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Second report on the elaboration of regulations for the planning, programming and evaluation cycle of the United Nations

Note by the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit herewith to the members of the General Assembly the report of the Joint Inspection Unit entitled "Second report on the elaboration of regulations for the planning, programming and evaluation cycle of the United Nations" (JIU/REP/83/6).

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SECOND REPORT ON THE ELABORATION OF REGULATIONS FOR
THE PLANNING, PROGRAMMING AND EVALUATION CYCLE OF
THE UNITED NATIONS

by

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SECOND REPORT ON THE ELABORATION OF REGULATIONS FOR
THE PLANNING, PROGRAMMING AND EVALUATION CYCLE OF
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Chapter I

The problem

1. The Joint Inspection Unit, which has been concerned for some 15 years in numerous reports with the processes of elaborating planning, programming and evaluation methods, last year submitted its recommendations on the elaboration of regulations for the planning cycle in its report (A/37/460) of 20 September 1982.

2. In resolution 37/234, of 21 December 1982, the General Assembly adopted the draft regulations, after having amended certain points and added a preamble, thus incorporating the bulk of the Joint Inspection Unit's recommendations. The Assembly, in the same resolution, requested the Secretary-General:

- To "issue rules in implementation of ... those Regulations ... and to submit those rules to the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination at its twenty-third session and to the General Assembly at its thirty-eighth session";
- To "comment on those recommendations of the Joint Inspection Unit on the regulations ... which have not yet been reflected in the regulations for consideration by the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination at its twenty-third session";

and finally it requested CPC

- To "report to the General Assembly ... on the need to amend the programme planning regulations and Financial Regulations ... in the light of the recommendations of the Joint Inspection Unit and the comments thereon by the Secretary-General, as well as in the light of the discussion on this subject in the Fifth Committee at the thirty-seventh session".

3. The final formulation of the regulations and rules should thus take place at the twenty-third session of CPC and at the summer session of the Economic and Social Council, and should be adopted at the thirty-eighth session of the General Assembly. Following the long tradition of co-operation in this field between the Joint Inspection Unit and the Secretariat, the text of the draft report of the Secretary-General on the rules has been transmitted to the Joint Inspection Unit. After consultations with representatives of the Secretariat, it seemed essential to the author of the report in document A/37/460 to supplement the Joint Inspection Unit's contribution to the exercise of elaborating the regulations and rules, by offering additional comments on the documents submitted to the General Assembly for consideration and approval.

4. The fundamental reason for this supplementary contribution is that the concept which has underlain the elaboration of the draft rules by the Secretariat is

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markedly different from that which the Joint Inspection Unit thinks should have been adopted in order faithfully to reflect the will of the General Assembly as stated, in particular, in the text of the regulations. The debate on this subject involves a fundamental problem which is none other than the definition of the role intended for the planning cycle and, in particular, the medium-term plan itself, and its introduction, and for evaluation. Still more specifically, the question is whether the planning cycle instruments should be purely management instruments or should also serve, in addition to their function as a management tool, as conceptual instruments.

5. The report of the Secretary-General (A/38/126) does not deal with this problem, but the rules it proposes are clearly based on the idea that the plan is a management instrument only and not a conceptual instrument. It is no doubt true that in practice intergovernmental organs have so far mainly used the medium-term plan as an instrument enabling the Secretariat to make formal proposals to Member States on the future work of the Organization in implementation of mandates received, and to allow the General Assembly to react to such proposals. However, the practice followed so far has not allowed the Economic and Social Council, UNCTAD or the substantive Main Committees of the General Assembly to become involved in this preparation sufficiently far in advance. Moreover, the prevailing view has been that the future policy and medium-term strategy of the United Nations are defined by those same organs, but using other methods.

6. The basic problem is to determine whether the entire exercise of establishing a planning, programming and evaluation cycle at the United Nations is not intended precisely to change an unsatisfactory situation by improving the type of document which the Secretariat submits to Member States, at a time when they determine the strategies, objectives and mandates given to the Secretary-General.

7. In so far as the draft rules contained in the report of the Secretary-General tend, in our view, to perpetuate the current situation rather than alter it, it seemed to us necessary to convey very clearly to the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination, the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly the reservations which we have concerning the draft rules and the way in which the draft should be amended.

8. This report will thus deal with:

(a) The concept of the planning-programming-evaluation cycle as it emerges from the deliberations and resolutions of the General Assembly, and how the current situation should be altered accordingly;

(b) The specific amendments which should be made to the draft rules currently under consideration by CPC and the General Assembly; and, finally:

(c) The additional studies which it might be appropriate to carry out so that the planning cycle can be fully used by all intergovernmental organs.

Chapter II

The need to alter the current situation

9. There is no doubt that the General Assembly wished and requested that the planning cycle and, in particular, the introduction to the medium-term plan, the medium-term plan itself and the evaluation should serve as instruments for reflection on the objectives of the Organization at the highest level and as instruments for defining priorities. The resolutions and the regulations already adopted by the General Assembly are, in that respect, perfectly clear:

(a) The preamble to the regulations indicates that the goal of the planning cycle is:

"(a) To subject all programmes of the Organization to periodic and thorough reviews;

"(b) To afford an opportunity for reflection before choices among the various types of action possible are made in the light of all existing conditions;

"(c) To associate in that reflection all participants in the Organization's actions, especially Member States and the Secretariat;

"(...)

"(i) To evaluate periodically the results achieved, with a view either to confirming the validity of the orientations chosen or to reshaping the programmes towards different orientations".

(b) The role of the introduction to the medium-term plan is defined by regulation 3.7 sufficiently clearly for it to appear as being essentially a conceptual instrument. "A key integral element in the planning process", which will "highlight, in a co-ordinated manner, the policy orientations of the United Nations system" indicating "the medium-term objectives and strategy" and "the Secretary-General's proposals on priorities";

(c) The medium-term plan itself is, in the words of regulation 3.3, "the principal policy directive of the United Nations";

(d) Finally, the objective of evaluation is, according to regulation 6.1:

"(a) To determine as systematically and objectively as possible the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness and impact of the Organization's activities in relation to their objectives;

"(b) To enable the Secretariat and Member States to engage in systematic reflections, with a view to increasing the effectiveness of the main programmes of the Organization by altering their content and, if necessary, reviewing their objectives".

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10. This series of quotations was necessary in order to demonstrate that the introduction to the plan, the medium-term plan itself and the evaluation had been conceived by the General Assembly as conceptual instruments intended to define the Organization's objectives at the level of the major programmes themselves, and to set priorities at the level of major programmes and programmes.

11. It is true that this clearly expressed intent of the General Assembly has not yet been translated into reality. Several reports by the Joint Inspection Unit on planning, programming and evaluation have attempted to explain how the current situation was unsatisfactory in that regard, and to outline the efforts which would be necessary to alter it. Some progress has been made, but it is a fact that a satisfactory solution is still a long way off.

12. In particular:

(a) The Joint Inspection Unit has pointed out in its report on medium-term planning in the United Nations, of March 1979 (A/34/84), that there was a planning crisis at the United Nations, that the fundamental means of resolving it consisted in establishing a structure of programming by objectives, that to that end the policy descriptions of major programmes (recommendation No. V in the report) should be constructed according to a plan allowing satisfactory identification of objectives and, finally, that the introduction to the medium-term plan should be drawn up with the intention of helping Member States to define priorities (recommendation No. VI);

(b) In its report of 20 September 1982 on the elaboration of regulations for the planning cycle at the United Nations (A/37/460), the Joint Inspection Unit repeated that the situation concerning initiation of the reform of the planning cycle was still not satisfactory, that the methodology, devised with such patience, is neither properly understood nor properly applied, that the current planning exercise produces results which do not correspond to the hopes placed in it and its conception has to be thought out again, and that the standardized presentation of all types of programmes or activities and the form required for drafting the passages explaining the subprogrammes were the major shortcomings in the present plan. Finally, the potential of the instrument termed the introduction to the medium-term plan had not yet been fully grasped within the Secretariat. The whole of chapter I of that report was devoted to explaining the unsatisfactory nature of the present situation and to analysing the reasons for it;

(c) Finally, the series of reports on the problems of evaluation at the United Nations has regularly repeated that there was still no real system of evaluation and that much remained to be done.

13. Moreover, it is a fact that the General Assembly committees which deal with substantive issues have not really considered and debated the medium-term plan, although it has been submitted to them. It may thus be stated that the strategy orientations at the level of the major programmes are determined by instruments other than the medium-term plan, but this does not mean that that is a desirable state of affairs, or that the attitude adopted by the substantive committees of the General Assembly means that the medium-term plan should not serve as a conceptual instrument. It would no doubt have been different:

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- If the Secretariat had proposed the inclusion of consideration of the medium-term plan in the agendas of those committees in good time and not at the very last minute;
- If the medium-term plan had been genuinely conceived as an instrument for reflection on the programmes, with introductory explanations, genuinely significant in terms of each major programme and facilitating decisions on choices between various possible types of subprogramme;
- If the advantage of having a substantive committee make a genuine contribution to defining the "principal policy directive of the United Nations" had been correctly explained.

14. In fact the present medium-term plan for 1984-1989, which was finally adopted by the General Assembly, was not only a still imperfect instrument, to use the phrase employed in the report of the Secretary-General. It is not, in fact, either a conceptual instrument or a good management instrument. These two aspects complement each other:

- The availability of a good management instrument at that level means that there are clear, precise and reasonably accessible objectives for each of the programmes for which the Secretariat of the Organization is responsible, so that these programmes can act as a framework for activities defined in the programme budget and in each unit's programme of work. It also means that their correct implementation can be monitored and that the results obtained through them can be evaluated;
- The availability of a conceptual instrument means that there are gathered together all the data and analyses necessary to choose, among the various possible objectives of the Secretariat of the Organization, those which best correspond to the means possessed by the Organization to facilitate the attainment of the objectives of the Member States themselves, and to define them in the clearest and most precise manner possible.

That means that the medium-term plan cannot be an effective management instrument unless it is first of all an effective conceptual instrument.

15. The present situation may be summed up by stating that the fundamental shortcoming in the way in which the Secretariat of the Organization provides Member States with information on the definition of the Organization's programmes has still not been overcome. The mass of documents supplied to intergovernmental organs gives Member States either general information on the kinds of problems of concern to Member States themselves, or explanations or proposals for activities of the Organization in the framework of guidelines formulated by the intergovernmental organs. What is lacking is some kind of document to link the overall guidelines and the preparation of the various units' programmes. The instruments for the planning cycle, in particular the medium-term plan itself, its introduction and the evaluation reports, have been conceived to meet precisely that need, or more exactly the dual need:

- For precise analytical methods to facilitate choice by Member States, in the case of major programmes and programmes, between the Secretariat's various possible objectives;
- For comparison of all the objectives thus defined in order to allow the Organization's priorities to be ascertained.

The fact that these instruments are not sufficiently used for this purpose is regrettable and should not, in any event, be construed as an argument in favour of maintaining the status quo.

16. In fact, the fundamental objectives of instituting the planning cycle will not be attained:

- Until the medium-term plan explains, rigorously and systematically, how secretariats define the contents of major programmes and programmes, (that is, how they identify the constituent subprogrammes) and until a plan conceived along those lines - in other words comprising in essence explanations of the major programmes systematically describing the reasoning followed - is used as a basis for the deliberations of the intergovernmental organs dealing with substantive issues;
- And until the introduction to the medium-term plan and the medium-term plan itself are drawn up, at least with regard to economic and social programmes, in such a way as to allow the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly to define the Organization's priorities.

17. A comparison should be made in this connection between the procedures followed:

- By the Organization in preparing the international development strategies at 10-year intervals, with provision for a review and appraisal after the first five years,
- And the procedures followed every six years for the preparation of a medium-term plan to set out the Organization's objectives and programmes for that period.

18. While the Main Committees and the intergovernmental organs dealing with substantive issues, together with other organizations of the United Nations system in their spheres of competence, are closely involved in the preparation of the strategy, and while the preparation exercise and the review and appraisal process make it possible at least to attempt to integrate into the strategy the trends in development policy emphasized by Member States and the various organizations, the preparation of the medium-term plan has so far been regarded as a formal exercise in which only the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination, the Economic and Social Council for a brief time at its summer session, and the Fifth Committee of the General Assembly are actually involved. Everything proceeds as if the Organization's programme was not considered important enough to involve all the parties concerned in the drafting of the introduction and the body of the medium-term plan, or as if, in effect, programmes were defined "in some other way",

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that is, without any defined and coherent approach. However, there is no real justification for the difference in attention given to the two exercises, and a reappraisal of the present approach to medium-term planning would no doubt be beneficial.

19. Lastly, it should also be noted that evaluation cannot do what is expected of it as long as the design of the medium-term plan does not allow objectives to be clearly identified. It should be recalled in this connection that:

- Evaluation is extremely difficult when objectives are poorly defined,
- Evaluation is meaningless unless it makes it possible to extract lessons for the future not only as regards the effectiveness of subprogrammes in attaining their objectives but also as regards the choice of possible types of subprogrammes.

20. In short, much remains to be done to change the current situation with regard to the design of the medium-term plan and its introduction, and the way those documents are used to improve the definition of the Organizations's programmes, so as to conform more closely to what the General Assembly has called for in the regulations referred to in paragraph 9. It seems obvious that this requires that in future:

(a) The procedures for drawing up the introduction to the medium-term plan must be designed to meet the requirements set out in regulation 3.7;

(b) The body of the medium-term plan must include a statement of strategy for each major programme and programme which will explain, substantiate and make possible the discussion and selection, by Member States, of the objectives proposed by the Secretariat - in other words, the selection of subprogrammes;

(c) The medium-term plan must serve as the basis for the deliberations of the relevant intergovernmental organs on the substance of the Organization's programmes;

(d) It must be possible for evaluation to cover not only the conditions in which subprogrammes have been implemented but also the relationship between the Organization's objectives, as defined at the programme and major programme levels, and the selection of the various subprogrammes.

21. In order for all these conditions to be met, the rules which translate the regulations into more specific directives must not go against such essential changes which are needed in existing practice. However, a consideration of the rules proposed in the Secretary-General's report reveals that they reflect a conception of the introduction, the medium-term plan and evaluation which differs completely from that which seems to us to emerge from the texts adopted by the General Assembly.

Chapter III

Consideration of the draft rules

22. The present draft of the rules proposed in the report of the Secretary-General is based, in large measure, on the idea that the basic level for reflection and explanation is the subprogramme. The adoption of such a conceptual basis is, in our view, at variance with the provisions of the regulations to which we have referred in paragraph 9. In any event, it would prevent the medium-term plan from serving as a conceptual instrument which would help Member States and the Secretariat to define the Organization's objectives in the best possible way.

23. In other words, the difference in the approaches of the Secretariat and the Joint Inspection Unit can be summed up in the following question:

Which narratives in the medium-term plan should be the most extensive and most interesting:

(a) The narratives for major programmes setting out the reasons for the choice of objectives and hence of subprogrammes?

(b) Or the narratives for each subprogramme describing how the objective set for the subprogramme will be attained?

24. For the Joint Inspection Unit, the correct answer is (a); for the Secretariat, it is (b). The two could no doubt be combined but, bearing in mind that the plan should not be unduly long if it is to be read, a choice must be made as to the space to be given to the two kinds of narratives. The choice which is currently made by the Secretariat is short on the indications about strategy which would be found in a type (a) narrative (major programmes and programmes), that is, it vitiates, in our view, the primary purpose of the medium-term plan.

25. The definition of the term "strategy" proposed in the annex to the report is as follows:

Programme strategy: "A programme strategy is a sequence of means of action to be undertaken for the purpose of achieving an objective".

This definition should be compared with the definition of the terms "programme" and "subprogramme" given in the same annex. "Subprogramme" appears to be the only term linked to the word "objective"; the definition of the word "strategy" provided in the annex thus applies, in reality, more to subprogrammes than to programmes. Such a definition could be retained but should apply to the term "subprogramme strategy". A complementary definition would then be needed to apply to major programmes and programmes, which could be worded as follows:

"Major programme and/or programme strategy: A major programme or programme strategy consists of the analysis of the Secretariat's reasons for selecting the objectives and the subprogrammes intended to attain them. Such an analysis takes into account the world situation in the sector in question, the

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problems which have been identified, contributions made towards solving those problems by Member States themselves and by other international organizations, including those of the United Nations system, and the reasons for choosing to have the United Nations make a given type of contribution towards the solution of those problems in preference to others."

26. The definition of the term "programme" proposed in the annex to the same report also calls for some comment. By resolution 34/164, adopted in 1979, the General Assembly approved the glossary of evaluation terms proposed by the Joint Inspection Unit and recommended its use by the entire United Nations system. In that glossary, the term "programme" is defined as follows:

"an organized set of activities, projects, processes, or services which is directed toward the attainment of specific objectives".

(A programme may be concerned with a geographical region, a function, or an area of activity. United Nations organizations consider programmes in a four-level hierarchy - major programme, programme, subprogramme, and programme element.)

This definition, which has the advantage of establishing a relationship between the organization of a set of activities and the objectives to be attained, is not incompatible with the definition proposed in the annex to the Secretary-General's report. A cross-reference to the definition should, however, be included in the annex, and the text of the definition proposed by the Secretariat should be preceded by the words "As used in the context of the medium-term plan ...".

27. The wording used in the rules on the medium-term plan and its introduction drawn up to apply to regulations 3.1 to 3.12:

(a) Fails to make clear how the plan is to be drawn up, referring to detailed instructions to be issued at a later date (rule 103.1 "instructions shall be issued in accordance with the present regulations and rules ...");

(b) Deliberately interprets the terms "medium-term objective" and "strategy" used in the regulations (regulation 3.3) as relating solely to subprogrammes (rule 103.3 "in the subprogrammes of the proposed medium-term plan, etc.") without dealing either with major programme and programme objectives or with the strategies underlying the choice of objectives by the Secretariat and the related subprogrammes;

(c) Decides to circulate to various intergovernmental or expert bodies the various sections of the plan, thereby preventing the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination from making a comprehensive preparatory analysis of programme priorities (rule 103.5, medium-term plan proposals relating to substantive services are to be dealt with by CPC and ACABQ, those relating to common services by ACABQ and those relating to conference services by ACABQ and the Committee on Conferences);

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(d) Decides once again that the subprogramme is to be the main unit of analysis, review and evaluation in the United Nations planning and programming system (rule 103.6, para. (d) (iii)) and fails to specify the contents of introductory narratives for major programmes and programmes (rule 103.6, (d), (i) and (ii));

(e) Provides no further clarifications concerning procedures for preparing the introduction to the medium-term plan (rule 103.7);

(f) Lastly, fails to establish a connection between the introduction to the medium-term plan and the process of preparing the plan which begins at the unit level ("programme managers shall prepare ... a draft of their portion of the plan" (rule 103.12) without any overall guidance from the Secretary-General as to the design of the various parts and their relative priorities).

28. In our view, the rules and parts of rules referred to above should be reformulated. Suggestions as to wordings which we consider to be in keeping with the spirit and the letter of the regulations will be given below. In order to provide a coherent description of what the draft medium-term plan should contain, it would be clearer, in our view, if the specifications were not spread out over rules 103.1, 103.3 and 103.6. There is a need to consolidate into a single rule, which could become new rule 103.6, the description of the contents of major programme, programme and subprogramme narratives for the different types of activity with respect to which the regulations require a distinction to be made - substantive activities (with special emphasis on continuing activities) and servicing activities.

29. The provisions of such a new rule could be patterned on the following text: 1/

"(a) Each major programme in the plan shall be presented in a separate chapter. Submissions shall be made in accordance with a list of major programmes drawn up by the Secretary-General. The major programmes, for servicing activities, shall be:

- public information,
- administration and finance (excluding personnel),
- personnel services,
- conference services.

(b) As regards substantive activities:

1. At the major programme and programme level, the strategies shall include an explanation of the choice of proposed Secretariat objectives, including:

(i) Information on the world situation in the sector under consideration, and the problems resulting from it for the international community;

(ii) Information on the principles of action deriving from resolutions of the General Assembly or competent intergovernmental organs, the renewal of mandates which have been laid down and a clear formulation of the objectives of Member States for intergovernmental action in the field in question;

(iii) A brief account of efforts already made by Member States, the United Nations system and the United Nations;

(iv) An explanation of the allocation of the activities of the Organization among units to which various programmes have been assigned and of the specific character of each unit;

(v) The identification of possible contributions which the United Nations can make in the field, bearing in mind the resources at its disposal and the analyses referred to in paragraphs (i), (ii) and (iii) above;

(vi) The formulation of objectives proposed by the Secretary-General for the Secretariat, and a statement of the choices thus made among the various possible options identified in the preceding paragraph.

The Secretariat objectives thus proposed shall identify:

- the continuing functions or activities of the Organization,
- the time-limited objectives,

The allocation of the various paragraphs envisaged above among the introductory narratives for major programme and programme narratives shall be determined in consultation with the managers of programmes which are components of the same major programme.

At the major programme level, the medium-term plan shall include indicative estimates of its resource implications by stating alternative growth assumptions. The estimates shall include assumptions on the availability of extrabudgetary funds.

2. At the subprogramme level, the introductory narratives shall include a brief explanation of:

- the reasons governing the choice of activities from among the various activities proposed (research, technical co-operation, backstopping for negotiations, etc.) to attain the objective of the subprogramme and, where applicable, the reasons for choosing a given mix of continuing activities and time-limited objectives,

- the various stages, preferably biennial, over which the various activities for the six-year period are to be spread out.

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When a time-limited objective of a subprogramme cannot be attained during the plan period, both the date of the longer-term objective and the specific objectives to be achieved within the plan period shall be set.

Where an entire subprogramme or an identifiable part of a subprogramme is expected to be financed from extrabudgetary resources, this shall be indicated."

(Paragraph (b) (v) relating to continuing substantive activities and the present text of paragraph (e) relating to servicing activities in the Secretary-General's draft do not call for any comment on our part.)

30. Rule 103.5, which defines the arrangement for the review of the various types of activity by intergovernmental and expert organs, should be combined with rule 103.12, since regulation 3.12 deals with arrangements for review of the plan by various intergovernmental and expert organs. Moreover, it should not provide for an allocation of work between CPC and ACABQ which seems to us to be at variance with the provisions of regulation 3.12.

31. Rule 103.7 should give at least some indication concerning the procedures and time-table for the preparation of the introduction to the medium-term plan. It could be patterned on the following text:

"The introduction to the medium-term plan shall be submitted to the intergovernmental organs one year before the date of submission of the medium-term plan itself. To that end, the Secretary-General shall set a timetable and outline the procedures to be followed for consultations on the possible contents of the introduction with programme managers of the United Nations and his colleagues in the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination. The first draft of the introduction prepared after consultations with the programme managers shall be circulated to the specialized agencies and their comments shall be sought in good time so that a second draft can be prepared for submission, in the first instance, to the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination."

32. Rule 103.12 could include the following provisions:

"(a) At the start of preparations for the plan, the Secretary-General shall issue to all programme managers instructions in which he sets priorities among policy orientations and defines the general framework in which the next medium-term plan is to be drawn up."

No change is proposed in the rest of rule 103.12.

33. The rules relating to evaluation, 106.1 to 106.4, reflect to a great extent the conceptual approach to the planning cycle which underlay the preceding draft rules in the Secretary-General's report. The wording of those rules leaves doubts on several points which should be cleared up, in particular, as regards:

(a) The level at which evaluation should take place (the rules refer in places to programmes, but much more often to subprogrammes only);

(b) The contents of evaluation reports (with regard to which rule 106.2 mentions only that "the scope and other characteristics of a self-evaluation study shall be determined by the nature and characteristics of the activities programmed and other relevant factors");

(c) The kind of conclusions and recommendations to which such reports should lead (rule 106.4 states only that they "shall be unambiguous and readily implementable");

(d) How the conclusions reached by the competent intergovernmental organs on the basis of evaluation reports are to be implemented (although rule 106.4, states in its first two paragraphs, that evaluation findings shall be immediately taken into account by programme managers and that the evaluation system shall include the monitoring of the follow-up of evaluation conclusions and recommendations, without specifying, however, who shall be responsible for that, and although rule 106.1 provides that evaluation findings shall be communicated to Member States through intergovernmental bodies in order to facilitate reconsideration of existing mandates, policies, strategies and objectives, the substantive content of programmes and its utility to end-users).

34. It should first be recalled that the number of major programmes of the United Nations is 28 (24 in the current plan plus four new major programmes for servicing activities), that the number of programmes in the current plan is 115 (50 central programmes and 65 regional programmes), and that the number of subprogrammes is 387. The establishment of an evaluation plan should therefore determine the number of reports to be prepared by the central evaluation unit and considered by CPC each year, and specify how programmes not covered by such reports are to be evaluated. In the light of the results of the experiment already carried out in that respect, it is difficult to believe that CPC will be able to consider more than three evaluation reports each year. In addition, in order to cope with such a workload, it is likely that the central evaluation unit will need to be reinforced with additional staff and resources. In those circumstances, if, during the six-year period, only 18 evaluation reports of this kind can be prepared, an effort will obviously have to be made:

- to select, on the basis of clear-cut criteria, the major programmes or parts of programmes (groups of programmes) or subprogrammes which are to be covered by such reports,
- to indicate clearly how during the same six-year period all the other programmes of the Organization can be evaluated. If the figure of 18 suggested above for the first category of report is adopted, slightly more than 100 programmes remain (115 currently, plus servicing activities programmes, less 18) to be evaluated in six years, or some 16 to 17 programmes to be evaluated each year. If, for this second category of programmes, we decide to use the simplified method of self-evaluation, it should be understood that self-evaluation reports would not be considered

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by CPC, for the obvious reason that its sessions are overcrowded. These various considerations prompt us to propose the inclusion in existing rule 106.2 of the following text:

35. (a) All major programmes of the Organization shall be evaluated once every six years. For that purpose, the evaluation system shall entail the submission, for consideration either by CPC, or by the intergovernmental or expert organs directly concerned with each major programme or programme, of a series of evaluation reports;

(b) The reports submitted for consideration by CPC shall be prepared by the central evaluation unit in collaboration with the programme managers concerned and, if necessary, competent experts in the fields involved. The Joint Inspection Unit may also assist in the preparation of such reports;

(c) Reports submitted only to governmental or expert organs directly concerned with each major programme or programme to be evaluated shall, for the most part, be self-evaluation reports prepared by programme managers in collaboration with their staffs, with methodological assistance from the central evaluation unit;

(d) The evaluation programme evolved by the Secretary-General and submitted to the General Assembly for its approval shall include a list of major programmes and portions of major programmes to be covered, during the six-year period, by evaluation reports to be submitted to CPC for its consideration of CPC, and a time-table indicating the years in which the reports are due.

He shall also draw up a list of all other programmes to be covered during the six-year period by self-evaluation reports and a time-table indicating the years in which those reports are due. He shall indicate the criteria used in allocating programmes of the Organization to one or other category of report.

(e) The minimum number of evaluation reports prepared by the central evaluation unit and submitted for the consideration of CPC shall be three each year. Methodological support shall, in addition, be provided by that unit in connection with self-evaluation reports.

36. In the light of the experience so far, we now are beginning to have a general idea of the sequence of the various stages through which evaluation reports must pass. There is a need for a rule which spells out this sequence, clearly defining all the necessary stages of research and investigation. The following text could be considered for inclusion in rule 106.3:

37. Evaluation reports:

(a) Shall use all the information collected during the monitoring phase and contained in programme performance reports, but shall update this information;

(b) Shall assess the quality and relevance of the outputs of each subprogramme, their usefulness to end-users and the make-up of end-user networks;

(c) Shall compare the situation existing at the start of implementation of each subprogramme and what remains to be done at the end, in order to ascertain the extent to which a subprogramme has attained its objective;

(d) Shall study to what extent the objectives of the programme or major programme have been attained and what has been the impact of the totality of subprogrammes implemented in the context of the programme;

(e) Shall identify, in the light of such findings, other possible designs for major programmes or programmes - that is, their breakdown into lists of subprogrammes which could have been considered to improve performance in attaining the objectives of the major programme or programme;

(f) Shall identify the criteria which should, in future, govern such a breakdown into subprogrammes so that the competent intergovernmental organs can decide between the possible designs for the programme or major programme;

(g) The Secretary-General's report on all the evaluation studies shall include a summary of the findings of the individual reports and general conclusions on the design of the Organization's programme in order to assist in the preparation of the medium-term plan and the introduction thereto for the following six-year period.

38. The way in which the recommendations contained in the various types of evaluation report are to be translated into specific measures should be spelled out in a rule, in implementation of regulation 6.4, which provides that: "the findings of intergovernmental review of evaluations shall be reflected in subsequent programme design, delivery and policy directives". It seems necessary that the rules should not only provide for the use of the findings contained in such reports by programme managers themselves (as is done in paragraphs 1 and 2 of rule 106.4 in its present form) but also spell out more clearly than does paragraph 3 of existing rule 106.1 how intergovernmental organs can use such findings to make mid-course adjustments in the plan. It is therefore proposed that the following text should be included in rule 106.4:

39. "Intergovernmental or expert committees directly concerned with each programme or major programme shall formulate, in connection with self-evaluation reports submitted to them, recommendations concerning the methods for implementing the programme or major programme concerned and shall suggest, where appropriate, a new design for the programme or major programme resulting in a new breakdown into subprogrammes. These recommendations shall be transmitted to CPC for consideration and, in the case of major programmes concerning servicing activities, to CPC and ACABQ.

After considering the recommendations of the competent intergovernmental or expert organs and the recommendations contained in reports prepared by the central evaluation unit directly before it, CPC shall propose to the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly measures which may relate to:

- The administrative reorganization of units responsible for programme delivery,
- Changes in procedures used in implementing ongoing programmes,
- The redefinition of the contents of major programmes and programmes,
- Measures thus proposed shall be considered either in connection with the formulation of a new plan after study of the report of the Secretary-General envisaged in regulation 6.4 summarizing his conclusions on all evaluation studies, or in connection with a biennial revision of the plan as envisaged in regulation 3.11."

40. The substance of the rules to be adopted is obviously related to the machinery which will be responsible for implementing them. An evaluation system (a subsystem of the integrated planning, programming, budgeting, monitoring and evaluation system which the General Assembly has on many occasions decided to adopt, in particular in resolution 37/234) must include:

- A definition of the responsibilities of the various intergovernmental organs in the field of evaluation,
- A definition of the responsibilities of the various intergovernmental organs in the field of evaluation,
- A central evaluation unit to provide overall guidance, co-ordination and support for the evaluation activities of all Secretariat units,
- An evaluation programme which sets a time-table for evaluation reports so that all programmes will be evaluated during a specified period, and identifies the mix of in-depth studies to be carried out mainly by the central unit and self-evaluation reports,
- Guidelines dealing, inter alia, with format, i.e., a list of the various stages through which evaluation reports must pass,
- Mechanisms for the analysis, discussion and application of the findings of reports, both by intergovernmental organs responsible for determining programme content and by programme managers responsible for their implementation by the Secretariat.

These components of a comprehensive evaluation system have been described in several reports of the Joint Inspection Unit, in particular in the detailed report on the evaluation system of UNDP (JIU/REP/83/5).

41. The report which the Secretary-General has just issued (A/38/133) in pursuance of resolution 36/228, which requested him to improve the evaluation services and system and to report to the General Assembly at its thirty-eighth session on action taken in response to that request:

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- Provides a description of the current situation;
- Identifies the functions which should or could be performed in the progressive implementation of an evaluation system;
- Indicates the proposals of the various United Nations departments for the improvement of existing units;
- Lastly, proposes a programme of in-depth evaluation studies, to be carried out at a rate of one each year over an eight-year period.

42. The report seems to reflect a concept of an evaluation system which is markedly different from that outlined by the Joint Inspection Unit. For one thing, the report does not indicate clearly whether there should be a central evaluation unit or what its role should be. The report seems to reflect a very decentralized concept of evaluation, with each major department or regional commission - only if it so wishes - setting up its own unit, each staffed by between one and four Professionals, according to the work-load assigned to it. Moreover, it is stated in paragraph 69 of the report that, in the case of DIESA, work towards setting up an internal evaluation system and guidelines for its use has been slow, as existing resources had to be devoted to competing assignments. In addition, departments which do not want an evaluation system seem to have been given complete freedom to maintain the status quo. For example, the Economic Commission for Europe is not mentioned at all in connection with evaluation. Lastly, it is not indicated, in particular in part III relating to the time-table of in-depth studies, how practical effect could be given to the provision of rule 106.2 which the Secretary-General himself has proposed and which stipulates that: "all subprogrammes shall be submitted to self-evaluation at least once in every six years". The recommendations in paragraph 80 of the Secretary-General's report to strengthen evaluation units and activities along the lines proposed in paragraphs 65 to 76 of the same report do not, therefore, seem to us to promote the establishment of a genuine evaluation system.

43. In the opinion of the Joint Inspection Unit, if the evaluation regulations proposed in this report are to be implemented, it would be essential:

- For a decision to be taken to establish a central evaluation unit,
- For this unit to be staffed by at least six Professionals in order to perform all the functions indicated in resolution 36/228 B on a continuous and system-wide basis,
- For a network of evaluation officers to be rationally constituted, by creating the necessary posts in all the main departments and by designating, in all other departments, officials who, while continuing to perform their job functions, would be correspondents of the central evaluation unit (according to our calculations, in order to cover the main departments and all the regional economic commissions, such a network should, over and above the four officials currently envisaged for UNIDO, consist of 12 officials - one Professional post for each of the other

departments and commissions. This system would give a total of 22 Professional posts - a slight increase compared with the existing number of evaluation officers).

- For the evaluation plan or programme to include, as we have proposed in paragraphs 34 and 35 above, at least three in-depth evaluation reports each year, under the direction of the central evaluation unit, and a specific programme for self-evaluations.

44. The crucial problem which this report has tried to address is how the intergovernmental organs dealing with substantive issues can be enabled to examine in depth the design of United Nations programmes. The proposals just made concerning the rules attempt to provide an answer to this question, by suggesting a concept of the medium-term plan allowing analysis and discussion of the selection to be made between the various types of activity designed to attain the objectives of the programmes and major programmes, and by proposing a system of evaluation allowing a systematic and detailed study of the design of major programmes and programmes throughout the six-year period.

45. The problem thus formulated appears to be related to those studied by the Economic and Social Council in connection with its revitalization. Economic and Social Council resolution 1982/50 of 28 July 1982 decides, in paragraph 1 (e) and (f), how the Council should be involved in the review of the medium-term plan and in the review of the co-ordination of activities of the United Nations system. With regard to economic and social programmes, the role of the Council in the consideration of programme design could perhaps be reviewed on this occasion. One possible approach would perhaps be for the Council to use for this purpose the in-depth evaluation studies after they have been considered by CPC. This could be done either in the context of the review of the United Nations programme, or in the context envisaged in paragraph 1 (f) of the above-mentioned resolution in connection with activities of the United Nations system. In any case, if the Economic and Social Council felt that additional studies are needed in order for the planning-programming-evaluation cycle to be fully used by all intergovernmental organs, particularly those which decide programme content, the Joint Inspection Unit would be glad to contribute.

PRINCIPAL RECOMMENDATIONS

46. The principal recommendations of this report are as follows:

Recommendation 1: The definitions of the terms "programme strategy" and "programme" should be amended along the lines suggested in paragraphs 25 and 26 of this report.

Recommendation 2: The wording of the draft rules proposed in the Secretary-General's report concerning the design of the medium-term plan should be amended as follows:

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- Rules 101.1, 103.3 and 103.6, as suggested in paragraph 29 of the report,
- Rules 103.5 and 103.12, as suggested in paragraphs 30 and 32 of the report,
- Rule 103.7, as suggested in paragraph 31 of the report.

Recommendation 3: The wording of rules 106.1 to 106.4 proposed in the Secretary-General's report concerning evaluation should be amended as suggested in paragraphs 35, 37 and 39 of the report.

Recommendation 4: CPC could take into account the remarks and suggestions made in paragraph 44 above, when making its recommendations concerning the strengthening of the evaluation units and system.

Recommendation 5: The Economic and Social Council could consider the suggestions made in paragraph 45 of this report concerning the possible role of the Economic and Social Council with regard to the detailed review of the design of economic and social programmes with the help of the evaluation reports.

Notes

1/ We have used underlining to indicate proposals that are new in relation to the text proposed in the Secretary-General's report.
