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FIFTH COMMITTEE

30th meeting

held on

Monday, 31 October 1977

at 3 p.m.

New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 30th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. TALIEH (Iran)

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

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The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 105: PATTERN OF CONFERENCES: REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON CONFERENCES
(continued) (A/32/32)

1. Mr. FOKINE (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said it was to be regretted that, as in the past, the Committee on Conferences had devoted much of its time to considering departures from the calendar of conferences and had not paid enough attention to its principal task of ensuring the efficient and economical use of resources allocated to the servicing of conferences. However, the Committee on Conferences had submitted recommendations designed to improve conference servicing, and his delegation supported those recommendations. In particular, departures from the calendar of conferences approved by the General Assembly must be reduced to a minimum, all United Nations bodies must try to complete their work within the allotted time and all additional expenditure incurred as a result of departures from the calendar of conferences must be covered using existing resources. His delegation attached particular importance to the recommendation of the Committee on Conferences to eliminate additional expense caused by the cancellation of meetings. The annual average rate of cancellations had risen from 20 per cent in 1975 to 30 per cent in 1976; in 1976 at New York alone, \$600,000 had been spent on free-lance interpreters for meetings that had not taken place. His delegation therefore firmly supported the guidelines recommended by the Committee on Conferences for reducing the number of cancellations (A/32/32, para. 103). His delegation also supported the recommendations contained in paragraphs 101, 115, 130 and 145 of the report of the Committee on Conferences (A/32/32).

2. The Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space had decided unanimously that its Legal Sub-Committee should meet alternately in New York and Geneva. In that connexion, it should be noted that it would be cheaper to hold the 1978 session of the Legal Sub-Committee in Geneva than to hold it in New York. Moreover, because of the reconstruction work to be carried out in 1978, the facilities available at New York would be seriously curtailed. It therefore seemed preferable for the 1978 session of the Legal Sub-Committee to be held at Geneva, and it was surprising that some members of the Committee on Conferences had reached a different conclusion. Sessions of the Legal Sub-Committee should be held alternately in New York and Geneva.

3. With respect to the future of the Committee on Conferences, the Committee had played a positive role in recommending measures for the more effective use of available resources. However, those recommendations tended to be too general and were therefore inadequate. The Committee had not found the time to deal with fundamental problems related to conference servicing; in particular, it should have discussed the introduction of a system of quotas for the distribution of resources available to conference services, an analysis of the workload norms of staff involved in servicing conferences, the co-ordination of resources within the United Nations system, and so on. If the mandate of the Committee on Conferences was renewed, the Committee should devote itself primarily to solving fundamental problems related to the effective and economical use of resources, it should programme meetings and conferences on the basis of the calendar of conferences

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(Mr. Fokine, USSR)

approved by the General Assembly and should supervise the implementation of that programme, and it should ensure the economical use of the resources allocated to conference servicing.

4. Mr. GEORGESCU (Romania) said that, as evidenced by its report (A/32/32), the Committee on Conferences had endeavoured to carry out a number of tasks entrusted to it and had achieved positive, although limited, results. In that connexion, his delegation attached great importance to recommendations 1, 3 and 6 in paragraph 168 of the Committee's report. The Committee had had less success, however, in ensuring the optimum utilization of conference services. While the Committee's mandate, which contained no provision for enforcing decisions, might have been responsible for that state of affairs, the Committee itself had not exhausted the search for means to achieve a more rational utilization of the human and material resources of the Department of Conference Services. That unsatisfactory situation had resulted in divisions among the members of the Committee.

5. His delegation appreciated the efforts made by the Committee to evaluate its own activities and make recommendations on its future aimed at increasing its effectiveness, with greater co-operation from the Secretariat, in dealing positively with such questions as the optimum use of interpreters, the quality of their work and recruitment practices.

6. Owing to the changing character of United Nations meetings, which had come to be used more for negotiation than for policy statements, conference servicing was no longer a purely technical matter but a political instrument which required intergovernmental control.

7. His delegation found it difficult to accept the termination of the Committee on Conferences but it also found it difficult to agree to its establishment on a permanent basis until it could be proved that it would be able to respond to the legitimate interests of Member States. Accordingly, his delegation favoured a compromise solution which would extend the mandate of the Committee for one or two years, after which time a final decision could be taken on its future. During that time, the Committee on Conferences must do its utmost to remedy the short-comings, both conceptual and methodological, that had characterized its work.

8. Finally, his delegation had no difficulty in approving the draft resolution recommended by the Committee in paragraph 168 of its report.

9. Mr. IYER (India) said that in the three years of its existence the Committee on Conferences had learnt by trial and error and had succeeded in improving its work. It had made a useful contribution by laying down guidelines for the more economical use of resources available for conference servicing. Because of the nature of the Committee's work, however, it was often difficult to quantify its success.

10. The Committee's evaluation of its own future was useful and balanced, and his delegation shared the view expressed by the majority of members of the Committee on Conferences with regard to its continuation. It therefore supported draft resolution A/C.5/32/L.12, which reflected a number of specific proposals that it had

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(Mr. Iyer, India)

put forward in the Committee on Conferences. The General Assembly should provide more specific guidelines in revising the mandate of the Committee so that it could serve as a more effective means of exercising intergovernmental control over the meetings of the United Nations.

11. Ms. MUCK (Austria) said that the record of the Committee on Conferences during its experimental period warranted the renewal of its mandate. Her delegation agreed with the view of the Chairman of the Committee regarding the need for an intergovernmental body responsible for taking the political decisions relating to the management of scarce resources. Some delegations had expressed doubts about the usefulness of the Committee, claiming that its powers were illusory and it had been expected to endorse decisions already taken by other bodies. Her delegation shared those concerns to some extent but believed that one way of overcoming such difficulties was to extend the mandate of the Committee as outlined in draft resolution A/C.5/32/L.12, of which her delegation was a sponsor.

12. Mr. KIVANÇ (Turkey) agreed that the magnitude of the additional costs arising from departures from the approved calendar of conferences was a matter of serious concern. His delegation supported the recommendations made in paragraphs 7, 8 and 9 of the draft resolution proposed by the Committee on Conferences in paragraph 168 of its report and believed that priority should be given to paragraph 8.

13. His delegation was concerned about the under-utilization of conference resources resulting from the cancellation of scheduled meetings. In the case of permanent staff, the loss could be partially offset by reassignment but the loss in respect of free-lance staff was irretrievable. Both delegations and the Secretariat had a part to play in avoiding the cancellation of meetings. In that connexion, his delegation supported the eight guidelines set forth in paragraph 10 of the draft resolution proposed by the Committee, the timely implementation of which would reduce the rate of cancellation to a reasonable level by establishing better communication and co-ordination between delegations and the secretariat of each body concerned.

14. His delegation supported the recommendation of the Committee on Conferences that the General Assembly should authorize the Secretary-General to overprogramme meetings and interpretation services during 1978 at a level which could ensure maximum utilization of resources.

15. His delegation shared the concern expressed by the Committee in paragraph 128 of its report concerning the planning and timely issue of documentation and hoped that the Secretariat would implement the relevant recommendation in paragraph 130.

16. His delegation hoped that the Committee would be in a position in the future to make recommendations on the establishment of a uniform set of rules of procedure for pledging conferences by giving greater attention to the proposals submitted by the Office of Legal Affairs.

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(Mr. Kivanç, Turkey)

17. He expressed satisfaction with the fact that the new procedures for the provision of meeting records had worked reasonably well and that the introduction of the one-stage system had resulted in savings of approximately \$500,000 in editing and external printing for the biennium and had released resources estimated at \$300,000 annually for the internal reproduction of other documentation. As a result, the Secretariat had been able to absorb the cost of additional conferences and meetings. His delegation was also greatly interested in the possible introduction of modern word-processing techniques which could lead to considerable further savings. In that connexion, it supported the recommendation of the Committee that the criteria for the provision of meeting records which had been adopted on an experimental basis for the biennium 1976-1977 should be continued and used more widely.

18. His delegation welcomed the introduction of a two-year calendar of conferences coinciding with the concept of biennial budgeting.

19. While the General Assembly had confirmed that, as a general principle, bodies should meet at their established headquarters, his delegation believed that some meetings of United Nations bodies should be held in various cities in order to increase public awareness and understanding of United Nations activities, provided that the additional cost was borne by the host country. The Committee on Natural Resources had recently accepted the invitation of the Turkish Government to hold its next regular session in Turkey in spring 1979. His Government was prepared to appropriate the necessary funds to cover the additional cost as soon as detailed cost estimates were provided.

20. With regard to the future of the Committee on Conferences, his delegation believed that the legislative will of the main bodies of the United Nations with regard to intersessional departures from the calendar of conferences and other conference servicing matters should be interpreted by an intergovernmental body. It therefore supported the continuation of the Committee and wished a consensus might have been reached on the draft resolution contained in annex XI to the Committee's report.

21. Mr. LIPATOV (Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic) said that the Committee had during the three years of its existence put forward a series of positive, albeit general recommendations, relating, inter alia, to the cancellation of meetings. On the whole, however, much remained to be done in that sphere. The Committee had not, for example, dealt with the question of a quota system, the question of workload standards and the question of the co-ordination of activities within the United Nations system, nor had it ensured the implementation of the principle established in General Assembly resolution 2609 (XXIV) that, as a general rule, no more than one major conference should be held in any given year. Moreover, the Committee had devoted an inordinate amount of time to consideration of requests for intersessional departures from the calendar of conferences.

22. His delegation was seriously concerned over the high rate of cancellation of scheduled meetings. The Secretary-General had indicated that the average cost of

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(Mr. Lipatov, Ukrainian SSR)

a single meeting was \$7,300 and it was therefore imperative to take measures to eliminate such waste. His delegation supported the guidelines laid down for that purpose by the Committee in paragraph 103 of its report and its recommendations in paragraph 115 with respect to overprogramming meetings to ensure the maximum utilization of the permanent cadre of interpreters and reduce the recruitment of temporary staff.

23. His delegation regretted that the Committee had not reached consensus regarding the venue of the meetings of the Legal Sub-Committee of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space. The wish expressed by the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space to hold its sessions alternately in New York and Geneva should be granted. It would clearly cost less to hold the session in Geneva and, in any event, construction work on meeting rooms at Headquarters at the beginning of 1978 would make it necessary for a number of bodies to hold their meetings elsewhere.

24. If the Committee on Conferences were to be established on a continuing basis, as envisaged in draft resolution A/C.5/32/L.12, the membership of the Committee should reflect equitable geographical distribution and it should focus its efforts to a greater extent on the identification of measures to ensure the more economical and effective utilization of resources allocated for conference servicing.

25. Mr. HANNAH (New Zealand) said that the financial implications of intersessional departures from the approved calendar were considerable and that his delegation fully endorsed the recommendations of the Committee on Conferences on that matter. His delegation regretted that the Committee had been unable to reach agreement on the venue of the meeting of the Legal Sub-Committee of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space. It should have been possible to reach a consensus on that matter, giving particular weight to the general principle enunciated in General Assembly resolution 31/140 that bodies should meet at their established headquarters unless there were compelling reasons to the contrary.

26. His delegation endorsed the guidelines proposed by the Committee to reduce waste resulting from the cancellation of meetings. It regretted, although it understood the reasons for it, that the Committee had not been able to consider the question of documents production. The Committee might consider the establishment of a small working party to consider that matter next year. An evaluation of the problems referred to in paragraph 128 would be of interest to his delegation.

27. His delegation agreed with the conclusions and recommendations of the Committee regarding meeting records and hoped that the Committee might provide some indication in future reports of further steps that might be taken to implement the criteria laid down in resolution 3415 (XXX). His delegation endorsed the draft resolution proposed by the Committee in paragraph 168 of its report. Parts I and II were fully acceptable, although his delegation would have gone further and included some exhortation to the bodies receiving summary records under the traditional procedure to report to the General Assembly through the Committee on Conferences on the outcome of their consideration of the questions which they were urged to reflect on. His delegation welcomed the recommendations concerning intersessional departures from the approved calendar made in paragraphs 7, 8 and 9

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(Mr. Hannah, New Zealand)

of the draft resolution. Considerable concern had been expressed at the July session of the Economic and Social Council over the number of resumed or special sessions held by subsidiary bodies as a means of circumventing the rule that they meet biennially. As noted in paragraph 152 of the Committee's report, the Council had accordingly decided to request its subsidiary bodies to seek the advice of the Committee on Conferences before they proposed changes in the established pattern of conferences. His delegation hoped that, in giving such advice, the Committee on Conferences would state frankly to the Economic and Social Council whether it concurred in the proposals referred to it. His delegation would rely on the Committee to monitor and report on progress achieved in implementing the recommendations made in General Assembly resolutions.

28. He suggested that the words "the wastage resulting from" should be inserted after the word "reducing" in paragraph 10 of the proposed draft resolution in order to be consistent with recommendation 3 of the Committee.

29. His delegation fully supported the continuation of the Committee and the progressive consolidation of its role, since, despite its short-comings, it was an important management tool. It too hoped that the Committee would deal more adequately in future with the question of the optimum utilization of resources, but did not believe that a further experimental period for the Committee was necessary. His delegation therefore welcomed the submission of draft resolution A/C.5/32/L.12 and was satisfied with the suggested terms of reference in paragraph 3. It also supported the proposal in paragraph 4 that subsidiary bodies should seek the advice of the Committee with regard to the scheduling of and changes in their meetings. He proposed, however, that the word "Invites" in that paragraph should be replaced by the word "Requests" in order to conform to the language of decision 279 (LXIII) of the Economic and Social Council. His delegation had been prematurely listed as a sponsor of draft resolution A/C.5/32/L.12; if the amendment he had just proposed was acceptable to the sponsors, it would join in sponsoring the text.

30. Mr. TERADA (Japan) said that the Committee on Conferences could play a key role in ensuring the optimum utilization of available resources and reducing to the extent possible the administrative and financial implications of United Nations meetings.

31. The under-utilization of available resources for conference servicing resulting from the cancellation of scheduled meetings was a matter of grave concern to his delegation. Consequently, it viewed the guidelines recommended by the Committee in paragraph 103 of its report as constructive and hoped that they would be implemented without delay.

32. His delegation would welcome additional information regarding the concept of overprogramming but was prepared to endorse the recommendation set out in paragraph 115 of the Committee's report, on the understanding that the practice of overprogramming should be reviewed by the Committee one year after its implementation.

33. Despite the short-comings of the Committee's terms of reference, his

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(Mr. Terada, Japan)

delegation believed that it was both practical and necessary for an intergovernmental organ to monitor the utilization of conference resources. It therefore endorsed the continuation of the Committee but was willing to abide by the consensus on the question as to whether the Committee should be established on a temporary or continuing basis.

34. Lastly, his delegation endorsed the recommendations and draft resolution proposed by the Committee in paragraph 168 of its report.

35. Mr. VARGAS-SABORIO (Costa Rica) commended the Committee on Conferences for the excellent work it had accomplished in establishing criteria and new guidelines for the optimum utilization of conference services and the rational preparation of a calendar of conferences, taking into account the need for close co-ordination between the United Nations and the specialized agencies. On the latter point, his delegation would have welcomed a more comprehensive calendar of conferences for 1978-1979, including relevant information concerning meetings of other organs of the United Nations system which were not specialized agencies.

36. Apart from certain exceptions made by the General Assembly, which should not be regarded as established principles, all meetings and conferences should be held at the respective headquarters in the interest of greater economy. His delegation was concerned by the under-utilization of available resources, particularly as a result of cancellation of meetings. It accordingly gave full support to the recommendations in paragraph 103 of the report of the Committee on Conferences (A/32/32). Overprogramming might be another effective means of preventing the waste of resources, with the decisions regarding the scheduling of meetings being left to the discretion of the Secretariat.

37. Recalling that his delegation had endorsed the Secretary-General's recommendations for the reconstruction of conference rooms at Headquarters, he expressed the hope that the work would begin promptly. In the interest of effecting further savings, he also supported the recommendations contained in paragraph 145 of the report of the Committee on Conferences concerning meeting records.

38. With regard to the future of the Committee on Conferences, his delegation had co-sponsored the draft resolution calling for establishment of that intergovernmental supervisory body on a continuing basis (A/C.5/32/L.12). It favoured a broadening of the Committee's terms of reference, however, which would empower it to require the various United Nations bodies to consult it before adopting decisions affecting their calendar of meetings. At that connexion, he welcomed the decision taken by the Economic and Social Council at its sixty-third session calling on its subsidiary organs to request the advice of the Committee on Conferences before submitting proposals for changes in their meeting schedules. That decision was a first step towards converting the Committee on Conferences into an advisory body for the over-all co-ordination of United Nations meetings, which should be its proper function. That co-ordinating role should be extended to the entire United Nations system, with the Committee having competence to lay down rules governing workloads and eventually to establish a universally acceptable system of quotas to facilitate the optimum utilization of global resources.

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(Mr. Vargas-Saborio, Costa Rica)

39. In short, his delegation sought to strengthen the powers of the Committee on Conferences sufficiently to enable it to act as an effective instrument for the rational apportionment of conference resources. It enthusiastically supported draft resolution A/C.5/32/L.12 and had no objection to the slight amendment to paragraph 4 suggested by the New Zealand representative.

40. Mr. KHAN (Bangladesh) said that, within the limits of its vaguely defined terms of reference, the Committee on Conferences had successfully weathered many practical difficulties in the formulation and control of the calendar of meetings and his delegation supported the recommendations and guidelines it had adopted with a view to ensuring the maximum utilization of conference resources. With the increasing number of United Nations meetings and the growing percentage of the budget absorbed by conference services, it was imperative for the General Assembly to establish the new Committee on Conferences on a continuing basis with broader powers. Those powers should be clearly spelled out and it should be mandatory for all subsidiary bodies to consult the Committee before deciding on their meeting schedules. Indeed, the Committee should have the power to exclude certain practices and to recommend others in the interest of the optimum utilization of resources and avoidance of waste. For all those reasons, his delegation had co-sponsored draft resolution A/C.5/32/L.12.

41. Mr. HART (Australia) said that the recommendations made by the Committee on Conferences (A/32/32) represented a continuing effort to streamline and rationalize the United Nations calendar of conferences and were broadly acceptable to his delegation. The re-establishment of the Committee advocated in draft resolution A/C.5/32/L.12 was an attempt to inject criteria of efficiency, good management and optimum utilization of resources into the preparation of the calendar. However, in the view of the Australian delegation, the Committee did not have sufficient weight and prestige to enforce its decisions against intergovernmental bodies; the Secretariat, while it could decide matters such as intersessional departures from meeting schedules, could not insist that those intergovernmental bodies adhere to Secretariat strictures on conference-related organizational questions.

42. After weighing the arguments in favour of extending the Committee's mandate (A/32/32, para. 140) in the context of those contained in chapter V of the Committee's report relating to the prospects for strengthening the Committee's operation, his delegation questioned whether re-establishment of the Committee on a continuing basis was necessarily the best solution at that stage. In the belief that there was a better chance of implementing reforms while the Committee was still transitional in nature, his delegation would prefer to see the Committee's mandate extended for a limited period, perhaps three years, with efforts to strengthen it being intensified. On the other hand, if the Fifth Committee wished to adopt draft resolution A/C.5/32/L.12 by consensus, his delegation would not oppose that action. Operative paragraphs 3 (c), 3 (d) and 3 (e) should provide a framework for future reports of the Committee. It had noted with interest the suggestion made by the representative of Romania, however, and felt that a resolution dealing with the future of the Committee on Conferences should take more fully into account some of the difficulties outlined in chapter V of the Committee's report.

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43. Mr. PIRSON (Belgium) said that his delegation was prepared to support draft resolution A/C.5/32/L.12 recommending the establishment of the Committee on Conferences on a continuing basis. Such a committee was essential in order to settle many problems which the Secretariat had no authority to decide, such as changes in the venue of conferences. However, it should not meet on a quasi-permanent basis; perhaps one meeting a month would be sufficient, with powers delegated to its Chairman to decide changes of venue of meetings having no political or financial implications. If the General Assembly decided to re-establish it, the Committee on Conferences should begin by endeavouring to reduce the number of its own meetings.

44. The CHAIRMAN, observing that draft resolution A/C.5/32/L.12 had financial implications which would have to be considered by ACABQ, suggested that the Committee should postpone action on it until it received the Advisory Committee's report.

45. It was so decided.

AGENDA ITEM 100: PROPOSED PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 1978-1979 (continued)
(A/32/6, A/32/8, A/32/38; A/C.5/32/12 and 13)

First reading (continued)

Section 14 -- International drug control

46. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) pointed out that the Advisory Committee had recommended a reduction in the Secretary-General's request for the section totalling \$28,400. That figure was made up of a reduction of \$16,700 in the estimate for consultants (A/32/8, para. 14.8), a reduction of \$7,200 in the estimate for supplies (para. 14.7) and a reduction of \$4,500 in the amount requested for travel of representatives (para. 14.5).

Section 23 -- Conference and library services (continued)

47. Mr. CUNNINGHAM (United States of America) said that he wished to respond to the request of several delegations that he explain how the reduction in funding for section 23 proposed by the United States delegation would be allocated. He stressed, however, that he could only provide indications of reductions that could be made, since the Secretary-General reserved the right to allocate the resources of the Organization within individual sections of the programme budget and his delegation did not wish to tie the Secretary-General's hands in administering those resources.

48. As the Secretary-General himself had stated in his annual report on the work of the Organization (A/32/1, sect. 11), the General Assembly and other organs should be fully aware of the high cost of conference operations and should strive to economize and manage conference resources effectively. It was to encourage him to reduce those costs that the United States was proposing an over-all reduction in the actual number of conferences and meetings held by the United Nations during the next biennium. The additional 132 meetings projected for that period would cost the Organization \$2,810,000 and the average cost of all meetings would be 12 per cent higher than for the current biennium. Although the projected growth

(Mr. Cunningham, United States)

rate was only 2 per cent, the rate was very rapid in certain sectors such as UNCTAD, which had doubled the number of its meetings since 1976 and was expected to reach nearly three times the 1976 figure by 1978.

49. The constant increase in the number and cost of United Nations meetings and in the resulting volume of documentation and translation was unduly taxing the resources of the Organization and creating a direct additional cost to Member States, whose officials not only had to attend those meetings, but had to spend time and resources to prepare for them and analyse their results. His delegation was suggesting two methods of controlling that growth. The first consisted in making the funding for meetings part of the budgets of programmes and activities, so that each organ would have to set a priority for each meeting it scheduled and determine how much it was prepared to spend on it. It would thus be forced to make choices and exert natural controls on the calendar of meetings. Unfortunately, the trend appeared to be against such a practice, the prime example being the transfer of funding for meetings for the next biennium from the UNCTAD budget to section 23 of the regular budget of the United Nations.

50. The second method of reducing the number of meetings was to place limitations on the organization's capacity for holding them - in other words, to limit the total resources available for that purpose. Given the way in which the budget was constructed, the second method appeared to be the only one which was feasible. A tight ceiling on funding would force strengthened management over available resources so as to make them go further.

51. Although the Advisory Committee's recommendations for reductions under section 23 were not predicated on reductions in the number of meetings per se, it could be assumed that reductions which it had recommended in other sections of the budget would operate to reduce the level of meeting activity; since the Fifth Committee had already accepted several of those reductions, it was not unreasonable to consider reducing funding for section 23 below the amount recommended by ACABQ. His delegation wished to make it clear, however, that its proposal was an elaboration rather than a criticism of the Advisory Committee's recommendations. It also wished to point out that some areas of section 23 should not be touched under the proposed reduction. They included the programme for the modernization of equipment of the Department of Conference Services, which was the most readily available means of rapidly increasing the efficiency of the Department's operations and would bring costs down in the long run. Similarly, certain innovations recommended by the Committee on Conferences relating to the strengthening of guidelines for conference management, the practice of over-programming of conference facilities and the elimination of summary records were in line with the intent of the United States proposal.

52. The gross figures presented in section 23 were not a full reflection of reality. For example, as ACABQ pointed out (A/32/8), an amount of \$16,355,000 had been added to the revised figures for the 1976-1977 biennium for section 23 and it was impossible to know what assumptions would govern the components of the section for the next biennium or to be sure that the projected growth rate could give them proper weight.

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(Mr. Cunningham, United States)

53. Since there were a number of variables that would require periodic adjustments in section 23, his delegation had not compiled a detailed list of reductions in specific subsections of the budget. Instead, it invited attention to certain comparisons which emerged from an analysis of the programme budget.

54. For example, table 23.5 (A/32/6) showed that 80 per cent of the total request for section 23 covered the costs of interpretation and meetings services, translation, editing and typing and publication and documentation. Those activities were basically processing activities and lent themselves to increases in productivity which could lead to savings. Table 23.12 offered a good example of what could be realized by increasing productivity: the estimates for 1978-1979 showed that the cost of translation would be a half-cent less per word than in the current biennium at revised 1977 rates. That half-cent reduction in cost per word amounted to a saving of \$1 million. A further half-cent reduction per word, represented by a 3 per cent increase in productivity, would save the United Nations another \$1 million. By reducing available funding, an incentive would be provided for achieving that further productivity increase. The necessity for such inducements was demonstrated in table 23.14, which showed that there would be a 22 per cent increase in the cost of single interpreter assignment in the next biennium, in table 23.17, which indicated that there would be a 33 per cent increase in the cost of editing and typing each word contained in conference documents and in table 23.19, which showed a 15.4 per cent increase in the cost of publishing a United Nations document and worked out to over \$2.5 million. It should be possible to realize savings through increases in productivity for those operations.

55. Pending unification of the indices used to measure production in New York and Geneva, it was enlightening to analyse table 23.30 and to find a considerable disparity between workload standards in the two offices. The requirements for Geneva translators, revisers, editors and stenotypists appeared to be extremely modest compared to standard workloads in most modern publishing houses. However, the full import of those standards could be appreciated only by developing unit costs for each of those activities. The disparity in the cost of a single interpreter assignment at Geneva and at Headquarters during the next biennium - somewhere between \$100 and \$125 for Geneva and \$210 for Headquarters - was surprisingly wide and was not consistent with other assumptions about comparative costs between the two offices. According to the figures contained in the table, it cost \$70.67 to translate, revise, stenotype and edit a single page of copy for a United Nations document in Geneva, whereas, applying the same cost ratio to that figure as was applied to the cost of interpreter assignments between Geneva and New York, the cost of those services in New York would be \$118. Even allowing for the unusual requirements of the United Nations and the many languages in which it had to work, those figures seemed far out of line. In the light of such exorbitant costs, it would not seem unreasonable to at least double the workload standards for translation, revision, stenotyping and editing in the interest of economizing. Indeed, major savings could be realized if workload standards were tightened up throughout all the divisions of the Department of Conference Services

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(Mr. Cunningham, United States)

56. Those findings fully justified the modest reduction in funding for the Department which his delegation had proposed. The proposal was intended as an incentive to the United Nations to institute strong measures to increase productivity in the various activities connected with conference services.

57. Ms. MUCK (Austria) said that her delegation was prepared to support the Secretary-General's requests for section 23, as amended by ACABQ, as well as the Advisory Committee's recommendation concerning library facilities at Headquarters and Geneva. In the latter connexion, it would draw the attention of the Secretary-General to the need for locating library units in the new building at Donaupark in Vienna to serve the substantive offices which would be working there. She hoped he would make a proposal on the question to the Assembly at its thirty-third session, taking account of the needs and existing facilities.

58. Mr. GARRIDO (Philippines), supported by Ms. MUCK (Austria) and Mr. NAUDY (France), requested the Secretariat to confirm the accuracy of the comparisons made by the United States representative in support of his proposal for a reduction of funding under section 23 before the Committee took any action on the proposal.

59. Mr. KEMAL (Pakistan), supported by Mr. RHODES (United Kingdom), requested more time to consider the United States proposal.

60. Mr. OLAITAN (Nigeria) said that, while he accepted the proposition that savings could be realized under section 23, he did not think they would exceed the levels recommended by ACABQ.

61. Mr. GOSS (Australia) pointed out that, even if the figures given by the United States representative were confirmed, it was not clear that they added up to the over-all reduction he proposed. The Committee should reserve judgement until it had heard the comments of the Secretariat and ACABQ.

62. Mr. LEWANDOWSKI (Under-Secretary-General for Conference Services and Special Assignments) said that he was grateful to the United States representative for stimulating the interest of the Committee in the cost and functioning of conference services and would welcome another opportunity to explain the operations of his Department. Indeed, he would request the assistance of the United States representative in the preparation of the Secretariat's reaction to the figures he had quoted.

63. The CHAIRMAN suggested that the Committee should postpone a vote on the United States proposal and the recommendations of ACABQ relating to section 23.

64. It was so decided.

Section 12 - United Nations Industrial Development Organization (continued)

65. Mr. CUNNINGHAM (United States of America) said that in dealing with section 12 ACABQ had been overly generous, and the reductions it had recommended were more imagined than real. The Advisory Committee had recommended that amounts relating

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(Mr. Cunningham, United States)

to the Third General Conference of UNIDO should be deleted from the estimates and that the Secretary-General should be requested to resubmit proposals when he was able to make a more accurate estimate of the funds required (A/32/8, para. 12.13). Of the reduction of \$2,390,000 recommended by ACABQ, \$1,005,000, or 42 per cent, was related to the General Conference for which revised and possibly higher estimates were to be submitted. Accordingly, the real reduction recommended by ACABQ amounted to 2.3 per cent, which was very modest for a programme which would receive \$103,400,000 in extrabudgetary funds. While it was difficult for a legislative body to detect inflated estimates, his delegation was concerned by the requests for additional posts and by planned additional expenditure on travel and consultants. His delegation proposed that \$1 million be deducted from the amount recommended by ACABQ and that the amount of \$56.8 million be approved under section 12 in first reading.

66. Mr. AMNEUS (Sweden) said that his delegation did not object to the total estimate for the system of consultations because of the importance of that system. However, it agreed with the comments of the Industrial Development Board and the Advisory Committee in that respect (A/32/8, paras. 12.4 and 12.5), and drew attention to the lack of clarity in the presentation of estimates for consultations. The Secretariat should keep those views in mind when preparing future budget estimates and should also provide much more detailed information on the distribution of resources among the various units of UNIDO within the framework of the regular programme budget. He asked for clarification with respect to paragraph 12.10 of the Advisory Committee's report: in his opinion, paragraph 159 of the Industrial Development Board's report (ID/B/193) meant that provisions for meeting the cost of attendance were limited to the meetings of the follow-up working groups and did not apply to the consultations themselves.

67. His delegation favoured the strengthening of the operational activities of UNIDO, including the Industrial Operations Division, but allowance must be made for the impact of significant changes in extrabudgetary financing provided by UNDP. The measures taken by the Executive Director to implement General Assembly resolution 31/162 were rather disappointing, particularly with respect to operational activities in the field. Senior industrial development field advisers (SIDFAs) had a crucial role to play, and almost all SIDFAs were currently financed by UNDP. The Executive Director was shedding crocodile tears when he regretted that attempts to find room for SIDFAs in the regular budget had proved abortive. If the scarcity of SIDFAs was a question of financing only, SIDFAs should be transferred to the regular budget in order to increase the number financed by UNIDO. It was time for UNIDO to take full responsibility for the financing of the field advisers and perhaps also to increase the total number of such advisers. Such an approach would considerably strengthen the operational activities of UNIDO at the national and subregional level.

68. With respect to the industrial studies programme, the studies tended to be too theoretical and should be directed more towards specific problems of developing countries. The studies should also focus more on the system of consultations. Finally, the International Centre for Industrial Studies was relying too heavily on the services of consultants and his delegation therefore supported the Advisory Committee's recommendations in paragraph 12.22 of its report (A/32/8).

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69. Mr. AKASHI (Japan) said that his delegation recognized the positive role played by UNIDO in helping Member States, particularly the developing countries, to promote industrialization. Industrialization was an extremely complex process, particularly since much of the industrial knowledge that had been acquired was to be found in the private sector. Industrialization was different from agricultural development in that respect. His delegation therefore welcomed the fact that UNIDO had placed particular emphasis on the system of consultations. However, such a system required very thorough preparation, and his delegation shared the concern of the Industrial Development Board that the original plans submitted by the Secretariat were over-ambitious and resources had been spread too thinly. The revised programme was more realistic, but the Secretariat must proceed with caution when deciding on the number of consultations to be held and the number of sectors to be included in the programme.

70. His delegation had found it difficult to accept previous estimates for UNIDO, because of the size of the estimates and doubts about the absorptive capacity of UNIDO itself. Although the estimates for the biennium 1978-1979 were more modest than previous estimates, caution must be exercised with respect to the system of consultations, which his delegation endorsed with some reservations. Considerable emphasis had been placed on industrial studies, and his delegation agreed with the Industrial Development Board that proposed studies must be screened carefully in order to ensure quality and the relevance of the studies to the international community. The range of activities in which consultants were engaged was too broad.

71. His delegation was relieved that UNDP had agreed to finance several SIDFAs and had decided to increase the number of SIDFAs to 36. Japan was the only Member State to have agreed to finance a SIDFA on the basis of voluntary contributions, and it was to be hoped that other Member States would do the same. His delegation agreed with the Advisory Committee that SIDFAs should not be funded from the regular budget (A/32/8, para. 12.8).

72. With respect to estimates for travel, his delegation did not favour the incremental approach. The entire amount to be used for travel must be justified. The same applied to expenditure on consultants. His delegation agreed with the Advisory Committee's recommendation to grant 10 of the requested new posts.

73. The responsibilities of the various units of UNIDO with respect to public information and external relations should be examined closely in order to avoid duplication. Similarly, UNIDO and the regional economic commissions should co-operate closely in the field of regional industrial co-operation, and it was to be hoped that the economic commissions would react favourably in that respect. It was also to be hoped that UNIDO would maintain its flexibility with respect to the utilization of staff and would redeploy staff in accordance with the changing priorities called for in the Lima Declaration and Plan of Action.

74. Mr. GEORGHIEVSKY (Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic) said that his delegation could not support such a high rate of budgetary growth for UNIDO, the main reasons for which were, firstly, the tendency within the Secretariat to include existing programmes in the budget for the following biennium automatically,

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(Mr. Georghievsky, Ukrainian SSR)

and, secondly, the inclusion of estimates to cover the effects of inflation. In accordance with General Assembly resolutions 3534 (XXX) and 31/93, the Secretariat must take practical measures to rationalize the activities of UNIDO, and expenditure caused by inflation should be financed by savings in other sectors, adjustments within the budget and by contributions from those developed countries where United Nations offices were situated. The proposed budget for UNIDO did not establish programme priorities, nor did it give a clear picture of the links between programmes and programme expenditure. For some areas of activity, the proposed budget did not provide the data necessary to enable the Fifth Committee to take a well-informed decision. That was particularly true with respect to the system of consultations which was one of the main components of the UNIDO programme for the following biennium. Similarly, the proposed budget contained no information on the activities of the International Centre for Industrial Studies or the Industrial Operations Division in connexion with the operation of the system of consultations. Moreover, the Secretariat had been unable to provide adequate information on how much of the total resources requested for UNIDO would be devoted to that system (A/32/8, para. 12.4). The Industrial Development Board had suggested that the experimental phase of consultations should be extended for a two-year period, but had recommended that the consultation programme for 1978-1979 should be financed within the limits of the amount approved for the current biennium. His delegation fully endorsed that recommendation and considered that, when compiling programmes, the Secretariat should plan the number of consultations and sectors in the light of already approved allocations. His delegation could not support the sharp increase in expenditure on the system of consultations requested under "conference services, public information and external relations".

75. With respect to policy co-ordination, his delegation supported the Advisory Committee's recommendation that provision for consultants should remain at the 1976-1977 level of \$332,000 (A/32/8, para. 12.16). No new posts should be established under the regular budget, since 13 posts would be established on the basis of extrabudgetary funds. As suggested by the Industrial Development Board and the Advisory Committee, the number of studies proposed by the Secretariat should be reduced and a better balance should be established between research work and operational activities. In that connexion, his delegation supported the reductions recommended by ACABQ with respect to the "industrial studies" programme and with respect to administration and common services.

76. Despite certain reductions, the estimate recommended by the Advisory Committee under section 12 represented an increase of \$11,737,700 over expenditure during the current biennium. Moreover, that increase did not include estimates for the Third General Conference of UNIDO, which would be submitted at the thirty-second session. His delegation considered that ACABQ could have recommended greater reductions and it could not, therefore, support the appropriation recommended by ACABQ under section 12.

77. Mr. MAJOLI (Italy) said that his delegation agreed with the resolutions recommended by ACABQ but could not agree to any further reductions. Industrial development was of the utmost importance; while the administrative expenses of

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(Mr. Majoli, Italy)

UNIDO and expenditure on some studies could perhaps be reduced somewhat, it would be wrong to cut back on operational activities or the system of consultations which were the most important aspects of the work of UNIDO. The system of consultations in particular had produced encouraging results. The advantage of that system was that it was not too formal and was not limited to government representatives but included industrialists, trade unionists and consumers. It also helped to establish a dialogue between developed and developing countries. His country's support for UNIDO was reflected in its voluntary contributions.

78. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) referring to the point raised by the representative of Sweden in connexion with paragraph 12.10 of the Advisory Committee's report, said that the Industrial Development Board's decision that the costs of attendance should be borne by participants applied to both consultation meetings and the follow-up working group meetings.

79. Mr. DEBATIN (Assistant Secretary-General, Controller) said that the Secretariat had requested a total of 14 new posts under section 12, but had done so only after redeploying existing staff to make the best possible use of available resources. The Secretariat had not taken the existing situation for granted. If the requests of the Secretary-General were granted, the number of UNIDO posts would have increased by only 20 in the course of six years. If the Advisory Committee's recommendations were approved, the corresponding increase would amount to only 11 posts, giving a manning-table growth rate of less than 1.4 per cent.

80. The use of consultants was particularly important with respect to industrial development, where specialized knowledge was even more vital than in other fields. Existing manpower must clearly be put to the best possible use, but consultants must be engaged if the desired output was to be maintained. The Secretary-General's estimate for consultants for the biennium 1978-1979 included an additional amount of \$394,000 for the maintenance base and an additional amount of \$377,000 to offset inflation. ACABQ had recommended a reduction in that increase of \$716,000, which would mean that the existing level of activity could not be maintained. The cut recommended by the Advisory Committee was equivalent to 12 man-years or 6 posts for the biennium and should be seen in the context of the three Professional posts which ACABQ had recommended for approval.

81. With respect to travel, the Secretary-General had requested an increase of \$100,000 if estimates for the Third General Conference, a non-recurrent item, were excluded. Of that increase, \$8,500 had been requested to finance the participation of certain African liberation movements, and \$54,000 had been requested specifically for the "policy co-ordination" programme in connexion with the system of consultations. The Advisory Committee had recommended a reduction of 86 per cent in the travel estimates, despite the fact that three new Professional posts involving travel had been approved.

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82. Mr. MSFELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) said the Controller had given the impression that the Advisory Committee had recommended the approval of three Professional posts. In fact, the Advisory Committee had recommended the approval of seven Professional posts and four General Service posts, a total of 11. However, since the Secretary-General had recommended that four Professional and two General Service posts should be deleted, the effect of the Advisory Committee's recommendation on the manning table of UNIDO would be to add three Professional posts and two General Service posts, a total of five.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.