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JOINT INSPECTION UNIT

Report on methods of determining staff requirements

Comments of the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination

The Secretary-General transmits herewith to the members of the General Assembly the comments of the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination on the report of the Joint Inspection Unit on methods of determining staff requirements (A/36/168).

Comments of the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination

1.   The report of the Joint Inspection Unit (A/36/168) provides a comprehensive summary of the practices of 11 of the organizations in the United Nations system with respect to (a) preparing proposals on staffing for inclusion in their regular budgets, and (b) taking decisions on staffing proposals.

2.   On the basis of a survey of budgetary policies and procedures, the following conclusions are drawn in the report:

"(a)   Units of secretariats that propose staffing do not have available to them sufficiently precise techniques ... for accurately assessing their requirements in relation to the work to be accomplished;

"(b)   Central management services in secretariats could play a greater role in devising and applying techniques and procedures for assessing staffing requirements;

"(c)   Reviews of staffing requirements ... do not give sufficient attention to demonstrating the continuing need for existing staff ...;

"(d)   Legislative bodies ... do not always have the information needed to permit them to make an informed judgement (A/36/168, para. 32)."

3.   The Administrative Committee on Co-ordination (ACC) notes that there are a wide variety of budgetary and management practices in the various organizations of the United Nations system, as is indicated in the report. The organizations also vary greatly in size and administrative complexity. The Committee concludes, therefore, that it would not be desirable or possible to formulate one set of practices and procedures in respect to the determination of staffing requirements which would be useful for all the organizations in the system.

4.   The Committee also wishes to point out that the several legislative bodies concerned have not indicated dissatisfaction with the level of programme and staffing detail provided by their secretariats. To furnish greater detail could result in concentration on a very low level of activity - sometimes involving less than one staff-year of effort. In several of the legislative bodies, primary budgetary decision-making takes place at the subprogramme or programme level in order to focus on broad policy and substantive issues.

5.   With respect to recommendation 1, the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination endorses the use of work measurement and/or other appropriate techniques in determining staffing requirements, it being understood that the particular techniques to be used and the activities to be covered would necessarily vary from one organization to another and would depend upon the susceptibility of particular types of work to quantitative measurement.

6.   Similarly, the Committee accepts the recommendation to undertake interagency exchanges of information, within the framework of the Consultative Committee on

Administrative Questions (CCAQ), on the establishment of productivity norms for
those types of work where they are applicable. Because of the wide differences in
the nature of the work and working procedures found in the various organizations,
the CCAQ would not, however, attempt to establish uniform work measurement norms
to be applied by all organizations. For example, clerical work is influenced by
the availability or non-availability of automated systems (for text-processing,
accounting etc.) and the nature and extent of computer support vary greatly among
organizations.

7.   The Committee also accepts the suggestion contained in recommendation 2
(A/36/168, para. 33) that central management services should participate in the
process of determining staffing requirements, although, because of their
particular organizational arrangements and budgetary practices, several of the
organizations do not contemplate using their central management services to review
all proposals for new posts. In one organization, a committee has this
responsibility, while in another organization the determination of requirements
for new posts rests with its budget division. In yet another organization these
needs are appraised through normal programme planning procedures.

8.   In recommendations 3 and 4 (A/36/168, para. 33) it is proposed that detailed
data on programme element costs and workload estimates be provided to legislative
bodies, which would use the information for determining whether the cost of
programme elements is commensurate with their value. As indicated in paragraph 4
above, the Committee is not convinced that the inclusion of a greater degree of
detail in proposed budgets would be useful. The wishes and needs of the
legislative body in each organization will determine what additional detail, if
any, is required. In some organizations the programme budget texts already
describe in considerable detail the purpose and nature of the work to be performed
under many individual programme elements.