcomers to headquarter stations who were confronted with housing costs substantially above the average level. His delegation was somewhat disappointed, however, by the very restrictive provisions of the scheme; in particular, it did not believe that the tapering off of the subsidy over a four-year period was desirable. For that reason, it recommended that ICSC should take a fresh look at the rental subsidy scheme with a view to liberalizing it. A more generally applicable rental subsidy scheme could lead to lower post adjustment levels, with consequent budgetary savings.

89. Mr. MOLTINI (Argentina) expressed satisfaction with the excellent work of ICSC and its secretariat and with the brevity of the current year's report. The document made it possible to take an overall view of trends in the conditions of service in all the organizations of the United Nations common system, and the subsequent discussion allowed the various delegations an opportunity by their opinions and decisions to give effective support to the objective of co-ordination which inspired the work of ICSC.

90. Referring to the comparison of total compensation (A/38/30, paras. 23-30), he emphasized the progress achieved by ICSC in completing the first stage of the comparison. He hoped that the two sets of margin calculations mentioned in

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paragraph 30 of the report would be submitted to the Fifth Committee in the future, but noted that, for financial reasons, the actual comparison of total compensation, including expatriate benefits, was still pending. In his view, ICSC should be provided with the funds necessary to complete the work since it would permit better comparison of compensation in the common system with that of the comparison State. To that end, he shared the opinion expressed by the Federation of International Civil Servants' Associations (FICSA) in paragraph 26 of document A/C.5/38/23, presenting its comments on the ICSC report.

91. The broadening of the rental subsidy scheme implemented by ICSC in response to the General Assembly's request would help to solve the serious accommodation problem at many headquarter cities, especially New York. In that regard, he wished to know on what criteria the Commission had based its decision on the percentage reductions indicated in paragraph 44 (c) of its report (A/38/30).

92. So far as the language incentive was concerned (paras. 47-54), it was undoubtedly a subject which the Committee should consider with care, since it was there that the decision which started the ICSC study had originated. In that regard, he noted the belief of the organizations that the introduction of incentives was not the way to ensure language ability (para. 48), and wished to know if the Secretary-General shared the view that improved training facilities were preferable to the creation of the language incentive (para. 51). He also wished to know what the United Nations Secretariat thought of the assertion that the language incentive as applied by the United Nations was an anomaly, was not achieving its objective, and was also applied restrictively even within the Organization (para. 53).

93. His delegation supported the Commission's decision, in the course of its periodic consideration of allowances, to fix a new amount for the education grant (para. 83) since the rise in the cost of education was a reality which ought to be periodically reflected in the amount of the grant. Moreover, the rise would only mean an increase of about 0.1 per cent in the budget of all the organizations in the common system (\$1.7 million). FICSA's suggestion that the General Assembly should advocate the introduction of a continuous monitoring procedure to keep the grant in line with rises in education costs was therefore worth considering.

94. He was pleased to see the careful analysis carried out by ICSC, during its previous two sessions, of the status of staff contributions to health insurance (para. 105), which were approximately 3 per cent of net salary for staff at Geneva and Vienna, and 6 per cent in New York. The proposal to be submitted by the Secretary-General in that regard was still awaited. Likewise, his delegation would like to know why ICSC had not given due retroactive effect to its recommendations when fixing the date for their implementation (para. 107).

95. With regard to the comprehensive review of conditions of service in the field (paras. 117 to 123), he expressed satisfaction that ICSC had studied detailed documents on the subject prepared by its secretariat and by staff associations. A considerable number of officials who were carrying out important tasks for

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developing countries were concerned , and ICSC should therefore be encouraged to follow the question very closely, along the lines laid down in paragraph 121 (e) of its report, which laid down clearly and precisely the steps necessary for continuous supervision of the conditions of service in the field.

96. He noted that ICSC was continuing to make progress on matters relating to personnel policies. That was a difficult task because of the different approaches existing in the various organizations of the common system. The work of ICSC in that field therefore deserved the Committee's support.

97. In the area of staff questions, his delegation appreciated the suggestions relating to career development and human resources planning contained in the document submitted by FICSA (A/C.5/38/23).

98. As to ICSC's recommendation that organizations should not for the moment introduce changes in the existing mandatory age of separation (para. 168), he agreed that it was not the right time to innovate, but ICSC should study the matter in greater depth since it was of great importance for the career of international civil servants.

99. In conclusion, he referred to Chapter IX of the ICSC report, where reference was made for the first time to action taken by the Commission under article 17 of its statute: implementation and consideration by organizations of ICSC recommendations and decisions. From a reading of paragraph 170 to 176 and from an analysis of the very clear and useful tabulated summary of replies to the questionnaire sent by ICSC to the organizations (annex IV), it was clear in general terms that the reaction of the system's organizations had been very positive.

The meeting rose at 6.07 p.m.