

**REPORT  
OF THE GROUP OF HIGH-LEVEL  
INTERGOVERNMENTAL EXPERTS  
TO REVIEW THE EFFICIENCY OF THE  
ADMINISTRATIVE AND FINANCIAL  
FUNCTIONING OF THE UNITED NATIONS**

**GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

OFFICIAL RECORDS: FORTY-FIRST SESSION

SUPPLEMENT No. 49 (A/41/49)



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New York, 1986

#### **NOTE**

**Symbols of United Nations documents are composed of capital letters combined with figures. Mention of such a symbol indicates a reference to a United Nations document.**

[15 August 1986]

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## I. INTRODUCTION

1. The basic objectives of the Charter of the United Nations have been reaffirmed and further developed throughout its 40 years of existence. Changing international circumstances and new challenges have led to a gradual but significant expansion in the scope, range and volume of the work of the Organization.

2. As new tasks have emerged and old ones persist, the agenda of the United Nations has shown a sustained growth. This larger, more diversified and complex agenda has led to a parallel growth in the intergovernmental machinery. New organs, committees, commissions and expert groups have been established at different levels in pursuit of the objectives of the Charter. In this process of institutional growth, sufficient attention has not always been given to avoid overlapping of agendas and duplication of work. This is the case for the United Nations itself and its affiliated bodies, as well as for the relationship between the United Nations and the specialized agencies. The United Nations own intergovernmental machinery for dealing with political, economic and social problems, including operational activities, has an overly complex structure which generally suffers from lack of cohesion and which makes co-ordination difficult.

3. The increase in activities and the institutional growth have led to a significant growth in the number of conferences and meetings held annually under United Nations auspices. Such conferences and meetings constitute an integral part of multilateral diplomacy and represent important tools in the search for mutual understanding and for a harmonization of policies and actions with regard to common problems. The number, frequency and duration of conferences and meetings has, however, reached a level which presents difficulties for all Member States, in particular smaller States with limited personnel resources, to participate fully. Another problem is that too often the considerable resources allocated to conferences and meetings are not put to maximum productive use. The volume of documentation, both in relation to conferences and meetings as well as in more general terms, has increased considerably and has, to some extent, surpassed the limit of what can be studied and constructively used by Member States.

4. The United Nations Secretariat, which services the intergovernmental machinery, has undergone a parallel growth. As an example, the number of posts funded from the regular budget of the United Nations has grown from 1,546 in 1946 to 11,423 in 1986. This growth has, at times, been rapid, particularly at the end of the 1970s. Management capacity, especially with regard to the need to maintain overall administrative efficiency, productivity and cost effectiveness, has lagged behind this pace of growth. The quality of work performed needs to be improved upon. The qualifications of staff, in particular in the higher categories, are inadequate and the working methods are not efficient. Today's structure is too complex, fragmented and top-heavy. The Secretariat is divided into too many departments, offices and divisions. There are at present nine political departments or offices and some 15 economic and social departments or offices. This is exemplified by the excessive number of Under-Secretaries-General and Assistant Secretaries-General.

5. The larger agenda of the United Nations, which responds to the demands and requirements of the international community, has led to a gradual growth in the regular budget of the Organization. The regular budget appropriation for the present biennium (1986-1987) financed through assessed contributions stands at \$1,663 million. However, this portion of the budget covers only a part of the

activities of the United Nations. The remainder, amounting to roughly \$1,200 million per year, is financed through voluntary contributions. Moreover, the budget of the United Nations is only one of many budgets covering the activities of the network made up of the United Nations and its affiliated organizations, whose secretariats fall directly or indirectly under the control of the Secretary-General.

6. Activities financed through assessed contributions under the regular budget fall into several distinct categories: political activities (10.4 per cent), economic and social activities (31.0 per cent), conference-servicing activities (19.5 per cent), technical co-operation activities (4.4 per cent), humanitarian activities (2.9 per cent), activities relating to international law (1.7 per cent), public information activities (5.2 per cent) and administrative activities (24.9 per cent). These activities are, as will be seen, extremely varied in nature. The activities financed from voluntary contributions (extrabudgetary resources) are less diverse, comprising humanitarian and operational activities.

7. Over a number of years, there has been disagreement on the content and level of the budget of the Organization. This situation reflects to some extent political disagreement among Member States on parts of the substantive activities included in the programme budget. It also reflects some degree of dissatisfaction with aspects of the management and administrative functioning of the Organization. These problems are compounded by shortcomings in the present planning and budget procedure. This procedure is meant to constitute an integrated process through which wide agreement should evolve on activities to be financed from the budget of the Organization. In practice, it has not fulfilled its purpose. Many of the existing procedures for preparation and approval of the programme budget still correspond to the times when the budget was formulated by object of expenditure and not in terms of programmes. Furthermore, Member States can only give their opinion on the programme budget at a very late stage in the process. There is a need to develop budget procedures which would associate Member States more actively with the preparation of the medium-term plan and the programme budget and which would better facilitate broad agreement among Member States on budgetary matters, while fully preserving the principle of sovereign equality of States enshrined in the Charter.

8. As the Group of High-level Intergovernmental Experts began its work, it acknowledged that it was not within the mandate of the Group to address the immediate and short-term financial problems of the United Nations. The Group had rather been called upon by the General Assembly to identify, within the framework of the Charter, measures for further improving the administrative and financial functioning of the Organization in medium and longer term.

9. The Group furthermore noted that it had been requested to consider only the administrative and financial matters of the United Nations and its subsidiary bodies. The relationship between the Organization, including its subsidiary bodies, and the specialized agencies, as well as system-wide co-ordination and co-operation, thus falls outside the mandate of the Group.

10. On this basis, the Group undertook a review of the intergovernmental machinery of the United Nations and its subsidiary organs, the structure of the United Nations Secretariat, the personnel policy of the Organization, activities related to co-ordination, monitoring, evaluation and inspection and budgetary matters. Throughout this process, the Group did consistently seek to identify measures to improve the administrative and financial functioning of the Organization. The

Group noted also that some of the measures it recommended would improve the cost effectiveness of the Organization, thereby increasing the resources available to substantive activities.

11. The time constraints under which the Group had to work did not allow it to make a comprehensive study of some of the extremely complex problems put before it. The Group was established in late February 1986. It had to spread its research, its discussions and the drafting of its report over four sessions, the total meeting time representing only eight weeks.

12. In accordance with paragraph 6 of General Assembly resolution 40/237 of 18 December 1985, the Secretary-General met with the Group on several occasions to give his views on questions before it. The Secretariat of the Organization responded to requests from the Group for information which enabled the Group to have before it a considerable volume of documentation.

13. In these circumstances and in view of the breadth and complexity of the subject considered, the Group felt that a distinction should be drawn between:

(a) Those questions on which it was possible for it to submit precise recommendations that might be taken into consideration by the General Assembly upon the submission of its report;

(b) Those questions that merited and required examination in greater depth and with regard to which it had to be satisfied with defining lines of approach and suggesting methods for subsequent research.

14. The Group has performed its work on the basis of full respect for the principles and provisions of the Charter. The recommendations of the Group are set out below. The Group is convinced that the measures it recommends will contribute to improve further "the efficiency of the administrative and financial functioning" of the United Nations, "which would contribute to strengthening its effectiveness in dealing with political, economic and social issues".

15. The Group remains convinced that it has only begun a reform process. This process must now be carried further by other intergovernmental bodies and by the Secretary-General of the Organization. The Group considers that it has fully discharged its mandate and concluded its work with the submission of this report. The continued commitment of Member States to the United Nations and the process of multilateral diplomacy that it represents is indispensable if this process is to succeed.

## II. THE INTERGOVERNMENTAL MACHINERY AND ITS FUNCTIONING

16. As new tasks have emerged without old ones being solved, the agenda of the United Nations has shown sustained growth. This expansion in the agenda has led to a parallel growth in the intergovernmental machinery, which has in some cases resulted in duplication of agendas and work, particularly in the economic and social fields. The efficiency of the Organization has suffered through this process and there is a need for structural reform of the intergovernmental machinery.

17. The Group is convinced that reforms should also be carried out with regard to the frequency and duration of United Nations conferences and meetings and to the volume of documentation. Many recommendations to this effect have been suggested in the past, to little or no avail. There is ample room for reductions in many areas. In addition to having a positive effect on the substantive work to be done, such reductions would lead to economies in conference and documentation costs.

18. Besides eliminating obvious duplication in the agendas and programmes of work, there is also an urgent need for improved co-ordination of activities undertaken both within the United Nations itself and throughout the United Nations system. This is particularly valid for activities within the economic and social sectors, and encompasses the work of the various secretariats as well as of the intergovernmental machinery. The structure of the present system makes co-ordination of activities a difficult undertaking. The large number of mechanisms established for co-ordination testify to this.

19. The magnitude and complexity of the intergovernmental structure is such, however, that recommendations for more fundamental structural reforms require a comprehensive review of the present situation. On account of the limited time available to it, the Group has not found it possible to undertake such an in-depth review. As suggested below, the Group is of the opinion that such a careful and thorough review should be entrusted to an intergovernmental body.

20. Pending such a comprehensive review of the intergovernmental machinery of the United Nations and its subsidiary organs, the Group considers that there are some specific changes that can and should be implemented without delay.

21. On this basis, the Group submits the following recommendations:

### A. Specific recommendations

#### Recommendation 1

The Committee on Conferences should be strengthened and be given broader responsibilities:

- (a) The highest level of membership on the Committee should be ensured;
- (b) The Committee should be entrusted with monitoring the implementation of the recommendations of the General Assembly on all organizational aspects dealing with conferences, meetings and related documentation, and report to it annually. It should also monitor the policy on publications, with the assistance of the Publications Board and taking into account positions adopted by the Committee on Information;



(c) The Committee should also ensure the harmonization of working procedures of conference services among all United Nations offices performing such services;

(d) Within an overall level of resources allocated for conference services by the General Assembly, the Committee should be entrusted with the task of preparing the calendar of conferences and meetings within this level, in close co-operation with the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions; such calendar should be submitted to the General Assembly for approval;

(e) The Committee should plan and co-ordinate conferences and meetings, in particular by staggering them throughout the year; this would ensure better utilization of conference facilities and established resources, limit the use of temporary personnel and reduce overtime.

## Recommendation 2

The number of conferences and meetings can be significantly reduced and their duration shortened without affecting the substantive work of the Organization. To this end:

(a) The Economic and Social Council should be invited to hold an annual session;

(b) The General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council should request their subsidiary bodies to review urgently their current agendas and schedules of meetings in order to reduce substantially their number, frequency and duration. In this context, the move towards biennialization of conferences and meetings, which has been initiated particularly in the economic and social fields, should be vigorously pursued;

(c) As there continues to be large differences between planned and actual utilization of available conference resources by numerous United Nations bodies, these bodies should be requested to provide a more realistic assessment of their needs. 1/ The Committee on Conferences should, in co-operation with the bodies concerned, ensure that wastage of conference-service resources is minimized through a reduction in the projections of the length and, where appropriate, the frequency of meetings of those bodies that have consistently utilized a lower level of resources than planned;

(d) Until 1978, a number of resolutions had requested that only one major conference be scheduled annually. The decision of the General Assembly that no more than five special conferences should take place in a given year and that no more than one special conference should be convened at the same time should be strictly implemented.

## Recommendation 3

The procedures and methods of work of the General Assembly and its subsidiary organs, particularly its Main Committees, should be streamlined and thereby made more effective. Many recommendations have been put forward to this effect. 2/ In this connection, the following points should be emphasized:

(a) The high cost of holding meetings of the principal organs of the United Nations makes it imperative to utilize fully available services. The responsibility for this rests with the presiding officers of those organs, as well as the representatives of Member States;

(b) The agenda of the General Assembly should be rationalized by grouping or merging, to the extent possible, related items and by setting an interval of two or more years for the discussion of certain items;

(c) The possibility of holding the meetings of the Fourth Committee and the Special Political Committee in sequential order should be addressed;

(d) The distribution of agenda items among the Main Committees of the General Assembly and between those Committees and the plenary meetings of the Assembly should be reviewed, in order to ensure the best possible use of the expertise of the Committees and of the time and resources available;

(e) As a rule, the General Assembly should not create new subsidiary organs without discontinuing existing ones;

(f) Efforts should be made to reduce the number of resolutions adopted by the General Assembly. Resolutions should request reports of the Secretary-General only in cases where that would be indispensable for facilitating the implementation of these resolutions or the continued examination of the question.

#### Recommendation 4

The existing principle that United Nations bodies should meet at their respective established headquarters, as provided for in General Assembly resolution 40/243 of 18 December 1985, should be strictly enforced. Whenever the Assembly accepts an invitation from the Government of a Member State to hold a conference or meeting away from established headquarters, the additional cost should be borne in full by that Government. The methods of budgeting these costs should be improved so as to ensure that all additional costs are accounted for.

#### Recommendation 5

Construction of United Nations conference facilities should only be undertaken when sufficient resources are available, bearing in mind the desirability of decentralizing the activities of the United Nations wherever appropriate.

#### Recommendation 6

Reimbursement of travel costs for representatives of Member States attending the General Assembly should be limited to the least developed countries.

#### Recommendation 7

Since the cost of processing and distributing as official documents communications received from Member States is estimated at \$2 million per biennium, Member States should co-operate in significantly curtailing this practice. The provisions of General Assembly decision 34/401 should be strictly adhered to.

R. Comparative study of the intergovernmental machinery and its functioning

22. As stated in paragraphs 16 to 19, the Group is of the opinion that the magnitude and complexity of the intergovernmental machinery, particularly in the economic and social fields, is such that recommendations for more fundamental structural reforms require a comprehensive review of the present situation. There are, for instance, in these fields more than 150 committees, commissions, sub-committees, sub-commissions and working groups. Within the time span set for the Group's work by the General Assembly, it has been impossible to address in depth this complex issue and the Group will consequently recommend that this be done by an intergovernmental body.

23. The need to improve the efficiency of the United Nations, the importance of the economic and social activities and the fact that they require a significant proportion of resources of the Organization make it necessary to implement reforms in these areas as a matter of priority.

24. The Group therefore submits the following recommendation:

Recommendation 8

- (1) A careful and in-depth study of the intergovernmental structure in the economic and social fields should be undertaken by an intergovernmental body to be designated by the General Assembly. This body should preferably have a limited membership, at the highest possible level of representation and based on the principle of equitable geographical distribution. In discharging its tasks, the body should seek the co-operation of the intergovernmental organs whose functions are being reviewed in the study and draw on the expertise of relevant United Nations bodies, such as the Joint Inspection Unit and the United Nations Institute for Training and Research.
- (2) In general terms, the study should include a comparative analysis of agendas, calendars and programmes of work of the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and related subsidiary bodies, in particular the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Fund for Population Activities, the United Nations Children's Fund, the United Nations Environment Programme, the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the World Food Council. The study should also include their support structures.
- (3) The purpose of the study should be, inter alia, to:
  - (a) Identify measures to rationalize and simplify the intergovernmental structure, avoid duplication and consider consolidating and co-ordinating overlapping activities and merging existing bodies in order to improve their work and make the structure more responsive to present needs;
  - (b) Develop criteria for the establishment and duration of subsidiary bodies, including periodic reviews of their work and mechanisms for implementing their decisions;

(c) Define in precise terms areas of responsibility for the various bodies. Particular attention should be given to strengthening the coherence and integrity of the structure, to facilitating the formulation of a comprehensive approach to development issues and to the necessity of putting more emphasis on regional and subregional co-operation;

(d) Consider the establishment of a single governing body responsible for the management and control, at the intergovernmental level, of United Nations operational activities for development;

(e) Improve the system of reporting from subsidiary to principal organs, thereby reducing the number of reports and avoiding duplication of documentation;

(f) Strengthen on a continuous basis the co-ordination of activities in the economic and social fields under the leadership of the Secretary-General.

- (4) The study should be undertaken as a matter of priority and its findings and recommendations should be presented to the General Assembly not later than at its forty-third session.

### C. Co-ordination

25. The United Nations has been entrusted, under Article 58 of the Charter, with the responsibility of making "recommendations for the co-ordination of the policies and activities of the specialized agencies". The mandate of the Group is to improve the efficiency of the United Nations. The Group realizes that effective co-ordination between organizations in the system is a necessity and took note of General Assembly resolution 32/197 of 20 December 1977, in which the Assembly called upon the Director-General for Development and International Economic Co-operation to provide effective leadership in exercising overall co-ordination within the system and the standing agreements between the United Nations and the specialized agencies, which called upon each agency to co-ordinate its activities with those of the United Nations.

26. A number of attempts to improve co-ordination of the United Nations system have failed. The Group nevertheless believes that efforts have to be pursued and that they should begin by the main agencies of the United Nations system defining a common approach to the possible solutions of the economic and social problems. The executive heads of these main agencies should accordingly exchange views on the policies and programmes they are proposing to Member States, in order to improve the compatibility of these programmes.

27. The Group therefore submits the following recommendations:

#### Recommendation 9

The machinery for inter-agency co-ordination should be streamlined. Maximum use should be made of flexible ad hoc arrangements designed to meet specific requirements.

#### Recommendation 10

Executive heads of the International Labour Organisation, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the World Health Organization, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, the International Atomic Energy Agency, the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development and the International Monetary Fund should be invited to hold an annual one-week session under the chairmanship of the Secretary-General, assisted by the Director-General for Development and International Economic Co-operation and the Under-Secretary-General for International Economic and Social Affairs, to discuss major policy questions in the economic and social fields and improve the co-ordination of their programmes. They would report on a biennial basis to their respective governing bodies.

#### Recommendation 11

In order to strengthen the co-ordination of operational activities at the national level, in conformity with the policies of the Governments concerned, the central co-ordinating role of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in these matters should be reaffirmed and the authority of the resident co-ordinators should, wherever possible, be clarified and confirmed with respect to non-UNDP programmes.

#### Recommendation 12

The cost effectiveness and efficiency of the field representation of the various programmes should be reviewed by the relevant governing bodies, with a view to merging field offices of the United Nations whenever feasible, thereby achieving better co-ordination and reducing some of the administrative costs.

#### Recommendation 13

The efforts to harmonize the format of the programme budgets of the organizations of the United Nations system should be vigorously pursued. The administrative budgets of the United Nations affiliates, such as the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Environment Programme, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, and the United Nations Fund for Population Activities, should, as far as possible, adopt the format of the United Nations budget.

### III. STRUCTURE OF THE SECRETARIAT

28. Over the years, there has been a significant growth of the Secretariat. This expansion in the Secretariat structure has, at times, been rapid and has resulted in duplication of work and reduced productivity and has made it difficult to make maximum use of resources. Co-ordination of activities has been made difficult on account of the extent and complexity of the Organization's structure.
29. The Group has examined the present organizational structure, bearing in mind that the aim should be to enhance the capacity of the Organization to implement the tasks entrusted to it as efficiently and cost-effectively as possible. The Group is convinced that in many areas there is room for changes which can lead to an overall increase in the productivity and efficiency of the Secretariat, and which would make it more responsive to the needs of Member States.
30. Firstly, today's structure is both too top-heavy and too complex. In the regular budget, there are 28 posts at the Under-Secretary-General level and 29 posts at the Assistant Secretary-General level. In addition, there are 7 and 23 posts at these levels, respectively, that are financed from extrabudgetary sources. These posts include those of the United Nations-affiliated bodies, such as the United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations Children's Fund. The establishment of this large number of top-echelon posts has inevitably resulted in dispersion of responsibility, as well as diffuse lines of authority, accountability and communication. A substantial reduction in the number of these posts, together with clearer and simpler lines of authority and responsibility, will have a positive impact on the Organization's ability to carry out the tasks entrusted to it. The aim must be a Secretariat with an increased capacity and ability to deliver the services required with high quality.
31. Secondly, the present organizational structure is too fragmented. For example, the Secretariat has 9 political and 11 economic and social departments, centres or offices, excluding the regional commissions. Such a fragmentation inevitably leads to duplication of work, both within the Secretariat and vis-à-vis other organs of the United Nations system. It makes co-ordination more difficult and leads to a reduced quality of performance. To improve and strengthen the Organization, offices, departments and other units dealing with matters of a similar or related character should therefore be consolidated.
32. Thirdly, concerning the size of the Secretariat, even with the present organizational structure, a leaner Secretariat will enhance productivity and improve efficiency. Furthermore, increased efficiency could be achieved in the administrative and related functions of the Secretariat, without affecting the quality of the services provided, through the elimination of duplication, the strengthening of authority by suppressing hierarchical layers and by improving the personnel policies, particularly through the use of objective methods of recruitment.
33. Fourthly, in many countries a variety of United Nations offices are at present established at the same location. In many cases, they may be consolidated, with resulting increased efficiency and financial savings.
34. Emphasizing both the leadership responsibilities and prerogatives of the Secretary-General as chief administrative officer of the Organization in accordance with the provisions of the Charter, and noting with appreciation his efforts to

improve the efficiency of the Secretariat, the Group, in accordance with its mandate, submits the recommendations set forth below. The implementation of the recommendations relating to the organizational structure of the Secretariat and the redeployment and reduction of personnel should be guided by the legislative mandates and the relative importance and objectives of programmes in the political, economic and social fields as approved by the various legislative bodies. It should also take into account the principles laid down in the Charter relating to the staff of the Organization. The Group suggests that the recommendations set forth below should be implemented over a period of three years.

35. The Group therefore submits the following recommendations:

#### A. General recommendations

##### Recommendation 14

The organizational structure of the Secretariat should be simplified. In so doing, the following considerations should be borne in mind:

- (a) The present structure is top-heavy and too complex. There is a need for simplification and for developing clearer lines of authority, responsibility, accountability and communication;
- (b) Departments, offices and other units dealing with questions of a similar or related character should be merged when such a consolidation would contribute to improving the efficiency of the Organization;
- (c) There is a need for improved co-ordination on a continuing basis of the work of departments, offices and other units in order to avoid duplication of work;
- (d) United Nations offices are at present established at the same location in many cities and countries. In most cases, they may be consolidated with no loss of efficiency and with resulting economies both in personnel and general costs.

##### Recommendation 15

- (1) A substantial reduction in the number of staff members at all levels, but particularly in the higher echelons, is desirable. It should be possible to undertake such a reduction in a relatively short period of time without causing any negative impact on the current level of programme activities of the United Nations, as determined by the General Assembly and other legislative organs.
- (2) To this end:
  - (a) The overall number of regular budget posts should be reduced by 15 per cent within a period of three years;
  - (b) The number of regular budget posts at the level of Under-Secretary-General and Assistant Secretary-General should be reduced by 25 per cent within a period of three years or less, with a comparable reduction in posts at those levels funded from extrabudgetary sources.

(3) The Secretary-General should submit to the General Assembly his plans for implementing the recommendations in paragraphs (1) and (2) above. When drawing up such plans, the Secretary-General should, inter alia, be guided by:

(a) The necessity of securing the highest standards of efficiency, competence and integrity of the staff, with due regard to equitable geographical distribution;

(b) An analysis of work-loads in the various departments and offices, taking into account the efficiency that can be gained through the consolidation of functions and the elimination of duplication;

(c) The need to avoid any negative effects on the implementation of programmes;

(d) The continuing need to recruit new staff members, especially at the junior Professional levels, to ensure a vigorous Secretariat structure. The number of staff members recruited at the P-1, P-2 and P-3 levels should not fall below the average number of those recruited during the years 1982, 1983 and 1984. Such new recruitment should, however, be balanced with an equivalent reduction in staff, so that the aim of a net reduction of 15 per cent is achieved within a three-year period.

(4) A further reduction in the overall number of posts could be undertaken as a result of restructuring of the intergovernmental machinery and the Secretariat.

#### B. Political affairs

36. As indicated in paragraph 31, the Secretariat has nine political departments, centres or offices. Such fragmentation inevitably leads to duplication of work, dispersion of responsibility and blurred lines of authority, accountability and communication.

37. The Group therefore submits the following recommendations:

##### Recommendation 16

A review of the political departments and offices that carry out a wide variety of functions should be undertaken, with a view to consolidating and streamlining the organizational structure in this field in order to strengthen the Organization's capacity to deal with these important matters.

##### Recommendation 17

The administrative functions of the Office for Field Operational and External Support Activities should be transferred to the Department of Administration and Management. Most of the staff in the field offices should be recruited locally. The number of internationally recruited field service officers should be substantially reduced. The political information functions entrusted to the Office should be reassigned, taking into consideration recommendation 18.



#### Recommendation 18

There is a duplication of efforts with regard to the dissemination of news and political analysis activities in various departments, namely, the Office for Field Operational and External Support Activities, the Department of Political and Security Council Affairs, the Department of Political Affairs, Trusteeship and Decolonization and the Department of Public Information. These activities should be rationalized and co-ordinated with a view to achieving substantial savings and better utilization of resources.

#### Recommendation 19

Activities relating to Namibia are currently undertaken by several offices in the Secretariat, each of which requires its own administrative structure and specialized substantive staff. In order to enhance the Organization's capacity to deal with this important matter and without in any way limiting the programmes and services in this area, support activities of the United Nations Council for Namibia and of the Office of the United Nations Commissioner for Namibia should be consolidated and strengthened by providing full support, as recommended by the recent International Conference for the Immediate Independence of Namibia.

#### Recommendation 20

The Department for Disarmament Affairs should be structured in such a way that it may better assist Member States in following the disarmament negotiations and related disarmament questions.

#### Recommendation 21

In view of the decrease in the work-load of the Department of Political Affairs, Trusteeship and Decolonization as a result of progress achieved in matters of decolonization and trusteeship, there should be a corresponding reduction in the number of its staff.

#### Recommendation 22

Special economic assistance programmes currently administered by the Office for Special Political Questions should be transferred to the United Nations Development Programme. Future programmes should be administered by the Programme once they are approved. This measure should in no way affect these programmes or reduce their effectiveness.

#### Recommendation 23

Several United Nations offices are at present administering emergency, humanitarian and special economic assistance programmes. Wherever feasible, the work of those offices should be co-ordinated and rationalized to minimize duplication and to ensure the most efficient utilization of the United Nations resources in this field.

#### Recommendation 24

The United Nations Development Programme should be requested to consider the feasibility of taking over the functions currently performed by the Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator.

### C. Economic and social affairs

38. The economic and social sectors are of great importance to Member States and entail a very high percentage of allocated resources. They are also without a doubt the most complex and varied area of United Nations activities, which require an extensive and in-depth study that the Group was not in a position to carry out.

39. The problems identified by the Group in the economic and social fields relate not only to the duplication noted in the political area but also to the fact that the offices responsible for the research, analysis and operational activities in economic and social matters are not sufficiently responsive to the changing realities at the global and regional levels. The multiplicity of offices dealing with economic and social matters and their dispersion create additional problems of co-ordination and communication that are not found in the political field.

40. In many cases it has not been possible for the Group to recommend concrete solutions to the present deficiencies, as such solutions can only emerge as a result of a more in-depth review. The Group has, however, endeavoured to identify and briefly analyse these issues, and to point to possible avenues for solutions, keeping in mind the importance of ensuring that the work of the Secretariat fully meets the needs of Member States. In this context, it should be borne in mind that the structure of the various offices of the Secretariat and other United Nations entities in this area are intimately linked to the intergovernmental structure, which is dealt with in section II of the present report.

41. The Group submits the following recommendations:

#### Recommendation 25

- (1) A review of the tasks performed by the Department of International Economic and Social Affairs (DIESA), the Department of Technical Co-operation for Development (DTCD), the secretariats of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, the United Nations Environment Programme, the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) and other Secretariat offices and those of other United Nations bodies such as the United Nations Development Programme, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the United Nations Children's Fund and the World Food Programme should be undertaken with a view to eliminating duplication and to ensuring that the offices concerned are able to be more responsive to the needs of Member States. The General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade should be invited to participate in this review.
- (2) Any reorganization in this important sector should help to ensure that the Secretariat has the ability to assist Member States. In this context, the activities of the Centre for Science and Technology for Development should be evaluated and the feasibility of integrating the Centre into DIESA and DTCD should be considered. The purpose should be to achieve a higher level of effectiveness in this sector, which is of particular importance to the economic and social development of Member States.

- (3) In this context, the functions of the Office of the Director-General for Development and International Economic Co-operation should also be reviewed. The authority of the Director-General should be enhanced so that he may fully exercise the functions envisaged by the General Assembly in its resolution 32/197 of 20 December 1977 as regards co-ordination within the system in the field of development and international economic co-operation.
- (4) Consideration should be given to establishing at a single location all departments and offices of the United Nations dealing with economic and social matters.

#### Recommendation 26

The Department of Technical Co-operation for Development should be made more responsive to the actual needs of the developing countries. Duplication and overlapping of activities between the Department and other United Nations organs, in particular the United Nations Development Programme, should be avoided. For these purposes, a review of the Department should be undertaken.

#### Recommendation 27

Some of the activities of the regional commissions are not fully suited to the current needs of Member States in the region concerned. Greater specialization is needed in areas of importance to Member States while keeping in mind the need to avoid duplication and overlapping with other organizations of the United Nations system. The structures and activities of the commissions should therefore be examined in the context of the study suggested in recommendation 8, with a view to improving their effectiveness in furthering multilateral, subregional and interregional co-operation in the economic and social fields.

#### Recommendation 28

It is observed that the regular budget allocation for the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) does not include the cost of administration, conferences and general services. These services are provided by the United Nations Office at Geneva to ECE and were to the tune of \$35,281,500 in 1984-1985. This figure was provided by the Secretary-General in his proposed programme budget for the biennium 1984-1985. On account of inflation, the comparative figures for the biennium 1986-1987 could perhaps be increased by 10 per cent, to \$38.8 million. The total amount for conference services, administration and common services in the budget for 1986-1987 for the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific is \$18.5 million, for the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, \$21.3 million, for the Economic Commission for Africa, \$18.7 million and for the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, \$13.5 million. These are, however, included within the regular budgets of these commissions, unlike ECE. Therefore, the format for the presentation of resources pertaining to the regional commissions should be harmonized in future programme budgets.

## Recommendation 29

Keeping in mind the need to avoid duplication, the functions of the Office of Secretariat Services for Economic and Social Matters should be reassigned to the Department of Conference Services for technical servicing activities (such as the editing of documents) and to the Department of International Economic and Social Affairs for substantive, servicing and co-ordination matters.

### D. Administration and other fields

42. The administrative and related functions of the Secretariat require a sizeable share of the budget of the Organization. The Group believes that increased efficiency could be accomplished in these fields without affecting the quality of the services provided. This could be achieved through eliminating duplication, strengthening lines of authority and suppressing hierarchical layers. In particular, the process of programme planning and budgeting needs to be brought under a more coherent structure. The Group attaches major importance to bringing about more coherence into the administrative and programme planning procedures and this objective should be reflected in the reorganized structure of the Secretariat.

43. The Group is also of the opinion that administrative and general service costs should be reduced. The share of common service costs in the programme budget should be gradually reduced so that maximum resources would become available to substantive activities. To this end, the present financial and administrative procedures should be simplified. Procurement procedures and practices should be improved to ensure maximum efficiency. Automation and use of modern technical equipment should be further pursued where it results in net savings compared to personnel costs. Such a streamlining will not only improve the Organization's cost effectiveness, but will also increase the resources available to substantive activities.

44. The Group therefore submits the following recommendations:

#### Recommendation 30

The Department of Administration and Management should be streamlined to increase its efficiency and to achieve cost effectiveness of administrative services. Particular attention should be given to the need to avoid duplication of work, fragmentation of responsibility and diffuse lines of accountability.

#### Recommendation 31

The Management Advisory Service, which was established to advise on management techniques and to evaluate management structures and weaknesses, is of marginal usefulness and the Service should be abolished.

#### Recommendation 32

All activities relating to programme planning and budgeting should be brought together under a coherent structure.

### Recommendation 33

Support activities for the permanent liaison offices in New York of various Secretariat entities should be consolidated in a single office.

### Recommendation 34

The Department of Conference Services should be rationalized with a view to making it more efficient. The current external printing arrangements should be made more cost-effective. The publication programme should be more closely monitored and streamlined with a view to reducing the overall number of publications, improving their quality and maximizing the sale of successful publications.

### Recommendation 35

The amount spent on outside consultants exceeds at present \$8 million per biennium. Although, for certain tasks and on an ad hoc basis, it might be beneficial to the Organization to use outside consultants on a diversified geographical basis, the amount spent on such services is too high and should be reduced by 30 per cent with immediate effect. Particularly, the practice of hiring retired staff members should be abolished.

### Recommendation 36

Concurrent with the reduction in the overall size of the Secretariat, there should be a reduction in the requirements for rented premises. In this connection, optimum utilization of space should be pursued. Member States and other users occupying office space on United Nations premises should pay a rent based on current commercial rates.

### Recommendation 37

- (1) A thorough review of the functions and working methods as well as of the policies of the Department of Public Information should be conducted, with a view to bringing its role and policies up to date in order to improve the capacity and ability of the Department to provide information on United Nations activities as approved by the intergovernmental bodies. To this end, the working methods of the Department should be rationalized, in order that the funds allocated to that Department should, to a larger extent than hitherto, be used for programme activities.
- (2) The Group has noted that information activities are currently conducted by several departments and offices in the Secretariat. Such activities should, to the extent possible, be consolidated in the Department of Public Information.
- (3) A review of the functions and activities of the United Nations information centres should be undertaken by the Secretary-General and, to the extent that the quality of public information activities would not be hampered, the consolidation of such centres with other existing United Nations offices should be undertaken as mentioned in recommendation 12.

#### Recommendation 38

(1) The present level of official travel should be reduced by 20 per cent. There are too many missions and the Secretariat staff assigned to service conferences tends to be excessive, particularly from the Department of Public Information. The number and duration of missions should be reduced, as should the number of staff members attending conferences. Such a reduction can be done without prejudice to the quality of services and public information coverage.

(2) As a rule, first-class travel should be limited to the Secretary-General.

#### Recommendation 39

The internal audit function should be separated administratively and be independent from the function of implementation and disbursement of funds. To this end, the Internal Audit Division, which is now a part of the Department of Administration and Management, should become an independent unit.

#### Recommendation 40

The functions of the executive office in each department or office should be consolidated into the office of the head of department or office in a compact and streamlined unit.

#### IV. MEASURES REGARDING PERSONNEL

45. The efficiency of the United Nations depends to a large extent on the performance of its Secretariat and other organs; the quality and usefulness of the Secretariat are, in turn, dependent upon the quality and dedication of its staff. Article 97 of the Charter, in designating the Secretary-General as the chief administrative officer, confers upon him the responsibility for managing the Organization. In selecting and managing the staff, the Secretary-General is guided by Articles 100 and 101 of the Charter, which state that the staff should not seek or receive instructions from any Government or from any other authority external to the Organization and that the paramount consideration in the employment of staff shall be the necessity of securing the highest standards of efficiency, competence and integrity, with due regard being paid to the importance of recruiting staff on as wide a geographical basis as possible.

46. The Group is aware of the fact that, particularly during the last 10 to 15 years, numerous studies (mostly by the International Civil Service Commission and the Joint Inspection Unit) have been made on the management of human resources in the United Nations. Many of the recommendations resulting from such studies have been reflected in resolutions of the General Assembly. There is therefore now a body of guidelines and mandates on a wide variety of subjects such as recruitment methods, the recruitment of women, the principle of geographical distribution particularly at higher-level posts, the age of appointment, the retirement age, occupational groups and career development. These mandates guide the Secretary-General in the discharge of his important responsibilities.

47. The Group is convinced that efficient management of the staff should rest upon clear, coherent and transparent rules and regulations. This will enable the Organization to secure and retain the services of staff meeting the highest standards.

48. Clear and coherent rules and regulations are not in themselves, however, sufficient to ensure that the ability and the qualifications of the staff are utilized in the most efficient way or that the staff derive satisfaction and pride from their work. The officials responsible for the management of the staff, that is, not only the office responsible for human resources management, but also every manager who is in charge of a unit, section, division or department, must implement these rules and regulations and create a challenging environment where the staff can and are motivated to give their best efforts to further the goals of the Organization. It is important, indeed fundamental, to develop an institutional spirit in the Organization and to strengthen it as an entity. In this endeavour, staff members at every level have an indispensable role to play. Special responsibility for creating a healthy climate rests with the senior managers. In this respect, the importance of selecting high-level officials with the necessary management skills cannot be over-emphasized.

49. In approaching questions of personnel policy, the Group also believes that it is essential to acknowledge the responsibility and prerogatives of the Secretary-General as chief administrative officer of the United Nations and to emphasize that his authority under the Charter should in no way be prejudiced.

50. With these considerations in mind, the Group submits the following recommendations:

## A. General recommendation

### Recommendation 41

Personnel policy and management in the United Nations has suffered as a result of the considerable political and other pressures that have influenced the selection of staff. The Secretary-General should exercise greater leadership in personnel matters and ensure that the selection of staff is done strictly in accordance with the principles of the Charter. He should improve the management of human resources, protect the authority of the official in charge of personnel and instruct all other senior officials to refrain from influencing the selection of staff. The office responsible should be renamed "Office of Human Resources Management".

## B. Recommendations to be reflected in the staff rules and regulations

### Recommendation 42

The personnel management of the Organization must be based upon clear, coherent and transparent rules. Present inconsistencies and ambiguities should be eliminated. The current staff rules and regulations should be revised to take into account the resolutions and decisions on personnel policy already adopted by the General Assembly and the specific recommendations set forth below. Measures taken to implement these rules and regulations should be clearly set out in a personnel manual which should be widely available and kept up to date. These revised rules and regulations should be applicable to all entities under the authority of the Secretary-General in the Organization, that is, the Secretariat and other subsidiary organs of the Organization. Moreover, while the Group recognizes that its mandate pertains only to a review of the United Nations, it wishes to emphasize its belief that a coherent common system is highly desirable and, in this spirit, the applicability of these new rules and regulations to other organizations in the United Nations system should be considered.

### Recommendation 43

- (1) The Group endorses the principle of recruitment of the staff through national competitive examinations for posts at the P-1 to P-3 levels, in order to ensure that the candidates selected meet the highest standards. Such examinations should be organized without discriminating against any Member State so as to ensure that the principles of selecting staff on the basis of merit and competence and on as wide a geographical basis as possible are respected. The internal and external examinations should be governed by the same standards and criteria.
- (2) Selection of candidates for all posts when competitive examinations are not used should be based on objective methods and clear criteria. For P-4 and P-5 levels, tests or individual examinations designed to determine drafting ability should be part of such methods.



#### Recommendation 44

The proportion of appointments at various levels in the Professional category should be considered, with a view to having a greater proportion of appointments at the junior Professional levels (P-1 to P-3).

#### Recommendation 45

Staff members should be eligible for permanent appointments after having served three years in the United Nations. This period should be sufficient to evaluate the performance of a staff member and determine whether or not the staff member meets the criteria for such appointments.

#### Recommendation 46

Additional measures should be taken by the Secretariat to ensure that an increasing proportion of the posts in the Professional category, particularly at the higher levels, are filled by women, in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly.

#### Recommendation 47

The Secretary-General should take additional measures to ensure that nationals of developing countries are duly represented at senior levels, in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly.

#### Recommendation 48

Staff members who are recruited on a post-by-post basis rather than in the context of an occupational group may be tied too closely to their post and their reassignment to different functions may be difficult. Staff members should therefore be recruited and their careers developed on the basis of occupational groups. This would facilitate mobility and ensure optimum use of their qualifications and experience.

#### Recommendation 49

A job rotation system among the various duty stations should be developed for staff members in the Professional category as part of the career development plans.

#### Recommendation 50

The Secretary-General should include in his annual reports to the General Assembly on personnel questions a section related to the ratings of the performance of staff and their promotion. The system of performance evaluation should be improved by introducing an element of comparison in the rating of staff.

#### Recommendation 51

Strict and clear criteria should be developed for the promotion of staff at all levels. In this context, the functions and the composition of the appointment and promotion bodies should be reviewed, with a view to securing fairness and objectivity in the management of appointments and promotions. Such bodies should be structured on the basis of occupational groups.

## Recommendation 52

The mandatory retirement age of 60 should be strictly applied, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 35/210 of 17 December 1980.

### C. Other recommendations

## Recommendation 53

The International Civil Service Commission is responsible for establishing standards in matters dealing with personnel management. The mandate of the Commission should be modified so that it can also monitor the implementation of such standards by the United Nations and report thereon to the General Assembly.

## Recommendation 54

It would be in the interest of the Organization to renew periodically the leadership of departments and offices. To this effect, the Secretary-General should not, as a rule, extend the service of Under-Secretaries-General and Assistant Secretaries-General for a period exceeding 10 years.

## Recommendation 55

The General Assembly, in its resolution 35/210 of 17 December 1980, reaffirmed the principle that "no post should be considered the exclusive preserve of any Member State, or group of States" and it requested the Secretary-General "to ensure that this principle is applied faithfully in accordance with the principle of equitable geographical distribution". In order to facilitate the implementation of this recommendation, no more than 50 per cent of the nationals of any one Member State employed by the United Nations should be appointed on a fixed-term basis.

\* \* \*

Some members of the Group indicated that the second sentence of recommendation 55 violated the provisions of section I, paragraph 4, of General Assembly resolution 35/210 and, therefore, should not be included in the report of the Group.

## Recommendation 56

A vacant post should not be filled merely because it becomes vacant. The work-load in the organizational unit in which the post is located should be considered before deciding whether it is necessary to fill that post. Such a measure will ensure an efficient use of the resources of the Organization.

## Recommendation 57

In order to secure the necessary flexibility, the ratio between permanent staff members and staff members on fixed-term appointments should be reviewed with the objective of having an adequate range between the two categories. However, in order to ensure that the principle of equitable geographical distribution is faithfully reflected among the Secretariat staff holding

permanent appointments, at least 50 per cent of the nationals of any Member State working in the Secretariat should be employed on a permanent basis. The report of the Secretary-General on this question should be submitted to the General Assembly at its forty-third session.

\* \* \*

Some members of the Group indicated that the second sentence of recommendation 57 ran counter to the principle of equitable geographical distribution and violated section I, paragraph 4, of General Assembly resolution 35/210 referred to in recommendation 55 and, therefore, should not be included in the report of the Group.

#### Recommendation 58

The content of United Nations training programmes should be strictly geared to the needs of the Organization and their effectiveness carefully monitored to ensure optimum utilization of allocated resources.

#### Recommendation 59

The efficiency of the Organization would be increased if clear guidelines were established for the role and functions of the staff union, in order to ensure that the union does not infringe upon the managerial responsibilities of the Secretary-General. Staff unions or associations should finance all their activities from their own funds.

#### Recommendation 60

The system of administration of justice, as constituted at present, is cumbersome. The procedures should therefore be simplified to render the system more efficient and less costly. In its resolution 40/252 of 18 December 1985, the General Assembly endorsed the recommendations of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions that the Secretary-General be requested to prepare an analysis of the problem and indicate which steps he has taken or intends to take to simplify the procedures. This recommendation should be implemented without delay and the measures recommended taken as rapidly as possible.

#### Recommendation 61

The total entitlements (salaries and other conditions of service) of staff members have reached a level which gives reason for serious concern and it should be reduced. In particular, the elimination of the education grant for post-secondary studies and the establishment of a four-week annual leave system for all staff members should be considered for prompt implementation.

#### Recommendation 62

A serious effort should be made by the Secretary-General to discourage the present practice of transferring extrabudgetary posts to the regular budget.

## V. MONITORING, EVALUATION AND INSPECTION

51. Monitoring, evaluation and inspection of the activities of the United Nations are of particular importance in order to secure administrative efficiency and proper use of funds. To safeguard and promote the confidence of Member States and of the international community in the United Nations, it is important that the activities of the Organization are undertaken in the most efficient manner, that resources available are used in an optimum way, and that the relevance, effectiveness and impact of the activities are assessed in the light of established goals and objectives. Monitoring, evaluation and inspection constitute an indispensable tool to achieve these goals.

52. The functions of the Joint Inspection Unit are, among other things, to monitor, inspect and evaluate the activities of the participating organizations, satisfying itself "that the activities undertaken by the organizations are carried out in the most economical manner and that the optimum use is made of resources available for carrying out these activities". Furthermore, the Joint Inspection Unit not only advises organizations on their methods for internal evaluation, but also makes ad hoc evaluations of programmes and activities. As to internal evaluation and monitoring, these functions are to varying degrees undertaken by the United Nations and its system of organizations. The Group believes that there is a need to improve further the present system.

53. Firstly, it is necessary to see that the reports of the Joint Inspection Unit are adequately dealt with at the intergovernmental level. Sufficient attention is not always given either to the reports as such or to the implementation of the recommendations contained therein. The competent and relevant bodies and organizations should, therefore, ensure that the reports are adequately dealt with and that the recommendations approved by them are implemented.

54. Secondly, the Group is of the opinion that more emphasis should be put on evaluation in order to increase the awareness of the bodies concerned regarding the status of implementation of the programmes adopted and their relevance, effectiveness and impact in achieving the goals set. It is also important in order to improve the internal evaluation system.

55. Thirdly, the work performed and some of the reports submitted by the inspectors should be improved upon. The quality and standard of the work performed are of course intimately linked to the competence of those entrusted with these tasks, as is true for the Secretariat. To a larger degree than hitherto, it is important to ensure that the inspectors appointed possess the necessary qualifications to undertake the variety of tasks with which they are faced. As laid down in the statute of the Joint Inspection Unit, it is also important to secure that the independence of the inspectors is safeguarded and that they are appointed on the basis of equitable geographical distribution.

56. The Group therefore submits the following recommendations:

### Recommendation 63

In order to improve management, secure administrative efficiency and achieve greater co-ordination between organizations and organs, the members of the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU), in discharging their duties, should put more emphasis on the evaluation aspect of their work, a function which is already

included in the statute of the Unit. To reflect this added emphasis on the preparation of the evaluation reports to be directed to intergovernmental bodies, JIU should be renamed Joint Inspection and Evaluation Unit and its statute revised accordingly.

#### Recommendation 64

When selecting candidates for appointment as inspectors, Member States should give special emphasis to qualifications, particularly in the field of personnel management, public administration, inspection and evaluation. The selection should furthermore reflect different disciplines.

#### Recommendation 65

The General Assembly should give the Joint Inspection Unit greater guidance on its programme of work with respect to the United Nations.

#### Recommendation 66

The reports of the Joint Inspection Unit, with summaries thereof, should be made available to all Member States. The General Assembly, in its resolution 38/219 of 20 December 1983, invited the United Nations organs, when considering reports of the Unit, to indicate those recommendations which they approved and those which they did not. The other organizations of the system should be invited to follow the same procedure.

#### Recommendation 67

There should be increased co-operation between the Joint Inspection Unit and the External Auditors. The External Auditors should, on their part, put greater emphasis on management audits and other areas of importance as required by the legislative organs concerned. The internal and external audits should continue to be kept as two separate functions.

## VI. PLANNING AND BUDGET PROCEDURE

### A. General considerations

57. As a result of changing international circumstances, which give rise to new concerns and problems, and a corresponding change in the needs of Member States and the international community, the United Nations must constantly adjust its tasks within the provisions of the Charter. The medium-term plan and the programme budget should have the necessary flexibility so that priorities and resources could be adjusted to the changing international circumstances and to the new challenges and problems that might arise. The procedures for reaching the widest possible agreement on the content and level of the budget, including the criteria for the setting of priorities and the mechanisms for applying them, are therefore particularly important.

58. Over the past 15 years, the General Assembly has established principles, methods and instruments which should have made it possible to reach satisfactory results in this area. The six-year medium-term plan should reflect the consolidated objectives and goals of Member States and should constitute the principal policy directive of the United Nations. It should serve as the basis for transforming these goals and objectives into action by guiding the resource allocation and the setting of priorities in the two-year programme budget.

59. The medium-term plan, the programme budget, the monitoring system and the evaluation system are meant to constitute an integrated process through which wide agreement should evolve on activities that should be financed over the regular budget of the Organization. The criteria for setting priorities among programmes adopted pursuant to General Assembly resolutions 37/234 of 21 December 1982 and 38/227 A and B of 20 December 1983 should assist Member States and the Secretary-General in this process.

60. However, in terms of the programme budget, the medium-term plan does not, in reality, serve as the principal policy directive. The regulations and rules pertaining to the setting of priorities have not served the purposes for which they were intended. The current decision-making procedures with respect to priorities do not correspond to those stipulated in the regulations and rules.

61. In the opinion of the Group, it is therefore important to rectify the present deficiencies and to develop planning and budget procedures, including the setting of priorities, which can facilitate agreement among Member States on the content and level of the budget of the Organization.

### B. Setting of priorities

62. The criteria for the setting of relative priorities are set out in the Secretary-General's bulletin entitled "Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation" (ST/SGB/204). These Regulations and Rules devote special attention to the application of priorities at all levels. Regulation 3.15, relating to the medium-term plan, states that "the establishment of priorities among both substantive programmes and common services shall form an integral part of the general planning ... process". The determining criteria are defined as being based "on the importance of the objective to Member States, the

Organizations's capacity to achieve it and the real effectiveness and usefulness of the results". Regulation 3.16 defines the process according to which intergovernmental bodies formulate recommendations on priorities among the subprogrammes in their field of competence. The idea of priority is taken even further in regulation 3.17, which calls for the establishment of priorities by the General Assembly among the subprogrammes, and in regulation 4.6 relating to the programme budget, which requests the Secretary-General to identify "programme elements of high and low priority".

63. These criteria are by and large satisfactory. The problems experienced regarding the setting of priorities are primarily related to the lack of application of these criteria by the intergovernmental machinery and the Secretariat. Under the current rules and regulations, priority setting in the medium-term plan takes place at the subprogramme level, while resource estimates are to be provided at the major programme level. In the programme budget, priority setting takes place at the programme element level only, while comprehensive resource requirements are given at the programme level, with summary information given at the subprogramme level. Consequently, there is no clear linkage between priority setting and resource requirements either in the medium-term plan or in the programme budget. This has led to the fact that activities that are considered obsolete, of marginal usefulness or ineffective have not always been excluded from the programme budget.

64. The C therefore submits the following recommendation:

#### Recommendation 68

In order to facilitate agreement among Member States on the content and level of the budget, the existing rules and regulations pertaining to the setting of priorities should be strictly applied by the intergovernmental bodies concerned and by the Secretariat. The Committee for Programme and Co-ordination should be requested to monitor their application and report thereon to the General Assembly.

#### C. Planning and budget mechanisms

65. The Group has considered the present procedure for preparing the medium-term plan and the programme budget and the structure and functioning of the intergovernmental machinery responsible for these tasks.

66. The present procedure used in preparing the medium-term plan fails to provide Member States with an opportunity to consider in depth the content of the programme of the Organization. The introduction to the medium-term plan is not conceived in conformity with the definition given in article 3 of the Regulations and Member States have, therefore, not been able to make use of it in order to initiate a constructive dialogue on the policy orientations of the plan. Nor do the description of the major programmes and the programmes contain, in most cases, the analyses necessary for considering the effect of these programmes. Furthermore, the text of the medium-term plan, like the programme budget, is prepared by the Secretariat in a form which is almost final, and Member States have neither the means nor the time to undertake major changes in the draft medium-term plan

67. Furthermore, the medium-term plan does not in reality serve as "principal policy directive" for the programme budget. In fact, the programme budget is merely the financial compilation of a number of decisions and recommendations taken by a large number of intergovernmental bodies and interpreted in the various departments and divisions of the Secretariat. The establishment of the programme budget may be described in the following manner:

(a) The already existing activities are extended, with some minor modifications, from biennium to biennium. The determination of activities that are obsolete, of marginal usefulness or ineffective, and which consequently shall not be included in the budget, is not being undertaken in an appropriate manner;

(b) Decisions to include new or additional expenditures in the budget are based upon decisions taken by the General Assembly, major conferences, the Economic and Social Council etc., or emanating from the Secretariat. Such decisions are generally confirmed by a biennial modification of the medium-term plan, which permits the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination to make useful observations, but no central organ really monitors the overall conception of the plan on such occasions;

(c) The Secretariat prepares the programme budget itself; the Budget Division sends the budgetary directives around June of the year preceding the year in which the General Assembly votes on the budget. Preparation lasts about 11 months; in May of the following year, the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination, on the one hand, and the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, on the other, begin reviewing the programme budget: the former examines the programme content while the latter examines the administrative and financial aspects of the programme budget, after which the two committees submit their reports so that the Assembly can begin its consideration of the programme budget in September and complete it by the end of the year. The opportunities which the two above-mentioned committees have for recommending modifications in the content of the programme budget are very slight and relate almost entirely to details, because the Secretariat tends to consider the submission of budget fascicles to be practically definitive.

68. The Group is of the opinion that it is essential to rectify the deficiencies of the present planning and budget mechanisms. It is above all important to secure that Member States take part in the planning and budget procedure from the very beginning and throughout the process. Today that is not the case, as the procedures instituted to this effect for the medium-term plan are not correctly followed and because the present methodology of preparation of the programme budget does not allow for the participation of Member States in the process of definition of the programme budget. The programme budget is prepared in detail before Member States are being brought into the process. A procedure must therefore be developed which makes it possible for Member States to exercise - at the very beginning of the planning and budget process, as well as throughout the whole process - the necessary intergovernmental leadership, particularly regarding the setting of priorities within the resources likely to be available.

69. The members of the Group had a detailed and intensive discussion on this important and admittedly difficult question relating to the planning and budget mechanism. Notwithstanding the many points of convergence, the Group could not reach a consensus on the different proposals submitted;



(a) Several members were in favour of a solution along the following lines:

The intergovernmental decision-making process must be adjusted to take into account the methodological change in programme budgeting. The existing machinery separates the consideration of the financial and administrative aspects of the budget from the review of the content of the programmes, as the first is the responsibility of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions and the latter the responsibility of the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination. What is needed is an intergovernmental mechanism which can consider and give recommendations on the medium-term plan as well as the programme budget, particularly with regard to the priorities among programmes, resource allocations which reflect these priorities within the context of the resources that are estimated to be available, and recommend redeployment of resources for increased activity in high-priority areas from areas with lower priorities when the need arises and the resources are limited.

Recommendation A

The terms of reference of the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination (CPC) should be fully implemented and adjusted to reflect its status as the principal advisory body for the General Assembly on matters relating to the medium-term plan and the programme budget. The latter function should be performed with full respect for the mandate and responsibilities of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) and in conformity with regulation 4.8 of the Regulations Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation, relating to co-ordination between CPC and ACABQ. <sup>3/</sup> Furthermore, the relevant recommendations made by CPC in its report to the General Assembly at its forty-first session <sup>4/</sup> should be implemented in order to reinforce its role and improve its performance.

Recommendation B

To reflect its new responsibilities and tasks, the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination should be renamed the Committee for Programme Budget and Co-ordination.

Recommendation C

The revised Committee for Programme and Co-ordination should take part in the planning and budget procedure from the very beginning and throughout the process. Its schedule of meetings should be expanded and adjusted accordingly, and it should discharge its duties in close co-operation with the Secretary-General and the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions.

Recommendation D

With regard to the medium-term plan:

(a) The revised Committee for Programme and Co-ordination should consider and make recommendations to the General Assembly on the priorities among the programmes on the basis of decisions adopted by the respective legislative bodies and established criteria. These priorities should be accompanied by resource estimates;

(b) The regulations and rules adopted pursuant to resolutions of the General Assembly pertaining to the medium-term plan should be fully implemented;

(c) The introduction to the plan should be subject to wide consultations among Member States;

(d) In formulating the plan, sectoral, technical, regional and central bodies in the United Nations should be consulted in a systematic way regarding the major programmes in the plan;

(e) The Secretary-General should, in co-operation with the revised Committee for Programme and Co-ordination, draw up calendars for the consultations described above.

#### Recommendation E

With regard to the programme budget:

(a) The revised Committee for Programme and Co-ordination should consider and submit recommendations to the General Assembly on:

- (i) Priorities among programmes on the basis of the medium-term plan, decisions adopted by the respective legislative bodies and established criteria;
- (ii) Resource allocations which reflect these priorities within the level of resources it expects to be available for the biennium;
- (iii) When necessary, the redeployment of resources for increased activity in high-priority areas from areas with lower priority within the budget level adopted by the General Assembly.

(b) The procedure should be as follows:

- (i) In the spring of the non-budget year, the revised Committee for Programme and Co-ordination should receive from the Secretary-General an outline of the programme budget for the next biennium, based on the medium-term plan and decisions by the legislative organs of the United Nations, with an indication of resources that the Secretary-General expects to be available. This outline (and the draft programme budget to be prepared later by the Secretary-General) should include expenditures related to the political activities of a "perennial character" and their related conference costs. It should also include a contingency fund (financial envelope) to cover additional expenditures resulting from legislative action in the year in which the budget is being adopted and in the biennium. This contingency fund should not exceed 2 per cent of the estimated budget.
- (ii) The revised Committee for Programme and Co-ordination would consider this outline and make recommendations thereon to the General Assembly through the Fifth Committee. Such recommendations should indicate the level of resources that can be expected to be available for the biennium and the allocation of resources to various programme activities within that level;

- (iii) Decisions on these matters by the General Assembly should guide the Secretary-General in preparing the draft programme budget;
- (iv) In the budget year, the revised Committee for Programme and Co-ordination would consider the Secretary-General's draft budget and submit its recommendations thereon to the Fifth Committee;
- (v) Throughout the process described above, the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions will, in the same manner as at present, examine and report on the costing of the budget.

#### Recommendation F

The General Assembly, in order to define the roles to be played regarding the programme budget by the revised Committee for Programme and Co-ordination and the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, should consider establishing new rules which would clearly identify the areas of common collaboration and interaction and those of separate responsibilities of the two organs.

#### Recommendation G

Additional expenditures resulting from legislative decisions, either in the year the budget is being adopted or in the biennium, must be accommodated within the budget level decided upon by the General Assembly (i.e. within the contingency fund for additional expenditures). If additional expenditures are approved that are above the resources available within this fund, such expenditures can only be included in the budget through redeployment of resources from low priority areas or modifications of subprogrammes. Otherwise, such additional activities will have to be deferred to a later biennium.

#### Recommendation H

- (1) The members of the revised Committee for Programme and Co-ordination should be elected by the General Assembly, upon the nomination of Member States, for a period of three years, and they may be re-elected. The Committee should continue to be an intergovernmental body, with the same representative composition as at present, but its members should be elected in an expert capacity. In nominating representatives to the Committee, Member States should take into account their technical competence and professional experience. Each expert could have one deputy. The Chairman should be elected for the three-year period. The revised Committee for Programme and Co-ordination should continue to take its decisions by consensus.
  - (2) The necessary permanent secretariat services should be made available to the revised Committee for Programme and Co-ordination.
- (b) Several other members were in favour of a solution along the following lines:

The proposed mechanism set forth above for the consideration of the programme budget lacks clarity as to the respective roles of the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination and the Advisory Committee on

Administrative and Budgetary Questions in the consideration of the programme budget. This lack of clarity will inevitably lead to major conflict between the two organs in the performance of their respective roles, thereby worsening rather than improving the existing machinery.

This lack of clarity should be removed and the respective roles of the two organs should be made unambiguously clear. The aim should be to improve the functioning of the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination and at the same time maintain the existing mandate of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions on which there is unanimous agreement on the excellent performance of its role. To this end, the following proposals are made:

The intergovernmental decision-making process must be adjusted to take into account the methodological change in programme budgeting. The existing machinery separates the consideration of the financial and administrative aspects of the budget from the review of the content of the programmes, as the first is the responsibility of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions and the latter the responsibility of the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination.

#### Recommendation A

The terms of reference of the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination should be fully implemented to reflect its status as the principal intergovernmental body for the General Assembly on matters relating to the medium-term plan and the programme aspects of the programme budget. The latter function should be performed with full respect for the mandate and responsibilities of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, and in conformity with regulation 4.8 of the Regulations Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation. <sup>3/</sup> Furthermore, the relevant recommendations made by the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination in its report to the General Assembly at its forty-first session <sup>4/</sup> should be implemented.

#### Recommendation B

The Committee for Programme and Co-ordination should take part in the planning and budget procedure from the very beginning and throughout the process. Its schedule of meetings should be expanded and adjusted accordingly, and it should discharge its duties in close co-operation with the Secretary-General and the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions.

#### Recommendation C

With regard to the medium-term plan:

(a) The Committee for Programme and Co-ordination should consider and make recommendations to the General Assembly on the priorities among the programmes on the basis of decisions adopted by the respective legislative bodies and established criteria. These priorities should be accompanied by indicative resource estimates;

- (b) The regulations and rules adopted pursuant to resolutions of the General Assembly pertaining to the medium-term plan should be fully implemented;
- (c) The introduction to the plan should be subject to wide consultations among Member States;
- (d) In formulating the plan, sectoral, technical, regional and central bodies in the United Nations should be consulted in a systematic way regarding the major programmes in the plan;
- (e) The Secretary-General should, in co-operation with the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination, draw up calendars for the consultations described above.

#### Recommendation D

With regard to the programme budget:

- (a) The Committee for Programme and Co-ordination and the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, each in accordance with its mandate, should consider and submit recommendations to the General Assembly on:
  - (i) Priorities among programmes on the basis of the medium-term plan, decisions adopted by the respective legislative bodies and established criteria;
  - (ii) Aggregate resource allocations which reflect these priorities;
  - (iii) When necessary, the redeployment of resources for increased activity in high-priority areas from areas with lower priority within the budget level adopted by the General Assembly.
- (b) The procedure should be as follows:
  - (i) In the spring of the non-budget year, the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination and the Advisory Committee for Administrative and Budgetary Questions should receive from the Secretary-General an outline of the programme budget for the next biennium, based on the medium-term plan and decisions by the legislative organs of the United Nations, with an indication of resources that the Secretary-General expects to be available. This outline (and the draft programme budget to be prepared later by the Secretary-General) should include expenditures related to the political activities of a "perennial character", their related conference costs and estimates for inflation and exchange rate fluctuations. It should also include a contingency fund (financial envelope) to cover additional expenditures resulting from legislative action in the year in which the budget is being adopted and in the biennium;

- (ii) The Committee for Programme and Co-ordination and the Advisory Committee for Administrative and Budgetary Questions will consider this outline and make recommendations thereon to the General Assembly through the Fifth Committee. Such recommendations should indicate the level of resources that can be expected to be available for the biennium and the allocation of resources to various programme activities within that level;
- (iii) Decisions on these matters by the General Assembly should guide the Secretary-General in preparing the draft programme budget;
- (iv) In the budget year, the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination and the Advisory Committee for Administrative and Budgetary Questions will consider the Secretary-General's draft budget and submit their recommendations thereon to the Fifth Committee.

#### Recommendation E

Additional expenditures resulting from legislative decisions, either in the year the budget is being adopted or in the biennium, must be accommodated within the budget level decided upon by the General Assembly (that is, within the contingency fund for additional expenditures). If additional expenditures are approved that are above the resources available within this fund, such expenditures can only be included in the budget through redeployment of resources from low-priority areas or modification of subprogrammes. Otherwise, such additional activities will have to be deferred to a later biennium unless another decision is taken by the General Assembly.

#### Recommendation F

- (1) The members of the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination should be elected by the General Assembly, upon the nomination of Member States, for a period of three years, and they may be re-elected. The Committee should continue to be an intergovernmental body, with the same representative composition as at present, but its members should be elected in an expert capacity. In nominating representatives to the Committee, Member States should take into account their technical competence and professional experience. Each expert could have one deputy. The Chairman should be elected for the three-year period.
- (2) The necessary permanent secretariat services should be made available to the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination.
- (c) Some other members were in favour of yet another solution along the following lines:

#### Recommendation A

The budgeting process and the programme planning process in the United Nations should be merged. These two functions are to be entrusted to a single intergovernmental expert body. This body should work on the basis of consensus.

#### Recommendation B

Before the Secretary-General starts his work on the budget estimates, the overall limit of the future budget should be determined by the intergovernmental expert body on the basis of the amount of resources that Member States can and are prepared to make available to the Organization.

#### Recommendation C

After the overall limit of the budget is set, the intergovernmental expert body should proceed with the setting of relative priorities within this limit. This body should also co-operate closely with the Secretary-General in the preparation of the budget estimates.

#### Recommendation D

It is desirable that decisions of intergovernmental bodies, including the Fifth Committee, on the overall limit of the budget and on the level of remuneration of the United Nations personnel are taken by consensus.

## VII. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE GROUP'S RECOMMENDATIONS

70. The Group is fully aware of the fact that, over the years, many recommendations on administrative and financial reforms have been adopted by the General Assembly. A substantial number of these recommendations have, however, remained unimplemented. The reasons for this are partly that the body or organ in question has shown little willingness to implement the recommendations and partly that the General Assembly itself has not taken the steps necessary to ensure such implementation of its recommendations.

71. The Group therefore recommends that the General Assembly should take the following steps to ensure that the recommendations contained in the present report, if approved by the Assembly, are speedily and effectively implemented:

### Recommendation 69

The Secretary-General should be requested to implement those recommendations that are within his purview. These recommendations should be implemented as soon as possible and, under all circumstances, within the time-limit set. To this effect, he should submit a progress report to the General Assembly by 1 May 1987, outlining which recommendations have been implemented and his plans for implementing those remaining.

### Recommendation 70

The General Assembly should request the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination, assisted, as required, by the Joint Inspection Unit and other bodies, to co-ordinate and monitor the implementation of the recommendations relating to the intergovernmental machinery and its functioning. The Committee for Programme and Co-ordination should report to the General Assembly before the beginning of its forty-second session on which recommendations have been implemented and the plans for implementing those remaining.

### Recommendation 71

The Secretary-General and the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination should report to the General Assembly at its forty-fourth session on the implementation of all the recommendations contained in the present report and approved by the Assembly.

### Notes

1/ See A/AC.172/88/Add.4.

2/ See A/40/377, annex, and A/41/437; annex.



Notes (continued)

3/ Regulation 4.8 reads as follows:

"The Committee for Programme and Co-ordination shall prepare a report on the proposed programme budget, containing its programme recommendations and its general assessment of the related resource proposals. It shall receive a statement by the Secretary-General on the programme budget implications of its recommendations. The report of the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination shall be communicated simultaneously to the Economic and Social Council and to the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions. The Advisory Committee shall receive the report of the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination and study the statement by the Secretary-General. The reports of the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination and the Advisory Committee on each section of the proposed programme budget shall be considered simultaneously by the General Assembly."

4/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-first Session, Supplement  
No. 38 (A/41/38).

## ANNEX

### Organizational matters

#### A. Establishment of the Group

1. At its 121st plenary meeting, on 18 December 1985, the General Assembly adopted resolution 40/237, entitled "Review of the efficiency of the administrative and financial functioning of the United Nations", the operative part of which read as follows:

"The General Assembly,

"...

"1. Expresses its conviction that an overall increase in efficiency would further enhance the capacity of the United Nations to attain the purposes and implement the principles of the Charter of the United Nations;

"2. Decides to establish a Group of High-level Intergovernmental Experts to Review the Efficiency of the Administrative and Financial Functioning of the United Nations, with a term of one year, to carry out in full accordance with the principles and provisions of the Charter the following tasks;

"(a) To conduct a thorough review of the administrative and financial matters of the United Nations, with a view to identifying measures for further improving the efficiency of its administrative and financial functioning, which would contribute to strengthening its effectiveness in dealing with political, economic and social issues;

"(b) To submit to the General Assembly, before the opening of its forty-first session, a report containing the observations and recommendations of the Group;

"3. Requests the President of the General Assembly, in consultation with the regional groups, to appoint as soon as possible the members of the Group of High-level Intergovernmental Experts with due regard to equitable geographical distribution;

"4. Decides that the Group will consist of eighteen members and requests the Secretary-General to convene a meeting of the Group as soon as possible to enable it to elect its officers;

"5. Requests the Secretary-General to provide the Group with the necessary staff and services;

"6. Also requests the Secretary-General to provide full assistance to the Group, in particular by submitting his views and providing information necessary to conduct the review;

"7. Invites the relevant subsidiary organs of the General Assembly to submit to the Group, through their chairmen, information and comments on matters pertaining to their work;

"8. Decides to include in the provisional agenda of its forty-first session an item entitled 'Review of the efficiency of the administrative and financial functioning of the United Nations: report of the Group of High-level Intergovernmental Experts to Review the Efficiency of the Administrative and Financial Functioning of the United Nations'."

#### B. Membership

2. In compliance with paragraphs 3 and 4 of resolution 40/237, the President of the General Assembly appointed the following persons as members of the Group of High-level Intergovernmental Experts to Review the Efficiency of the Administrative and Financial Functioning of the United Nations:

Mr. Mark ALLEN (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland)  
Mr. Maurice BERTRAND (France)  
Mr. BI Jilong (China)  
Mr. FAKHREDDINE Mohamed (Sudan)  
Mr. Lucio GARCIA DEL SOLAR (Argentina)  
Mr. Ignac GOLOB (Yugoslavia)  
Mr. Natarajan KRISHNAN (India)  
Mr. Kishore MAHBUBANI (Singapore)  
Mr. Hugo B. MARGAIN (Mexico)  
Mr. Elleck MASHINGAIDZE (Zimbabwe)  
Mr. Ndam NJOYA (Cameroon)  
Mr. Vasilii Stepanovich SAFRONCHUK (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics)  
Mr. Shizuo SAITO (Japan)  
Mr. Edward O. SANU (Nigeria)  
Mr. David SILVEIRA DA MOTA (Brazil)  
Mr. José S. SORZANO (United States of America)  
Mr. Tom VRAALSEN (Norway)  
Mr. Layachi YAKER (Algeria)

#### C. Officers

3. At its 2nd meeting, on 26 February 1986, the Group elected the following officers:

<u>Chairman:</u>	Mr. Tom VRAALSEN
<u>Vice-Chairmen:</u>	Mr. Ignac GOLOB
	Mr. Shizuo SAITO
	Mr. David SILVEIRA DA MOTA
	Mr. Layachi YAKER

#### D. Adoption of the agenda

4. At the same meeting, the Group adopted the following agenda:

1. Opening of the session by the Secretary-General.
2. Election of the Chairman.

3. Adoption of the agenda.
4. Organizational matters:
  - (a) Election of the Vice-Chairmen;
  - (b) Organization of work.
5. Thorough review of the administrative and financial matters of the United Nations, with a view to identifying measures for further improving the efficiency of its administrative and financial functioning, which would contribute to strengthening its effectiveness in dealing with political, economic and social issues.
6. Adoption of the report.

E. Proceedings of the Group

5. At its 1st meeting, on 25 February, the Group decided to hold closed meetings.
6. The Group held its first session from 25 February to 4 March (1st to 9th meetings), its second session from 1 to 11 April (10th to 26th meetings), its third session from 16 to 27 June (27th to 43rd meetings) and its fourth session from 28 July to 15 August (44th to 67th meetings).

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