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REPORT ON THE UNITED NATIONS UNIVERSITY

Prepared by

J.C. Rodriguez-Arias
Earl D. Sohm

Joint Inspection Unit

Table of Contents

	<u>Paragraph</u>	<u>Page</u>
I. INTRODUCTION	1 - 5	1 - 2
II. ORGANIZATION	6 - 39	3 - 10
A. Mandate	6 - 11	3 - 4
B. Structure	12 - 30	4 - 9
(a) The Council	14 - 19	4 - 5
(b) The Rector	20 - 25	5 - 6
(c) The University Centre	26 - 28	6 - 8
(d) Planning and Evaluation Unit	29 - 30	8 - 9
C. Personnel Issues	31 - 37	9 - 10
D. UNU Headquarters	38 - 39	10
III. FINANCE AND BUDGET	40 - 61	11 - 15
A. The financial situation	40 - 46	11 - 12
B. Programme and budget	47 - 61	12 - 15
IV. FUNCTIONS AND ACTIVITIES	62 - 115	16 - 28
A. Aims and specificity of the UNU	62 - 68	16 - 17
B. Mode of operation - the network concept	69 - 76	17 - 19
C. Planning and programming the UNU's activities	77 - 97	19 - 24
(a) Methodology	77 - 79	19 - 20
(b) Approaches	80 - 82	20 - 21
(c) The need for a medium-term plan	83 - 84	21
(d) Programme effectiveness	85 - 87	21 - 22
(e) Training and fellowships	88 - 90	22
(f) Dissemination policy	91 - 97	23 - 24
D. Relationships	98 - 115	24 - 28
(a) Working with organizations of the United Nations system	99 - 107	24 - 27
(b) Co-ordination with other academic and research institutions	108	27
(c) A world-wide network operation	109 - 115	27 - 28
V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	116 - 118	29 - 32

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The United Nations University is a young organization. The idea itself is barely a decade old: it was first suggested in 1969 by Secretary-General U Thant, who proposed the establishment of a "United Nations University, truly international in character and devoted to the Charter objectives of peace and progress", with the primary purpose of promoting international understanding both at the political and cultural levels. The original concept was that of an institution staffed with professors providing training to a student body of young men and women from many nations and cultures. The initiative was welcomed by the General Assembly. However, subsequent studies undertaken by the Secretary-General, the Director-General of UNESCO and the work of the Founding Committee which prepared the University's Charter, changed the original concept significantly from a traditional degree-granting university to a world-wide network of advanced study institutions devoted to research, post-graduate training and dissemination of knowledge.

2. Formally, the UNU came into being in 1973 when the General Assembly approved its Charter, resolution 3081(XXVIII). The Charter specified that the University was to address itself to the study of "the pressing global problems of human survival, development and welfare that are the concern of the United Nations and its agencies". During the two following years the University Council was instituted and the Rector was selected. In practice, UNU activities did not start until September 1975 when the Rector took office in the UNU Headquarters in Tokyo. Only six years have passed since that date and, although its initial impetus was slowed by a series of financial and gestational crises, the UNU has accomplished much in its initial stages. Experiences gained, policies and practices adopted constitute a significant asset for its future even if its present achievements may be open to some criticism.

3. The Inspectors were prompted to attempt an assessment of the UNU's status and prospects for a number of reasons relating principally to the very concept of a university under the aegis of the United Nations system and to the somewhat divergent expectations arising from this concept. They also had the impression that both the University Centre and its world-wide constituency were still rather unclear as to the practical objectives - other than those broadly expressed in the Charter and other legal instruments - which an international university should seek to pursue. They sensed that a basic dilemma remained to be resolved: should the University aim at break-throughs in research on pressing global problems; should it aim at intellectual leadership in the academic world through the excellence of its scientific results; or, should it be envisioned more as a service organization whose role would be catalytic rather than speculative, aiming at building-up independent and self-reliant research capability, scientific awareness, methodological rigour where these are lacking. Finally, at the outset, the Inspectors were concerned with the then apparent lack of success of UNU's efforts in two crucial endeavours: the building of a sound financial basis for the University's programmes and the building of its image, i.e. the establishment vis-à-vis the UN system and the world academic communities of a viable, visible and credible international institution.

4. This report therefore attempts to shed some light on these fundamental questions. The Inspectors are of course well aware that their report is but one of a series of related studies 1/. The Inspectors considered the substance

1/ See, among others, report by the Swedish-Norwegian team (1979), and the Davidson-Dayal report (Document A/34/654).

of the University's programmes only insofar as was necessary to enable them to reach conclusions on structures and methods. Accordingly, their report deals mainly with form and procedures rather than content. They hope, however, that its timing and its recommendations may be of assistance to the different bodies and organs of the UNU in clarifying a number of issues.

5. The Inspectors wish to record their appreciation to all the officials and individuals, within the UN system and without, who assisted them in the preparation of their study. Visits were made to several organizations (UN, UNESCO, UNITAR, UNRISD, and others), to Council members and knowledgeable individuals, and to the UNU Centre in Tokyo (May 1981). The Inspectors also had the privilege of attending parts of the UNU Council meeting in Geneva (June 1981).

II. ORGANIZATION

A. Mandate

6. Even before the United Nations University formally came into existence the General Assembly had determined that it would be "a most appropriate institution for stimulating and conducting scholarly and objective studies, on a truly international basis, of the most crucial problems facing the world" 2/. The Assembly also made it clear that the UNU "should play an important role in furthering the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations by devoting its work to research into the pressing global problems that are the concern of the United Nations and of the organizations of the United Nations system" 3/. Furthermore, from the start, "it was clear that the concept of the University should be that of a system of academic institutions and not of an inter-governmental organization"; accordingly, the "academic freedom and autonomy" of the University were to be guaranteed 4/.

7. The goals of the UNU, as they were set by its founding fathers, were therefore to help solve pressing global problems of human survival, development and welfare through research, advanced training and dissemination of knowledge. It was to contribute to the continuing growth of vigorous, academic and scientific communities, particularly in developing countries.

8. From the beginning, considerable emphasis was placed upon the University's autonomy within the framework of the United Nations system. This is interpreted in various ways depending on the vantage point of those involved with the University's activities and has led to certain ambiguities concerning its status and role in the UN system. It remains, however, that the Charter stresses the importance of academic freedom required in the achievement of its objectives.

9. The University had a number of guidelines and principles, based on General Assembly resolutions and provisions of the Charter, to orient its work. Among these the following should be mentioned:

(a) The structure of the University should consist of a programming and co-ordinating central organ and a decentralized system of associated institutions integrated into the world university community.

(b) The research programmes of the institutions of the University should include, among other matters, co-existence between people of different cultures, tongues and social systems, peaceful relations between States and the maintenance of peace and security, human rights, economic and social change in development, the environment and the proper use of resources, basic scientific research in the application of science and technology in the interest of development.

(c) Procedures should be established so as to ensure the highest intellectual and moral quality of the personnel of the University.

2/ General Assembly resolution 3313(XXIX) of 14 December 1974.

3/ General Assembly resolution 3439(XXX) of 9 December 1975.

4/ General Assembly resolution 2951(XXVII) of 11 December 1972.

10. It is clear from the above that the UNU is not a degree-granting university of the traditional type, but a body including associated institutions working on specific research programmes with particular emphasis on those of concern to developing countries. These institutions were to be selected by the central organ with sufficient flexibility so that they might play a continuing and meaningful role within the framework of UNU and respond to the needs of changing programmes.

11. Incorporated institutions, i.e. institutions which would be constituent parts of the UNU central structure, have not yet been established, but are visualized for the future. The Inspectors feel they should be established only if they would serve well-defined long-term needs which could not be met otherwise. Most of their basic and recurring costs should be borne by the host governments or from other sources external to the UNU budget. Such institutions, it is hoped, would respond to specific expectations thus enhancing the University's impact and prestige.

B. Structure

12. The UNU, while enjoying academic freedom and autonomy within the United Nations system, functions according to its Charter under the joint sponsorship of the United Nations and UNESCO.

13. The Charter specifies that the structure of the University should consist of four elements:

(a) A University Council, serving as the governing body of the University;

(b) the Rector, reporting to the University Council on the direction, administration, programming and co-ordination of the University's activities;

(c) a University Centre which assists the Rector in programming, co-ordination, support, administration and fund-raising for the overall University programme;

(d) the research and training centres and programmes. The University Council was authorized to designate certain institutions and centres, particularly in developing countries, which would become associated or incorporated institutions of the University.

(a) The Council

14. The Council of the University is established on a broad geographical basis to reflect major academic, scientific, educational and cultural trends in the world and is composed of 24 members serving in their personal capacity. They are designated jointly by the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the Director-General of UNESCO, after consultation with UNITAR and other appropriate agencies. The Rector, the Secretary-General and the Director-General of UNESCO, as well as the Executive Director of UNITAR, are ex-officio members of the Council. The term of office for the Council is six years, with half of its membership being renewed every three years. It seems unfortunate that the mandate provides that half of the members end their terms of office at the same time.

15. The Charter specified that the Council should formulate principles and policies which would govern the activities and operations of the University. It is the body which decides on the association or incorporation of research and training centres and on the programmes carried out jointly by UNU and these

institutions. It also reviews and approves the work programmes and adopts the budget of the University, based on proposals submitted by the Rector.

16. The Council meets at least once a year (usually twice) and reports annually on the work of the University to the General Assembly of the United Nations, ECOSOC and the Executive Board of UNESCO, through the Secretary-General and the Director-General of UNESCO respectively, who themselves submit comments on the UNU report. While the Council appears to satisfy the needs of all concerned, including the Rector, it is hoped that its attitude and actions in the future would reflect more collective wisdom and cohesive approaches. This would be in line with the high responsibility devolved to the Council and would give a greater impulse to the activities and operations of the UNU.

17. The Inspectors after considering the Council's working methods suggest that it should maintain its position as a policy-making organ and should not deal with day-to-day university operations, which should be the responsibilities of the Rector and his staff. For this reason, they recommend that as a general rule the Council meet only once a year, preferably in Tokyo. This would represent a saving of about US\$140,000 a year. It would also give more time to the Council members to review the documents to be considered, and would release the pressure exercised on the UNU Secretariat for the preparation of documents between sessions. A small ad hoc group composed of Council members might be established to be available on call by the Rector and which might be consulted by telex or in writing on matters requiring immediate action.

18. The Inspectors considered several alternatives with regard to the composition of the Council of UNU in an effort to permit it better to determine policy and approve and co-ordinate programmes. One possibility considered was to have some Directors of associated national academic institutions represented in the Council, as well as members serving in their individual capacities as at present. Although this possibility would have had advantages, the Inspectors decided not to make this recommendation. It would have allowed some direct communication between the policy-makers and the actual academic teams and might have helped in solving possible frictions and misunderstandings. However, the Inspectors felt that the same advantages could be obtained more simply and without amending the Charter. The Secretary-General and the Director-General of UNESCO should reinforce their efforts to select Council members who, although serving in their individual capacity, would also reflect the specific interests and concerns of the research community, including those of UNU-associated institutions. It is also suggested that the Rector continue to be informally consulted on the appointment of new Council members.

19. Pending future changes in the Council's membership, some directors or members of the associated institutions could participate on a rotational basis as members of the Advisory Committee (see paragraph 23). This would enable the Rector to receive advice which reflects also the views of these institutions which are a major component of UNU. The Committee should advise particularly on the allocation of resources from the general fund to programmes (see paragraph 58).

(b) The Rector

20. The nominating committee for the selection of the Rector of the University is appointed by the Council and it prepares a panel of names for review by the Council. After this review, the panel of names is sent to the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the Director-General of UNESCO. The Secretary-General appoints one of the candidates as Rector with the concurrence of the Director-General of UNESCO. He is appointed for five years and is eligible for re-appointment for one additional term.

21. The Rector serves as a chief academic and administrative officer of the University and has overall responsibility for the direction, organization, administration and programmes of the University. He submits a plan of work as well as budget estimates to the Council for its consideration and approval, and directs the activities connected with the execution of research and training programmes. He is authorized to establish advisory bodies which may be necessary and to make arrangements with governments and international and other organizations, with a view to offering and receiving services related to the activities of the University. The Charter directed the Rector to co-ordinate the research and training programmes of the University with the activities of the United Nations and its agencies and, so far as possible, with research programmes of the world scholarly community.

22. At present there are four Vice-Rectors, including three separate Vice-Rectors at the head of the University's three research programmes. In the early years of the UNU it seemed necessary and even natural to limit research to three programme areas and to have each headed by a high ranking official. The justification for this choice is less apparent now, especially since experience has proved that the programmes have grown largely in isolation, as sealed compartments rather than as elements of the same collective effort. Flexibility in the programmes of the research activities is now being introduced and the Inspectors concur with the steps taken by the Rector in this direction. However, measures should be taken to prevent the reconstruction of non-communicating research empires. The Inspectors believe that this could be avoided by modifying the organizational structure of the UNU in such a way as to have only one Vice-Rector who would serve as general manager of the University's activities under the policy direction of the Rector. In order to add distinction to this new and more responsible position it is suggested that he be ranked at the Assistant Secretary-General level so that his status would be clearly above the present D.2 Vice-Rectors who would eventually have their functional titles changed to Programme Director or Dean. The Inspectors suggest an organizational structure for the programming and co-ordinating Centre based on the one indicated below.

23. The Rector is assisted by a number of standing committees. He judiciously decided to have a single Programme Advisory Committee so that there would be better co-ordination among the programmes. This Advisory Committee should be enlarged as suggested in paragraph 19. There are also a number of useful additional committees. The Executive Committee assists the Rector in the decision-making process while the Academic Policy Committee is more in the nature of a brainstorming session where a free exchange of views on scientific and academic matters takes place.

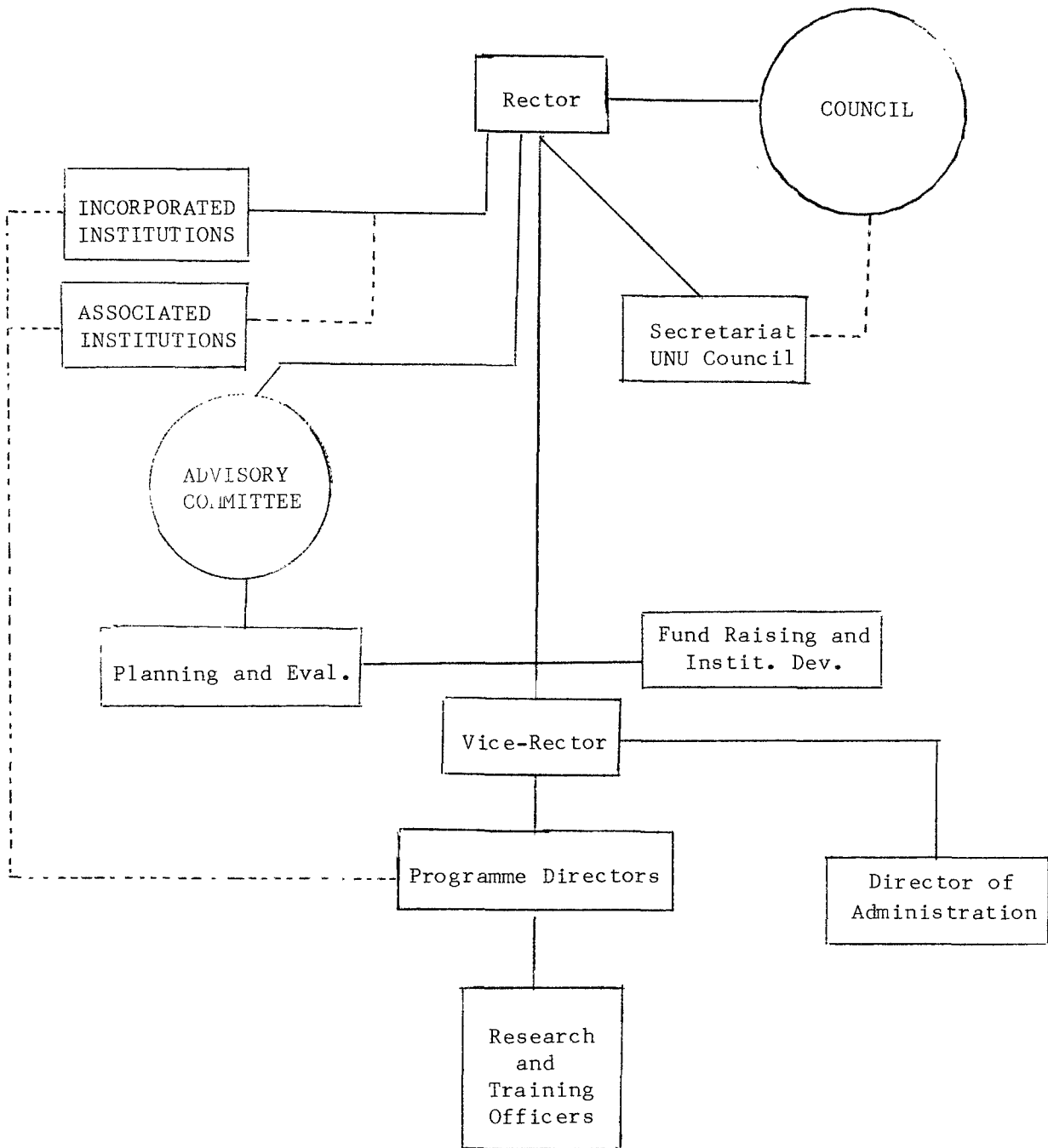
24. However, there appears to be some overlap between the Executive Committee and the Academic Policy Committee, particularly with regard to evaluation. The Inspectors understand that streamlining of the UNU internal committees is now underway.

25. The Inspectors consider that the overall structure of the University is sound and provides a foundation on which to develop the University either as it is now or in some modified form. For example, if it were determined that it were useful to enlarge the Headquarters' academic establishment in order to have more directors of additional programmes or to make it more like a university in the traditional sense, this would be possible under the present structure.

(c) The University Centre

26. Considerable debate has taken place concerning the role and function of the UNU Centre. All seem to agree that the Centre should serve as the staff arm of

UNU structure



ASG Vice-Rector

D.2s

Director, Planning and
Evaluation
Director, Fund Raising
and Institutional Dev.
Director, Centre for
Advanced Studies

D.1s

Secretary of the University
Director of Administration
Director of Information Services
Director of Academic Services
Executive Officer - Rector's
Office

the Rector for the administration of the University's programmes, but opinions diverge on the Centre's potential other activities. Some see it essentially as a part of the United Nations Secretariat which should act principally as a foundation or an aid-giving agency (its role would be mainly operational - identifying projects, negotiating contracts with institutions and individuals, processing salaries and travel documents, arranging seminars, etc.). Non-operational tasks would only relate to ensuring overall compliance of research activities with the provisions of the Charter and other UN system legal instruments or agreements. This rather narrow view is opposed by others who hold that the Tokyo Centre should exercise not only administrative but also intellectual leadership in the UNU research community, taking an active part in the development of all stages of research activities.

27. The Inspectors are aware that the above views reflect the different concerns and interests of individuals and groups at various locations of the UNU constellation. The issue of academic freedom for instance may be interpreted differently in the Centre and in the institutions of the UNU network. They also recognize that the concept of a research and training establishment in which the same individuals who control the funds also play a role in decisions on the substantive activities may be a source of friction and not conducive to a climate of creativity.

28. Until now the headquarters of the University has served with considerable success as the programming and co-ordinating hub of a multi-centred system of academic institutions. This should be its primary role, but it does need adequate intellectual capacity in order to handle effectively its programming efforts. The Inspectors have the impression that the present academic staff is almost totally occupied with administrative matters and have little time for creative thinking. They therefore agree that the intellectual capacity of the Centre should be strengthened. They see the Centre mainly as the focal point for the overall direction, identification, planning, monitoring and evaluation of UNU activities. For instance, once a research project has been signed and the administrative and substantive contractual obligations of all parties concerned clearly defined, the Inspectors feel that as in the tradition of most academic research institutions - and certainly of the most creative ones - direct involvement by the Centre with the actual research work should be kept to a minimum. However, the Inspectors are in general agreement with the Rector's proposals for the strengthening of the Centre as appear in document UNU/C/17/L.5 (paragraph 56 and ff.) which has been endorsed by the Council (June 1981 session).

(d) Planning and evaluation unit

29. Perhaps the most important recommendation of this report on organizational matters concerns the strengthening of the planning and evaluation at UNU Headquarters. Both are untried activities of UNU. At its fifteenth session, in June 1980, the Council discussed a paper on this subject prepared by an ad hoc committee. It determined that the policy directions emanating from the medium-term plan should be based inter alia on a systematic review of the University's activities. The same point was also raised by the Director-General of UNESCO in his report to the 110th session of the Executive Board in September 1980. In his statement before the Second Committee of the UN General Assembly, in September 1980, the Rector of UNU also stated that programmes had reached that stage when their progress and direction required evaluation; he referred to mid-term reviews which had already taken place as a first step towards evaluation.

30. Evaluation certainly is a prerequisite to any medium-term planning in order to assess the effectiveness and impact of current programmes, to modify them if necessary and to initiate new programmes. It is important, therefore, for the University to establish a small but effective planning and evaluation unit 5/ reporting directly to the Rector. This unit would play a major advisory role in assisting the Rector in assessing existing programmes and in ensuring coherence of UNU's overall research activities. It is also important that the University's research and training programmes be evaluated in order to determine their effectiveness and solicit lessons learned so that future programmes and projects could be made more effective. In future evaluation of projects will be facilitated by their improved design and by the introduction of time-limited research projects 6/. The proposed planning and evaluation unit could either conduct internal evaluation studies itself or have recourse to consultants for independent external evaluations. On this subject, attention is drawn to two reports by JIU: one is a "Glossary of Evaluation Terms" (JIU/REP/78/5 - A/34/286); the other concerns "Initial Guidelines for Internal Evaluation Systems" (JIU/REP/79/2 - A/34/271). Both reports have drawn general acceptance by the organizations of the United Nations system.

C. Personnel issues

31. The Charter specifies that the academic and administrative staff of the University should be selected with a view to achieving its objectives. Three categories of personnel compose the University:

(i) academic personnel which include the Rector, his senior collaborators and the Directors of the Research and Training Centres programmes, as well as research personnel, visiting professors, fellows, consultants, etc.

(ii) administrative personnel;

(iii) trainees.

32. Some academic and administrative personnel are appointed by the Rector on behalf of the Secretary-General of the United Nations and are officials of the UN. Others, as well as trainees, are either appointed by the Rector or in accordance with the terms of decisions of the Council establishing research and training centres or programmes. Such staff are not usually considered officials of the UN. (Article VIII of the Charter)

33. One of the important current issues of UNU is the tenure of the academic professionals. At present most of the staff are non-permanent. It is recognized that few scientists are willing, for professional reasons, to leave their own national academic community and take up a position at a relatively new international organization which does not have a well-established line of advancement. It is also recognized that if the University were to limit itself to academicians who were willing and able to accept long-term appointments, it would not be able in the future to bring in new personnel and individuals required by changes in the research programmes.

34. In the light of these considerations it is recommended that the University build its academic personnel around the concept of highly qualified professional

5/ This was approved by the Council (17th session, June 1981).

6/ See section IV.C. on programming.

staff with time-limited appointments. It is suggested that "limited" be interpreted in most cases as four to six years depending upon the needs of the University. This would allow flexibility in staffing academic positions and in adapting staff to changing University priorities. It is recognized that this type of appointment would present problems for the recruitment of individuals who wish to have a career with UNU and future permanent employment. However, the strengthening of the intellectual capacity of the Tokyo Centre and the future creation of a centre for advanced studies will no doubt make the Centre a more attractive and stimulating place to work in.

35. The administrative and managerial professional staff of the University should in general have appointments of longer duration. It would be useful if more of the administrative personnel could be seconded from the United Nations Secretariat and other UN system organizations.

36. Another issue is recruitment. One way to supplement the staff of the University would be to encourage universities, institutions and governments to second some of their academic personnel to the University. In certain cases this might permit governments and institutions to make a contribution to UNU by continuing to pay the salary and other allowances of the individuals involved. In these cases the seconded professionals would not be charged against the number of limited Headquarters personnel.

37. The problem of selecting individuals with very special qualifications is difficult. The Rector might wish to solicit the assistance of the members of the Advisory Committee for example, as well as carefully selected senior consultants who could spend some time offering advice and assistance on the selection of individuals.

D. The UNU Headquarters

38. The University's Headquarters is in an office building which fits its present administrative role. This in itself has created some appearance problems for those visiting Tokyo and expecting to find something more distinctive than office building quarters. The question of the future site of the UN University Centre has been resolved. The Government of Japan, in co-operation with the Tokyo Metropolitan Government, has offered, and the University has accepted, a suitable plot of land in central Tokyo. The construction of the Centre will undoubtedly improve the University's visibility and enhance its image.

39. The New York office should not be merely a liaison office with UN Headquarters. It should be strengthened and should be made somewhat more substantive, so that it serves also as a contact point with universities and other institutions in North and South America.

III. FINANCE AND BUDGET

A. The financial situation

40. The specific financial feature of the United Nations University is that it is not funded by the regular budget of the United Nations through assessed contributions of Member States. Income is derived primarily from voluntary contributions of Member States to an Endowment Fund and from the interests produced by this Fund. Annual operating contributions and specific project support are also received both from governments and non-governmental or private sources.

41. The Endowment Fund concept is intended to provide stability to the UNU's programme activities and to ensure the academic freedom of the University's research as well as to protect it from pressures likely to accompany other sources of funding. The Charter grants the University autonomy within the framework of the United Nations, including the authority to allocate funds as it deems appropriate for its programme activities. However, its financial administration is conducted within the rules and regulations of the United Nations and its accounts are audited by the United Nations Board of Auditors.

42. During its first years of existence, the primary objective of UNU's fund-raising activities was the solicitation of contributions to the Endowment Fund. A long-term goal of US \$500 million was originally set, which would have provided between \$25 and \$30 million per year, at the then relatively low interest rates. This goal has proven to be unattainable in the present world economic situation and has been more realistically reduced to \$250 million. Actual contributions received by the UNU for the Endowment Fund stood at \$109 million in September 1981; another \$31 million had been pledged but not yet received. Interests generated by the Fund were estimated at \$11.4 million for 1981 and \$12.5 million for 1982. To this income should be added operating contributions, specific programme contributions and the unencumbered funds accumulated over several years, which bring the annual budget levels to \$15.6 million in 1981 and an estimated \$17.5 million for 1982 (this is practically a "no-growth" budget). As at September 1981, 34 governments have pledged or contributed \$144.8 million to the Endowment and Operating Funds of which \$114.7 has been received in actual payments.

43. The current financial situation thus falls far short of initial expectations. The present level of income is due to the host country's generous contribution to the Endowment Fund (which now stands at \$91 million, out of a total pledge of \$100 million) and to the support of the UNU idea which is expressed by more than 30 Member States which have contributed to the Endowment Fund.

44. The Inspectors recognize that both the past and present Rectors, and their staff, have been tireless in their efforts to create a solid financial basis for the development of the UNU. They also recognize that the present inflationary trends and economic recession affecting large areas of the world will not facilitate fund-raising.

45. This situation and possible remedies have been studied at length by the UNU staff, the UNU Council and by independent consultants 7/. The Inspectors

7/ See in particular the Rector's Report on Fund-raising (UNU/C/16/L.5 of 28 October 1980), the Davidson-Dayal report (document A/34/654 of November 1979), the report by the Swedish-Norwegian team (October 1979).

have examined the recommendations of these various reports and the relevant resolutions adopted by the Council, the General Assembly and the UNESCO Governing Body on fund-raising issues. Broadly speaking, they concur with the thrust of these recommendations.

46. Hereunder is a limited number of suggestions that the UNU may wish to consider:

(a) Given the present unfavourable financial climate, UNU should perhaps realistically concentrate its fund-raising efforts on eliciting supplementary contributions for specific projects and programme activities. Increase of the Endowment Fund, however, should still remain the long-term objective for the financing of the University,

(b) The possibility of Member States and institutions - both governmental and non-governmental - providing contributions in-kind should be seriously investigated. This could take many forms: governments or institutions could, for example, provide a scientist to work for the University, host and bear the costs of conferences or seminars, provide research materials, finance scientific missions, provide computer facilities free of charge, etc.

(c) Fund-raising efforts should be made in the direction of non-convertible currencies once avenues for optimal utilization for such currencies have been identified (e.g. for meetings, study tours, purchase of equipment, etc.).

(d) More thought should be given to the idea of setting up a high-level fund-raising group or a committee composed of eminent persons from outside the University. A network of volunteers reporting to this group could be envisaged. Their role would be one of advocacy for the University directed not only to governments and the scholarly community, but also to the private world and perhaps towards the general public. A system of "national committees for the UNU" in which carefully selected scholars would participate (similar to those for UNICEF) might be encouraged as a two-way mechanism for dissemination of information on the University and for fund-raising.

B. Programme and budget

47. The Charter of the University gives the Rector the authority to "submit the plan of work and the budget estimates of the University to the Council for its consideration and approval" (Article V, 3(a)). However, Article IX, 7, specifies that: "The Rector shall prepare the budget estimates for the University in a manner consistent with the United Nations regulations, rules, policies and procedures. The estimates, together with the comments and recommendations thereon of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, shall be submitted to the Council for approval. The budget, as approved by the Council, shall be transmitted to the General Assembly together with the report of the Council."

48. This provision seems to have been interpreted somewhat liberally. Although the budget format has varied from year to year, the submissions have generally not been consistent with the UN regulations as:

- the Budget covers one year only;
- the annual "Programme" and the "Budget" have appeared in most years as separate documents;

49. The concept of yearly budgetary presentations can probably be explained by the uncertainties concerning the University's funding situation during the first years of its existence. It is debatable whether this can still be justified on the same grounds now that the Endowment Fund has grown to a level which - although still far from the long-term target - is sufficient to guarantee some stability in income.

50. Indeed, the practice of yearly budgetary presentations has been criticised on several occasions by ACABQ and by the Board of Auditors, particularly on the grounds that because only the costs for one year are presented to the Council, the full financial implications of work programmes extending beyond one year are not considered at the time of approval.

51. During the discussion of the 1981 budget by ACABQ, it was recommended that the University adopt a biennial budget as from 1982/83. This was subsequently adopted by the Council at its 16th session in December 1980. However, the Rector and his staff considered, in the course of 1981, that because of preparatory work on the matrix of a medium-term plan 8/, there was insufficient time to produce a biennial budget containing an adequate description of new activities. Biennial budgeting has hence been postponed to the 1984/85 biennium 9/.

52. The Inspectors appreciate the fact that the decision to postpone biennial budgeting was dictated by the current transitional stage of planning and programming in the UNU. Furthermore, the sweeping changes in the structure of the programmes proposed by the Rector to the Council introduce another element of uncertainty. They would recommend, however, that this transitional period be utilized to test the new planning and budgeting procedures so that biennial budgeting may commence on a sound basis in 1984.

53. In view of the changes scheduled to take place in the coming months, the present format of the programme and budget is not analyzed in great detail here. It may be useful to recall, however, that the history of the University's budgetary presentations has been a troubled one. The budget has often been criticized for its looseness and a number of hesitations and changes in format have taken place over the years.

54. The Inspectors recognize the recent constructive efforts which have been made to improve the budgetary presentations with the aim of providing a comprehensive description of the nature and operations of the University. A separate presentation is made on each of the five parts of the University Centre's operations: The Council, the Rectors' Office, the Planning and Development Division, the Administrative and Common Services Division and the Programme Division. The table below shows the budgetary allocations for these five areas and for the Contingency Fund (in 1981 funds for contingency activities to be undertaken if and when additional resources are made available to the University were introduced for each of the three programmes instead as a separate Contingency Fund). These funds represent an extra 20.9% for the World Hunger Programme, 23.6% for the Human and Social Development Programme and 16% for the Natural Resources Programme.

8/ Medium-term planning is discussed in Chapter IV of this report.

9/ Biennia in the UN system always start on even years.

Comparison of 1981 Budgeted Expenses with Prior Years 10/

Unit: \$US 1,000

-	1981		1980		1979		1978	
	Amount	%	Amount	%	Amount	%	Amount	%
Programme Division	12,340	79	10,786	78	7,849	74	6,494	71
Administrative Services	1,685	11	1,560	11	1,405	13	1,397	15
Planning and Development	600	4	556	4	515	5	404	4
Rector's Office	675	4	579	4	490	5	412	5
Council	300	2	280	2	344	3	267	3
Contingency Fund	-		70	1			158	2
-	15,600	100	13,831	100	10,603	100	9,132	100
Actual expenditures	-		-		7,938		5,739	

55. The table shows that the Programme Division accounts for 79% of UNU Funds. This does not, however, mean that 79% of funds is spent on programmes. The budget is presented so that its spending on programmes appear as large as possible. Thus, for example, expenses related to academic services, on information (including a \$200,000 contribution to "Development Forum"), library acquisitions, etc., are divided amongst the three programmes.

56. During the last few years the funds available to each of the three programmes were determined by subtracting from the total estimated income expenses for administrative support, the Rector's office, Council, etc., and by dividing the sum obtained into three roughly equal parts. This casual allocation is hard to defend but there did not seem to be a better system: within the minimum amount of money available to develop the approved programmes an allocation of \$2 to \$3 million to each programme could hardly be considered excessive.

57. The Inspectors understand that this procedure is about to undergo radical change: the existence of three independent and self-contained programmes is coming to an end. The introduction of a general reserve fund will permit the financing of new activities which the University will approve for 1982 and beyond. It will enable the University to re-shuffle its programmes and to move into the new areas proposed by the Rector and endorsed by the Programme Advisory Committee and Council.

10/ Extract from 1981 Budget, p.5.

58. The creation of a general reserve fund will allow a degree of competition between programmes for the relatively scarce resources of the University. It is intended that this procedure will result in better formulated and higher quality programmes. In effect, the choice between activities will be made on the basis of an appraisal of competing project proposals.

59. The Inspectors endorse this shift in the UNU programming and budgeting philosophy. They particularly appreciate the Rector's desire to expand the scope of the University's activities and the fact that choices will be made on the basis of quality of formulation. They would caution, however, against an excessive fragmentation of programme activities.

60. Also the Inspectors would advocate more stringent budgetary control. One area in which restraint needs to be exercised is that of official travel. A committee exists for the review of travel requests and it appears that for 1982 the maximum allocation for official travel will be the 1981 approved amount less 25%. Efforts in this direction should be pursued.

61. Another area which the Inspectors believe should be carefully scrutinized is that of official publications. The aim should be to have fewer publications, less glossy in character and improved in content, aiming at disseminating UNU research achievements rather than selling the UNU to the general public. The Inspectors understand that no increase in the amount budgeted for publications is scheduled for 1982.

IV. FUNCTIONS AND ACTIVITIES

A. Aims and specificity of the UNU

62. An international university without campus or students is most unusual. Its hybrid nature - part research foundation, part aid-giving institution and part United Nations entity - has led to divergent interpretations as to its basic raison d'être. Its lack of initial visibility and its financial predicament did not contribute, moreover, to the building-up of a firm and recognized academic research institution. The Inspectors are confident that with the general support of Member States, under the direction of the Council and the Rector, and with the progressive accumulation of valuable research achievements, the UNU will eventually emerge as a unique forum directed towards the bridging of intellectual gaps across the south and between north and south.

63. The task, as outlined in General Assembly resolution 2951(XXVII) and in the Charter, is a formidable one: "a system of academic institutions" (and not an inter-governmental organization) "integrated into the world university community" and "devoted to action-oriented research into the pressing global problems of human survival, development and welfare ...", dissemination of knowledge in ways that will "increase dynamic interaction in the world-wide community of learning and research" and contributing to "the continuing growth of vigorous academic and scientific communities everywhere and particularly in the developing countries". And this is to be done through a novel structure: "a central programming and co-ordinating body and a network of research and post-graduate training centres and programmes located in developed and developing countries". The principal aim of the UNU appears, therefore, to be that of a catalyst, promoting and mobilizing talents and energies for research in the international academic community and helping to build-up this research capacity where it is still weak.

64. In his report to the Council on the activities of the year 1978-79, the Rector stated that "The specific character of the United Nations University lies in the combination of its sponsorship, mandate, method of operation and emphasis. This combination gives the University a specific role in helping the United Nations to fulfil its purposes" 11/. However, most of these characteristics and conditions are common to other institutions, and the Council of the University, although expressing its confidence in the University's basic approaches, including association and collaboration with other international institutions, scientists and scholars, considered that further examination was needed to ensure its distinctiveness "through combining the analysis of problems, the dissemination of knowledge, training, and effective action at the grass roots level" 12/.

65. As regards the concept and role of "global university" the Joint Swedish-Norwegian Team report on the UNU added some relevant suggestions which the Inspectors think are worth considering concerning the rationale of an international institution of this kind, which would provide "catalytic functions" both for developing and industrialized countries. This team concluded that "it is only by improving its specific profile, the establishing of a more convincing legitimacy and raising the standard of its intellectual leadership that the

11/ General Assembly document A/34/31, Annex IV, paragraph 9.

12/ Document A/34/31, paragraph 9. See also Proceedings of the 12th session of the Council (June 1979) pp. 19-22.

United Nations University in the long run will be able to build a world-wide academic constituency. This in turn is a necessary pre-condition for it to fulfil its catalytic and scientific functions" (p.31). The Inspectors concur with this statement.

66. In some ways the UNU appears to some as an institution without a cause. Many of the arguments attempting to demonstrate its specificity seem in fact to reflect an urge to justify its very existence or to seek acceptance and support for its academic services. Most of these views, however, under-estimate the UNU's unique original feature: that as an organization of the UN system its services are, or should be, produced in common by an integrated community of associated academic institutions with the assistance and guidance of a co-ordinating nucleus (the UNU Centre).

67. The search for specificity is an important issue and the Inspectors were pleased to note that the Council and the Rector continue to analyze this question both from institutional and programmatic angles, to better define the role of the University and its plan of action. However, character and specificity cannot be established by decree: it is more likely that these will develop over the years through a cumulative process, the main constituent of which will be the visible results of research activities and advanced training.

68. The Inspectors are concerned that the UNU has an important role to play. They see its specificity chiefly based on the following elements:

(a) its international character, i.e. an institution embracing a world community of associated academic institutions;

(b) its independent approach, i.e. its willingness and capacity to deal with controversial issues which for political reasons cannot be tackled directly by other research institutions within (or without) the UN system;

(c) its capacity to produce original results, i.e. in a negative way the UNU should not repeat what others are already doing or finance activities that would be undertaken anyway by the recipient institutions; put positively, the UNU should take advantage of its unique international position to conduct research, propose solutions, disseminate results in areas of global and particular concern where it can make a visible and original contribution;

(d) its decentralized mode of operation, i.e. the fact that the substantive activities of its programme should be implemented mainly in the field, by its associated and incorporated institutions and scholars, with limited direct substantive activities at the headquarters level. The University's proper role could not be defined by uniqueness leading to a special new activity, but mainly by co-operation and leadership, vis à vis a world academic community that the UNU is supposed to build up for the purposes of its mandate.

B. Mode of operation - the network concept

69. The quantity of the work performed by the UNU during its first six years is certainly quite impressive. The Inspectors are pleased to record their esteem for the valuable efforts made in this difficult initial period to put such a complex institution on an operational basis, and to start its contribution to the international community as an intellectual instrument of the United Nations system. As already mentioned, the Inspectors do not intend to discuss the University's substantive activities in any great detail. The comments in the following paragraphs deal principally with questions relating to the UNU's network and framework for action.

70. According to its founding fathers, and to the legal instruments resulting from their work, the UNU was to function "through a central programming and co-ordinating body and a network of research and post-graduate training centres and programmes located in the developed and developing countries". This provision of the Charter has led to divergent interpretations with respect to the nature - both institutional and operational - of the relationship between the University Centre and the research units and institutions. Basically, some envision the UNU as a potential "totality" in which academic and scientific institutions would become the natural and constituent parts of the University, the relationship between the Centre and these institutions being one of partnership. Others, more pragmatically put the emphasis on the contractual nature of this relationship, i.e. the provision of services for the Centre, usually on a temporary basis.

71. Operating through networks, although appealing to the mind, has proved to be very difficult in practice. This perhaps partly explains why the UNU research centres around the world lack visibility in the sense that they do not appear to be recognized elements of "UNU activity". In many respects the use of the associated institution has proved to be a rather elaborate term for a relationship that was, for the overseas institution, like its relationship with other international and foreign agencies that were funding particular activities.

72. To a certain degree it is understandable that the relationship between the UNU Centre and the associated institutions be seen by the latter primarily as a source of funding (for activities which in some cases they would have undertaken anyway). In these circumstances it is difficult for such institutions to consider themselves as partners or constituent parts of the University. Moreover, perhaps as a result of ambiguities in the Charter, the Centre seems to have conceived the development of the network concept mainly as an avenue leading to its own growth as the world academic centre, to the strengthening of its own structure and centrally directed schemes, and extending its action to the field through its own research units and programmes.

73. The Inspectors believe that if this issue is not resolved it may lead to potential serious conflict within the UNU galaxy. The associated institutions should be considered as constituent elements of UNU which is intended to act as an international intellectual hub. The Inspectors would urge that the Council consider issuing a policy directive in order to clarify and strengthen relationships between the associated institutions and the Centre. The former should not be considered as mere recipients of technical or financial support, nor as instruments for the execution of research projects managed from the Centre. This policy directive might also stress the give-and-take nature of the relationship in which the interests of the parties concerned may not necessarily be the same (e.g. research results which may give the UNU visibility and credibility for the Centre; the possibility of participating in an international research and learning process with the potential of building-up indigenous research capabilities for the associated institutions).

74. The nature of the institutional, contractual and other arrangements governing the relationship between the Centre and associated, and other academic institutions or individuals should eventually be embodied in the Statute of the University, once policy decisions have been taken by the Council. Vague operational criteria would no doubt damage not only the UNU's image, but would also weaken the basis for its active presence in the field and curtail potential sources of support.

75. The Council, as the policy organ of the UNU, is giving more and more emphasis to the fundamental relationship with the associated institutions, the importance of which was never under-estimated by its members. In discussing

the role of the United Nations University many views were advanced concerning its activities in building up indigenous research capabilities, especially in Third World countries and on the advisability of basing UNU's efforts on institutions under national auspices (as focal points), rather than on personalities, and the enlisting of such institutions as the proper links for UNU's co-operative activities. The Inspectors are pleased to record this progress, recognizing that the UNU Centre should provide the terms of reference and offer to the national institutions a global outlook rather than a limited, technical research contract relationship.

76. With respect to incorporated institutions the Inspectors have already stated (paragraph 11 above) that they should be established only if they serve well defined long-term needs and that their basic costs should be borne from sources external to the UNU budget. At present the establishment of a number of such institutions is being studied; for example, an institute of advanced studies to be located in Tokyo; an institute for research on international economic policy, probably to be located in Europe; and an institute for research on child development in Islamic societies. Of these, the Inspectors believe that the institute for advanced studies should have priority - if adequate financing can be found - because of its potential for giving substance and visibility to the Tokyo Centre. The presence of a research focal point in Tokyo, preferably housed in the same premises as the UNU Centre, would serve two basic purposes: to build-up the intellectual strength and credibility of the University Centre and to develop links and working relationships between the Japanese academic community and the UNU. For these reasons, the Inspectors believe that the setting up of the Tokyo institute as soon as possible would serve several useful purposes. So far as the other incorporated institutes are concerned their justification should be carefully studied before any commitments are made.

C. Planning and programming the UNU's activities

(a) Methodology

77. The University's terrain of action is extremely wide. It includes the study of the most pressing global problems of mankind of concern to the international community. In essence its mandate is all-embracing; its resources however are limited. Hence the primary responsibility of the UNU Centre to enlist and co-ordinate, in the most productive manner, the activities of an integrated world-wide system of academic institutions and feedback channels, in conjunction with what is already being done by the organizations and specialized agencies of the United Nations, and to design and develop a coherent programmatic response to those problems in order to contribute ideas and strategies for their practical solution.

78. The Inspectors were pleased to note that the UNU Centre is generally aware of the global role it needs to accomplish, and of the need for a fundamental methodology required to prepare the plans for the University and to conduct its basic activities. The UNU should give careful attention to the question of how research can lead to useful action in the fields in which it is operative and what kinds of research, conducted in what ways, will be most effective.

79. The UNU is not discipline-oriented but essentially a problem-oriented institution. Its principal efforts should be towards the development of new concepts applicable to the solution of concrete pressing problems. The needs and problems of the United Nations system should be primarily taken into account, not only by promoting studies on subjects and fields where the secretariats for

political or other reasons cannot be active, but also working within the framework of the system as a global institution, concerned with the problems and objectives of the international community. However, in the absence of clear programming policy, the UNU runs the risk of spreading its resources too thinly rather than concentrating its activities in those substantive areas where it can make an original contribution. The Inspectors are of the opinion that it might prove useful for the Council, in order to facilitate the preparation of the UNU's broad work programme, to define - in an official policy statement:

(i) The fundamental core subject areas on which the University should work; and

(ii) other activities or areas of lesser priority in which research would be undertaken depending on the availability of additional financial resources.

(b) Approaches

80. Under the innovative impulse of the new Rector, the UNU's programmes are presently undergoing radical change. The original three programme structure (World Hunger, Human and Social Development and Use and Management of Natural Resources) is being transformed as it was becoming increasingly clear that it was no longer appropriate for the meeting of the University's long-term objectives. The somewhat rigid compartmentalized structure is giving way to a more flexible, responsive organization of work. The University is building these future activities on the strength of the existing programmes and institutional relationships established over the last five years. The goals and functions compatible with the UNU's distinctive nature are seen by the Rector as follows:

"...serving the intellectual needs of mankind as a whole and specifically the United Nations system; dealing with controversial aspects of peace, survival and change; building comprehensive and relevant knowledge and perspectives; helping understand social change; serving the ends of social transformation and a new international order; dealing with development problems and especially with the least developed countries and the most dis-advantaged members of society; dealing with problems of industrialized countries; developing the global knowledge base for ethical judgments; advanced training, education and dissemination; and others." 13/

81 The ad hoc Committee on Planning recently endorsed this approach and suggested to the Council that, in accordance with the Charter, certain themes, basic concerns and priority areas could be defined for the period 1982-87. Although requiring further refinement, the following themes proposed by the Rector were agreed upon as acceptable:

- (a) Peace, Security, Conflict Resolution and Global Transformation
- (b) The Global Economy
- (c) Hunger, Poverty, Resources and the Environment
- (d) Human and Social Development and Co-existence of Peoples
Cultures and Social Systems
- (e) Science, Technology and their Social and Ethical Implications

13/ Report of the ad hoc Committee on Planning to the Council of the University, document UNU/C/17/L.4 of 30 April 1981, paragraph 10.

82. The Inspectors are in general agreement with this approach. They would add, however, that the issue here is not what the UNU should do but also how it should be done, i.e. the translation of major issues of the international community into feasible specific programmes and projects. In the view of the Inspectors, this area has not received sufficient attention and the UNU should take account of what other international organizations are doing in these fields.

(c) The need for a medium-term plan

83. The Inspectors noted that both the Council and the UNU Centre seem to agree on the need to develop a planning framework, stretching beyond the rather ineffective year-by-year planning that has characterized the first six years of the University's existence. However, UNU programming philosophy still seems to be in an embryonic stage. In particular, there is some uncertainty as to whether the UNU needs a medium-term perspective or a medium-term plan. The ad hoc Committee on Planning seems to favour the former approach 14/. The Inspectors appreciate that planning of the activities of a research institution must allow for more flexibility than similar exercises in inter-governmental organizations. Nonetheless, their preference is for a six-year medium-term plan, perhaps constructed on a rolling basis, i.e. with a more precise programming of activities for the first two or three years and a broader framework for the following years.

84. The Inspectors see the following advantages in the establishment of a medium-term plan:

(a) the plan would give an overall sense of direction and cohesion to UNU activities and facilitate the translation of policy into programmes;

(b) it would provide an appropriate framework for the definition of priorities between programmes and for the definition of precise time-limited objectives and products for the UNU's programmes and projects;

(c) it would provide the framework for the co-ordination of the activities of associated and other institutions based on clear lines of responsibility;

(d) similarly it would facilitate co-ordination and help minimize risks of duplication with organizations of the UN system and with the world academic community;

(e) the medium-term planning exercise itself would enhance the Centre's sense of perspective and responsiveness vis-à-vis "pressing global problems", and strengthen its management and co-ordination function;

(f) better planning, clearer objectives are a sine qua non for evaluation of the University's research programmes;

(g) lastly, dissemination of the UNU's medium-term plan would give it greater visibility and establish the originality of its contribution.

(d) Programme effectiveness

85. The impact of UNU's activities as a research and training institution is difficult to assess. Objective conclusions concerning an institution whose outputs are mostly imponderable and have little short-term effects are not

14/ Ibidem, paragraph 23.

easy to formulate and would be mainly based on subjective appreciations. There are few hard and fast indicators which can be used (e.g. dollars spent on research or books published). Participation and co-operation with other institutions, and the level of support which is being obtained through voluntary contributions, could perhaps be used as indicators for estimating the University's overall performance; other, more precise, indicators should be sought in the future.

86. Taking into account the nature of the UNU's substantive activities, it is the impression of the Inspectors that the University is meeting its purpose although without sufficient participation from the world-wide academic community. It can be said that the UNU is falling short of its ambitious objectives and wide-ranging targets, but, all in all, its resources appear to have been expended, with few exceptions, in useful and generally productive activities.

87. The Inspectors would recommend that as part of its ongoing evaluation function (see paragraphs 29-30), the Centre commission regularly, at the rhythm of one or two a year, high-level evaluation reports or sector studies to be produced by independent consultants to assess both programmes and administrative processes (e.g. publications policies) of the UNU. Such reports might be in particular directed to an evaluation of the UNU's catalytic role in specific fields. It would be interesting to ascertain, for instance, whether the UNU is in any way assisting developing countries in the building-up of their indigenous research capabilities or whether UNU research programmes, though paying lip service to developing countries' research needs, still in fact reflect the dominance of western or northern academic patterns.

(e) Training and fellowships

88. Conflicting opinions have been voiced concerning the desirability of the UNU becoming directly involved in training activities, in particular activities undertaken at or by the Centre. Moreover, there does not seem to exist a clear definition of UNU policy in this area. A change in emphasis from research to training might be interpreted as a sign that the UNU has not altogether been successful in establishing itself as a research institution. The Inspectors believe that the UNU should not be excessively ambitious on the training side but that the UNU Centre should support the development of teaching methodologies and strengthen institutions, especially in developing countries, which could undertake most of the training.

89. The Inspectors would, however, stress that the UNU fellowships programme needs strengthening. These fellowships are awarded to graduate students, and junior professors and researchers, as well as government officials, from developing countries. The selection process is carefully done, although perhaps with insufficient geographical coverage. It takes into account potential contributions to the approved research programmes and academic needs in home countries.

90. Reviews were made of the effectiveness of fellowships, showing that results were satisfactory. In fact, the co-ordination of these efforts with the research activities of the UNU, avoiding unrealistic functional dichotomies, was quite useful and successful, and it is recommended that more resources should be devoted to fellowships even if their annual number has been steadily increasing. To be able to enroll a larger number of fellows in courses dealing with technical co-operation and development matters, the Inspectors endorse the suggestions made by the Director-General of UNESCO that UNU should take as much advantage as possible of the provisions of Articles IX.2 of the Charter, and utilize fellowship resources from organizations of the United Nations system.

(f) Dissemination policy

91. This activity is at present undertaken by the UNU Centre through (1) the "Academic Services" section which is in charge of publishing books and working papers, and (2) the "Information Services", charged with increasing the "world-wide awareness and understanding of the University among opinion formers and policy-makers ... in order to gain their support" 15/.

92. The aim established by the Charter in this regard is for the University to "disseminate the knowledge gained in its activities, to the United Nations and its agencies, to scholars and to the public in order to increase dynamic interaction in the world-wide community of learning and research" (Article I.4).

93. It is somewhat disturbing to note that after several years of intense and costly 16/ information efforts directed both at the academic communities and the public at large, the UNU has achieved so little in establishing its image and visibility. The lack of scientific achievements, and credibility of the institution (noted earlier) and the world-wide size of the information task are no doubt contributory factors. Pending a flow of scientific results - on which information work should concentrate - the University must be careful to ensure that its more general and institutional information work is targeted to defined groups of recipients and that the more costly activities are carefully assessed for their cost-effectiveness. The Newsletter, produced by Information Services, is considered to be one of the most useful publications of the UNU. With this exception, the Inspectors recommend that information activities of a general nature be reduced to a minimum and be based on the principle that the University should be known by its own scientific achievements.

94. The Academic Services section was organized as an academic and scientific information centre, including an information retrieval system which is being developed in conjunction with existing international information projects, particularly those of UNESCO. The Inspectors feel that the development of this service into a computer data bank on research activities carried out, whether under the UNU auspices or not, in the UN system should be studied and gradually implemented. Basic data on research activities undertaken by such bodies as UNRISD, UNSDRI, UNITAR, UNCTAD, the Institute of Labour Studies, etc., could thus be made available to interested research communities. This data bank could subsequently be developed to include information on research in selected fields undertaken by institutions of potential interest to the UNU, particularly in developing countries.

95. The amount of books and working papers published under the aegis of UNU is an impressive corollary of the work accomplished through the research programmes. However, to produce greater impact which would increase world-wide exchange and interaction the UNU needs to address two questions: increase the originality and quality of the material printed and improve the actual distribution of such material.

96. It is true that a good part of the dissemination function is achieved by the UNU through the research programmes themselves, in their scientific meetings, workshops and seminars, but publication is the best way to reach a world-wide

15/ Rector's 1979-80 report to the Council, Document A/35/31, p.69.

16/ Approximately 8.9% of the total budget in 1979; this has been reduced to 6.6 in 1981.

audience if the distribution of the material can be done effectively and at reasonable cost. The Inspectors feel that this kind of effort, to be really effective, should be done jointly with the participating institutions through the academic community, and with the organizations of the United Nations system including the regional training and research centres. Publications should in fact reflect the thinking of the University community in its totality. The effectiveness of this UNU activity could be further enhanced by the participation of associated institutions at national level.

97. The UNU Centre has accumulated rich experience in disseminating information, and it is now in a position to evaluate results achieved so far and to streamline this important activity.

D. Relationships

98. Institutional and working relationships with academic and scientific institutions and with the organizations of the United Nations system are fundamental for the UNU. The establishment and operation of the University would in fact not be possible if these relationships did not exist and were not organized. The Inspectors have already examined relationships with associated and incorporated institutions in paragraphs 69 to 76 of this section of their report. The following paragraphs are devoted to relationships within the UN system and to some concluding remarks on the network concept.

(a) Working with organizations of the United Nations system

99. The Inspectors examined the nature of the institutional relationship between the UNU and the organizations of the UN system. They found that opinions in this respect either stressed the autonomy and academic freedom of the UNU, sometimes excessively, with the risk of the University becoming an ivory tower within the system, or stressed that UNU is part of the United Nations family and therefore its programmes and activities should be "co-ordinated" by the UN system, with the opposite risk of it becoming just another segment of the international bureaucracy. The Inspectors feel that the UNU should be ready to undertake critical independent analyses of issues of concern to the UN system. It should not hesitate to tackle, with its constitutional liberty of action, political and economic issues which may not be "mature" for discussion in UN fora or which the Secretariats cannot yet confront for political reasons. In other words, the UNU should attempt to explore new terrains and themes which are likely to become of crucial importance for the UN in coming decades.

100. Exchanges of information, dissemination of knowledge to the United Nations and its agencies, and joint research efforts, are the indispensable modus operandi of the UNU in fulfilling this important role. The Inspectors concur with the recommendations of the Davidson-Dayal report in this respect 17/.

101. This approach is valid for the UNU relationships with all the organizations and agencies of the United Nations system, but particularly with the institutes and centres engaged in training or research activities, both at the global and regional levels. The institutions with potential for more substantial ties with the UNU in this regard are the University for Peace, the United Nations Institute for Social Development (UNRISD), UNITAR, and some regional training and research centres assisted by organizations of the United Nations system. These ties should consist of a two-way process in which the UNU should aim at providing these institutions with the advice and intellectual support they may need at their specific levels of work.

17/ Docurent A/34/654, paragraphs 42-47. The Inspectors subscribe in particular to the following statement (paragraph 43) of this report:

"... greater and more systematic co-ordination with other United Nations agencies, in particular UNESCO, is called for at all stages of the work, namely, the planning, preparation, implementation and follow-up of programmes. This should be done in order to ensure that there is no unnecessary duplication and that complementary work on "the pressing global problems of human survival, development and welfare that are the concern of the United Nations and its agencies" (A/9149/Add.2, annex, art. 1, para. 2) is carried out. It seems entirely possible to have this systematic co-operation without infringing on the autonomy of the University, which of course is to be safeguarded. This co-operation, as among autonomous bodies, should ensure that:

(a) Themes and projects of real interest, which are not being done elsewhere or could be better done by the United Nations University, are chosen:

(b) the results of the work of the United Nations University are systematically known to all these agencies and they can help in making the University better known;

(c) the practical follow-up of the work, which may well be the domain of the United Nations agencies, can be more effectively carried out, thereby further demonstrating the applicability of the work of the United Nations University and increasing its impact;

(d) The co-operation can be carried out keeping in view the fact that the United Nations University is able to approach and analyse problem areas from different points of view, particularly a multi-disciplinary, flexible and scientific approach free from undue inter-government constraints, which its constitution enables it to do."

102. The University for Peace was established by General Assembly resolutions 34/111 and 35/55 as "a part of the system of the United Nations University", with which it should be associated by a mutual agreement determining the ways and means of co-operation and co-ordination. There is no experience as yet in this regard, and the Inspectors express the hope that both institutions will take advantage of the principle of association underlined in the above mentioned resolutions. Any future activities of the UNU falling under the theme "International peace, security and global transformation" would, of course, have to be closely co-ordinated with the University of Peace.

103. Concerning the co-operation and co-ordination between UNU and UNITAR, the Inspectors are pleased to note the positive reaction of the United Nations Secretary-General in regard to the recommendations contained in a previous JIU report on UNITAR 18/, in which the Inspectors pointed out the inherent dangers of duplication arising from the many similarities in the work programmes of both institutions. A joint UNU/UNITAR special and formal discussion on this matter, in consultation with United Nations and UNESCO authorities, may perhaps be needed in order to co-ordinate efforts, clarify responsibilities, and consolidate the distinctive characters of the programmes of both institutions.

104. An even richer intellectual relationship, and a larger common programme, could be developed between UNU and UNRISD, for the benefit of both institutions. It is the impression of the Inspectors that UNU and UNRISD should extend and strengthen the basis for co-operation agreed upon in their Memorandum of Understanding, on 9 October 1979, and fully establish a programme of complementarity and joint action in these fields while maintaining their individual characteristics. The Inspectors consider that the UNU has a responsibility to use, to the extent possible, the existing research organizations of the UN system, and, especially UNRISD and UNITAR, in fulfilling its own mandate. This could take the form of sub-contracting agreements accompanied by appropriate mechanisms for intellectual interaction and support between the parties concerned.

105. In respect to the regional training and research centres, the UNU could play a valuable role as an intellectual support for these centres within the United Nations system. Many of them are working in areas of knowledge requiring constant scientific revision, at least from a methodological point of view; some of these areas are not yet properly defined and consequently, for practical purposes, in need of critical analysis concerning their basic principles 19/.

106. The Inspectors were pleased to note that the working relationships of the UNU with the specialized agencies are improving, not only on the basis of the existing Memoranda of Understanding, which establish co-operation procedures and define fields of action for joint activities, but also as a result of their mutual experience and exchange to ensure co-ordination. UNESCO has been particularly active in this regard.

107. The same constructive approach should be applied in the many instances in which the UNU could be called upon to co-operate with organizations of the United Nations system by organizing post-graduate courses and study programmes,

18/ JIU/REP/79/18

19/ JIU reports 79/9, 79/13 and 80/10.

or research activities, seminars, workshops, etc., which should be prepared and conducted on the basis of a global outlook and taking into account the basic principles and underlying policies approved by the international community for the United Nations system as a whole. In this regard, when appropriate, the possibility of UNU becoming an executing agency for UNDP global research and training projects should be further explored. Such a co-operation might even attract collateral financing and enlist the support of the world-wide academic community.

(b) Co-ordination with other academic and research institutions

108. The Inspectors believe that the University should maintain constant communication and co-operation with other academic and scientific institutions which are not part of its system, especially since the Charter stipulates that a central objective of its research and training programmes should be the "continuing growth of vigorous academic and scientific communities everywhere and particularly in the developing countries" (Article 1, paragraph 6). This is important since development, social progress and security are together a dynamic and multi-dimensional process where the various aspects, and inter-relationships have great significance and cannot be ignored. In this context the Inspectors were pleased to note the continuous efforts which are being made by the UNU, since the approval of its agreement with the International Association of Universities (IAU) in 1976, to enlarge and strengthen its contacts with the academic world and to benefit as well from the consultative and information services of non-governmental organizations such as IAU, concerned with high-level educational and scientific activities and recognized by the United Nations and UNESCO.

(c) A world-wide network operation

109. In previous reports 20/, the JIU has stressed the value of the network strategy as an effective modus operandi to promote and facilitate exchange and co-ordination, avoid duplication, enhance co-operation of efforts and, above all, increase the potential impact, coherence and purpose of the various research and training institutions within the United Nations system. The Secretary-General of the United Nations, referring to this strategy in regard to UNITAR, agrees with the potential of this method to "help to harmonize long-term planning" and to augment its role as a focal point 21/.

110. In the case of the UNU, operating through networks is a basic need of the institution itself. This point has been developed in Chapter IV, section B. This constitutes the backbone of the very concept of the University and the specific character of its mission as a catalyst creating linkages, promoting and leading the activity of a world-wide academic community devoted to the study of the problems of mankind that are the concern of the United Nations system. As a mode of operation, networking is far from being an easy task. In particular, it requires sound planning and a clear understanding of the roles and responsibilities of all parties concerned.

111. The Inspectors feel that the UNU network should be organized as a non-hierarchical entity, a constituency of various parts with multi-purpose and independent functioning capacity, but not necessarily as a laissez-faire establishment.

20/ JIU/REP/79/18 on UNITAR and JIU/REP/80/10 on Assistance by the UN System to Regional Inter-country Technical Co-operation Institutes.

21/ See document A/35/181/Add. 1, p.2.

112. The functioning of a network as a give-and-take mechanism within an institutional context requires legal formalities, embodied for instance in a co-operation agreement or contract. The Inspectors do not interpret this as meaning that the constituent parts should be regulated or directed from above. Institutions should be linked to the system only by the content of the specific co-operation agreement which has been signed.

113. Networking could be organized not only on a substantive, but also on a regional basis; perhaps both methods could be combined in the future leading to an effective world-wide web of intellectual stimulation and activities.

114. To stimulate those associated institutions already working in fields of interest of the University programme, and to pull them together in functional co-ordination with this programme, the UNU Centre could perhaps initially provide core research funds according to its own priority areas of work with a view to promoting adequate working relationships and sound network dynamics under its guidance. As stated by the Council, the University "networks should be used as vehicles for developing methodologies for dealing with related global problems, and should reflect on what more the UNU could uniquely contribute" 22/.

115. Reports of the Council and the Rector state that the networks of each of the three present programmes were set-up to link together institutions and researchers, co-ordinating their work in order to stimulate inter-disciplinary approaches and share experiences. However, their actual impact appears to be rather weak. As already mentioned in paragraphs 73-74 the Inspectors recommend that the present networking strategy of the UNU should be thoroughly reappraised. Policy statements are necessary on behalf of the Council, and could eventually be embodied in a Statute of the University. These policy guidelines should clarify all basic operational questions arising in the context of the working relationships between the Centre and the peripheral research institutions and units. In particular, the responsibilities of the parties involved with respect to programming, financial matters, auditing, evaluation, publication and dissemination of research findings should be clearly defined. This would be extremely beneficial as it would help to establish who does what and avoid interference between the managing-programming functions and the academic-scientific functions.

22/ Proceedings of the 15th session of the UNU Council, document UNU/15/L.13, p.17.

V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Conclusions

116. The United Nations University is an achievement in itself despite the fact that its finances, its programmes and its image still fall short of what its founding fathers had envisioned. The first six years have demonstrated the potential of the idea: an institution of learning which is at the same time a United Nations organization and a global network of centres of academic and scientific research. During the next six years, the UNU will have to prove not only that this unique concept is viable institutionally, but also that its activities are valuable for the international community. In the final analysis the UNU will be judged by its capacity to produce ideas and solutions that are effectively put into action. This only will determine whether it will become a pole of attraction for academic and scientific communities all over the world, or just another marginal research institution. This is the challenge for the coming years.

117. Throughout this report, the Inspectors have attempted to address issues of structure and procedure with a view to strengthening the UNU's chances of making its breakthrough on the international scene. They hope that their recommendations will contribute to shaping the plans for the University's next steps. Moreover, they are pleased to note that many of their conclusions seem to coincide with the approach adopted by the new Rector, in particular:

(a) The importance of greater inter-action and co-ordination among the three present programmes, and the need to establish one advisory committee in place of the three present separate committees;

(b) Recognition that the University should not confine itself to only three programmes but expand into five broad themes.

(c) The importance of establishing a biennial budget which would be formulated within the framework of the medium-term plan.

(d) The importance of developing the intellectual capability of the UNU headquarters in Tokyo.

(e) The need to develop the UNU network in such a way as to enable the University to evolve from a single-centred institution to a decentralized global system.

(f) The need for each project or activity to have a cost limit and a definite time frame which would be clear to all concerned.

The Rector and the Council are commended for taking action on these important issues.

118. The Inspectors stress one final point. This report concludes that the University has great potential and that it should attempt to move ahead expeditiously, especially in operations distinguishing it from existing international organizations or research institutions. More risk-taking, and questioning of conventional theories may perhaps be necessary. It is stated above that the UNU's ultimate test will be its capacity to produce ideas and solutions. In application of its mandate, such solutions and ideas will tend to be global. World-wide applicability should not, of course, be under-estimated; however, the UNU should also emphasize the building-up of the capacity of developing countries to seek and find their own solutions, which may not be the same as solutions elsewhere. Universal solutions to problems of socio-economic

development may at times be an illusion; global development is more likely to be the result of the inter-action of individual national solutions. Hence the necessity for an international university to devote itself to building-up, within individual developing countries, the institutional and infrastructural capacity for development research and for the application of such research.

B. Recommendations

(a) Organization

RECOMMENDATION 1

The University should maintain its present character and not move towards a degree-granting university of the traditional type. It should be strengthened by improved institutional and working relationships with the world academic community. Incorporated institutions should be established only if they serve well-defined long-term needs and if their cost can be borne by the government of the country hosting the institution or from other sources external to the UNU budget (paragraphs 11 and 76). If these conditions can be guaranteed, the establishment of an Institute of Advanced Studies in Tokyo should have priority over other incorporated institutions (paragraph 76).

RECOMMENDATION 2

(i) The Council of the University should maintain its position as an overall policy-making organ and not deal with day-to-day operations which should be devolved to the Rector and his staff. It should normally meet once a year, preferably in Tokyo. An ad hoc group composed of some members of the Council might also be established and be on call by the Rector (paragraph 17).

(ii) The Secretary-General and the Director-General of UNESCO should reinforce their efforts to select Council members reflecting the specific interests and concerns of the research community, including those of UNU associated institutions. The Rector should continue to be informally consulted on the appointment of new Council members (paragraph 18).

(iii) Pending future changes in the Council's membership, some directors or members of associated institutions could participate on a rotational basis as members of the Advisory Committee (paragraphs 19 and 23).

RECOMMENDATION 3

In order to avoid compartmentalization of UNU research activities, the organizational structure of the UNU should be modified in such a way as to have only one position of Vice-Rector (at the ASG level). Present Vice-Rectors should have their functional titles changed to Programme Directors or Deans and maintain their present grades (D.2) (paragraph 22).

RECOMMENDATION 4

The intellectual capacity of the UNU headquarters should be strengthened in order that it may effectively act as the focal point for the overall direction, planning and evaluation of research activities. Direct involvement with the actual work of associated institutions should be kept to a minimum (paragraph 28).

RECOMMENDATION 5

A small but effective planning and evaluation unit reporting directly to the Rector should be established. It should conduct evaluation studies itself and have recourse to consultants for independent external evaluations of the UNU's programmes (paragraphs 29-30 and 87).

RECOMMENDATION 6

The University Centre should be staffed by highly competent academic professionals, serving as a general rule for limited periods (e.g. from four to six years, depending upon the needs of the University). More secondments of administrative personnel from UN system organizations should also be encouraged (paragraph 35). The New York liaison office should be strengthened and made to play a more substantive role (paragraph 39).

(b) Finance and budget

RECOMMENDATION 7

(i) UNU should concentrate its fund-raising efforts on eliciting supplementary contributions for specific projects and programme activities. Increase of the Endowment Fund however should still remain the long-term objective (paragraph 46(a)).

(ii) The possibility of Member States and institutions - both governmental and non-governmental - providing contributions in-kind should be seriously investigated (paragraph 46(b)).

(iii) Fund-raising efforts should be made in the direction of non-convertible currencies once avenues for optimal utilization for such currencies have been identified (paragraph 46(c)).

(iv) More thought should be given to the idea of setting up a high-level fund-raising group or a committee composed of eminent persons from outside the University. A network of volunteers reporting to this group could be envisaged. A system of "national committees for the UNU" in which carefully selected scholars would participate might be encouraged (paragraph 46(d)).

(v) Biennial budgeting for UNU activities should start in 1984 at the latest (paragraph 53). Stringent budgetary control procedures are necessary. Restraint should be exercised in the areas of official travel and publications (paragraphs 60-61).

(c) Functions and activities

RECOMMENDATION 8

The nature of the relationship between the Tokyo Centre and the associated institutions of the University needs to be clearly established and strengthened. A policy directive by the Council on this matter would help in making responsibilities and obligations of the parties concerned more transparent. Details concerning institutional, contractual and operational arrangements of the UNU network could eventually be embodied in a Statute (paragraphs 68, 73-74 and 115).

RECOMMENDATION 9

(i) Policy statements are also required in the area of programming in order to define the priority core subjects on which the UNU should work and the other less fundamental activities in which research would be undertaken depending on the availability of additional resources (paragraph 79).

(ii) Although flexibility is necessary in planning and research activities of the UNU, the establishment of a six-year medium-term plan should not be delayed. The plan could be constructed on a rolling basis with precise time-limited objectives and outputs for the first two or three years, and a broader framework for subsequent years (paragraph 83).

RECOMMENDATION 10

The UNU should not be excessively ambitious in training. It should, however, support the development of training methodologies in developing countries. The UNU fellowships programme should also be strengthened (paragraphs 88-90).

RECOMMENDATION 11

The information and dissemination policies of the UNU should be reconsidered. Information activities of a general nature should be reduced to a minimum. Emphasis should be on dissemination of research results (paragraphs 91-93).

RECOMMENDATION 12

The development of the present information retrieval system into a computer data bank on research activities carried out in the UN system should be studied and gradually implemented. This data bank could subsequently be enlarged to comprise information on selected research activities carried out by other academic institutions, particularly in developing countries (paragraph 94).

RECOMMENDATION 13

By virtue of its liberty of action, the UNU should not hesitate to tackle political and economic issues that may not yet be "mature" for discussion in UN fora. It should explore new terrains likely to be of importance to UN organizations in the coming decades (paragraphs 99-100).

RECOMMENDATION 14

UNU research activities falling under the theme "International peace, security and global transformation" should in future be closely co-ordinated with the University for Peace (paragraph 102).

RECOMMENDATION 15

To the extent possible UNU should utilize existing research organizations in the United Nations system; co-operation and co-ordination of activities with UNITAR and UNRISD should be especially reinforced. UNU should also consider giving intellectual support to UN system regional training and research centres (paragraphs 103-106). The possibility of UNU becoming an executing agency for UNDP global research and training projects should be explored further (paragraph 107).