



INTERIM REPORT
ON
THE USE OF CONSULTANTS
IN THE UNITED NATIONS

by

S. Ilić, C.S. Jha, C.E. King,
J.A. Sawe and A.F. Sokirkin

Joint Inspection Unit

1. At the request of the Fifth Committee (A/8531/Add.1), the Joint Inspection Unit included in its annual work programme for the year 1972 "An overall review of the question of experts and consultants hired by the different services of the United Nations".
2. The Inspectors participating in this review found that despite the concern voiced in the General Assembly and by ACABQ in the past over what appears to be a parallel growth in the permanent establishment and in expenditure on temporary assistance, including individual experts and consultants and ad hoc expert groups, the problems that arise from the use of such experts and consultants in the United Nations have not as yet been studied specifically or in depth. Where they are mentioned at all it is usually en passant and in conjunction with other issues and reviews by various bodies in the past.
3. In 1962 expenditure in the United Nations Secretariat alone (i.e. excluding HCR, UNCTAD and UNIDO) on "Individual experts and consultants" totalled \$337,718 and on "Ad hoc expert groups" \$149,968. In 1971, which is the last year for which expenditure figures are available, it totalled, respectively, \$1,205,279 and \$348,066.^{1/} The rate of increase for this type of temporary assistance during this period was about twice that of the United Nations budget as a whole.
4. During the same period there was a clear tendency, at least in the United Nations Secretariat, to over-budget estimates under these two items of expenditure, the margin of annual savings going up to roughly 45 per cent (1966) in the case of consultants and 72 per cent (1968) in the case of ad hoc expert groups.
5. The Inspectors, in their investigations, addressed themselves to the following main issues:
 - (a) the justification for employing large numbers of individual experts and consultants in the context of a large permanent establishment and of other available outside sources of information and expertise;

^{1/} A/5505 and Secretariat sources.

- (b) whether existing controls over the hiring of individual experts and consultants and over the evaluation and utilization of their work are adequate, and if not, how they can be improved.

6. The Inspectors found it necessary to investigate a large number of individual cases; to examine the authority for various projects involving the use of individual experts and consultants; to ascertain whether they were in fact related to approved programmes; whether the persons contracted to carry them out had the proper expertise; whether the fee was appropriate; what use was made of the work done by the consultant; whether adequate administrative and financial controls were exercised at the different stages of the projects, etc.

7. The Inspectors' investigations are well advanced, but not yet concluded, partly on account of the difficulty of obtaining comprehensive information. Further inquiries need to be made and, in particular, many cases have to be discussed with the services concerned before the Inspectors can arrive at definitive conclusions and formulate recommendations based thereon. They hope to complete their report well in time for its consideration at the twenty-eighth session of the General Assembly.

8. On the basis of their investigations to date, the Inspectors are in a position to say that there is some laxity in the programming of projects involving the use of individual experts and consultants and of groups of experts; that controls are in many cases either inadequate or ineffective; that many projects are only remotely related to the problems of development and that in many cases consultants are recruited in effect as staff supplementary to the existing establishment.

9. The Inspectors' preliminary investigations lend support to the reduction in the estimates for "Individual experts and consultants" and "Ad hoc expert groups" recommended for 1973 by the ACABQ. Pending the submission of their final report, they further recommend that the appropriations approved by the General Assembly for these items in 1973 should not be exceeded in 1974.