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# **Report**

## **on the pattern of conferences of the United Nations and the possibilities for more rational and economic use of its conference resources**

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*Joint Inspection Unit*

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ON THE PATTERN OF CONFERENCES OF THE UNITED NATIONS  
AND THE POSSIBILITIES FOR MORE RATIONAL AND ECONOMIC USE  
OF ITS CONFERENCE RESOURCES

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## FOREWORD

It may assist the reader of this report if he is aware from the outset of one of the authors' major conclusions. It is that reports such as this, like similar reports prepared in the past by the Secretary-General, the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions and various expert groups, cannot themselves provide solutions to all the problems involved in the United Nations conference programme.

The United Nations conference programme is not and can never be fixed and static. It is living and dynamic and it cannot be dealt with successfully simply by attempting to fit it, for any significant period of time, within what has been termed a "model pattern of conferences". Because of this fact, because of the complexity of the conference programme and because of its vital importance to the functioning of the United Nations, no single report can deal with it adequately; rather, it must be given governmental attention and supervision on a continuing basis. It is proposed later in this report that this function be given to a governmental committee on conferences, somewhat similar to that which existed some years ago but having broader terms of reference and greater authority.

Accordingly, this report makes no specific recommendations for the modification of the present United Nations pattern of conferences or the conference programme itself, but merely suggests possible alternative approaches to problems which appear to exist today as a result of the present pattern. It analyzes how the pattern of conferences developed into its present form and reviews what various governmental and expert bodies have had to say about it in the past. It draws attention to certain problems relating to the conference programme which appear to require immediate attention, such as the shortage of simultaneous interpretation staff, inadequate co-ordination between Headquarters and the Geneva Office and the lack of any real co-ordination between the United Nations and the specialized agencies with respect to the requirements of their conference programmes. It points out that although in general these problems are not new, some of them, such as the shortage of interpretation staff, have now assumed significantly new dimensions and must be taken seriously into account in determining the level and content of the United Nations conference programme.

There is little in this report which has not been said in one form or another in the past. The report will be of value only if it results in the establishment of a mechanism, such as a committee on conferences, for dealing with the conference programme and the problems related to it on a continuing basis. Such a committee

could look into the merits of the various suggestions contained in this report, as well as those emanating from other sources, and make firm recommendations with respect to those of the General Assembly. If such a body is not created and given adequate authority, then it is probable that this report will be no more effective in helping to rationalize the United Nations conference programme than the many attempts made in the past.

Had this report been prepared simply for the attention of the General Assembly and possible action by that body, much of the historical material contained in it would have been omitted. However, the report has been prepared with the thought that it should not only be useful to the General Assembly but should also serve as a basic background and reference document for the proposed committee on conferences. Accordingly, there has been included in the report a detailed description and discussion of the developments which have led to the situation existing today with respect to the United Nations conference programme. Hopefully, this will help the proposed committee on conferences to come to grips quickly with the urgent problems which now face the United Nations in the conference area.

Throughout the preparation of this report the Inspectors have had the complete co-operation of United Nations Secretariat officials in New York, Geneva, Vienna and elsewhere. They have also been greatly assisted by officials of the specialized agencies of whom they have requested a considerable amount of information and by officials of the Austrian Government and of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) whom they consulted in connexion with the study of the inclusion of Vienna in the United Nations pattern of conferences. Without this co-operation and assistance it would not have been possible to complete this report.

## I. INTRODUCTION

### A. Background and scope of study

1. This study was requested by the General Assembly in operative paragraph 5 of A/RES/2960 (XXVII) of 21 December 1972. That resolution reads as follows:

#### "The General Assembly

1. Approves the calendar of conferences and meetings as set forth in the addenda to the report of the Secretary-General (A/8790/Add.1 and 2);

2. Reaffirms the applicability of paragraphs 8 to 12 of General Assembly resolution 2609 (XXIV) of 16 December 1969, which relate to the pattern of conferences and meetings;

3. Requests the Secretary-General, in close co-operation with the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, to continue to submit programmes of meetings and conferences to the General Assembly at each session for its approval;

4. Approves the comments and recommendations contained in the report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (A/8868 and Add.1);

5. Requests the Joint Inspection Unit, in particular, to prepare the study requested in paragraph 6 of resolution 2609 (XXIV), including a model pattern of conferences for New York, Geneva and Vienna as recommended by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions in paragraph 9 of its report and taking into account the views expressed in the Fifth Committee at the twenty-seventh session, and to submit that study to the General Assembly at its twenty-ninth session."

2. The origins of the present study go back to 1969. On 8 August of that year the ECOSOC adopted resolution 1460 (XLVII) reading, in part, as follows:

"Considering the future expansion of conference and meeting facilities that will result from the construction of new buildings at Geneva,

Considering also the need to make the most rational and economic use possible, both at Headquarters in New York and at the United Nations Office at Geneva, of the administrative premises and the staff assigned to conference and meeting services,

Requests the Secretary-General to submit to the Council at its forty-ninth session a study showing for both Headquarters and the United Nations Office at Geneva:

(a) The respective trends over the past five years in the number and length of conferences and meetings held in the economic and social field and in the field of human rights;

(b) The resulting changes in the number of interpretation, translation and servicing personnel for such conferences;

(c) The estimated cost of recruiting temporary staff of this category, including their subsistence allowance, in New York and at Geneva, and the cost of travel of staff sent temporarily from New York to Geneva to service meetings held at the United Nations Office at Geneva."

3. The ECOSOC resolution was followed by General Assembly resolution A/RES/2609 (XXIV) of 16 December 1969 which contained operative paragraphs 6 and 7 reading as follows:

"6. Requests the Secretary-General:

(a) To complete the study provided for in Economic and Social Council resolution 1460 (XLVII) by widening its field of application to the whole area of conferences and meetings held by subsidiary organs of the General Assembly;

(b) To incorporate in this study, taking into account views expressed in and suggestions presented to the General Assembly as well as other relevant considerations, proposals concerning the calendar of conferences for 1971 and the following years, which would allow for the most rational and economic use possible of the administrative premises and staff assigned to conference and meeting services both at Headquarters in New York and at the United Nations Office at Geneva.

7. Requests the Secretary-General, without prejudice to the provisions of Economic and Social Council resolution 1460 (XLVII) to present the study referred to in paragraph 6 above to the General Assembly at its twenty-fifth session;"

(Because so much of this report is related to this resolution, the full text of the resolution is set forth in Annex I.)

4. In 1970 the Secretary-General submitted to the ECOSOC at its forty-ninth session a report (E/4887) containing the information requested in E/RES/1460 (XLVII). Without discussion, the Council merely noted the report "with interest".

5. The Secretary-General also submitted to the General Assembly at its twenty-fifth session a report (A/8138) which, as requested by paragraph 6 (a) of A/RES/2609 (XXIV), completed the study provided for in E/RES/1460 (XLVII) "by widening its field of application to the whole area of conferences and meetings held by subsidiary organs of the General Assembly".

6. However, the Secretary-General did not incorporate in that report (A/8138), as requested by paragraph 6 (b) of A/RES/2609 (XXIV), "proposals concerning the calendar of conferences for 1971 and the following years which would allow for the most rational and economic use possible of the administrative premises and staff assigned to

conference and meeting services both at Headquarters in New York and at the United Nations Office at Geneva". He agreed that "The addition of a significant number of new conference rooms in the Palais des Nations calls for a detailed review of the present pattern of conferences and the related redeployment of conference services staff in New York and at Geneva". However, he suggested postponing such a review for a year to provide an opportunity to evaluate (a) the results of a study to be made of the optimum distribution of Secretariat functions among New York, Geneva and any other appropriate locations, (b) the JIU report concerning possible improvements in the system of documentation and in the organization of meetings of the General Assembly, and (c) the AMS report on the utilization and deployment of staff in the Geneva Office.

7. The ACABQ in its report (A/8172) to the twenty-fifth session of the General Assembly concurred "in the recommendation of the Secretary-General that the question of changes in the distribution of meetings between New York and Geneva be deferred until the twenty-sixth session of the General Assembly".

8. The General Assembly, in A/RES/2693 (XXV), took note of the report of the Secretary-General and the observations of the ACABQ and requested the Secretary-General "to present the study called for under the terms of paragraph 6 of its resolution 2609 (XXIV) of 16 December 1969 to the General Assembly at its twenty-sixth session". Presumably the intention here was to refer to paragraph 6 (b) of A/RES/2609 (XXIV) since, as indicated above, the Secretary-General had already complied with paragraph 6 (a) of that resolution. However, it is of interest to note that in the Fifth Committee of the Assembly, only one delegate referred to the information submitted by the Secretary-General in response to paragraph 6 (a).

9. In October 1971, the Secretary-General reported (A/8448) to the twenty-sixth session of the General Assembly as requested. He pointed out that his reports of the prior year to ECOSOC and the Assembly had completed the study called for in paragraph 6 (a) of A/RES/2609 (XXIV). With respect to paragraph 6 (b), he suggested that proposals concerning the calendar of conferences be deferred for another year since (a) the additional conference facilities being constructed in Geneva would not be fully available for use until 1973, and (b) the study of the optimum distribution of Secretariat facilities between Headquarters in New York, Geneva and other locations would be undertaken in 1972.

10. The General Assembly, in resolution 2834 (XXVI) of 19 December 1971, took note of the Secretary-General's report (A/8448) and, inter alia, requested the Secretary-General (a) "to present to the General Assembly at its twenty-seventh session the study called

for under the terms of paragraph 6 (b) of its resolution 2609 (XXIV) of 16 December 1969 and to include in the study consideration of other locations", and (b) "to include in the study to be undertaken in accordance with paragraph 6 (b) of resolution 2609 (XXIV) an assessment of possible measures to ensure that the pattern of conferences is organized on the most effective and efficient basis".

11. In his report (A/8790) to the twenty-seventh session of the General Assembly, the Secretary-General expressed the view "that further action on the study requested under paragraph 6 of the General Assembly resolution 2609 (XXIV) should be suspended, not merely postponed for another year". He said that "The situation that led the Secretary-General previously to suggest deferment of the study requested still obtains" and added that "after consideration of the many elements involved, the Secretary-General is of the opinion that the pattern of conferences, including the question of distribution of meetings as between Headquarters, Geneva and other locations, does not lend itself at this stage to long-range analysis and administrative control". He pointed out that apart from the location of meetings he had been requested to assess possible measures to ensure that the pattern of conferences is organized on the most effective and efficient basis. He said that such measures "have been the subject of consideration and suggestion or recommendation of a number of bodies which have addressed themselves to the question of the conference programme" and that the measures recommended to keep the conference programme within control were known to the various UN organs and to Member States.

12. In its report (A/8868) to the twenty-seventh session of the General Assembly, the ACABQ took issue with the Secretary-General, stating that the study requested under paragraph 6 of General Assembly resolution 2609 (XXIV) "is particularly pressing at this time, as the new facilities in Geneva will soon become operational. Due regard must also be had to the situation in Vienna". The Committee said further in paragraph 9 of its report:

"9. In the circumstances, the Advisory Committee recommends that the Secretary-General, taking into account practice in recent years, the requirements of the proposed new programming and budgeting procedures and the existence of new conference facilities at Geneva, submit to the General Assembly at its twenty-eighth session a study including a model pattern of conferences for New York and Geneva. If, in his opinion, past practice makes for an uneconomical accumulation of meetings during particular periods of the year, he should submit recommendations on how the situation could be remedied. As a first step, the model need not include meetings of bodies whose sessions last less than a week and those requiring little by way of services."



13. On 21 December 1972 the General Assembly adopted A/RES/2960 (XXVII) which approved "the comments and recommendations" of the ACABQ and, in operative paragraph 5, requested the JIU to make the present study.

14. There are four aspects of that paragraph which have created an uncertainty as to the intention of the General Assembly. The first is the reference to paragraph 6 of A/RES/2609 (XXIV) rather than merely to paragraph 6 (b) as was the case in A/RES/2834 (XXVI). The second is the failure to refer at all to A/RES/2834 (XXVI) which had requested that there be included "in the study to be undertaken in accordance with paragraph 6 (b) of resolution 2609 (XXIV), an assessment of possible measures to ensure that the pattern of conferences is organized on the most effective and efficient basis". The third is the failure to repeat the request contained in A/RES/2834 (XXVI) "to include in the study consideration of other locations"; instead, the "model pattern of conferences" is to be limited to New York, Geneva and Vienna. The fourth and perhaps most important is the lack of clarity as to the meaning of the phrase "a model pattern of conferences".

15. Because of these elements of uncertainty, the obvious course was to turn for guidance to the ACABQ report which appears to have been endorsed by the General Assembly, except for the decision by the latter body to request that a study be undertaken by the JIU rather than by the Secretary-General. However, one finds it difficult to be certain about the position of the ACABQ when one examines the views expressed by that body in 1971 as well as in 1972.

16. In 1971 the ACABQ commented to the General Assembly on the JIU report on UN documentation (JIU/REP/71/4 (A/8319 and Corr.1)). In paragraph 252 of their report the Inspectors had stated that:

"They are convinced that if the recommendations regarding the reduction and control of documentation which they make in this report are to be really effective, more stringent measures to control the overall programme of conferences and meetings must be devised and applied. They would suggest, therefore, that the General Assembly arrange for a special study to be made of the problem."

17. The comments of the ACABQ on this suggestion of the JIU were set forth in paragraphs 5-7 of A/8532 and read as follows:

"5. Most United Nations documents are produced for, or result from, conferences and meetings. While the Advisory Committee does not propose to deal in this report with the broader question of the pattern of conferences, it must stress

that, unless Member States exercise restraint in requesting new conferences and meetings, documentation will be weakened. The Committee agrees with the Inspectors' view (A/8319 and Corr.1, paragraph 252) that effective control of documentation calls for stringent control of the overall programme of conferences and meetings. But the Committee has reservations about the efficacy of the Inspectors' related recommendation that the General Assembly should arrange for a special study of ways and means of rationalizing the programme of conferences and meetings. This question was studied extensively and with very little success by the Committee on Conferences. It was also considered by the Committee on the Reorganization of the Secretariat, which recommended, inter alia, that no United Nations body should exceed the number of meetings approved in the calendar; that no such body should hold more than one session a year; and that between 1 September and the end of the year no meetings should be held at Headquarters except for those of the General Assembly, its Main Committees, the General Committee, the Credentials Committee, the Security Council and its subsidiary organs, and the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions. 3/

6. There are two questions that should be asked in connexion with the annual calendar of meetings:

- (a) Does a proposed conference or meeting fully justify the expenditure involved?
- (b) How can a particular meeting be held most economically?

7. The first question is essentially a political one and can be answered only by the Member States on the merits of each case; the Committee feels, however, that not enough is being done by the Secretariat to make Member States aware of the additional expenditure, both direct and indirect, involved in a swollen calendar of conferences and meetings. As regards the second question, there is scope for constructive initiative by the Secretariat, but the final answer depends on the attitude of the principal organs to requests emanating from subsidiary bodies.

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3/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Twenty-Third Session, Annexes, addendum to agenda item 74, document A/7359, paragraph 136 (e), (f), (i)."

18. In its 1972 report to the General Assembly (A/8868) the ACABQ did not refer to its 1971 report (A/8532) and accordingly made no effort to reconcile the two reports. It appears likely that the ACABQ's objection in 1971 to a special study was to another study of the type carried out by various bodies in the past which concentrated primarily upon developing general principles which should govern the convening and the conduct of United Nations conferences and meetings. It is probable that in supporting a special study in 1972, the ACABQ had in mind a study which would attempt to apply the principles developed in the past and to recommend specific changes in the pattern of conferences,

both with respect to their timing and their location, in order "to achieve the most rational and economic use possible of the administrative premises and staff assigned to conference and meetings services". This interpretation of the position of the ACABQ appears to be supported by the emphasis placed by that body in its 1972 report on: (a) the need for an appropriate distribution of meetings among New York, Geneva and Vienna; (b) the necessity for spreading the conference and meetings programme more evenly throughout the year; and (c) the desirability of constructing a "model" pattern of conferences.

19. As indicated in paragraph 13 above, a particularly difficult problem faced by the Inspectors was that of determining what the ACABQ and the General Assembly meant by a "model pattern of conferences". In so far as they were able to determine, this phrase had never before appeared in General Assembly documentation and the reports of the ACABQ (A/8868) and the Fifth Committee (A/8947) as well as the summary records of the discussion in the Fifth Committee throw very little light on the meaning of the phrase.

20. Ever since 1952, the "pattern of conferences" has represented an effort to spell out, for a period of three to five years, the major principles which should govern the formulation of the annual calendar of conferences approved each year by the General Assembly. In 1957, the Secretary-General stated (A/C.5/722) that "in the present context 'pattern' signifies a guide or model for arranging, in relation to time and place, a programme of conferences". In other words, the "pattern of conferences" provides a framework within which the annual "calendars of conferences" are constructed. Accordingly, it can reasonably be assumed that when speaking of a "model pattern of conferences", the General Assembly, at least, was not referring to a "calendar of conferences".<sup>1/</sup> In any case, it would not appear to be appropriate for Inspectors to make the choice, which inevitably must be faced when drawing up the calendar of conferences today, between the competing claims of governmental bodies for resources which are not sufficient to meet the demands of all such bodies.

21. The existing pattern of conferences was last spelled out in 1969 in A/RES/2609 (XXIV) which is quoted in part in paragraph 3 above and which, as indicated in operative paragraph 5 of A/RES/2960 (XXVII), is the principal basis for the present study. The authors of this report have concluded that what the General Assembly intended when requesting the JIU to prepare a study "including a model pattern of

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<sup>1/</sup> It is true that the last sentence of the report of the ACABQ (A/8868) suggests that that body might have had in mind something more like a "calendar" than a "pattern" of conferences.

conferences" was that the Inspectors should review the present pattern as set forth in A/RES/2609 (XXIV) and suggest possible changes which might result in a more effective conference programme and might tend to ensure a "more rational and economic use" of the resources of the Organization.

22. In view of all of the foregoing, the authors of this report have decided that the present study will have as its objective the development of suggestions (rather than proposals) of the type mentioned in paragraph 6 (b) of A/RES/2609 (XXIV), namely, those designed to ensure the most rational and economic use of the administrative premises in New York, Geneva and Vienna and of the staff assigned to conference and meetings services at those locations; and that in the course of attempting to achieve that objective, the study will:

- (a) up-date the more important items of information provided earlier by the Secretary-General in response to paragraph 6 (a) of A/RES/2609 (XXIV) but will concern itself more with describing the factual situation existing today than with statistics relating to the past;
- (b) describe past efforts to rationalize the United Nations conference programme and the general principles which have been developed in this regard;
- (c) analyze the United Nations conference and meetings capacity in New York and Geneva in terms of physical and human resources and indicate the extent to which that capacity is presently used;
- (d) examine certain specific problems which appear to exist in the present conference programme and make suggestions for dealing with them;
- (e) suggest possible changes in the present pattern of conferences;
- (f) include a brief consideration of the special problem of financing conferences and meetings held away from Headquarters as requested by the General Assembly at its twenty-seventh session;
- (g) consider the need for a committee on conferences;
- (h) discuss the factors which appear relevant to the inclusion of Vienna in the United Nations pattern of conferences on a basis comparable to that of New York and Geneva.

B. Definitions

23. (a) Pattern - When reference is made in this study to the "pattern of conferences" the word "pattern" will have the meaning given to it by the Secretary-General in his 1957 report to the General Assembly (A/C.5/722), viz. "in the present context 'pattern' signifies a guide or model for arranging, in relation to time and place, a programme of conferences".

(b) Calendar - The "calendar" of conferences, as distinguished from the "pattern" of conferences, is the list of all conferences planned for a particular year indicating the nature, place, date and duration of each conference to the extent these details are known at the time the calendar is drawn up.

(c) Conference - In this study the term "conference" includes: (i) a series of meetings (or occasionally a single meeting) convened by principal organs of the United Nations or one of their subsidiary bodies or as a result of a decision of one of those organs or subsidiary bodies (and/or mutatis mutandis, the relevant bodies of the specialized agencies); (ii) other meetings held in UN conference rooms or under United Nations auspices when interpretation service is provided.

(d) Meeting - In this study a "meeting" denotes a gathering in United Nations conference rooms or under United Nations auspices for all or part of a morning, afternoon or evening.

(e) Resources - This study uses the definition of the word which was formulated by Sub-Committee 9 of the Fifth Committee in 1957 (A/C.5/731) as follows:

"By 'resources' is meant (a) the financial provision and staff resources annually authorized by the General Assembly; and (b) the various conference facilities of a physical nature - the technical apparatus for the reproduction of documents and the necessary conference rooms and equipment for the holding of meetings.".

C. Special difficulties encountered in this study

24. In addition to the problem already dealt with, that of ascertaining the intent of the General Assembly with respect to this study, several other special difficulties have been encountered.

25. First of all, as was recognized by the ACABQ in its 1972 report (A/8868), any rational pattern of conferences for the future must take into account "the requirements of the ... new programming and budgeting procedures". However, given the fact that

there has been only a first effort at formulating and approving a "programme budget", it would appear to be too early for the JIU to attempt to suggest a "pattern of conferences" which would meet the requirements of programme budgeting. It is clear that the existing calendar did not work well in 1973 and it is generally recognized that changes must be made. However, until the principal organs decide what role will be played by the various programme bodies in the formulation of the programme and budget, and until these same organs decide what bodies are to participate in the approval of the programme and budget once it is submitted by the Secretary-General, it is impossible to suggest a conference pattern which would meet the essential requirements.

26. Secondly, while the Inspectors were undertaking this study, the ECOSOC was engaged in rationalizing its work programme, including the calendar of conferences in the economic, social, and human rights fields. Once the new calendar approved by ECOSOC has also been approved by the General Assembly, it would seem presumptuous for the Inspectors to review that work and to suggest modifications - at a minimum such a review would appear to involve an unwarranted duplication of effort. Further, the ECOSOC has not yet completed its rationalization efforts and, inter alia, proposes to review the terms of reference of its subsidiary bodies. Accordingly, it would not appear to be appropriate at this time for the Inspectors to make detailed suggestions concerning the meetings pattern of those bodies. Certain suggestions concerning ECOSOC itself are made later in the report.

27. Thirdly, since this study was first requested in 1969, there has been an important development affecting United Nations conference activities in Geneva which has invalidated, or at least rendered questionable, one of the assumptions which made the study seem desirable. This was the assumption that it would continue to be less costly to maintain substantive and conference-servicing staff in Geneva than in New York and less costly to recruit free-lance staff on a temporary-assistance basis in Geneva than in New York. On the contrary, because of the devaluation of the United States dollar in relation to the Swiss franc, all staff costs are considerably higher in Geneva today than in New York. This fact, plus the uncertainty about future monetary fluctuations, has made it more difficult than in the past to consider the possible transfer of meetings from New York to Geneva or the scheduling of new conferences and meetings in

Geneva rather than New York, in view of the General Assembly's stated desire to ensure the most economical use of conference facilities and staff resources.<sup>2/</sup>

28. Perhaps the greatest difficulty in preparing this report lies in the fact that, as stated in the Foreword, the United Nations conference programme is living and dynamic. Every day certain old problems are being solved and new ones created. Given the number of bodies involved in the programme, it is impossible to be certain that the conclusions which are drawn on any given date in the case of many of these bodies will be valid six months later. This is particularly true when, as in the case of this study, a session of the General Assembly and several sessions of ECOSOC intervene between the time the study is commenced and the date the report is issued. It has been extremely difficult to keep abreast of all important developments in the conference programme and to update the facts and conclusions. Accordingly, it should come as no surprise if, at the time the report is considered by the General Assembly, certain of the conclusions, statistical data and suggestions for improvement have become less valid, less significant or less relevant than when they were incorporated in the report. This would, of course, not be an unwelcome development if it meant that, at least in some cases, the fact that this study was being made had helped those responsible for the conference programme to take steps to improve certain elements which had been unsatisfactory.

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<sup>2/</sup> A similar difficulty may well exist in the case of Vienna unless the Austrian Government continues to pay the extra costs of holding United Nations meetings there rather than in New York. The possibility of making Vienna a major United Nations conference centre similar to New York and Geneva is discussed at length in chapter VI of this report.

## II. THE PROBLEM

29. In 1952 the General Assembly adopted A/RES/698 (VII) calling for a study very similar to that requested in A/RES/2609 (XXIV) and A/RES/2960 (XXVII). It stated the Assembly's "conviction that a regular programme should be prepared for the rational and economic distribution of meetings between the permanent Headquarters and the United Nations Office at Geneva, making full use of the available facilities", and it instructed an Ad Hoc Committee of twelve members to prepare, with the assistance of the Secretary-General, a programme of this kind covering a period of from three to five years.

30. The Ad Hoc Committee defined the problem it faced as one of formulating a pattern of conferences which was designed to achieve the following objectives:

- (a) to bring about the most effective utilization of available facilities at Geneva and at Headquarters;
- (b) to avoid a clash of dates between meetings of the United Nations and those of the specialized agencies;
- (c) to enable delegations and the Secretariat to plan their conference work well in advance and in full knowledge of all commitments during a given year;
- (d) to explore all possible avenues of economy in connexion with meetings held away from Headquarters;
- (e) to make possible an increased use of common services by the United Nations and the specialized agencies;
- (f) to ensure a stabilized workload and obviate undue fluctuations both at Geneva and at Headquarters;
- (g) to ensure maximum efficiency in the work of the Secretariat and the delegations.

31. That definition of the objectives to be achieved in formulating a pattern of conferences has been repeated frequently over the years in reports by the Secretary-General to the General Assembly, the last time as recently as 1970. Although the Assembly has not specifically endorsed this definition, it has never taken issue with it as a valid statement of objectives to be achieved. Accordingly the Inspectors accept this definition as a reasonably accurate statement of certain aspects of the



problem with which this study must deal. However, this definition of twenty years ago must be updated to include at least four new aspects, namely, the increased desire of many Member States to meet away from Headquarters, the request of the General Assembly that the JIU consider the possible inclusion of Vienna in the pattern of conferences on a basis similar to that of New York and Geneva, the need to reconcile the level of the conference programme with the present critical shortage of qualified interpretation staff and the need to create a mechanism to bring more reason and order into the conference programme.

32. The fact that twenty years after the original study of the pattern of conferences by the Ad Hoc Committee in 1952, and after repeated studies and reviews by the Secretary-General and various expert and governmental bodies, an almost identical study has been called for, clearly stems from two sources. First, new conference facilities have been constructed in Geneva and additional conference facilities are planned for Vienna, and the General Assembly obviously wishes to be certain that appropriate use is made of these. Second, it is clear from statements by representatives of Member States that they did not believe that even the objectives mentioned in paragraph 30 above have been satisfactorily achieved.

33. The concern of Member States with respect to the programme of conferences appears to be basically twofold. Many Governments appear to believe that there has been too great a proliferation of councils, boards, commissions, committees, working groups, advisory groups, etc. which hold meetings requiring servicing by the Secretariat and participation by governmental representatives. Many Governments also hold the view that there are deficiencies in the manner in which the conferences and meetings of the various bodies are scheduled in terms of timing, duration and location, which result in unnecessary cost to the Organization, overburdening of the Secretariat and serious inconvenience to Member States, and that it should be possible to construct a conference programme which will ensure a more effective and economic use of both physical and human resources.

34. In the view of the Inspectors, it was not the intention of the General Assembly that the present study should deal with the first of the concerns mentioned in the preceding paragraph. The question of whether particular subsidiary bodies should have been created or should continue in existence is both substantive and political and can be answered only by Member States. Accordingly this study will deal with only the second matter mentioned in the preceding paragraph, namely the difficulties and deficiencies in the present conference programme and possible measures for achieving improved programmes in the future.

### III. DISCUSSION

#### A. Previous efforts to deal with the problem

35. The Inspectors feel that a knowledge of the record of attempts to deal with the problem of the pattern of conferences during the past twenty years is essential to an understanding of some of the positions taken and suggestions made in the present report, and accordingly this record is set forth in summary form.

36. As indicated in paragraph 29, the effort to establish a pattern of conferences which would cover a period of some years and would provide for rational and economic distribution of conferences and meetings between Headquarters in New York and other locations commenced in 1952. In that year the General Assembly established an ad hoc committee known as the Special Committee on Programme of Conferences and, on the basis of that Committee's report, adopted A/RES/694 (VII), which reads as follows:

"The General Assembly

Taking note of the report 1/ and recommendations of the Special Committee on Programme of Conferences,

Mindful of the necessity of firmly fixing a long-term pattern of conferences to allow for the rational and economic distribution of meetings between Headquarters and Geneva and to permit the proper utilization of staff and conference facilities at both places,

Recognizing the importance to the United Nations and the specialized agencies of having a regular conference pattern,

1. Decides that a regular pattern of conferences should be established for a period of four years commencing on 1 January 1954, under which sessions of all Headquarters-based bodies should be held in New York and sessions of all Geneva-based bodies should be held in Geneva with the following exceptions:

(a) The regular summer session of the Economic and Social Council would be held each year in Geneva during which period no other meetings of United Nations bodies would be held in Geneva;

(b) Sessions of a functional commission or of functional commissions (but preferably not more than one) of the Economic and Social Council would meet in Geneva without overlap for a total period not exceeding five weeks between mid-March and the end of April;

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1/ A/2323

(c) The International Law Commission would meet in Geneva only when its session could be held there without overlapping with the summer session of the Economic and Social Council.

2. Requests the Secretary-General to transmit to all organs of the United Nations and to the specialized agencies a conference pattern based on the principles enumerated above;

3. Recommends to all organs of the United Nations that they arrange their meetings in accordance with the dates and places set forth in the pattern presented by the Secretary-General, and invites the specialized agencies concerned to give due consideration to this pattern in drawing up their own programmes of meetings."

37. The basic feature of this resolution, that in general bodies should meet where they are "based" or "headquartered" and that meetings away from the base should be exceptions to the rule, has been consistently maintained in all subsequent resolutions on the pattern of conferences, although there has been a substantial increase in the number of exceptions. This matter is discussed further in chapter IV A (1).

38. Other notable features of resolution 694 (VII) are: (i) the decision, still in effect today, that the regular summer session of ECOSOC and sessions of a limited number of functional commissions of ECOSOC and of the International Law Commission (ILC) "would" be held in Geneva; and (ii) acceptance of the principle (to which less and less attention has been given in recent years) that overlap of UN meetings in Geneva should be avoided to the extent possible.

39. As the pattern established in 1952 ran only through 1957, the matter was reviewed in January of the latter year at the twelfth session of the General Assembly. The Secretary-General reported (A/C.5/722) that the situation then prevailing "differed radically" from that which had existed in 1952 both in terms of the "aggregate programme of conferences" and in the distribution of the number of meetings between New York and Geneva. There had been a transition from a conference programme falling within clearly-defined periods of the year (March-July and September-December) to one representing "a virtually continuous activity". The number of meetings at New York and Geneva now exceeded the combined capacity of the conference services and it was necessary therefore either to adjust the conference programme to the capacity of the services or to increase the establishment. Further, although the pattern of conferences adopted in 1952 had provided some measure of stability in the annual programme both in New York and Geneva, "the development of ... new activities ..., coupled with a steady increase in the number of meetings not included in the fixed

pattern of conferences which have been held away from Headquarters, has offset the stability to a considerable extent". On this point the ACABQ expressed the view (A/3396) that the General Assembly should enforce "a stricter procedure in regulating the transfer of sessions ... from Headquarters to other venues or the holding away from Headquarters of sessions which could be accommodated there with ease and economy".

40. The Secretary-General suggested that the General Assembly adopt a resolution like that of 1952, but adjusted to reflect the move of the secretariat of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs from New York to Geneva, and embodying the following new proposals:

- (a) the Secretary-General to be authorized, in any case affecting an ad hoc or subsidiary body, to decide on the appropriate place and date of meeting, taking account of relevant (including financial) factors;
- (b) if the Secretary-General should decide that an ad hoc or subsidiary body might with advantage meet away from Headquarters, he should be authorized to finance the related expenses as an unforeseen commitment within a specified aggregate limit for any one financial year. (Additional expenditure in excess of that limit would require the prior concurrence of the ACABQ.);
- (c) in the event of a disagreement between the Secretary-General and the body concerned, a final decision regarding the place and date of the meeting should be deferred until the next regular session of the General Assembly;
- (d) regardless of the time span of the approved pattern of conferences, the General Assembly should formally approve each year the conference programme for the following year;
- (e) no meetings should be held by UN bodies away from Headquarters, on invitation, unless the host Government agreed to pay the extra costs. (The Secretary-General suggested, however, that this principle should not apply to meetings of the regional economic commissions.).

41. In the Fifth Committee of the General Assembly this matter was first dealt with by Sub-Committee 9 of that Committee, which in general endorsed (A/C.5/731) the proposals of the Secretary-General. In addition it submitted two proposals which the Secretary-General later characterized as "of cardinal importance for the orderly administration of the annual programme". In summary they were as follows:

(a) under the Charter the function of considering and approving the budget of the Organization is reserved exclusively to the General Assembly, whose rules of procedure (notably rules 153-155) reinforce its power of financial control. Therefore, although certain United Nations organs and bodies are authorized to decide the place of their meetings, this prerogative is necessarily subordinate to the appropriating authority of the General Assembly; and

(b) as regards conference arrangements, it is the Secretary-General who is best placed to decide, in full knowledge of all pertinent factors when and where a particular meeting could be held to greatest advantage.

42. The Sub-Committee also stressed the importance of co-ordination with the rest of the United Nations family: "It appears to the Sub-Committee that the independent formulation of conference programmes by the United Nations, on the one hand, and by other international organizations, on the other, is not conducive to the most economical use of meeting facilities and of qualified language staff. ...".

43. On the basis of the foregoing the General Assembly adopted a resolution (1202 (XII)) approving a pattern of conferences for five years as from 1 January 1958 and incorporating the proposals of the Secretary-General mentioned in paragraph 40 above. It also invited "all organs of the United Nations as well as the specialized agencies to review their working methods and the frequency and length of sessions in the light of the present resolution and of the growing volume of meetings, the resulting strain on available resources, and the difficulty of effective participation of members".

44. In a complementary action, the General Assembly added a paragraph to its resolution (A/RES/1231 (XII)) on unforeseen and extraordinary expenses authorizing the Secretary-General, without the concurrence of the ACABQ, to enter into commitments not exceeding a total of \$25,000 to finance the costs of ad hoc or subsidiary bodies<sup>3/</sup> which he decided might with advantage meet away from Headquarters. A similar provision (although for 1959 the amount authorized was \$45,000) was included in subsequent annual resolutions on unforeseen and extraordinary expenses until 1965 when it was omitted from A/RES/2126 (XX).

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<sup>3/</sup> The intent here was primarily to provide for commodity conferences (see paragraph 384).

45. In his report to the seventeenth General Assembly in 1962 (A/5317), the Secretary-General, after drawing attention to the strains resulting from the ever-increasing number of meetings, especially in regard to the time available for substantive preparation and the submission of reports by subsidiary bodies to their parent organs, recommended postponement of the full review which should have taken place in 1962, when the pattern of conferences established in 1957 came to an end. The General Assembly agreed, and adopted resolution 1851 (XVII) extending the 1957 pattern of conferences for one year (but adding the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and its subsidiary bodies to the regional economic commissions authorized to meet away from their headquarters and eliminating the provision that sessions of the ILC should not overlap with those of ECOSOC). A further postponement of the full review for one year was approved by the eighteenth session of the General Assembly in 1963 and the matter was not considered at the non-voting nineteenth Assembly session.

46. In 1963, the ACABQ in its report on the budget estimates (A/5507), warned that "even if the necessary funds are voted by the General Assembly, there is but a limited reservoir of qualified temporary staff (e.g. interpreters, revisers, translators, précis-writers)" and that "the United Nations is in competition for their services with the specialized agencies and other intergovernmental and non-governmental bodies ... unless the demands made upon them are drastically reduced, the acceptance of a lower standard of servicing will be unavoidable". This was the most serious warning given up to that time of the existence of a problem which has now assumed critical proportions and is discussed at length in later sections of this report.

47. At its twentieth session, the General Assembly had two reports from the Secretary-General, that prepared for the nineteenth session (A/5867) and the other prepared for the twentieth session (A/5979), plus a report by the ACABQ (A/5889). In A/5867 he pointed out that after the Fifth Committee in November 1963 had recommended that the functional commissions of ECOSOC should meet biennially, the Third Committee had made an exception in the case of the Human Rights Commission and the Council itself had decided in 1964 that most of the functional commissions should continue on an annual basis. He added that the Council's action had been taken despite his recommendation and that of the ACABQ.

48. The ACABQ had stated that "well-established programmes in certain fields did not call for annual review by policy-making bodies; indeed, repeated changes in basic policies may well inhibit the actual execution of the work, and there is little doubt

that the preparation and servicing of annual sessions of functional and other subsidiary bodies occupy a large number of staff who could be employed in the furtherance of the tasks given to the Secretariat by the organs concerned".

49. In A/5867 the Secretary-General also pointed out that when the Council took its decision it also decided to request him "to undertake a study of the measures which could be taken to alleviate the problems faced by the United Nations as a result of the ever-increasing number of meetings held each year". With respect to that request the Secretary-General stated the following:

"Essentially, the Council's request raises two separate points:

- (a) Is it desired to curb or even reduce 'the ever-increasing number of meetings held each year'? or
- (b) Is it desired to study what measures should be taken to alleviate the problems arising out of a progressive increase in the number of meetings?

In the Secretary-General's opinion, point (a) above can be answered only by the Member States and by their delegations in the Fifth Committee and other Main Committees. It involves a question of priorities, that is, a question to which he has been repeatedly requested to give the closest possible attention. He has in response made frequent representations over the years to the General Assembly, to the Economic and Social Council, and to their commissions and committees, to the effect that the conference work-load must be held to manageable proportions corresponding to (i) the budgetary limitations insistentlly desired by delegations in the Fifth Committee, (ii) the staffing resources that are offered on competitive markets, and (iii) the conference facilities (in the form of meeting rooms and related office space) available in United Nations offices. Parallel representations have been made on numerous occasions by the Advisory Committee."

50. Finally, the Secretary-General pointed out in A/5867 that although the ACABQ had recommended a reduction in the budget estimates on the assumption that the ECOSOC intended to streamline the meetings of its functional commissions and other subsidiary bodies, there had been no curtailment of meetings by the ECOSOC which instead had proposed additional meetings in Geneva requiring additional appropriations. The Secretary-General concluded by saying:

"In the disquieting situation which the present paper discloses the Secretary-General suggests that the object in view - the establishment of a rational meetings programme - can best be achieved if the efforts of the General Assembly and other organs are concentrated on particular areas where improvement, in the form of a reduction in frequency and/or duration of sessions, is not impossible. Apart from the principal organs, whose sessions or meetings are governed

directly or indirectly by Charter provisions 13/, it has from the outset been recognized that there are cases where other than financial or administrative considerations must prevail when the meeting place of a body and the frequency and duration of its sessions are under study. Typical examples are meetings of a political character such as the Conference of the Eighteen-Nation Committee on Disarmament and the Conference on the Discontinuance of Nuclear Weapon Tests. But with these and other obvious exceptions, it may perhaps be accepted that progress can be achieved if, in addition to the specific provisions contained in the proposed pattern of conferences, conscientious efforts are made to decrease the aggregate volume of meetings held by subsidiary bodies of the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the Trusteeship Council. It remains true that the success of any such efforts depends upon the Member States themselves and upon their delegations in the Main Committees of the General Assembly and in the Councils.

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13/ Articles 20, 28, 72 and 90"

51. In his report (A/5979) prepared for the twentieth session, the Secretary-General again expressed his concern at developments relating to United Nations conferences and meetings. He said that "the programme is reaching unmanageable proportions" and that "apart from the serious budgetary consequences, the hasty preparation of an excessive volume of documents is detrimental to the basic research and study upon which the quality of those documents must obviously depend". He also noted that in the general debate on the 1966 budget estimates "the members of the Fifth Committee had given considerable, though not unanimous support" to his submissions and he summarized certain of the views expressed in the Fifth Committee as follows:

"(a) At a time of acute financial crisis, the United Nations also had to handle an expanding programme of conferences and meetings, particularly in connexion with trade, industrialization and economic aid to the developing countries. Such an expansion could be welcomed if it led to greater efficiency. But a mere increase in the number of meetings, as experience had shown, rarely produced that result. Too often it placed a burden not only on the United Nations but on the developing countries, whose reservoir of experts was severely limited. If their experts had to attend too many conferences, their participation would prove ineffectual and the conferences self-defeating. In many cases developing countries found it physically impossible to send representatives to every conference, while all countries, developed and developing, had difficulty in coping with the flood of documents.

(b) Concern over the anticipated increase in the number of meetings in 1966 and in the volume of documents was understandable. Neither the appeals of the Secretary-General nor the admonitions of the Fifth Committee had availed. Unquestionably, it should be possible, where programmes were well established, for subsidiary organs to hold less frequent sessions: biennial or even triennial sessions would suffice. Unfortunately, there was scant hope of



improvement if the decision was left to the policy-making organs. Thus, in November 1963, after the Fifth Committee had recommended that the functional commissions of the Economic and Social Council should meet biennially, the Third Committee had made an exception in the case of the Commission on Human Rights, while the Council itself decided in 1964 that most of its functional commissions should continue to meet on an annual basis. At the current session, the Sixth Committee had recommended that the International Law Commission should meet in 1966 for a period twice as long as in other years. The Fifth Committee, as distinct from its component delegations, was powerless to prevent such recommendations on the part of the policy-making organs. Perhaps a further effort should be made to persuade the General Assembly to adopt stricter rules by which all subsidiary organs should be governed."

The Secretary-General went on to say:

"In this matter, the power of the Secretary-General is limited to the power of proposal, and he has obviously no authority - for example - to convert on his own initiative, the session of a given body from an annual to a biennial or triennial basis, even though he may be satisfied that economy and efficiency will thereby be served."

52. The Secretary-General again suggested that the Fifth Committee might wish to renew its endorsement of the propositions formulated by Sub-Committee 9 of the Fifth Committee in 1957 (see paragraph 41 above) which had been concurred in and strongly supported by the ACABQ. At the twentieth session, the Fifth Committee took the suggested action without objection.

53. The resolution (A/RES/2116 (XX)) adopted by the General Assembly at its twentieth session established a pattern of conferences for the years 1966-1969. This was similar to the previous pattern, although certain new provisions were added authorizing the meeting in Geneva of the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation and the Sub-Committees of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, and dealing with the summer session of ECOSOC and the meetings of the functional commissions of ECOSOC.

54. In 1966 the Ad Hoc Committee of Experts to Examine the Finances of the United Nations and the Specialized Agencies issued its second report (A/6343), chapter IX of which deals with conferences, meetings and documentation. After endorsing the warnings of both the Secretary-General and the ACABQ that the demand for meetings and conferences was exceeding the capacity of the Secretariat to service them, in terms both of physical accommodation and of qualified staff, and drawing attention to the even greater increase in the volume of documentation, with consequent adverse effect

on the regular work of the Secretariat staff and on the quality of the documents themselves, the report made a series of recommendations of which the more important are as follows:

- (a) each major organ of the United Nations and the specialized agencies should review the conference programmes of each of its related bodies, with a view to reducing total meeting time to the extent possible;
- (b) biennial to replace annual sessions wherever possible;
- (c) the Secretary-General should draw up in advance a draft consolidated annual calendar of all conferences and meetings, "reconciling" as far as possible the total available resources and the views expressed by the various bodies concerned;
- (d) there should be a special line in the budget showing the expenditure directly attributable to conferences and meetings, and an annex estimating total expenditure, direct and indirect;
- (e) Member States of the United Nations and the specialized agencies should substantially reduce their requests for conference documentation and the size of their delegations, and chairmen should encourage meetings to dispense with verbatim or summary records;
- (f) no dependent body should be permitted to increase the number or length of its meetings already authorized without the specific approval of the organ which established it;
- (g) in the planning of conferences and meetings:
  - (i) the human, physical and financial resources available should be determined and taken into account;
  - (ii) an adequate interval should be allowed between conferences of the same body, or of a similar nature;
  - (iii) there should be co-ordination between the United Nations and the specialized agencies on the convening of major international conferences.

55. The Committee's recommendations were approved by the General Assembly in resolution 2150 (XXI).

56. Also at its twenty-first session in 1966, the General Assembly approved a suggestion made by the Special Committee on Co-ordination of ECOSOC, and endorsed by the ACABQ, that a committee of the General Assembly should be established to deal with the calendar of meetings. This was the Committee on Conferences, established (on an experimental basis) by resolution 2239 (XXI) with fifteen members. Its functions were "to submit to the General Assembly, at each regular session, a calendar of meetings and conferences for the following year for the competent organs of the United Nations including the subsidiary organs of the General Assembly", and "to undertake such other tasks in this general field as may be requested by the General Assembly". The Committee would base its recommendations on information regarding availability of resources, etc. to be supplied by the Secretary-General and on the comments of the ACABQ with respect to this information, supplemented by a review, during the session, of proposals for new meetings and conferences, on which it would make recommendations to the Main Committees concerned. Its proposed calendar of conferences for the following year would include "recommendations concerning the schedule for the succeeding year" and would be drawn up in consultation with the chairmen of the principal organs and of the Main Committees.

57. In its first report (A/6991/Rev.1) the Committee on Conferences stressed the "special and intrinsic value" of United Nations conferences and meetings and pointed out that the question could not be considered solely from an administrative and financial point of view. At the same time, it shared the concern expressed by the Secretary-General, the ACABQ and the Ad Hoc Committee of Experts over a situation in which the total programme of conferences and meetings "had reached proportions such that its effectiveness was open to serious doubt", and especially over "the tendency of subsidiary organs to take decisions involving expenditure without seeking the prior approval of the General Assembly". The report endorsed a previous recommendation by the ACABQ that the overall calendar of conferences for a given year should be based on the schedule of the larger recurrent conferences of the United Nations family of organizations, which (in the case of the United Nations) accounted for almost three-quarters of the total conference workload and (in the case of the agencies) necessitated the recruitment of large numbers of temporary staff in competition with the United Nations. The point was also made that such recurrent conferences can often be planned for some years in advance. A further general recommendation was that the intervals between successive sessions of the same body should be lengthened, and that special conferences should be held during periods of "relative slack". Finally, the Committee proposed a programme of conferences and meetings for 1968 which was approved by the General Assembly.

58. In its report (A/7361) to the twenty-third session of the General Assembly, the Committee on Conferences referred to statements of the Secretary-General (A/7201, page 226) and the President of the ECOSOC (A/7203, page XVI) concerning the "over-loaded calendar of meetings" and said that these observations "confirmed both the long-standing nature of the question and the widespread recognition that the situation had assumed critical proportions". It added that "the Committee was aware that in the final analysis it is the responsibility of Member States to take decisions, reflecting a sense of discipline that would halt and reverse the steady trend towards an ineffective and unproductive conference programme".

59. The Committee then called for a clarification of its mandate. The Committee pointed out that as much as 50 per cent of the 1968 calendar approved by the General Assembly at the twenty-second session had been modified during the year; many of the changes had been of a minor nature but some had been substantial. This raised an important question of principle; does any subsidiary body possess the power to depart from the meetings programme laid down for it by the General Assembly without first seeking the approval of its parent body? In the view of the Committee "the line of authority must be drawn more tightly in a way that would not be detrimental to the work of any main or subsidiary organ but would inject a greater element of discipline into existing procedures. In the Committee's opinion the General Assembly should establish an arrangement under which proposals for adjustments in the approved calendar - involving more than very insignificant changes in dates - would be reviewed by an intermediary body and be subject to its recommendations. Should the Assembly concur, the Committee on Conferences would be prepared to assume such a responsibility, which it would see as a logical extension of its present mandate".

60. The Committee then recommended that "the General Assembly should establish that all proposals for new conferences and meetings made during the regular session are subject to the recommendation of the Committee on Conferences and to final approval by the Assembly, and, moreover, that such proposals made outside the regular session are subject to the concurrence of the Committee on Conferences". (Underlining inserted.)

61. Further points made in the Committee's report were:

(a) financial stringency and the lack of physical facilities are not the only limiting factors in the effective implementation of a conference programme; "an even more critical factor is the very real problem that now exists in locating for limited periods the services of highly-qualified language staff". (Underlining inserted.);

(b) a process had been taking place over the years whereby new principal organs and subsidiary bodies had been created by the General Assembly and the ECOSOC "without the disbanding of existing bodies or any significant reduction in the frequency, length or servicing needs of their sessions. It has been this progressive expansion ... that has occasioned doubts ... whether the total programme is any longer truly effective". The Committee had discussed three possible approaches to this problem: (i) the General Assembly and the ECOSOC could require future calendars "to be drawn up within a quantitative framework", using such criteria as the size of the permanent staff establishment, the budgetary allocation for temporary assistance for meetings, the total number of meetings in the year, etc.; (ii) the General Assembly and the ECOSOC would "take firm decisions affecting the meetings schedules of their main subsidiary bodies, including the semi-autonomous organs", with a view to eliminating congestion; and (iii) those subsidiary bodies which had failed to respond to previous requests to examine their own conference programmes with a view to reducing the number of meetings should be reminded of their obligations and a deadline should be set.

62. The Committee saw merit in all the approaches described above, but concluded that before following them up it would be wise to have "a final round of consultations with the subsidiary bodies concerned". Accordingly, it recommended to the General Assembly that it adopt a resolution calling, inter alia, for a review of the periodicity of meetings of certain subsidiary bodies of the General Assembly and the ECOSOC.

63. In its consideration of the report of the Committee on Conferences at the twenty-third session of the General Assembly, the Fifth Committee also had before it a report by the Committee on the Reorganization of the Secretariat (A/7359), chapter VII of which expressed "great concern" over the situation and made a series of proposals designed to limit the number of United Nations conferences and meetings. In a report by the ACABQ (A/7400) they were described as more comprehensive and far-reaching than those of the Committee on Conferences, and, on the recommendation of the ACABQ, the Fifth Committee added a paragraph to the draft resolution proposed by the Committee on Conferences calling for the implementation "at a very early date" of the recommendations of the Committee on the Reorganization of the Secretariat. However, during the General Assembly discussion of the item, a proposal to delete the new paragraph was approved.

64. In adopting A/RES/2478 (XXIII) in 1968, the Assembly made several changes in the language proposed by the Committee on Conferences. Two of these were of major importance. As mentioned in paragraph 60 above, the Committee had recommended, with respect to its terms of reference, that while proposals for new conferences and meetings made during the regular session of the General Assembly should be subject to the "recommendation" of the Committee, such proposals made outside the regular session should be subject to its "concurrence". In A/RES/2478 (XXIII) the General Assembly replaced the word "concurrence" by the word "recommendations". It also failed to include a provision recommended by the Committee on Conferences which would have requested all principal and subsidiary bodies of the General Assembly and the ECOSOC to seek the "concurrence" of the Committee on Conferences on proposals for changes in the approved calendar and instead provided that "proposals made outside the regular sessions for changes in the approved calendar will also be subject to the recommendations of the Committee on Conferences".

65. Thus in adopting resolution 2478 (XXIII), the General Assembly rejected not only the recommendations of the Committee on the Reorganization of the Secretariat and of the ACABQ, but also the key recommendations of the Committee on Conferences.

66. The Committee on Conferences submitted its third report (A/7626) to the twenty-fourth session of the General Assembly. It stated that the problem of an expanding conference and meetings programme had been "seriously aggravated" since its previous report by the creation of a number of new bodies and that the Committee's "efforts to bring about a more orderly and manageable calendar of conferences have not produced satisfactory results". In this connexion it pointed out that the Committee "did not enjoy the right either to approve or disapprove proposals for changes in the calendar" and that "the bodies concerned proceeded to hold meetings on dates proposed or at places indicated without the prior approval of the General Assembly". Accordingly, the Committee had "reached a unanimous conclusion that the General Assembly would have to strengthen the Committee's terms of reference ... if it was to perform the task assigned to it ... and if this was not found possible, its tenure should not be extended further".

67. In A/RES/2609 (XXIV), the General Assembly took note of the report of the Committee and stated that it would "reconsider at its twenty-fifth session the question of the membership and terms of reference of the Committee on Conferences" - no reference was made to this matter at the twenty-fifth session - and it decided "in the meantime not to reconstitute the membership of the Committee".

68. As pointed out in paragraph 3 above, the General Assembly included in paragraph 6 of A/RES/2609 (XXIV) a request to the Secretary-General for a study which would include "proposals which would allow for the most rational and economic use possible of the administrative premises and staff assigned to conference and meetings services both at Headquarters in New York and at the United Nations Office at Geneva". This request, which is the principal basis for the present study, took the matter back to where it was in 1952.

69. Apart from the fact that it recorded the failure of the efforts of the Committee on Conferences, General Assembly resolution 2609 (XXIV) deserves serious attention because of its relationship to this study and because it represents the latest detailed statement by the General Assembly of the principles and the exceptions to those principles which make up the United Nations pattern of conferences today. Accordingly these principles and the exceptions thereto are discussed in detail in chapter IV of this report.

70. The record since 1969 of United Nations action with respect to the pattern and programme of conferences is largely covered in paragraphs 1 to 22 of this report. However, several elements of that record call for particular attention.

71. First of all, as indicated in paragraph 4 above, the ECOSOC in 1970 did not even discuss the study submitted by the Secretary-General in response to the Council's request in 1969 (E/RES/1460 (XLVII)) and, as indicated in paragraph 8 above, the General Assembly did little better with the study submitted to it by the Secretary-General in response to paragraph 6 (a) of A/RES/2609 (XXIV).

72. Secondly, in each of the years 1970, 1971, 1972 and 1973 the total number of UN meetings continued to increase<sup>4/</sup> despite what had been said in A/RES/2609 (XXIV) about the desirability of having fewer meetings. Yet in each of these years the General Assembly confined its action to adopting brief resolutions approving a calendar of conferences for the next year and calling for the study requested of the Secretary-General in paragraph 6 (b) of A/RES/2609 (XXIV). The 1972 resolution of course assigned responsibility for the study to the Joint Inspection Unit.

73. Thirdly, attempts by the Secretary-General and the ACABQ to ensure "the most rational and economic use possible of the administrative premises and staff assigned to conference and meetings services both at Headquarters in New York and at the

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<sup>4/</sup> Although there was no increase at Headquarters in the 1970-1972 period.

United Nations Office at Geneva", as called for by the General Assembly in A/RES/2609 (XXIV), were ignored by various subsidiary bodies and in certain cases overridden by the General Assembly itself. For example, in 1972 the General Assembly rejected the recommendation of the ACABQ that, for reasons of economy, two Headquarters-based bodies, the Special Committee on the Question of Defining Aggression and the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of the Sea Bed and the Ocean Floor Beyond the Limits of National Jurisdiction, should meet at Headquarters as called for by the pattern of conferences. In 1973 the First Committee initially voted unanimously to hold the 1974 Law of the Sea conference in the period 13 May-19 July even though the Secretary-General had informed the Committee that there would be no interpretation staff available to service the conference during most of the month of June. (The dates of the conference subsequently had to be changed to 20 June-29 August.) In the Fifth Committee at the twenty-eighth session of the General Assembly, the recommendation of the ACABQ concerning the amount to be appropriated to finance the Law of the Sea conference was not even put to the vote and the Committee voted instead to approve the amount proposed by the Secretary-General's special representative for the conference.

74. By the end of 1973 it was apparent that the advice given and recommendations made over a twenty-year period with respect to the rationalization of the United Nations conference programme had had little or no effect. The scheduling of meetings had become even more chaotic than before and, commencing in January of each year, the annual calendar of conferences approved by the General Assembly was constantly being modified throughout the year in the interest of individual organs without regard to the impact of such modifications on the conference programme as a whole. The conference programme had now reached a level where at times there simply were not sufficient interpretation staff available to service all the conferences desired. And most importantly, no mechanism had yet been developed for the purposes of bringing order out of chaos and attempting to ensure that the conference resources of the United Nations were used in an organized and rational manner.

75. The experience of the first four months of 1974 at Headquarters appeared to confirm the foregoing analysis of the situation. Instead of the usual relatively low level of meetings in January and February which in the past has provided a breathing spell for interpretation staff after General Assembly sessions, the number of meetings with interpretation service in January and February was respectively 183 and 184 as compared with 136 and 145 in the same months in 1973; and the number of interpretation



assignments in those months in 1974 was respectively 1,533 and 1,388 as compared to 1,113 and 1,138 in the same months in 1973. Although the number of meetings with interpretation services and the number of interpretation assignments were less in March and April of 1974 than they were in those months in 1973, the requirements of the Sixth Special Session of the General Assembly in April imposed increased demands on the interpretation staff at Headquarters and it was not possible to bring interpreters from Geneva (which was itself overtaxed) or to recruit more than a limited number of free-lance staff to help deal with the situation. On 24 April about half of the interpreters at Headquarters failed to report for duty in protest against what they considered to be an excessive volume of work and the failure by the administration to take adequate measures to deal with the problem. This "job action", which caused the cancellation of eight meetings on 24 April, lasted only one day and the complaints of the interpreters were referred to the Joint Advisory Committee of the Secretariat.

76. On 1 May 1974 the Ad Hoc Committee of the Sixth Special Session adopted a draft resolution (now resolution 3202 (S-VI)) which, inter alia, established an Ad Hoc Committee of the Special Programme. It was assumed that this body would meet for a three-week period at New York during May/June and hold two meetings a day with interpretation into the five official languages. In the "financial implications" paper prepared by the Secretariat (A/9557) with respect to this draft resolution, it was stated that:

"In view of the very heavy programme of conferences scheduled to be held in May/June at Headquarters as well as at Geneva, and in view of the fact that most of the existing staff as well as the free-lance language staff in New York and Geneva have already been committed to other meetings, the General Assembly may wish to note that it may be extremely difficult for the Secretary-General to provide the necessary conference services to the Ad Hoc Committee during this period, unless some of the meetings that have already been approved for this period are rescheduled.".

77. The Inspectors have not been informed as yet of what arrangements have been or will be worked out, to make possible the meetings of the Ad Hoc Committee of the Special Programme.

78. As of 1 May 1974 the Secretariat faced at Headquarters the most difficult May/June conference schedule in its history. There were already scheduled for this month fourteen meetings a day, seven in the morning and seven in the afternoon, that is, the equivalent of the schedule for a regular session of the General Assembly. At the same time, it was impossible to draw upon staff from Geneva as was normally done during regular sessions of the Assembly. In so far as the Inspectors could ascertain, the Secretariat was not certain as of 1 May whether or not it could cope successfully with this situation.

B. Factors which must be taken into account in any new effort to deal with the problem

(1) Psychological factors

79. A reading of the immediately preceding section of this report might well lead one to conclude that it is hopeless to expect the acceptance by the General Assembly of concrete proposals which will tend to ensure "the most rational and economic use possible" of the United Nations physical and human conference resources - and this may indeed be the case. It is possible that despite all the past warnings, the United Nations will take no action to rationalize its conference programme until it breaks down completely. However, it would appear that much of what has occurred in the past has resulted from certain psychological factors and it may be possible to remove these or at least take them into account in a manner which will lessen their impact on the conference programme.

80. One of the psychological factors which has played an important role during the past twenty years has related to the cost of conferences. The annual calendar of conferences has always been considered in the General Assembly in the Fifth Committee (the Administrative and Budgetary Committee). There has been evident in the Committee from the beginning a rather deep cleavage between those Governments which have felt that United Nations expenditures were increasing too rapidly and those which have felt that only minimal resources were being devoted to the United Nations and that it was wrong to impose arbitrary ceilings or limits on appropriation levels for United Nations activities. Unfortunately, the consideration of the convening of new conferences and meetings and of their venue has repeatedly become involved in the conflict about budgetary levels, particularly when certain States, and bodies like the ACABQ, have emphasized the cost of conferences and meetings. When this has occurred, many States have, "as a matter of principle", voted against proposals which would have the effect of limiting expenditures for conferences. Although one must recognize that the cost of conferences is an important factor, it seems clear that in past considerations of the problem too much emphasis has been placed on the financial aspects of the matter without regard to other considerations which were of at least equal or perhaps greater importance. It is of little benefit to debate whether a conference should cost \$100,000 or \$200,000 when in fact it should not be held at all at the time or place proposed because adequate documentation cannot be prepared in time, qualified interpreters are not available, etc..

81. So far as the venue of meetings is concerned, there is another important psychological factor which has caused various United Nations bodies to disregard the General Assembly's principle that Headquarters-based bodies should, in general, meet at that base. There are many United Nations delegates attached to permanent missions to the United Nations in New York who would prefer to be located in cities other than New York and there are others who, while finding the city attractive for certain periods of time, feel a desire at other times to get away from the pressures - and the warm summers - of New York. There is thus a natural desire to have meetings of New York-based bodies held elsewhere in the world from time to time and particularly to have them held in Geneva in the summer. This feeling has been enhanced since new conference facilities have been constructed in Geneva and elsewhere. It leads some to insist that, as a matter of principle, as many meetings as possible be held away from Headquarters, regardless of the disruptive effect this may have on the work of the Secretariat or on the conference programme as a whole. This feeling must be taken into account adequately when drawing up future conference programmes.

82. So far as the number of meetings - and often conflicts in their dates and venues - are concerned, an important psychological factor is the acceptance thus far of the view that subsidiary bodies of the General Assembly have the right to "decide" upon additional meetings and the dates and venues of such meetings, for themselves, and to create additional subsidiary bodies which "decide" upon meetings and the dates and venue of such meetings, for themselves. It is only human nature for members of any subsidiary body which has been given an important task and which is not concerned with the whole of the United Nations conferences and meetings programme, to wish to expand their own conference activities and to create sub-bodies to assist them. Once the initiative has been taken, then even if it is recognized that approval by the ECOSOC or the General Assembly is required, it is almost inevitable that the approval will be given. If this type of behaviour can be avoided in the future, a good part of the battle will have been won. If it cannot, then the situation may well be hopeless.

83. The length of United Nations conferences has been affected by a factor which has both psychological and political origins, namely the growing size of subsidiary bodies. It is almost inevitable that a committee which is expanded from fifteen to thirty members will require more time and accordingly more conference servicing to complete its work and in most such cases it is doubtful that there will be any compensating improvement in the quality of its reports. There is little doubt that it would be helpful from the

point of view of servicing the conference programme if Governments could be persuaded to limit the size of subsidiary bodies to the absolute minimum consistent with reasonable geographic distribution and to rely on representation in parent bodies to ensure that States other than those which were members of the subsidiary body had an opportunity to present their views. This matter of the optimum size of subsidiary bodies is probably important enough to warrant the General Assembly's requesting a special study by an appropriate body (not the Joint Inspection Unit).

84. These factors which have been mentioned have thus far tended to negate the general recognition by most Member States that the conference programme is too large, too uneven, too undisciplined, too burdensome on Governments and secretariats and in some areas, unproductive. This recognition is based not only on the reports of the Secretary-General and the findings of the many expert bodies mentioned in chapter III A above, but even more on the personal experiences of Government representatives themselves. Few members of a permanent mission to the United Nations have failed to realize that the conference schedule requires more time than they can afford, that there are too many conference documents to read and that too many of these are poorly prepared because of time pressures or are issued too late, that at times interpretation is poor because it has not been possible to recruit a sufficient number of fully-qualified interpreters or because interpreters are required to service too many meetings, that too much meeting time is wasted because delegates have not been able to cope with the situation and require delays to prepare statements, that too many resolutions are adopted which delegates and Governments have not had an opportunity to study carefully, and that too often, because of the pressure of the conference schedule, attempts to arrive at agreed courses of action are abandoned and instead resolutions are adopted calling for new studies or establishing new bodies to which the unsolved problems are passed.

85. If Governments are now prepared to recognize that factors of the kind mentioned are largely responsible for many of the aspects of the conference programme which they deplore, they may be willing to support corrective measures which they have rejected in the past.

(2) United Nations conference capacity and its present use

(a) The situation at Headquarters in New York

(i) Conference rooms

86. United Nations Headquarters has thirteen conference rooms equipped for simultaneous interpretation. Six of these, namely the General Assembly hall, the Trusteeship Council Chamber and conference rooms Nos. 1-4, will seat representatives of the entire membership at the conference tables. The Economic and Social Council Chamber is being modified to seat the enlarged membership (fifty-four) of the Council. The remaining six rooms, namely conference rooms Nos. 5, 6, 7, 8 and 13, and the Security Council Chamber, will seat between nineteen and thirty-three delegates at the table. The exact seating capacity of each of these rooms is set forth in Annex II.

87. Annex II also includes charts prepared by the Secretariat showing the actual use of each of the above-mentioned conference rooms in 1973 and the projected use of each of these rooms in 1974. In analyzing these charts certain facts should be borne in mind. The General Assembly hall is considered suitable for only very large meetings and so is scarcely ever used outside of sessions of the General Assembly (mid-September through mid-December). Since the Charter requires the Security Council "to be able to function continuously", the Security Council Chamber is not scheduled for any other formal meetings, although it is frequently used for interpreters' training when the Council is not in session. Finally, conference room No. 13, which is the smallest of the rooms, is normally scheduled for use only by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ).

88. An analysis of the use of the other ten conference rooms in 1973, as shown by the chart included in Annex II, gives the following results in terms of the number of work weeks during which those rooms were not in use during that year<sup>5/</sup>:

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<sup>5/</sup> For the purposes of this study, the five-day work week is used. Moreover the first week in January and the last two weeks in December have been omitted from the calculation. Further, even if only one meeting was held in a given room during any week, this was counted as a full meeting week.

Conference room No. 7 .....	14 (10 weeks for maintenance)
Conference room No. 4 .....	10 (2 weeks for maintenance)
Conference room No. 3 .....	8 (6 weeks for maintenance)
Conference room No. 5 .....	8
Conference room No. 2 .....	6
Conference room No. 6 .....	6
Conference room No. 1 .....	4
Conference room No. 8 .....	4 (1 week for maintenance)
ECOSOC Chamber .....	3 (all for maintenance)
Trusteeship Council Chamber .....	1

89. It will be noted from the chart that in most cases the time periods during which conference rooms were not in use were not contiguous but were spread throughout the year. Thus the fact that a particular room was not in use during a number of weeks of the year does not mean that it would have been possible to schedule additional meetings of more than one week's duration in that room. Nevertheless, it is apparent from the chart that, in so far as conference rooms were concerned, a number of meetings, in addition to the 2,924 actually held<sup>6/</sup>, could have been held in New York in 1973, particularly during the January-February and mid-June to mid-September periods.

(ii) Language staff

90. Although obviously many categories of staff, both those described as "substantive staff" and those termed "conference staff", are needed in order to make possible the holding of United Nations meetings, this study deals only with that part of the United Nations conference capacity represented by the so-called "language staff", namely, interpreters, translators, revisers, verbatim reporters and précis-writers. Special attention is given to the interpretation staff for reasons which will appear below.

91. In 1973 United Nations Headquarters had established posts for seventy-seven interpreters. Twenty-one of these were to provide interpretation into (and from) Chinese, fourteen for interpretation into English, fourteen for interpretation into French,

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<sup>6/</sup> This number (2,924) includes official meetings with interpretation service (2,156), official meetings without interpretation service, such as those of the Panel of Experts on Science and Technology for International Development (190), unofficial meetings with interpretation service, such as the 280 regional group meetings (548), and additional unofficial meetings with service other than interpretation service (30). The corresponding annual figures since 1969 for the total number of meetings held at Headquarters are: 1969 (2,683), 1970 (2,787), 1971 (2,665), 1972 (2,685).

fourteen for interpretation into Spanish and fourteen for interpretation into Russian. The Secretary-General requested eleven additional interpreter posts for 1974 (eight Chinese, one French, one Russian and one Spanish) but the General Assembly approved only the eight Chinese posts. Three Chinese-language posts were subsequently transferred to the Geneva Office.

92. Thus today Headquarters has regular posts for eighty-two interpreters, an increase of fourteen since 1969. This enables Headquarters, in theory, to field seven five-language interpretation teams, consisting of eleven interpreters each (three Chinese<sup>7/</sup>, two English, two French, two Russian and two Spanish) and also to provide some interpretation into Chinese for United Nations meetings in Geneva (when the conference programme there cannot be fully handled by the Chinese interpreter staff permanently assigned to Geneva) and elsewhere and to lend Chinese interpreters, on occasion, to the specialized agencies.

93. In addition to its regular interpretation staff, United Nations Headquarters is usually able, for peak meeting periods, to recruit in New York one team of free-lance interpreters and it does this not only for General Assembly sessions but also during other periods of the year. It is also able, at times, to borrow interpreters from the Geneva Office and it does this during Assembly periods. This use of free-lance and borrowed staff enables Headquarters, in theory, to field at least eight full interpreter teams for Assembly sessions.<sup>8/</sup>

94. The phrase "in theory" has been used in the preceding two paragraphs since it is not always possible to field the number of interpreter teams mentioned in those paragraphs. Among the reasons for this are leave, vacancies, illness and the fact that Headquarters has a Medical Service recommendation that, on a long-term basis, interpreters should not work more than seven or eight full meetings a week. Also, during January and February and at other times when the meetings schedule permits, some interpreters are required to spend part of their time revising the verbatim records produced during the preceding sessions of the General Assembly.

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<sup>7/</sup> Three interpreters are normally required in the Chinese booth since they are called upon to interpret both from and into Chinese.

<sup>8/</sup> Beginning with the twenty-ninth session of the General Assembly, interpretation from and into Arabic will be provided for the Assembly and its Main Committees (A/RES/3190.(XXVIII)). For this purpose the Secretariat is attempting to recruit free-lance interpreters. There also appears to be a possibility of borrowing some staff from certain of the specialized agencies. It is not yet possible to say what the situation will be at the twenty-ninth session of the Assembly.

95. When considering the need for the use made of interpretation services at United Nations Headquarters, it is necessary to distinguish between the General Assembly period and the balance of the year. The Assembly meeting schedule is by far the heaviest of the year at Headquarters and normally includes not only seven morning and seven afternoon meetings of Main Committees, Plenary Sessions of the Assembly and the ACABQ which can be planned reasonably well in advance, but also evening and Saturday meetings planned only a short time in advance. In this period there must also be accommodated such meetings of the Security Council as might be required and a few short sessions such as the resumed summer ECOSOC session, meetings of the ACC and its Preparatory Committee and various Pledging Conferences. It is clear that during this period, the interpretation capacity at Headquarters, including regular, free-lance and borrowed staff, is taxed to the limit and that it is not possible to schedule in that period additional meetings of any significant duration.

96. The non-General Assembly period in which many different organs meet at Headquarters presents a somewhat different situation. In the long-range planning for meetings in that period, Headquarters takes into account only the interpretation capacity represented by its regular staff. For the reasons mentioned in paragraph 94 above, it cannot assume that this regular staff will ensure the availability of seven full interpreter teams and starts with the assumption that at any one time it can field only six teams able to service twelve meetings a day (six in the morning and six in the afternoon).

97. However, there is an important factor which limits the number of meetings which can be planned well in advance, to a level below twelve meetings a day. This is the fact that Headquarters must service a large number of "political" bodies, whose meetings are not scheduled in the annual calendar of conferences for fixed dates, but are listed either for a period of time defined in general terms (for example January-June) or are listed as "to be determined" or "as required". These bodies include the Security Council and a number of other organs such as the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, the United Nations Council for Namibia and its Sub-Committees, the Special Committee on Apartheid and its Sub-Committees and the Special Committee on Peace-keeping Operations and its working group. The meetings of these bodies represent some 25 per cent (about 600 meetings) of the total of all meetings held in New York each year.



98. The Secretary-General called attention to this problem in 1965 (A/5979, paragraph 16) and suggested to the General Assembly "that only the Security Council be allowed to meet as necessary throughout the year; all other organs and subsidiary organs should, as far as possible, have predetermined dates for their sessions so that they can be fitted into a rationally planned programme of meetings". The ACABQ stated (A/6162) that "while the Advisory Committee recognized that in particular instances it may not be possible for certain bodies to prepare and adhere to a given schedule of meetings, the Committee considers it essential that all bodies endeavour to the extent possible to formulate such a programme". Despite these expressions of view, it is evident from the 25 per cent figure mentioned in the preceding paragraph that a significant portion of the Headquarters interpretation capacity is used inefficiently and the total conference capacity is accordingly reduced.

99. However, starting in 1973, the Secretariat has made a special effort to rationalize the meeting schedules of those "political" bodies that have no fixed dates for their meetings but meet regularly throughout the year. It has established weekly meeting quotas as follows: United Nations Council for Namibia - three meetings per week; Special Committee on Apartheid - two meetings per week; Committee on Relations with the Host Country - one meeting per week; Security Council Committee established in pursuance of resolution 253 (1968) - one meeting per week; Special Committee on Peace-keeping Operations - one meeting per week. If required, the above bodies will cancel their meeting to allow the Security Council to meet. This approach to the undetermined programme of meetings allows Headquarters to use its meeting capacity more efficiently.

100. For long-term planning purposes and for constructing the annual calendar of conferences for the non-Assembly period, Headquarters assumes the availability of only five teams of interpreters able to service a total of ten meetings a day. When it comes to more immediate planning, say one month or less in advance, when Headquarters tries to accommodate the previously unplanned requirements of the type mentioned in paragraph 97 above, and meetings such as those of regional groups, it can normally produce six teams able to service twelve meetings a day. If necessary a seventh team can sometimes be produced from the regular staff but any requirement for the servicing of seven meetings simultaneously is likely to call for the recruitment of a free-lance team on a temporary-assistance basis.

101. Given the long-term planning capacity of ten meetings per day, and assuming twenty-one meeting days per month, Headquarters can construct a calendar of conferences for the non-Assembly period calling for the servicing of 210 meetings per month on specific dates; and this is used as the "basic planning figure" for that period.<sup>9/</sup> This does not necessarily mean that 210 meetings per month can be planned to be held in New York since Headquarters is sometimes called upon to supply all or part of the interpretation services for meetings held away from Headquarters.<sup>10/</sup>

102. For 1973 the number of meetings in New York<sup>11/</sup> with interpretation service totalled 2,733<sup>12/</sup> and on a monthly basis the figures were as follows:

<u>Months</u>	<u>New York</u>
January .....	135
February .....	144
March .....	287
April .....	272
May .....	269
June .....	221
July .....	127
August .....	133
September .....	165
October .....	384
November .....	410
December .....	186
	<u>2,733</u>

103. During the General Assembly period in 1973, Headquarters supplemented its regular interpretation staff with free-lance interpreters costing about \$270,000 in temporary-assistance funds, with eight interpreters borrowed from the regular staff of the Geneva Office.

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<sup>9/</sup> Except for July and August, the "leave" months, when a total of 120 meetings per month is considered reasonable by Headquarters.

<sup>10/</sup> In 1973 Headquarters supplied some of the interpreters required for four meetings in Geneva (Governing Council of UNDP, Governing Council of UNEP, Committee on the Peaceful Uses of the Sea Bed, and ECOSOC) and for meetings in New Delhi, Paris, Tokyo, Vienna and Stockholm and all the interpreters required for meetings in Oslo and Panama City.

<sup>11/</sup> Plus eleven meetings held in Panama City in March and eighteen meetings held in Oslo in April.

<sup>12/</sup> The corresponding totals since 1969 were the following: 1969 (2,558) 1970 (2,688), 1971 (2,573) 1972 (2,670).

104. In six months of the non-Assembly period in 1973, the number of meetings with interpretation service exceeded the "basic planning figure" and in three months (March-May) it reached levels requiring the interpretation services of more than six teams. During the three months mentioned, Headquarters was required to recruit a number of free-lance interpreters on a temporary-assistance basis.

105. When one considers for future planning purposes the extent to which Headquarters may have had interpretation capacity which was not fully utilized in certain months in 1973, one must keep in mind a point similar to that made in paragraph 89 above. This is the fact that, while in certain months, such as January and February, there were a number of potential meeting days which were not utilized, these were not necessarily contiguous and their existence did not necessarily mean that additional meetings of any significant duration could easily have been serviced.

106. It must be concluded that, from the point of view of interpretation services, Headquarters meeting capacity is fully utilized most of the year and almost fully utilized the rest of the year.

107. In so far as language staff other than interpreters are concerned, in 1973 United Nations Headquarters employed 325 regular staff as translators, revisers and verbatim reporters and the General Assembly approved the addition of three Chinese-language translator trainee posts for 1974. This total of 328 represents an increase of thirty-two since 1969.

108. It is much more difficult in the case of these language staff than in the case of interpreters, to demonstrate the relationship between their number and the conference capacity of Headquarters. It is always possible to produce conference documentation by putting to one side non-conference documentation (such as annual reports and publications) and, in fact, Headquarters always manages somehow to provide the regular conference documentation. Further, while it is clear that hundreds of thousands of dollars are spent each year for temporary assistance in order to produce the necessary conference documentation and that much of it is produced later than the time for which it is scheduled, it is also reasonably clear that these facts can be attributed to the late submission of documentation to the Translation Service (and sometimes to the poor condition in which it is submitted) rather than to a lack of capacity in the Translation Service itself. These matters were discussed in the JIU report on United Nations documentation and on the organization of the proceedings of the General Assembly and its main bodies (JIU/REP/71/4 (A/8319 and Corr.1)) and that discussion will not be repeated here.

109. It is concluded, after discussion with the Secretariat, that even after the reduction of documentation which has taken place in the last year or two, the capacity of the Headquarters' Secretariat as a whole to produce conference documentation is still severely strained; and that the level of the conference programme for which Headquarters must produce documentation cannot be significantly increased with any assurance that documentation requirements will be met.

(b) The situation in Geneva

(i) Conference rooms

110. The United Nations Office at Geneva has twenty-four<sup>13/</sup> conference rooms equipped for simultaneous interpretation, fourteen in the old Palais and ten in the new wing. Twelve of these can seat representatives of the entire membership of the United Nations at the conference tables: four in the old Palais, namely the Assembly hall and conference rooms XVI, XII and VII, and eight in the new wing, namely conference rooms XVII, XVIII, XX, XIX, XXI, XXVI, XXIII and XXIV. The remaining twelve rooms, namely conference rooms III, V, VIII, IX, X, XI, H-3, C-3, F-3 and the Council Chamber in the old Palais, and conference rooms XXII and XXV in the new wing, can seat between thirty-two and 108 delegates at the table. The exact capacity of each room is set forth in Annex III.

111. In addition to the above-mentioned conference rooms, five small rooms, not equipped for simultaneous interpretation, are also available in the old Palais, namely rooms I, K-4, A-R, A.206 and C.108.

112. The Inspectors were informed by the Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva that, as a result of the availability of the new conference facilities, the distribution of meetings between the old Palais and the new wing is, or is intended to be, as follows:

"Old Palais

- All meetings of ECE, whose regional, limited membership can be accommodated more rationally in the old, smaller conference rooms and whose secretariat has similarly remained located in the old building;

- Meetings of the Disarmament Conference and similar bodies, whose size and nature are such that the Council Chamber and adjacent caucus rooms and offices provide ideal facilities from operational and security points of view;

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<sup>13/</sup> Consideration is being given to equipping an additional room in the new wing of the Palais for simultaneous interpretation. If this is done, the room will be designated conference room XXVII.

- Conferences requiring the old Assembly hall - which remains by far the largest room - and a number of smaller rooms, including caucus rooms without interpretation, and whose working methods (written records, etc.) require large servicing secretariats and an equally large number of servicing offices immediately around the Assembly hall; this applies and is expected to continue to apply to conferences of the ILO, WHO, WMO, ITU, ICAO and other agencies, as well as to special United Nations conferences of similar scope, all of which, however, could in future be allocated also to some of the new larger conference rooms if required and available.

#### New Wing

- All the meetings of UNCTAD whose universal membership and parallel institutional groups can best be accommodated in the larger new conference rooms and adjacent medium size rooms, except for the occasional plenary meetings of the Trade Conferences, for which the old Assembly hall will still be required; as the UNCTAD secretariat is located in the new building, only a few presidential and forward echelons offices are required for these purposes around the conference rooms;

- Meetings of the ECOSOC whose enlarged membership cannot be accommodated adequately in the old Council Chamber where it used to meet; this has been amply demonstrated at last year's summer session when participants had of necessity to be squeezed somehow into the Chamber. Naturally further restructuring of that Chamber for this and other possible purposes would involve expenditures out of proportion with the object and hardly justifiable now that new, adequate facilities are available; the ECOSOC Committees will likewise more adequately be accommodated and concentrated in the new building;

- Meetings of the UNHCR, whose secretariat is now located in the new wing;

- Meetings of organs whose sessions usually take place during whole or part of the peak May-August period, when most or all the rooms in the old Palais are needed for the WHO, ILO, ECE, Disarmament and similar organs, as stated above; this applies namely to the International Law Commission whose session lasts some ten to twelve weeks every year starting beginning of May.

Old or new facilities would be used indifferently for other meetings such as these of the functional commissions of ECOSOC, special conferences not requiring the old Assembly hall, large preparatory committees such as those of the Sea Bed and similar world conferences, etc."

113. With respect to the possible use of the new wing of the Palais des Nations by the ILO, that organization informed the Inspectors by letter dated 9 May 1974 that:

"In 1974 we shall be using one room (room XVII) in the new wing as an experiment. Moreover, in the planning of the new wing, the ILO was consulted and led to believe that the general policy would be to encourage us to hold the bulk of the Conference in the new wing. The situation in the old Palais has reached a very critical point, in that virtually all the Conference committees exceed in size the seating capacity of the meeting rooms there."

114. Included in Annex III are charts prepared by the Secretariat, showing the actual use of each of the old and new conference rooms in the Palais in 1973 and the projected use of each of these rooms in 1974.

115. Unlike the case of New York, there is little point in attempting to analyze the use of each of the Geneva conference rooms in 1973, in order to determine the capacity of the Geneva Office to accommodate more meetings, since none of the rooms in the new building was available before May of that year and many were unusable during much of the balance of the year because of maintenance work. This meant that during a large part of the year, meetings had to be concentrated in the old Palais in a manner not likely to be repeated, at least to the same extent, in future years. Similarly, there is little point in trying to make an analysis of conference room usage in 1974 since, as indicated in the 1974 conference room occupancy chart for the new building, many rooms were unavailable for use during the first four months of the year because of maintenance work, and two of the larger conference rooms in the new building are expected to remain unused throughout all of 1974 because of a shortage of electrical power.<sup>14/</sup>

116. Despite the difficulty of making a precise analysis at this time of the capacity of the physical facilities at the Geneva Office to accommodate additional conferences, it is clear from the annexed charts that these facilities can accommodate a conference programme significantly larger than that presently scheduled for 1975. The programme approved by the General Assembly for 1974 will not be affected, for example, by the inability to use two of the large new conference rooms this year because of a power shortage. The Geneva Office has stated the following with respect to the use of the conference rooms there during the next few years:

"Taking into account the continuously growing programme of UNCTAD and the trend of the overall programme of meetings over the last years, ... it is estimated that in 1974/75 the four larger new conference rooms will be used approximately four months a year and the six smaller of the new rooms some six months a year. Assuming as we should that the old premises will continue to be used much to the same extent as before, the total number of half day meetings to be held in the Palais, old and new, is thus likely to exceed 7,000 within the two or three years to come."<sup>15/</sup>

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<sup>14/</sup> It is anticipated that this shortage of electrical power will continue until the summer of 1975.

<sup>15/</sup> This statement was made before it became clear that two of the larger new conference rooms would be affected by the power shortage.

117. The figure of 7,000 meetings mentioned above compares with the figure of 6,335, representing the total number of meetings held in the Geneva Office conference facilities in 1973.<sup>16/</sup>

(ii) Language staff

118. In 1973 the Geneva Office manning table provided for thirty-two interpreters as regular staff members. In addition, the Geneva Office administered eight interpreter posts financed from the UNCTAD section of the budget (section 14) and included in the UNCTAD manning table. Although many of the occupants of those forty posts had the ability to interpret into more than one official language, at least twelve were able to interpret into English, twelve into French, twelve into Russian and four into Spanish. Interpretation into Chinese was provided, to the extent possible, by regular staff outposted from New York. All additional demands had to be met by recruiting free-lance staff on a temporary-assistance basis, by bringing staff from Headquarters in New York, or by borrowing staff from other organizations in Europe.

119. Thus in 1973 the Geneva Office was able, from its regular establishment of interpreters, to field at any one time a maximum of two four-language (English, French, Russian and Spanish) interpretation teams, plus four three-language (English, French and Russian) interpretation teams.<sup>17/</sup> With the addition of interpreters into Chinese outposted from New York, it became possible to transform the four-language teams into five-language teams. Additional five-language teams could be created only by recruiting free-lance personnel, by bringing interpretation staff from New York or by borrowing from other organizations. Because of this fact, in 1973 the Geneva Office spent \$925,500 in temporary-assistance funds for free-lance interpretation staff and in the summer brought a number of interpreters from New York.

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<sup>16/</sup> This figure of 6,335 includes what are termed "formal and informal meetings with interpretation" (3,641) "formal and informal meetings with other services" (1,168), "informal meetings without services" (739) and "meetings of specialized agencies, non-governmental organizations, intergovernmental bodies, etc." (787). The corresponding annual figures since 1969 for the total number of meetings held at the Geneva Office are: 1969 (4,119), 1970 (4,911), 1971 (5,311), 1972 (5,329).

<sup>17/</sup> Even this availability was qualified, as in the case of New York, by such factors as illness, vacancies, leave, etc..

120. Operating in this fashion, the Geneva Office was able to provide interpretation services for 3,641 meetings in 1973.<sup>18/</sup> The monthly totals for such meetings in 1973 were the following:

<u>Months</u>	<u>Geneva</u>
January .....	265
February .....	162
March .....	293
April .....	202
May .....	381 <sup>19/</sup>
June .....	449 <sup>20/</sup>
July .....	465
August .....	421
September .....	231
October .....	247
November .....	372
December .....	153
	<hr/>
	3,641
	<hr/>

121. For 1974 the Secretary-General requested eight additional posts for interpreters (two each for English, French, Russian and Spanish) and these were approved by the General Assembly. For interpretation into Chinese in 1974, three Chinese-language posts have been transferred from Headquarters to the Geneva Office. As in 1973, additional interpretation requirements are met by the use of free-lance or borrowed staff financed from temporary-assistance funds or staff brought from New York.

122. The new regular staff level approved for 1974 should enable the Geneva Office to field one more four-language team using regular staff and this of course can be converted into a five-language team if a sufficient number of Chinese interpreters are made available. This means that it should be possible for the Geneva Office, in 1974, to field from its regular staff a maximum of three four/five-language interpretation teams plus four three-language teams, or a total of seven teams.

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<sup>18/</sup> The corresponding annual totals since 1969 were the following: 1969 (2,585), 1970 (2,831), 1971 (3,238), 1972 (3,418).

<sup>19/</sup> In addition to these United Nations meetings, during the month of May the WHO held some 125 meetings with interpretation in the Palais.

<sup>20/</sup> In addition to these United Nations meetings, during the month of June the ILO held some 450 meetings with interpretation in the Palais.



123. The primary reason for the substantial reliance by the Geneva Office on three-language interpretation teams is the fact that a large number of the meetings which must be serviced by that Office are those of ECE and require interpretation into only three languages (English, French and Russian). In 1973, the Geneva Office provided interpretation services for about 1,000 ECE meetings, 794 in Geneva and the balance elsewhere, or about a little more than 25 per cent of the total number of meetings provided with such services by the Geneva Office.

124. For these ECE meetings, the Geneva Office assigns three three-language interpretation teams for each day available for meetings during the entire year. This in effect limits ECE to a quota of 1,086 meetings per year for which the Geneva Office provides interpretation services. However, ECE forecasts a "normal growth" in the number of meetings to about 1,270 by 1978 and a possible "accelerated growth" to a level of 1,600 by that year. It is certain that the three interpretation teams which are presently working to almost full capacity to service ECE meetings will not be able to cope with such an increased workload. It is also likely that it will be difficult to add the additional interpretation teams required because of the demands of the balance of the conference programme and the shortage of interpreters into Russian.

125. Because of the assignment of three three-language interpretation teams to the ECE alone, the Geneva Office is left with the possibility of providing from regular staff a maximum of three four/five-language teams and one three-language team for the meetings of other bodies. In relating this interpretation capacity to non-ECE meeting requirements, one naturally starts with the requirements of the Geneva-based bodies. Of these, the organizational unit which generates the most meetings is UNCTAD. In 1973 the Trade and Development Board and its subsidiary and related bodies held sixty-two weeks of meetings and in 1974 are scheduled to hold about seventy weeks of meetings. Most of these meetings have in the past required interpretation into four languages (English, French, Russian and Spanish) although some have also required interpretation into Chinese, and requests for interpretation into that language are increasing. UNCTAD hopes to reduce its meeting programme to sixty weeks or less over the next five years but decisions in the last two years to add to the regular meeting schedule, rather than to reduce it, do not inspire confidence in a reduction in the future.

126. An examination of the schedule of UNCTAD meetings discloses the following. The four-week regular session of the Trade and Development Board is traditionally scheduled to take place between the summer session of ECOSOC and the opening of the General Assembly and is thus generally held in August/September. The Board also holds a

two-week special session every second year on review and appraisal of the Second United Nations Development Decade and this is normally scheduled in April/May. An effort is made to spread other major meetings (some sixteen weeks) throughout the year though there is a marked tendency for the majority of UNCTAD bodies to request sessions in the first seven months of the year to enable them to present the most up-to-date report possible to the Board. Smaller meetings are fitted into the remaining periods, avoiding as far as feasible overlapping with other UNCTAD meetings and those of other organs working in related fields. However, given the fact that a sixty to seventy-week programme has to be fitted into a fifty-two week year, some overlapping is inevitable.

127. As indicated in paragraph 118 above, the Geneva Office has one four-language team of eight interpreters financed from the UNCTAD budget and available to UNCTAD throughout the year. As in the case of interpreters assigned to ECE, this team can be used for meetings of other bodies when not required by UNCTAD. However, the assignment of one team meets only a part of UNCTAD's interpretation requirements, as is evident from the fact that UNCTAD held some 1,500 meetings with interpretation in 1973. Accordingly, to service the entire UNCTAD conference programme, recourse must be had to other regular staff interpreters, if available, or to free-lance staff. In fact, one or two teams of free-lance interpreters must be employed much of the time and at times as many as three such teams are required.

128. In view of the ECE and UNCTAD requirements and the fact that the Geneva Office must send some of its regular interpretation staff to New York for General Assembly sessions (it sent eight in 1973), it is clear that there is only a limited regular staff interpretation capacity left for the servicing of other bodies. Much of this limited capacity is required by such Geneva-based bodies as the Commission on Narcotic Drugs, the Executive Committee of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and now the Human Rights Commission and its subsidiary bodies.

129. There are two further factors in the Geneva situation which affect the capacity of the regular Geneva interpretation staff to service meetings. The first is the fact that in the peak meeting months of July and August, one-quarter to one-third of the regular interpreter staff members are permitted to take annual leave.<sup>21/</sup> The second

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<sup>21/</sup> Annual leave at this time of the year does not cost the Organization extra amounts of money in temporary-assistance funds since the Geneva conference programme is such that temporary assistance is normally required at any time throughout the year when interpretation staff take leave. Further, it should be noted that (a) annual leave in July and August is customary in continental Europe and that (b) many interpreters at Headquarters are permitted annual leave in these months which is a time when there are relatively few meetings in New York. Moreover, the prohibition on leave in July and

is the continuing failure to fill some of the Russian-language interpreter posts. For all of 1973 there were three vacancies; staff for these posts had been requested from the Moscow Pedagogical Institute for Foreign Languages<sup>22/</sup> but never arrived in Geneva.

130. From the foregoing it is evident that even after the strengthening of the regular staff in 1974, the servicing of virtually all meetings in addition to those mentioned, requires not only the provision of additional Chinese interpreters from New York but also the recruitment of other interpretation staff on a free-lance basis or by borrowing, and the sending of additional staff from New York to Geneva in peak periods.

131. The possibility for the United Nations to borrow staff from other organizations is very limited because those organizations employ very few regular interpreters.<sup>23/</sup> The possibility of sending staff from Headquarters is also quite limited because of the heavy conference programme and the unpredictability of the schedule of meetings there plus the annual leave requirements of New York staff. Thus the principal reliance is on free-lance staff.

132. This reliance on free-lance staff has resulted in serious problems for the Geneva Office today. This is primarily because in recruiting free-lance staff, the Geneva Office is in competition with the specialized agencies in Geneva and elsewhere, with other organizations holding international meetings and with such international conferences as the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe and the Conference on Mutual Balanced Force Reduction. This situation and possible ways of dealing with it are discussed at some length in the following section of this report. It should be said here, however, that unless and until the existing interpretation problems are solved, the Geneva Office cannot service more meetings than it is now handling during the peak meeting period of May-August and it can service (but without Chinese) only a very few more meetings during the General Assembly period when it must lend interpreters to New York. It can service a few additional meetings (not all with Chinese) in the January-April period.

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August might well make it impossible for interpreters having school-age children to spend vacation time with them. However, annual leave of regular interpretation staff at this time, plus the fact that some free-lance staff do not accept employment in these months, reduces the total of interpretation staff available in Geneva at a peak meeting period there.

<sup>22/</sup> See paragraphs 164 and 165.

<sup>23/</sup> See paragraph 225.

133. Apart from the staff of the Interpretation Division there is, of course, the staff of the Languages Division. In 1973 the Geneva Office manning table for that Division provided for eighty-eight regular Professional staff consisting of translators, revisers and editors, plus supervisory personnel. This number was increased for 1974 to 106, in part to strengthen existing translation services but also to provide for a Chinese translation section. In addition, the Geneva Office administers thirty-two translator, reviser and editor posts which are financed from the UNCTAD budget and are included in the UNCTAD manning table.

134. Despite this increase in regular translator staff, the Geneva Office in 1974 expects to rely upon temporary assistance for some 35 per cent of its translation output. In general there has as yet been no serious difficulty, such as that which has developed in the case of interpreters, in obtaining the necessary temporary-assistance staff required to translate meetings documentation. However, a sizable increase in the number of meetings serviced by the Geneva Office such as that forecast by ECE might well produce problems in the translation field.

135. As in the case of New York, there have been occasions in Geneva when documentation for meetings has been issued later than it should have been. However, as in New York, such instances do not appear to reflect any lack of capacity on the part of the Languages Division to translate meeting documentation. Rather they very clearly relate to the submission by substantive units of documentation much later than forecast or in quantities much larger than forecast.

136. For example, the Geneva Office states that in 1973 UNCTAD had forecast that more than 80 per cent of the documentation for those of its meetings which required a significant volume of documentation would be submitted more than six weeks before the relevant sessions; in fact, only slightly more than 40 per cent was submitted by that time. According to the Geneva Office, UNCTAD had also predicted that pre-session documentation for those meetings would amount to some 4,102 pages, but the actual workload proved to be 4,676 pages.<sup>24/</sup> More importantly, the Geneva Office states that some

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<sup>24/</sup> UNCTAD states that in fact it forecast 4,192 pages of documentation and submitted only 3,487 pages. The discrepancy between these figures and those of the Geneva Office apparently results primarily from the fact that UNCTAD counted only the pages of substantive documentation whereas the Geneva Office counted the pages of all documentation relating to meetings, including such items as lists of delegates, agendas, etc..

1,418 pages of documentation of UNCTAD-related bodies, namely, of the Joint UNCTAD/GATT International Trade Centre and the International Cocoa Organization were submitted without any advance notice.<sup>25/</sup>

137. Similarly, in 1973 ECE had forecast that, of the pre-session documentation for certain meetings, all but ninety-two pages (according to long-term forecasts) or 246 pages (according to short-term forecasts) would be submitted more than six weeks before the opening of the session. In fact, 801 pages were received during these six weeks. ECE had also made a long-term forecast that pre-session documentation for those meetings would amount to some 1,540 pages, but, in fact, the total number of pages was 3,871.

138. The Office of Conference and General Services in Geneva has repeatedly attempted to control this situation in so far as substantive units in Geneva are concerned, by requesting that half-yearly forecasts of requirements be submitted at least six weeks in advance of the six-month periods in question, to be supplemented by a refined forecast at least three months before the respective sessions. However, in October 1973 the Conference Division informed the Inspectors of the results of these efforts as follows:

"It will be seen

- (a) That the workload as announced in long-term forecasts seldom, if ever, corresponds, at times even remotely, to actual submissions in terms of volume; and
- (b) That the time-distribution of the workload, in relation to the opening date of the relevant session does not, on the one hand, follow the submission pattern announced in long-term or short-term forecasts nor, on the other hand, does it allow sufficient time to produce the documentation at the requested dates without resorting to emergency methods resulting in disruptive effects."

139. In so far as the future is concerned, it appears that the two major substantive bodies, UNCTAD and ECE, have recognized the need for greater discipline in the preparation and submission of conference documentation and have instituted procedures designed to improve the situation. Needless to say, the situation will improve only if care is taken to ensure that staff adhere strictly to these procedures. It should be recognized, for example, that even if only a few documents are submitted for translation

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<sup>25/</sup> UNCTAD disclaims any responsibility for forecasting or submitting this documentation.

later than scheduled, their production is likely to delay the translation of other documents submitted on time. It should also be realized that variations between forecasts and the actual submission of documentation create significant problems for the Languages Division in connexion with the timing of the recruitment of temporary staff.

140. In connexion with conferences of non-Geneva-based bodies, the Geneva Office is given by Headquarters a forecast of the anticipated documentation workload as a basis for an assessment of the staffing requirements and the costing of such conferences. The Geneva Office reports that there are "glaring discrepancies between the workloads as announced and as actually submitted" and it believes that "this fundamentally erratic pattern of submission is undoubtedly at the root of the difficulties experienced in meeting deadlines". Given the nature of the problem, it is difficult to judge whether there is any reasonable expectation that future estimates of workloads or of dates of submission of documentation of this kind can be made any more accurate than those of the past.

(3) The problem of providing interpretation services

141. As mentioned in paragraph 46, the ACABQ warned the General Assembly more than ten years ago that even if that body appropriated the funds necessary to recruit language staff on a temporary-assistance basis, there was available in Europe and elsewhere only a "limited reservoir" of qualified temporary staff and the United Nations was in competition with the specialized agencies and other organizations for the services of this staff. This warning was repeated in 1966 by the Ad Hoc Committee of Experts to Examine the Finances of the United Nations and the Specialized Agencies (see paragraph 54 above). It was sounded still more strongly by the Committee on Conferences in 1968 (see paragraph 61 above), when it said that it would be misleading to suggest that the appropriation of funds, of whatever magnitude, would be sufficient in itself to ensure that a conference programme could be effectively implemented; that a critical factor was the very real problem which existed in obtaining, for limited periods, the services of highly-qualified language staff.

142. It is now clear that the long-threatened shortage of qualified interpretation staff has become a fact. There are not available today either in the form of regular staff or free-lance staff, a sufficient number of qualified interpreters to service the present level of meetings at peak conference periods of organizations in the United Nations system; and the shortage is rapidly becoming more acute.

143. Although the Secretary-General has informed the General Assembly and the ECOSOC in a few specific cases (for example, the Law of the Sea Conference in 1974 and the summer session of ECOSOC in 1973) that a shortage of interpreters existed or was likely to exist at specific times, he has not reported to the General Assembly in detail on the situation or recommended measures for dealing with it. It would appear that the Department of Conference Services at Headquarters has not, at least until quite recently, considered the situation to be especially serious and has believed that the difficulties which have existed with respect to interpretation services could readily be overcome. For the reasons mentioned below, it is no longer possible to hold this view.

144. All the specialized agencies in Geneva, as well as those located elsewhere in Europe, rely heavily on free-lance interpretation staff for their conferences, as does the Geneva Office of the United Nations. In October 1973 the Joint Inspection Unit asked the agencies whether they were encountering difficulties in recruiting such free-lance staff and WHO, ILO, WMO and ITU all replied in the affirmative.

145. In its letter of 22 October 1973, WHO stated that "the difficulty of recruiting qualified interpreters is certainly not new to the Geneva-based organizations" and added that "the problem has become particularly acute in the last two years".

146. In its reply of 8 November 1973 the ILO indicated that it had not experienced "major problems" in regard to free-lance language staff "except in the case of free-lance interpreters". It added the following:

"In the past months, the ILO has indeed encountered such problems. As you have mentioned, this problem is particularly acute for, though not limited to, Russian-language staff. The kind of problem encountered may be illustrated by the following incident. At a recent ILO committee meeting, a Spanish interpreter became unavailable at the last minute and could not be replaced during the two weeks of the session. Previously, finding such a replacement would have been difficult but not impossible".

147. In its letter of 20 November 1973 concerning problems in the recruitment of free-lance interpretation staff, the WMO stated that "the situation is now deteriorating quite rapidly". It added that "while it remains true that we have not experienced particular difficulties in respect of Russian-language staff [since WMO normally recruits interpreters directly from the Hydrometeorological Service in Moscow] ... our Conference Branch points out that recruitment of free-lance interpreters becomes more and more difficult in Geneva" (words in brackets inserted).

148. In its reply of 5 December 1973, ITU stated that "we are now recruiting interpreters for 1974 and we face great difficulties, especially as regards the first six months. We have to recruit non-local interpreters in a much larger proportion than in the past years".

149. It is true that in October 1973 UNESCO in Paris commented to the Joint Inspection Unit that while the situation with respect to recruiting free-lance staff was "difficult", it was "not impossible" and that UNESCO did "not see any crisis looming in the foreseeable future". However, UNESCO also stated that it fairly frequently used all the free-lance interpreters into Russian who lived in the Paris area and on a number of occasions had to bring in from Geneva and London interpreters having the required linguistic combinations. It added that "we are lacking good interpreters" in all language combinations.

150. The principal reason given by each of the agencies for the increasingly serious shortage of free-lance interpreters is the same, namely, the increase in international conferences, both those initiated by organizations in the United Nations system and those with other sponsorship, and the overlapping of these conferences. An example of the impact which new special conferences have on the free-lance interpreter market in Europe is the fact that the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe, held in the Centre International de Conférences, in Geneva in late 1973 and early 1974, required the recruitment of seventy-two interpreters. A second example is the fact that the World Administrative Radio Conference for Maritime Mobile Telecommunications, scheduled in Geneva from 22 April to 7 June 1974 (thus overlapping with the World Health Assembly, the UPU Congress in Berne and meetings in Geneva of United Nations bodies such as the ILC, the ACABQ and the Legal Sub-Committee of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space) required the recruitment of forty interpreters.

151. Except for the WMO, the specialized agencies mentioned above appear to agree with the ILO statement that the free-lance interpreter problem "is particularly acute for, though not limited to, the Russian-language staff". ILO expressed the view that "the increasing scarcity of Russian-language staff is due to the fact that citizens of the USSR do not go abroad to work as free-lance interpreters and thereby replenish the supply. Some of the Russian free-lance interpreters employed by the ILO are between the ages of 65 and 75 years".<sup>26/</sup>

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<sup>26/</sup> Some of these same interpreters are also employed by the Geneva Office of the United Nations.



152. It should be noted that in their replies to the JIU with respect to the difficulties in the recruitment of free-lance staff, the specialized agencies do not refer to Chinese-language interpreters. This is both because some of the agencies do not provide interpretation into Chinese at their meetings and because there is no Chinese-language free-lance interpreter market in Europe (there are said to be only one or two such interpreters in Europe at the most). This matter of providing Chinese-language interpreters to the specialized agencies is dealt with further in paragraphs 228-230 below.

153. Turning now to the United Nations we find that the view of the Geneva Office is much the same as that of the specialized agencies and that the Geneva Office considers that there is a serious shortage of qualified interpretation staff in relation to the number of United Nations meetings scheduled to be held in Geneva. This is undoubtedly due to the fact that, like the agencies, and unlike Headquarters in New York, the Geneva Office relies heavily on free-lance interpreters. That Office was convinced in 1973 that it could not have found additional qualified free-lance interpretation teams in the summer months, had additional meetings been scheduled in Geneva; indeed, in these months it was compelled to employ a number of sub-standard interpreters to service the meetings actually scheduled. In the fall of 1973 it informed Headquarters that it would be unable to provide interpretation services to the Law of the Sea Conference if held in Geneva in June of 1974 unless other scheduled meetings were cancelled or rescheduled.

154. This awareness on the part of the Geneva Office of the shortage of interpreters reflects not only its experience with the free-lance market but also the fact that in 1973 it was unable to obtain candidates to fill a number of its established posts for Russian-language interpreters.

155. Because of its concern with regard to the shortage of qualified interpretation staff in Geneva, the Geneva Office has strongly backed and participated in the rather modest inter-agency interpreter training programme in Geneva which trains interpreters, in English, French and Spanish, for regular employment with the organizations (see paragraph 222 below). Further it has urged Headquarters from time to time to make arrangements with interpreter training schools in Europe which would induce a larger flow of qualified candidates interested in employment with the United Nations. At the same time, the Geneva Office has tended to look upon the problem of the shortage of interpreters primarily as one which could be largely solved, in so far as the United Nations was concerned, by entering into contracts with free-lance staff at a date

earlier than competing organizations, rather than as a problem which posed a threat to the whole United Nations system and which had to be solved by the system as a whole. This, in general, appears to have been the attitude of the specialized agencies in Europe thus far.

156. As indicated above, United Nations Headquarters has thus far not shared to any great extent the view of the Geneva Office and the specialized agencies concerning the seriousness of the situation. This is due, at least in part, to two factors. As indicated in paragraphs 91-93, Headquarters has a large regular staff of interpreters and relies on free-lance staff for only a small part of its interpretation services. Further, as indicated in paragraphs 193-194, the Geneva conference programme is run quite independently of Headquarters and, in general, Headquarters leaves it to the Geneva Office to solve problems which arise in connexion with that programme.

157. As was indicated in paragraph 151, the most acute interpreter shortage relates to Russian-language interpreters. Accordingly, it is important to understand the situation of the United Nations with respect to such interpreters.

158. In 1973 United Nations Headquarters had fourteen Russian-language interpreter posts and no new posts were added for 1974-1975. Thus the maximum regular staff potential there is seven teams of interpreters (two interpreters to a team) although normally a maximum of six are available.<sup>27/</sup> In addition, it is normally possible to recruit one free-lance team in New York in emergency situations. During most of the March-May and October-December periods Headquarters uses to the maximum every Russian-language interpreter available in New York and, during the General Assembly it brings one team from Geneva. During the balance of the year the Headquarters-based regular staff Russian-language interpreters are fully utilized in New York or elsewhere except during the leave months of July and August.

159. In Geneva the United Nations had ten Russian-language interpreter posts in 1973 and added two more posts in 1974-1975, thus bringing the present total to twelve posts. This means that the maximum regular staff potential, on the basis of these posts, is six teams of interpreters and that one would expect that normally five of these would

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<sup>27/</sup> This is because of illness and of leave and the fact that there is medical advice to the effect that over sustained periods interpreters should cover a maximum of seven or eight half-day meetings per week.

be available.<sup>28/</sup> (In addition, it should usually be possible to make up another team from multi-lingual interpreters occupying other posts.)

160. However, in 1973 only seven of the ten approved posts were filled and thus far neither the remaining three posts nor the two new posts approved for 1974 have been filled. These five vacancies have reduced by two and a half the number of Russian-language interpreter teams the Geneva Office can field from its regular staff.

161. In addition to its regular staff, the Geneva Office has in the past been able to recruit up to six fully-qualified free-lance Russian-language teams at peak meeting periods, and has been able to add two or three additional teams by the judicious use of sub-standard free-lance staff.

162. It is important to note that at peak conference periods in 1973 the United Nations Office in Geneva had to use all the Russian-language interpreters available, both regular and free-lance staff, including a number of free-lance interpreters considered to be sub-standard.

163. It is clear that even if all the Geneva Office authorized posts for Russian-language interpreters were filled, the Office would have to continue to rely on the free-lance market for at least half of its interpretation teams through peak conference periods, and for at least many of its teams during the balance of the year, assuming that the conference programme remained at its present level. And it is equally clear that the existing free-lance Russian-language interpreter market is dwindling rapidly and is bound to disappear within a relatively few years unless new measures are taken to replenish it. If it does disappear, then an alternative must be found.

164. What is happening is the following. The Russian-language free-lance market in Europe upon which the United Nations and the specialized agencies have relied for many years has been made up of non-USSR nationals who learned their Russian in the USSR or learned it from their families who came from the USSR. There are today some thirty to forty qualified interpreters in this market and almost all are over 60 years of age and some as old as 75. As these individuals die or withdraw from the market, they are being replaced today only to a limited extent by some of the relatively few non-USSR nationals who still hold regular Russian-language interpreter posts in the United Nations and the agencies; and even this limited replacement process is bound to come

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<sup>28/</sup> See foot-note to preceding paragraph.

to an end soon. There is no other replacement possibility since today the only training of Russian-language interpreters who are qualified to service the United Nations and specialized agency conferences takes place in the Moscow Pedagogical Institute for Foreign Languages and graduates of this Institute do not go into the free-lance market.<sup>29/</sup> This Institute, towards which the United Nations makes a contribution from its regular budget (\$214,000 for 1974-1975), seeks to train approximately twenty interpreters, translators and editors per year for potential regular employment with the United Nations (see section 28, paragraphs 147-149 of A/9006).

165. Accordingly, unless the conference programmes of the organizations are significantly reduced or there are additional training programmes to produce qualified Russian-language interpreters, the Moscow Institute will have to expand its training programme significantly to produce sufficient interpreters to replace the free-lance market. This means that it will have to produce sufficient graduates to replace the approximately thirty to forty qualified free-lance Russian-language interpreters now living in Europe, while at the same time replacing on a regular basis the approximately forty Russian-language interpreters employed as regular staff members by the United Nations and the agencies. As of now, the Moscow Institute is clearly not geared to this task for it has been turning out for United Nations use an average of about three Russian-language interpreters per year and has not been able to fill all the vacancies left by interpreters who have completed their United Nations contracts and returned to the USSR or who have retired.<sup>30/</sup>

166. Unless action is taken to deal with this situation, the only alternative appears to be to cut back the conference programme or to fail to provide interpretation into Russian at certain conferences and meetings in the same way as interpretation into Chinese is not provided at many conferences and meetings because of the shortage of Chinese interpreters. Indeed, early in 1974 UNCTAD had to advise the delegation of the USSR that it would be unable to provide interpretation into Russian for some of the 1974 meetings in which that Government wished to participate.

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<sup>29/</sup> A few of these graduates - two of the four requested - were made available on a temporary basis to the United Nations for the 1973 General Assembly.

<sup>30/</sup> The Institute hopes to produce five interpreters for Geneva and one for Vienna in 1974 and to produce ten interpreters for the United Nations in 1975.

167. It should not be assumed from the foregoing that the only Russian-language problem relates to interpretation into Russian. At United Nations Headquarters in New York where there has been no real problem in securing interpreters into the Russian language from the Moscow Pedagogical Institute, it appears that there is a real difficulty in recruiting qualified interpreters with Russian as a "passive" language, i.e. to interpret from Russian into other official languages. It seems clear that the Organization must make greater and more systematic efforts to find candidates and to train them for United Nations employment. It should be noted that although the problem seems to be more acute at United Nations Headquarters than elsewhere, several Geneva-based organizations have indicated that they too have difficulty in finding qualified interpreters with Russian as a "passive" language.

168. The situation with respect to Chinese-language interpreters is the following. In 1973 such interpreters were employed as regular staff members only by the United Nations - none was employed by the specialized agencies. The United Nations had twenty-one established posts for Chinese-language interpreters but only eighteen of these were filled. All the eighteen were based in New York, although three were outposted to Geneva, and as many as twelve additional interpreters were sent from New York to Geneva for meetings there of bodies such as ECOSOC and the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of the Sea Bed and Ocean Floor Beyond the Limits of National Jurisdiction.

169. For 1974 and 1975, the General Assembly approved eight additional posts at Headquarters for Chinese-language interpreters and interpreter trainees and the Secretary-General proposed that five interpreters be outposted to Geneva. When the ACABQ recommended the approval of the eight posts, it questioned the outposting arrangements and stated (A/9008, paragraph 29.10) that "the Committee has been informed that the Secretary-General is studying alternative arrangements and that he will submit a report on this question to the General Assembly at its twenty-eighth session". Although no written report on the matter was submitted, the Under-Secretary-General in charge of the Department of Conference Services informed the Fifth Committee at the twenty-eighth session of the General Assembly (A/C.5/SR.1615) that "provision had been made to transfer three permanent posts for Chinese interpreters to Geneva in 1974".

170. Assuming that all twenty-nine Chinese-language interpreter posts were filled, this would provide a total of only some nine to ten Chinese-language interpreter teams. Such interpreters normally work in teams of three because they usually interpret both

into and from Chinese. In emergencies, some of the teams might be made up of only two interpreters and accordingly the number of meetings served simultaneously might be increased to some limited extent beyond the nine to ten figure.

171. The number of interpreter teams available on the assumption that all twenty-nine Chinese-language interpreter posts are filled is significantly less than the number available to the United Nations for other languages since the number of free-lance interpreters into Chinese is much more limited than is the case with free-lance interpreters into the other official United Nations languages. It is clear that twenty-nine Chinese-language interpreters cannot service at all times of the year even the United Nations meetings held in New York and Geneva alone and it must be remembered that these interpreters must also service meetings in Vienna, Nairobi and other places (such as Caracas) and must in addition provide interpretation services for at least one of the specialized agencies, namely the WHO.<sup>31/</sup>

172. The Chinese-language interpreter situation is even more difficult than it appears on the surface. Although twenty-nine posts have been approved by the General Assembly and the Department of Conference Services at Headquarters has commenced a training programme in an attempt to fill these posts, at the end of 1973 only four candidates were participating in the programmes and no new candidates were presenting themselves. Thus, at that time, when there were still three vacancies in the twenty-one posts approved for 1973, it appeared that even if the four trainees completed the training programme successfully, this would make possible the filling of only one of the eight new posts approved for 1974. Recently, the Chinese Mission to the United Nations in New York has supplied the Secretariat with a list of ten candidates who might become either interpreters or translators. It is not clear at this time how many will qualify for interpreter posts.

173. The Department of Conference Services at Headquarters has dealt with the Chinese-language interpreter situation in close consultation with the Chinese Mission to the United Nations in New York. It has asked the Mission to designate those meetings which it wished to have serviced by the limited number of Chinese-language interpreters available. The Mission has accepted the lack of interpretation into Chinese at other

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<sup>31/</sup> Several of the specialized agencies have made their own arrangements with Chinese Government Ministries to secure Chinese-language interpreters for their meetings. Note in paragraph 228, reference to the ACABQ's suggestion (A/8874) for the establishment of a Chinese-language pool in Geneva to serve both the United Nations and the specialized agencies.

meetings and the Secretariat has not had to turn down any requests for Chinese-language interpretation. For the future, as for the past, the Department of Conference Services intends to bring the level of Chinese-language interpretation up to that of the other languages as rapidly as desired by the Chinese Government and as made possible by the availability of candidates. It is unclear how the situation will develop but, at present, the prospect of any significant increase in the number of Chinese-language interpreters is not bright.

174. The foregoing illustrates how serious the present interpretation situation is. One can expect that if it continues to be dealt with as in the past, it will become even more difficult, particularly with the added need to find Arabic interpreters for the proceedings of the General Assembly. Clearly a new approach to the problem is required on the part of the United Nations and the specialized agencies.

175. At least in so far as the United Nations is concerned, the time has undoubtedly come to recognize that the reliance on free-lance interpretation staff, which made sense with respect to the small United Nations conference programme at Geneva some 25 years ago, is no longer appropriate in the case of a programme of today's size. It is rather surprising that the United Nations has spent millions of dollars in recent years to increase to twenty-five the number of conference rooms in Geneva equipped for simultaneous interpretation and has not, at the same time, taken steps to provide for the necessary number of interpreters on a regular and assured basis. It must be conceded, of course, that up until the last year or two, the reliance on free-lance interpretation had worked reasonably well. However, one would have thought that all the warnings given in the past to the effect that the free-lance system had definite limitations would have occasioned a significant change in approach by this time.

176. When an organization constructs a conference room equipped for simultaneous interpretation, it could be argued reasonably that part of the equipment is a team of interpreters always available to make the room usable. If this approach were accepted completely, then the Geneva Office should have twenty-five regular staff interpreter teams instead of the seven it has today. However, it is clear that even taking into account today's large conference programme and the possibility of a limited expansion, only some twenty conference rooms, namely ten rooms in the new conference wing and ten in the old Palais, are expected to be used for United Nations meetings during the next few years for periods totalling more than four to six months per year. It seems not unreasonable to conclude that with careful planning, the interpretation requirement of

the twenty-five rooms could be handled by fifteen interpretation teams. Such an approach would result in the addition of eight regular staff interpretation teams to the Geneva Office.

177. A similar conclusion is arrived at by a different approach. Today the Geneva Office employs eighty to ninety free-lance English, French, Russian and Spanish interpreters, that is about ten teams, at peak conference periods, even when some of the new large conference rooms are not in use. If the peak periods can be reduced by 25 per cent by levelling out the Geneva conference programme, and reliance can be had on regular staff interpreters representing 75 per cent of the free-lance staff employed at present peak periods, this would require the employment of some seven to eight additional regular staff interpreter teams.

178. If a comparison is made with New York Headquarters, a somewhat lesser number of regular staff teams than suggested in the preceding paragraphs would appear to be called for. In 1973, New York provided interpretation service for 2,733 meetings, using seven regular staff teams for some nine months of the year and nine teams, including one free-lance team and one from Geneva, for some three months; and it believes it needs one more regular staff team. In 1973 Geneva provided interpretation service for 3,641 meetings, or 25 per cent more than New York. Assuming New York's need for interpretation teams is eight to ten then Geneva's need should be some eleven to thirteen.

179. Another method of calculation is to assume that an interpreter team can service two meetings per day for four days a week (as recommended by the Medical Service) or eight meetings a week. Then assume that the team can work solidly for forty-four weeks of the year, that is fifty-two less six weeks annual leave and two weeks of public holidays. This would mean that in the course of the year the team can theoretically service 352 meetings. Since, in 1973 there were 3,641 meetings in Geneva requiring interpretation, some eleven teams would have been able to service them. However, it cannot be hoped to use interpretation staff as efficiently as these assumptions would suggest. Illness cannot be avoided and the meeting schedule cannot be spread out so evenly as to avoid any peaks or valleys. Accordingly, there would seem to be a good case for at least some thirteen teams in Geneva on this basis.

180. In all these calculations one must not forget the need to send interpretation staff from Geneva to service meetings elsewhere in the world. Two or three teams at a time must sometimes be sent from Geneva for such meetings. To make allowance for this factor, at least one more team must be included in the foregoing calculations.



181. The question must be asked whether, if the Geneva Office has seven or eight additional regular staff teams of qualified interpreters, one could be certain that all these interpreters would be profitably employed throughout the year. As indicated above, the answer would appear to be yes. However, it must be conceded that this must depend in large part on the success which is achieved in evening out the Geneva conference programme. This, in turn probably depends on whether a committee on conferences having adequate powers is established. To the extent that the conference programme cannot be evened out, the addition of as many as seven or eight additional staff teams may not be justified and there may have to be a continued reliance on free-lance staff to service at least part of the programme.

182. It should be realized that it should be possible to make use of additional regular staff interpreters even if they were not fully utilized at all times in servicing United Nations meetings. One must not forget the needs of the specialized agencies. The expansion of the regular interpretation staff of the United Nations should take into account the possibility of making arrangements for the use of its regular interpretation staff by the specialized agencies which have very few regular staff interpreters of their own. Perhaps it would finally be possible to establish what has been spoken about for years, namely an inter-agency interpreter pool. Inter-agency consultation should take place before the expansion of the United Nations regular staff takes place and it should continue as the expansion proceeds.

183. Clearly, an expansion of the regular interpretation staff in Geneva, should take place in stages and with the advice and the careful attention of a committee on conferences. The first obvious step appears to be an attempt to recruit regular staff up to the level of the free-lance interpreters now employed throughout the entire year. This is said to be about one and one-half teams.

184. It is true that it would cost more to employ eight additional teams of regular staff interpreters in Geneva than to rely on free-lance staff as at present. Last year the Geneva Office spent \$925,500 to employ free-lance interpreters. The free-lance rates have increased since 1 January 1974 by between 15 and 25 per cent and it is likely at today's rates that it would cost the Geneva Office some \$1,100,000 to employ the same number of free-lance staff as last year. In comparison, if the Geneva Office were to employ eight additional regular staff teams, each including two English, two French, two Spanish and two Russian interpreters<sup>32/</sup>, and it is assumed that half of

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<sup>32/</sup> Chinese-language interpreters are already employed on a regular staff basis.

these interpreters would be employed at grade P-4, step VI, and half at grade P-3, step VI, it would cost the Geneva Office about \$1,500,000 in net salaries and post adjustments plus additional amounts for allowances and pension contributions.

185. Against this additional cost must be weighed the fact that the Geneva Office would not only have an assured supply of qualified interpreters but also could effect a significant saving in time and effort (and accordingly expense) which go into the preparation and administration of free-lance contracts. Today it is very difficult to secure the services of a free-lance interpreter for as long as a month at a time and the average contract is for only about a two-week period. As a result the Geneva Office had to prepare and administer some 758 contracts in 1973.

186. Finally, it should be noted that regardless of the cost, within a few years the United Nations is likely to have no option in the case of Russian-language interpreters except to employ them on a regular staff basis in view of the fact that the free-lance market is rapidly disappearing.

187. Having stated what appears desirable, one is faced with the realities of the situation today. Little purpose is served by suggesting the employment of additional regular staff interpretation teams by the Geneva Office if adequate numbers of qualified candidates for such employment are not available. What has been said earlier about the shortage of Chinese-language and Russian-language interpreters and the limited success of the inter-agency interpretation training programme in Geneva, makes it apparent that today adequate numbers of qualified candidates for employment as interpreters are simply not available. This does not mean that the proposal to increase the numbers of regular staff interpreters should be abandoned, particularly when today's reliance on free-lance staff appears no longer to be adequate to cope with the present conference programme. It means that serious and determined efforts must be made to produce the necessary candidates.

188. Consideration must be given to strengthening significantly the inter-agency interpreter training programme and to seeking the assistance of interested Governments in finding candidates for the programme. This may require the establishment of a special recruitment programme with its own budgetary provision. Consideration must also be given to special measures to increase the output of certain categories of interpreters such as Chinese- and Russian-language interpreters, if an inter-agency programme is unable to produce any. There are indications that the Geneva Office is beginning to give the necessary consideration to such measures.

189. Further, it may well be that the United Nations and the specialized agencies will have to increase the financial remuneration offered to interpreters. Given the competition today for the services of simultaneous interpreters and the difficulties experienced by the United Nations and the agencies in recruiting candidates for such positions because of the rates of remuneration which can be obtained by free-lance interpreters, it seems desirable to review the grading standards which now apply to the interpretation posts.

190. If these measures appear unlikely to meet the needs of the situation and it is desirable to maintain the United Nations conference programme at its present level, consideration will have to be given to reverting to the practice of earlier years when certain bodies, particularly expert bodies such as the ACABQ, carried on their work without any interpretation or with limited consecutive interpretation.

(4) Co-ordination within the United Nations and with the specialized agencies

(a) Co-ordination between United Nations Headquarters and the Geneva Office

191. The relationship of United Nations Headquarters and the Geneva Office with respect to conference activities is part of the broader relationship between these two centres and it shares the ambiguities of that broader relationship; although there are various understandings and working arrangements, there is no very clear definition of authority or responsibility as between the two centres. Since it is impossible to deal adequately with the relationship in the conference area without dealing with the problem of the broader relationship between Headquarters and Geneva - something which cannot be done in this report - the consideration given to the matter here is necessarily a limited one.

192. Although as indicated below there are problems which exist in the Headquarters/Geneva relationship in the conference area, one must recognize that these two centres, acting at times separately and at times jointly, have had to cope with a massive conference programme which was the result of decisions taken by Member States, often without regard to existing conference capacity or existing commitments or available conference resources. Somehow, Headquarters and the Geneva Office have managed to meet most of the conference demands made upon them, not only in New York and Geneva but elsewhere in the world. It has required great skill, hard work and daily improvisation to meet these demands which have often been arbitrary and without regard to the realities of the situation. It is quite likely that the pressure under which the

conference secretariats in New York and Geneva have worked for many years have been responsible, in part, for the failure to work out an entirely satisfactory relationship between the two centres.

193. While both Headquarters and the Geneva Office recognize that, at least in theory, Headquarters "controls" the entire United Nations conference programme, the conference operations of the Geneva Office are carried on quite independently and with no real supervision by Headquarters. It is true that Headquarters exercises some control over the Geneva Office budget requests for conference resources and on occasions reduces such requests, for example, those for temporary-assistance funds, below the amount considered necessary by the Geneva Office. It is also true that at times Headquarters establishes dates and lengths of sessions in Geneva despite the objections of the Geneva Office based upon budget, servicing, recruitment, accommodation or other difficulties. Despite these facts, it can be said that basically the Geneva Office runs the conference operation there.

194. There is only a minimum of sharing of staff resources between the two centres and this is understandable in view of the heavy conference programme of each. Some Geneva Office interpreters are sent to Headquarters for the General Assembly sessions (eight interpreters in 1973) but except for these and a few translators, revisers and stenographers, it has rarely been possible in more recent years to make the limited regular staff resources available for meetings at Headquarters. The conference staff resources of Headquarters, principally interpreters (notably Chinese), and translators and typists on home leave are, in a limited number of cases, made available to the Geneva Office when there is a real need (in 1973 eleven interpreters were made available in June, and fifteen were made available in July-August).

195. In so far as United Nations conferences outside of New York and Geneva are concerned (excluding meetings of the regional economic commissions and those of UNIDO) the general principle is that Headquarters services conferences in the western hemisphere and Geneva services conferences held elsewhere. However, very frequently it is necessary for one of the centres to provide conference staff to help service meetings under the control of the other.

196. In addition to the fact that the two centres operate virtually independently from one another, there are other reasons for the existence of certain problems, although limited in nature, in the Headquarters/Geneva conference relationship. The first is the fact that unlike Headquarters, Geneva has been primarily a conference centre with

relatively few substantive units and with the necessity of servicing many "visiting conferences". This in turn has led to a difference, explained earlier, in the method of recruiting staff to provide conference services, with New York relying almost completely on regular staff (except for General Assembly sessions), and Geneva relying heavily on free-lance and, to some small extent, on borrowed staff. Given these differences plus the uncertainties in the overall Headquarters/Geneva relationships, it is not surprising to find that at times difficulties arise in communication between the two offices, a lack of understanding on the part of each of some of the problems of the other and certain differences in the practices which are followed.

197. Secondly there is the fact, stemming in part from the factors mentioned in the preceding paragraph, that the two centres have different organizational structures for dealing with conferences. In New York there is the Department of Conference Services which includes the Interpretation and Meetings Division, the Translation Division, and the Editorial and Official Records Division. In Geneva a single Director controls both Conference and General Services. Within that Office, the conference area includes the Conference Division, the Interpretation Division, the Languages Division and the Documents Division. In so far as the Conference Division is concerned, its actual servicing activities are limited to conference room attendance. Unlike Headquarters' Interpretation and Meetings Service, it has no authority over the interpreters but is responsible for editorial and documents control as well as a number of other activities including long-term space management. The only field of activity common to the Interpretation and Meetings Service at Headquarters and the Conference Division at Geneva is the planning of meetings, the co-ordination of meetings servicing and conference room attendance. This lack of exactly corresponding responsibilities of the units in the two centres, except for the Translation Division at Headquarters and the Languages Division at Geneva<sup>33/</sup>, has not facilitated communication between them.

198. An example of lack of communication and understanding between the two offices is that relating to the availability of Russian-language interpreters. On 26 October 1973 the Department of Conference Services at Headquarters informed the Joint Inspection Unit as follows: "As for the supply of new regular Russian interpretation staff, the Moscow courses have proved most satisfactory. The number of interpreters supplied each year to New York, Geneva or Vienna is determined in the light of our stated projections. So far the Moscow Course has met our needs and, so long as we forecast our requirements approximately a year in advance, it should continue to be able to do so.". Shortly

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<sup>33/</sup> The co-ordination between these two units appears to be good.

after the receipt of this information, the JIU learned that one of the Geneva Office's established posts for Russian interpreters had been vacant since some time in 1972 and that two additional posts had been unfilled since the beginning of 1973, despite requests for replacements from the Moscow Pedagogical Institute for Foreign Languages. And on 14 November 1973, the Director of Conference and General Services, Geneva, wrote to the Department of Conference Services at New York that "as you probably know, we constantly suffer from the difficulty of filling established posts, especially for the Russian language. Obviously we do not get a sufficient number of recruits among the candidates trained in Moscow".

199. A second example of the lack of a common position on the part of New York and Geneva relates to the inter-agency interpreter training programme in Geneva initiated in 1968 and financed in part from the regular United Nations budget since 1969. Although trainees from that programme were recruited in Geneva by the Geneva Office and by some of the specialized agencies there, the Interpretation Division at Headquarters declined for several years to accept them<sup>34/</sup> and only in late 1973 was this position reversed.

200. A specific example of the difficulty of communication between the two centres occurred in relation to the Law of the Sea Conference to be held in Caracas during the period 20 June-29 August 1974. Despite an exchange of cables over a period of many months in late 1973 concerning staffing arrangements for that Conference and despite the fact that Headquarters should have been aware of the Geneva conference programme for 1974 and of the limits on the availability of Geneva resources during the period of the Caracas conference, Headquarters asked Geneva on 9 November to confirm that staff required to service the Conference would be available from the permanent Geneva establishment and from the free-lance market there. Geneva replied that it had repeatedly tried to make clear to New York that its regular establishment was already fully committed and that it would already be drawing on the free-lance market in Europe for other scheduled meetings at the time of the Caracas conference. It is difficult to understand how a situation like this could have developed.

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<sup>34/</sup> On the ground that this policy was required to maintain interpretation standards at Headquarters.

201. The fact that there is a lack of clarity as to the responsibility for the conference programme in the Palais and that, as a result, important matters are sometimes neglected is evidenced by the following example which relates to the right of the World Health Organization to hold meetings in the Palais des Nations. When the WHO offices were located in the Palais prior to 1966, that organization had the right, under a formal agreement dated 15 February 1950, to use the Assembly hall, the Council Chamber, as well as other meeting rooms in the Palais during such periods and on such terms and conditions as were fixed from time to time by WHO and the United Nations. When WHO moved its offices from the Palais, there was an exchange of correspondence in 1966 and 1967 between the Director-General of WHO on the one hand, and the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the Director of General Services at United Nations Headquarters on the other, concerning the right of WHO to continue to hold meetings in the Palais. It was agreed on both sides that the formal agreement of 1950 was terminated but there was a difference of views with respect to WHO rights in the future. The Secretary-General of the United Nations stated in his letter of 5 October 1966 that he understood that WHO wished to continue to use the Palais for its meetings and he said that the United Nations would "endeavour to meet the requirements of WHO". In his letter of 18 January 1967, the Director-General of WHO indicated his dissatisfaction with the suggestion of the Secretary-General of the United Nations and stated the view that WHO "should be given by the United Nations a more definite understanding than that which has been proposed". The Inspectors are informed that the files of WHO, and the United Nations files in both New York and Geneva, disclose no reply to the Director-General's letter of 18 January 1967. The United Nations files in New York contain a copy of a letter dated 13 March 1967 from the Director of General Services at Headquarters to the Director-General of the Geneva Office requesting the latter to negotiate an agreement with the Director-General of WHO on this matter, the agreement to be ratified by an exchange of letters between the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the Director-General of WHO. It appears that there is no indication in the files of the United Nations in New York or Geneva, or in the files of WHO, that any further action was taken in this matter. (In fact, the Geneva Office is said to have no copy of the letter of 13 March 1967 to the Director-General of that Office.) Thus, although WHO continues to use the Palais for its World Health Assembly meetings each May, the question of whether it has an absolute right to continue to do so has not been resolved and no United Nations official in New York or Geneva appears to consider himself charged with the responsibility for settling the matter.

202. A rather important example of lack of co-ordination between Headquarters and Geneva in the conference area is that relating to the reporting of conference workloads. It appears that for some years the report of the two centres, as contained in the budget, on the number of meetings they have serviced have provided no real basis for a comparison of staff workloads.

203. Headquarters has reported the total of all official meetings, including those without interpretation service, and all unofficial meetings for which it provided interpretation service. In the last five years the number of meetings without interpretation included in the totals reported has always been considerably less than 10 per cent and usually closer to 5 per cent so that the totals provide a reasonably accurate picture of the interpretation workload.

204. In the case of meetings held in Geneva, there have been reported in the budget a variety of totals without indicating exactly what they represented. For example, in the budget estimates for the biennium 1974-1975 (A/9006) it was stated in paragraph 29.25 of Section 29B (Conference Services, Geneva) that "in 1972 interpretation services were required in two, three, four or five languages in over 4,000 meetings". In paragraph 29.28 of Section 29 it was stated that "the number of half-day meetings involving the [Conference] Division in Geneva and elsewhere has increased from 2,735 in 1969 to over 5,300 meetings in 1972". In paragraph 29.34 of Section 29 it was stated that "the number of meetings serviced by the Geneva Office continued to rise from 2,585 in 1969 to 3,238 in 1971 and 3,418 in 1972".

205. In the ACABQ report on the proposed programme budget for 1974-1975 (A/9008) it was stated in paragraph 29.5 that the workload for Geneva in 1972 included 4,634 "meetings held" there in comparison with 2,685 "meetings held" in New York. Whereas the New York figure of 2,685 included only 217 meetings without service, or about 8 per cent of the total, the Geneva figure of 4,634 included 1,216 without interpretation, or about 26 per cent of the total. Thus the Geneva figure of 4,634 meetings which was supplied to the ACABQ was a questionable basis for considering whether an increase in interpreter staff was justified.<sup>35/</sup>

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<sup>35/</sup> The JIU has been informed by the Geneva Office that the data it issues for the budget and managing purposes provide a breakdown by types of meetings. For example, for 1972 the breakdown showed that while the total number of meetings held in the Palais or serviced by the Geneva Office was 5,329, the number of meetings held in the Palais by specialized agencies and intergovernmental organizations was 695, leaving a total number of 4,634 UN meetings (figure shown in the budget presentation); but the breakdown also showed that of that figure, only 3,418 meetings were with interpretation. Effective January 1974, statistical data are broken down further to show how many of the



206. It is somewhat surprising that these differences in the manner of reporting the number of meetings in New York and Geneva have gone virtually unnoticed for many years and that only now is consideration being given in Geneva or New York to changing the practice.<sup>36/</sup> Obviously this situation must be corrected before the next budget estimates are prepared.

207. The examples of lack of co-ordination between Headquarters and Geneva in certain cases do not prevent one from arriving at the overall conclusion that both Headquarters and the Geneva Office have made outstanding contributions to the Organization in the provision of conference services over many years. The examples do suggest, however, that there is room for improvement in the co-ordination between the two centres and that such improvement is essential if the Secretariat is to continue to cope successfully with the increasingly heavy burdens imposed by the overall conferences programme. A similar view appears to be held by the ACABQ which, in paragraph 29.3 of its report (A/9008) on the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1974-1975 stated the following:

"... in the interest of efficiency the two services [the Department of Conference Services at Headquarters and Conference Services at Geneva] must be regarded as parts of the same whole, and ... there is need to strengthen co-operative arrangements between the two so as to make best use of the established posts, reduce reliance on short-term staff where the employment of such staff is uneconomical, and work for a more rational conference pattern at Headquarters and at Geneva".

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meetings without interpretation nevertheless involve some servicing i.e. either translation, written or sound recordings, reproduction, amplification and/or miscellaneous room servicing, etc.

<sup>36/</sup> As recently as 2 January 1974, the Department of Conference Services at Headquarters put out a wall-chart entitled "Calendar of Conferences and Meetings of the United Nations to be held in 1974". This chart contains two graphs showing respectively, by months, projected meetings at Headquarters and at Geneva in 1974. Not only are the graphs drawn to two different scales but reflect meetings of different types. The meetings reflected by the New York graph are only United Nations meetings with interpretation service while those reflected by the Geneva graph are all meetings using conference rooms in the Palais including meetings without service and those of specialized agencies, non-governmental organizations and various intergovernmental organizations.

(b) Co-ordination with UNIDO (Vienna), UNEP (Nairobi) and the regional economic commissions (Addis Ababa, Bangkok, Bierut and Santiago)

208. Because of its location, the Geneva Office rather than Headquarters serves as the primary point of contact with UNIDO and UNEP with respect to conference activities.

209. Although UNIDO has a quite large conference-servicing staff (sixty Professional posts) it has only four interpreter posts. It has had, since 1967, an agreement with IAEA for a joint interpretation service which includes seven IAEA regular staff members along with the four UNIDO interpreters. It is necessary to supplement this service throughout the year with free-lance staff, of which some 70 per cent must be recruited in Geneva, and when possible, with interpreters borrowed from the Geneva Office or the specialized agencies (primarily ILO). Arrangements exist between UNIDO and the Geneva Office and ILO for obtaining such staff when available. Further, UNIDO interpreters (and sometimes those of IAEA) are made available from time to time to the Geneva Office and ILO when they are not required in Vienna. In addition, when the Geneva Office is called upon to plan and service meetings in Vienna of Geneva-based organs or special conferences, it makes use of UNIDO's staff resources (and sometimes those of IAEA) to the extent possible.

210. In so far as UNEP is concerned, the Geneva Office was initially involved in 1973 in policy consultations on the most rational and economic use of the conference facilities in Nairobi and on the related problems of conference planning and servicing. Subsequently the Geneva Office was requested to arrange to lend or to recruit the necessary conference staff to supplement the small UNEP permanent conference staff for the purpose of servicing UNEP conferences.

211. For the session of the Governing Council of UNEP in March 1974, the Geneva Office recruited in Europe and sent to Nairobi against replacement two full teams (sixteen) of regular staff interpreters as well as seven translators, seven revisers and thirteen stenographers. This staff was paid from UNEP temporary-assistance funds.

212. Since UNEP has no budgetary provisions for regular interpreter posts for the years 1974 and 1975 and has a provision for only five translator posts for these years, it seems certain that the Geneva Office will continue for the immediate future to be asked to assist in recruiting interpreters and in arranging for the translation of UNEP meeting documentation.<sup>37/</sup> This, of course, will have an impact, although not great at first, on the already heavily utilized free-lance market in Geneva.

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<sup>37/</sup> The Executive Director has requested (UNEP/GC/17/Rev.1, paragraph 27) that provision be made in 1975 for six Professional posts (five translators and one editor) and five supporting General Service staff to be financed from the UNEP fund.

213. The relationship of Headquarters and Geneva with the regional economic commissions (other than ECE) in the area of conference servicing has been limited; in a few cases there have been loans of interpreters, translators and revisers from Headquarters and Geneva to those commissions.

(c) Co-ordination between the United Nations and the specialized agencies

214. For more than twenty years the United Nations and the specialized agencies have recognized the desirability of at least a measure of co-ordination in their conference activities. It is interesting to note that when, in February 1952, the General Assembly requested (A/RES/534 (VI)) the Secretary-General to draw up a pattern of conferences for the United Nations, it asked him to do this "after consultation with the executive heads of the specialized agencies". The Secretary-General consulted the agencies in the course of 1952 and reported to the General Assembly (A/2243, paragraph 7), that they believed "that the satisfactory scheduling of the meetings of the different international organizations was largely dependent upon long-term and firm arrangements regarding the place and time of the meetings of the Economic and Social Council, adding that when such arrangements were made, the efforts of other bodies to arrange meetings in such a way as to meet most fully the convenience of Governments and make the most rational use of conference facilities would be still more effective". The Secretary-General also stated in his report that in his view there was a need for "co-ordination of conference programmes with all specialized agencies in Europe to avoid overlapping dates and consequent competition for temporary staff". In its resolution of 20 December 1952 (A/RES/694 (VII)), which established the first pattern of conferences, the General Assembly invited "the specialized agencies concerned to give due consideration to this pattern in drawing up their own programmes of meetings".

215. In its report (A/C.5/731) to the Fifth Committee at the twelfth session of the General Assembly in 1957, Sub-Committee 9 of that Committee stated the following with respect to the final paragraph of A/RES/1202 (XII) which called upon the specialized agencies, as well as all United Nations organs, "to review their working methods and the frequency and length of sessions":

"As regards the final paragraph of the draft resolution, the Sub-Committee considers it important, as in the case of the existing pattern, closely to associate the specialized agencies with the recommended arrangements, which represent an essential element of administrative and budgetary co-ordination. The Sub-Committee is well aware of the active steps which various agencies have already taken towards a possible reduction in the volume of their programme of meetings. The problem is, however, not confined to any single

organization. Rather, it represents a collective problem for the States Members of the United Nations family of organizations, since the aggregate number of meetings, their duration and the question of their overlapping are tending to strain the resources of Governments and to make adequate representation difficult.

It appears to the Sub-Committee that the independent formulation of conference programmes by the United Nations, on the one hand, and by other international organizations, on the other, is not conducive to the most economical use of meeting facilities and of qualified language staff. It would be useful therefore for the several organizations, especially in Europe, in drawing up their conference programmes, to intensify existing arrangements for consultation and liaison on such matters as the location of conferences, their frequency, length and staffing."

216. In 1966 the Ad Hoc Committee of Experts to Examine the Finances of the United Nations and the Specialized Agencies considered inter alia the conference activities of these organizations (A/6343). It noted that the increase in such activities had given rise to a number of problems and that, apart from the question of the availability of physical facilities, there was the fact that only a limited reservoir of qualified temporary conference staff was available and that competition for their services was becoming more and more severe each year. In paragraph 104 of chapter IX of its report, the Committee recommended inter alia the following:

- "(c) All the organizations in the United Nations family should inform the Secretary-General in good time of the conferences and meetings they are planning and when taking their decisions in this regard, they should be guided by the following procedures:
  - (i) the Secretary-General, in order to carry out his responsibilities for servicing conferences and meetings, and as Chairman of ACC, should, in consultation with the organizations in the United Nations family, draw up in advance a draft consolidated annual calendar of all conferences and meetings, reconciling as far as possible the total available resources and the views expressed by the various bodies concerned;
  - (ii) the appropriate organs of each of the organizations concerned, in their endeavours to bring about close co-ordination among themselves, should be invited to take their decisions in establishing their own programmes of conferences and meetings on the basis of the consolidated calendar."

217. At its twenty-first session in 1966 the General Assembly in A/RES/2239 (XXI) requested the Secretary-General:

- "(a) To consult with the other members of the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination, in accordance with the recommendation in chapter IX of the second report of the Ad Hoc Committee of Experts to Examine the Finances of the United Nations and the Specialized Agencies, to draw up in August of each year, for submission to the General Assembly, in his capacity as Chairman of the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination, the provisional calendar of meetings and conferences planned by the entire United Nations family of organizations for the two following calendar years."

218. Although an effort was made through the CCAQ machinery to construct a comprehensive provisional calendar of conferences and meetings for all the organizations, as requested by the Assembly, it soon became apparent that it was not feasible to do this for all the hundreds of meetings of subsidiary bodies. Accordingly, since 1967 the Secretary-General has submitted to the General Assembly each year, for its information when approving the annual calendar of United Nations conferences, a provisional calendar of conferences and meetings of only the principal organs of the specialized agencies for the next two years. The provisional calendars of agency meetings for 1974 and 1975 were included in document A/9214 submitted by the Secretary-General to the twenty-eighth session of the General Assembly.

219. Thus in the United Nations system today, the co-ordination of the scheduling of conferences amounts simply to the making available to each agency of information concerning the recurrent meetings of the principal organs of the others. This information does not normally include special conferences, even though these may be major in nature. For example, document A/9214 did not indicate that the ITU intended to hold a major conference (the World Administrative Radio Conference for Maritime Mobile Telecommunications) in Geneva from 22 April to 7 June 1974. Moreover, there are no existing arrangements designed to prevent a serious overlapping of the major meetings of the various organizations, for example, the overlapping of the ITU Maritime Conference in Geneva mentioned above, or the overlapping of the UPU Congress in Berne, from 22 May to 4 July, with the WHO Assembly and the ILO Conference in Geneva in May and June respectively. For some years the CCAQ attempted to develop co-ordination arrangements among the organizations in the United Nations system in the matter of conference planning but even the limited arrangements which were arrived at broke down within a comparatively short time.

220. There are, of course, a few instances in which co-ordination in conference planning among the United Nations organizations does exist. Since the WHO Assembly and the ILO Conference are held in the Palais des Nations in May and June respectively each year, the United Nations endeavours to schedule only a limited number of meetings in Geneva during these months. However, the need for this limitation by the United Nations has been increasingly ignored in recent years; for example, in 1973 the Governing Councils of UNDP and UNEP both met in Geneva in June while the ILO Conference was meeting at the Palais and this overlapping resulted in a severe strain on the totality of the conference staff resources available.

221. There is also considerable co-ordination between IAEA and UNIDO in Vienna in planning meetings there and this results in large part from the fact that they must on occasion use the same conference facilities and that they have a joint interpretation service.

222. Until recently the lack of co-ordination in conference planning among the organizations in the United Nations system has had little adverse effect, except perhaps on Governments which have found it difficult to supply the necessary manpower to participate in two or three major conferences at a time. The timing of the meetings of the specialized agencies has made little difference to ECOSOC since the specialized agency reports dealt with by the ECOSOC have related only to the activities of prior years. However, if the ECOSOC now takes seriously its role, set forth in part III of resolution E/1768 (LIV) of 18 May 1973, of co-ordinating and making recommendations concerning the future programmes of the specialized agencies in the context of a system-wide, medium-term plan, then it will be important to relate the timing of specialized agency conferences to that of ECOSOC sessions.

223. A second aspect of the conference activities of the United Nations system which calls for co-ordination is that of the employment of conference staff, and particularly interpretation staff. As indicated above, it has been noted for some twenty years that the organizations were competing with one another each year for the same free-lance staff and it has long been predicted that growth in conference programmes would at some point exhaust the limited reservoir of qualified free-lance staff.

224. To deal with this problem, the CCAQ secretariat has made a modest effort in recent years to increase the availability of qualified interpreters. In 1968 it promoted the establishment of an inter-agency interpreter training programme in Geneva which was designed to train interpreters for regular employment with the organizations and

accordingly to reduce to some extent their reliance on the free-lance market. However, this training programme has been a small one (it has never had more than nine trainees at a time) and it has produced primarily interpreters into English and French and a smaller number of interpreters into Spanish. It has not trained interpreters into Chinese and Russian and unfortunately it is these categories which have been in the shortest supply.<sup>38/</sup>

225. The CCAQ has also made efforts to establish an inter-organization "contrat-cadre" (similar to a "when actually employed contract") which would guarantee free-lance interpreters a certain number of days' employment each year. It has attempted to form an inter-organization "contrat-cadre" pool of associate interpreters (those who have completed the training course and are awaiting appointment by the organizations as regular staff members). Thus far, these efforts have not been successful on an inter-agency basis and it seems likely that in the long run individual agencies will be led to take independent action along these lines.

226. CCAQ's main activity with regard to conference staff has been the negotiations with the Association internationale des interprètes de conférence (AIIC) and the Association internationale des traducteurs de conférence (AITC), the representative bodies of free-lance interpreters and translators in Europe, Asia, Africa and Latin America. Since 1969, the European-based organizations have entered into a single agreement with each of these associations, with co-ordination being carried out on a continuing basis through the CCAQ secretariat.

227. Apart from the CCAQ efforts, co-ordination among the organizations with respect to conference staff has been limited largely to the lending of staff, primarily interpreters. This has been pretty much a one-way traffic since, apart from the Geneva Office of the United Nations, none of the European agencies has a sizable number of interpreters as regular staff members who are available for loan.<sup>39/</sup> Because of the

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<sup>38/</sup> Even this limited training programme is now threatened by the fact that some of its graduates are refusing to accept United Nations contracts since such contracts might involve service in New York where salaries would not be as attractive as free-lance pay in Europe.

<sup>39/</sup> FAO has five, IAEA has seven, ILO has twelve but of these only three are full-time interpreters and the other nine interpret only when not otherwise engaged, ITU has none, UNESCO has five, WHO has between five and seven, WMO has four who also serve as translators and IMCO and UPU have none. IMCO and UNESCO have a small number of "contrat-cadre" interpreters.

fact that agencies have so few regular staff interpreters, the arrangements for lending staff which now exist represent, in most situations, the only realistic possibility of "pooling" regular staff.

228. However, in 1972 the ACABQ recommended (A/8874) in the special case of Chinese-language staff, of which there were none in Geneva, that the organizations in Geneva establish, at least for the immediate future, what might be called a "pool" of Chinese-language staff. It also recommended that the CCAQ "give early consideration to the question of the optimum arrangements for the provision of Chinese-language services at conferences and meetings outside Headquarters, New York".

229. The CCAQ considered the matter in Paris in the spring of 1972 and at that meeting the representative of the United Nations took the following position (CO-ORDINATION/R.984):

"United Nations suggested to the specialized agencies that they should, if it would be helpful to them, co-ordinate all their requirements for major meetings through United Nations Headquarters which, in co-operation with the Chinese Mission, would be in a position to ensure that the meetings were serviced properly. Where there were multiple calls on the existing resources of Chinese-language staff, the views of the Chinese Mission were taken into account. The specialized agencies would therefore have to organize among themselves, but the United Nations Office of Conference Services was prepared to act as a central point to co-ordinate the needs of the agencies and the advantages of co-ordinating as a group as against submission of individual requests were clear."

230. It appears that thus far only WHO has taken advantage of the United Nations suggestion and that the other agencies have made direct arrangements with Chinese Government Ministries to obtain interpreters for their major conferences.

231. In the past year it has become evident that the limited joint efforts on the part of the United Nations and the specialized agencies to assure the availability of qualified interpretation staff have not been adequate and that the long-predicted shortage of such staff has now materialized. This matter is discussed in paragraphs 142-174 and the discussion will not be repeated at this point. Suffice it to point out here that despite repeated warnings that such a shortage was bound to develop with the growth of the meeting programmes, the organizations in the United Nations system have done relatively little in the past in a co-ordinated way to attempt to avert the shortage, that most of them have now acknowledged the existence of the situation only reluctantly and that as yet there still has not been developed a serious co-ordinated plan for dealing with the problem in the future.



232. In this connexion it is noted that in October 1973, the United Nations suggested to the specialized agencies that the Preparatory Committee of the ACC be invited to convene in Vienna in June or July 1974, an inter-agency meeting of officials directly concerned inter alia with "language arrangements". In its note making this suggestion, the United Nations stated that "it seems to us that the constantly increasing demand for language services, both in volume of work and in range of languages, suggests an examination of whether we are obtaining the optimum overall use of the total resources, staff and other, available. Recent developments regarding services in Chinese is an example".

233. It would seem that this matter of the lack of an adequate number of qualified interpreters to service the conference programmes of the United Nations system is one which calls for inter-agency recognition at the highest level and for inter-agency action at the earliest possible moment. The United Nations statement quoted above and the suggested meeting in Vienna in mid-1974, seem scarcely adequate recognition of the existence of the interpretation problem, or the urgency with which a solution should be sought by the United Nations system.

(5) Meetings of United Nations bodies away from their established bases (headquarters)

234. As mentioned in paragraph 37 the basic feature in every General Assembly resolution since 1952 dealing with the pattern of conferences has been the principle that, in general, bodies should meet where they are "based" or "headquartered"<sup>40/</sup> and that meetings away from the base or headquarters should be exceptions to the rule.

235. There have been two basic reasons for the acceptance of this principle. The most obvious is the extra cost occasioned by the travel of staff and in some cases, the additional cost of recruiting conference staff on a temporary-assistance basis. It is because of this cost factor that ever since 1957, General Assembly resolutions on the pattern of conferences have contained a provision that meetings may be held away from the established headquarters on the basis of a governmental invitation only if the inviting Government has agreed to defray the additional costs involved. This principle was formulated by Sub-Committee 9 of the Fifth Committee which stated (A/C.5/731) that "such a provision is necessary, in the Sub-Committee's opinion, if the basic principle regarding the most economical use of resources is to be fulfilled". This matter is discussed further in paragraphs 393-417 below.

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<sup>40/</sup> For purposes of the pattern of conferences, the "base" or "headquarters" of a United Nations body has been defined as "the office housing the secretariat by which that body is serviced" (A/C.5/732).

236. A second reason to which far less attention has been given but which may well be more important is that to which the Secretary-General referred as "administrative disruption" in paragraph 12 of his report (A/C.5/722) to the General Assembly in 1957 which reads in part as follows:

"Any meeting held away from the headquarters of the body concerned necessarily has an impact on staff resources, which may be described generically as an 'administrative disruption'. The extent of the disruption will, however, vary widely as between substantive staff, on the one hand, and conference services staff, on the other. Staff members in the former category work in a particular field, and while their assignment to a distant meeting-place may be costly and retard the completion of other work on which they are engaged, the disruption occurs within a limited sphere. Conversely, the staff employed for interpretation, translation, *précis*-writing, etc. constitutes a common service intended to be available for any organ at the duty station where the staff serves. Hence the disruption in the conference services resulting from a meeting away from the two main conference centres of the United Nations differs from that which occurs in respect of other staff. This disruption, which arises in every such case, will vary according to the ease or difficulty of engaging temporary, substitute language staff, a matter which at Headquarters, for example, presents great difficulty. The recent London session of the Sub-Committee of the Disarmament Commission, which necessitated the assignment of conference services staff from Headquarters and Geneva for periods of up to six months, illustrates the problem under reference. Furthermore, the fact that an organ meets away from its headquarters does not mean that the work-load of the conference services at that headquarters is thereby much reduced; the services in question will still have responsibility for a major part of the pre-meeting documentation as well as for subsequent work on post-conference documentation. Thus, even were the aggregate number of meetings to remain stable, the above factor would limit the possibility of making a flexible transfer of conference services staff from Headquarters to Geneva pari passu with a shift in the number of meetings from the one to the other;".

237. The disruption in the conference services to which the Secretary-General referred is particularly important today, given the problem, referred to in paragraphs 142-174 above, in securing an adequate number of qualified interpreters, particularly Chinese- and Russian-language interpreters. If a body meets in New York and Geneva where other meetings are in session, it is possible for an interpreter to service one body in the morning and another in the afternoon. If, however, a body meets at a location where no other meetings are in progress, the valuable and scarce abilities of interpreters may well be under-utilized, with an adverse effect on bodies requiring the service in New York or Geneva.

238. A further disruption in conference services occurs when United Nations conferences are held away from New York and Geneva, namely, that occasioned by the work and the time involved in the preparation of such conferences. For each such conference, one or more

senior conference officers must make several trips, at the request of the host Government, from New York or Geneva to the country where the conference is to be held. There, they must work out with Government representatives the overall requirements of the conference and how these are to be met. On some occasions they are asked to advise on the selection of a proper conference site from among alternative proposals. They must follow up to make certain that preparations are going forward according to plan. Finally, they must be at the conference site a number of days before the opening of the conference to co-ordinate the installation of all the services required and to check on final arrangements.

239. In the experience of the Geneva Office, major conferences such as the Environment Conference at Stockholm and the Population Conference at Bucharest, necessitate at least two or three such visits, each requiring the conference officers concerned (and the substantive and public information officers who are normally involved in the preparatory visits and consultations) to be away from their desks for a minimum of three days, and longer when inter-continental travel is involved. Further, the office work involved in the preparation of such conferences namely, consultations, co-ordination efforts, correspondence, telephone calls, etc. require considerably more time than is necessary in the case of conferences held in New York or at Geneva.

240. Of importance is the fact that the time spent by Secretariat officials in preparing for conferences away from New York and Geneva, and the disruption which is caused to the work which must continue to be carried on at those locations, are not compensated for in the payments which host Governments make for "additional costs" of conferences which they have invited to be held in their countries.

241. It should also be noted that there are often special disadvantages and extra costs to Governments when bodies meet away from their bases. If a body meets at its base where other meetings are in progress, a delegate based there can cover not only that meeting but also the high points of the meetings of other bodies with which he is familiar. This is not the case if a body meets away from its base in a location where there are no other meetings or where there are meetings of other bodies with which the delegate is unfamiliar.

242. On the matter of extra cost to Governments, the question has sometimes been asked whether the direct costs to Governments of the travel and subsistence of their representatives is greater or less if meetings are held in Geneva rather than in New York. The answer seems to be that for meetings of a non-Headquarters-based body, the direct costs

to Governments are likely to be a little less if meetings are held in Geneva. Thus it was estimated in July 1973 that the total cost to Governments (travel and subsistence) of sending two representatives from capitals to the United Nations Sugar Conference in Geneva in 1973 was some \$203,000 and that it would have been \$218,000 had the Conference been held in New York.

243. The situation is different if a Headquarters-based body meets in Geneva. In the case of the summer session of ECOSOC in 1973, the cost of the attendance of two Government representatives coming from capitals to Geneva is estimated to have been about \$204,000 whereas it would have been about \$234,000 had the meeting been held in New York. However, if for the summer session of ECOSOC each Member State had sent to Geneva one member from its permanent mission to the United Nations in New York (a total of fifty-four individuals) the cost to Governments would have been increased by more than \$100,000. Actually for that session in 1973, seventy members of permanent missions in New York were sent to Geneva. In contrast, when ECOSOC met in New York for its spring session in 1973 only three members of permanent missions in Geneva went to New York. Because of this tendency to send members of permanent missions in New York to meetings in Geneva of Headquarters-based bodies, but not to send members of permanent missions in Geneva to New York for meetings there of Headquarters-based bodies, it is probable that when a Headquarters-based body meets in Geneva, it will require Governments as a whole to spend more in direct travel and subsistence costs than if the meeting were held in New York. It is of course probable that travel to Geneva of some members of permanent missions in New York is combined with travel for home leave or other purposes and thus does not constitute an extra cost to their Government.

244. Having noted certain disadvantages of having United Nations bodies meet away from their "base", one must grant that there are often valid reasons for this practice, particularly in situations in which inviting Governments agree to pay the extra costs involved.

245. First of all, it is clear that it is not possible today, as it was in the early days of the Organization, for all Headquarters-based bodies to meet in New York. It will be noted from Annex II that for most of the year New York's capacity to service meetings is fully utilized. Thus some Headquarters-based bodies must meet elsewhere and the question becomes one of which bodies, where they shall meet, and when.

246. Secondly, some subsidiary bodies meet away from their base because of the nature of the mandate given to them. However, care must be taken to ensure that this practice is not abused as it would appear to have been in some cases in the past.

247. Thirdly, it has already been noted in paragraph 81 that many members of permanent missions in New York believe there is a very real "change of scenery" benefit which comes from having Headquarters-based bodies meet in Geneva from time to time.

248. Finally, there is now substantial support for the proposition that it is beneficial for some Headquarters- and Geneva-based United Nations bodies to meet from time to time in parts of the world other than New York and Switzerland. Such meetings not only make the United Nations more of a reality to peoples of the world far away from New York and Geneva but also acquaint them more fully with the different points of view of participants in United Nations meetings. They also expose United Nations delegates to conditions and attitudes of which they might otherwise not be completely aware. However, it appears likely that significant benefits of this kind will accrue only if such meetings involve United Nations bodies important enough to attract considerable public attention and if their duration is short enough to make possible the attendance of high-level Government representatives.

249. Granted that there are valid reasons for having Headquarters-based bodies meet away from New York from time to time, one must recognize that there are real problems today with respect to the manner in which meetings in Geneva of Headquarters-based bodies are arranged. The problems arise first because most Headquarters-based bodies which wish to meet in Geneva insist on going there in the May-August period and thus create an impossible workload at that time. As indicated in paragraph 132, Geneva simply cannot service any more meetings in those months with available interpreters even though it may have additional conference rooms available. Secondly, some Headquarters-based United Nations bodies appear to believe that they have a prescriptive right to meet in Geneva every year, regardless of the effect that this might have on the conference programme as a whole or on other bodies which also wish to meet in Geneva. What is clearly required in this situation is greater restraint and discipline, a recognition of the limits on the possibilities of meeting in Geneva and a willingness to share the advantages of meeting there with other United Nations bodies and other delegates.

(6) The possibility of transferring conference staff from New York to Geneva<sup>41/</sup>

250. In recent years a number of representatives of Member States have expressed concern because of the fact that when a new United Nations meeting was proposed for Geneva or it was proposed that an existing Headquarters-based body should meet in Geneva, the financial implications paper prepared by the Secretariat would almost invariably indicate that holding such a meeting in Geneva would be significantly more costly than holding it in New York and this would lead to opposition to the meeting being held in Geneva. These representatives felt that it was misleading to state that meetings requiring the same number of conference rooms and staff and the same amount of documentation, whether held in Geneva or New York, were more costly if held in Geneva. They considered that the situation was an artificial one requiring correction. The extra costs resulted, they contended, not because meetings were held in Geneva, but because the Geneva Office was inadequately staffed in comparison to Headquarters. Geneva had far fewer regular conference staff than Headquarters and accordingly, while Headquarters was able to cover almost all meetings held in New York with regular staff, Geneva was forced for almost all meetings except those of Geneva-based bodies, to recruit free-lance staff or bring regular staff from New York, with resulting additional costs.

251. Accordingly it has been suggested on occasion that the situation should be corrected by transferring regular conference staff from New York to Geneva, thus distributing such staff more evenly between the two centres. The practicability of taking this suggested action is examined in the following paragraphs.<sup>42/</sup>

252. So far as interpreters are concerned, it has been pointed out in paragraphs 95-106 that Headquarters already uses all available regular staff interpreters in New York during the March-May and the General Assembly periods, that it must bring a full team from Geneva for the Assembly sessions and is unable now to supply Chinese interpreters

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<sup>41/</sup> The possibility and desirability of transferring substantive staff from New York to Geneva is a related matter but is a much more difficult and political one and will not be considered here.

<sup>42/</sup> In examining this possibility, it will be assumed that Member States are prepared to pay the additional cost of maintaining regular language staff in Geneva rather than in New York. As of 1 March 1974 the Geneva post adjustment was class 9.4 and the New York post adjustment was class 5. Thus to maintain a married staff member at grade P-4, step VI in Geneva on that date cost (net salary plus post adjustment at dependency level) about \$26,392 per annum as opposed to \$22,828 per annum in New York.

at a number of meetings throughout the year. Further there is only a very limited possibility of recruiting in New York free-lance interpreters into the Chinese and Russian languages. If any of the present regular interpreter staff were moved to Geneva, they would have to be replaced by staff brought from Geneva during the March-May and the General Assembly periods or the number of meetings held during those periods in New York would have to be reduced. A shift of regularly employed interpreter teams from New York to Geneva is thus not an attractive solution so long as free-lance staff are not available in New York and there is a limit on the overall number of available Chinese- and Russian-language interpreters.

253. If one considers moving translators from New York to Geneva one finds several problems. First of all, there is the fact that it is accepted policy at Headquarters to rely for précis-writing services on the translators in the English and French sections. At Headquarters, the normal précis-writing capacity of the language services between sessions of the General Assembly is somewhat less than that of the interpretation section since there are generally one or two meetings a day requiring interpretation services but not records. During sessions of the General Assembly it is necessary to strengthen the English section and to transfer French and Spanish translators to précis-writing to provide an adequate number of précis-writing teams. Since all the committees of the General Assembly require précis-writing services, it is obvious that a transfer of translators from New York to Geneva would have to be compensated for, particularly during the General Assembly, by recruiting additional précis-writers, by deferring more translation to provide précis-writers or by bringing staff from Geneva.

254. Perhaps even more important is the role of the translators in preparing pre-session and in-session documentation. Today there are already disruptions and delays in the translation of documents for meetings at Headquarters, particularly meetings of the General Assembly. The transfer of regular translation staff to Geneva and the assignment of a higher percentage of the remaining translators to précis-writing during the General Assembly would almost certainly mean utter chaos in the production of General Assembly documentation unless a very high reliance could be placed upon contractual translation.

255. Then too one must remember the relationship between the location of substantive staff which prepare documents and that of the staff which translate them. It would be inefficient and would occasion too many delays to have translation staff which were

transferred to Geneva continue to process documents prepared by substantive staff in New York. Thus, it is difficult to contemplate the transfer of translators unless this is accompanied by a transfer of certain substantive units from New York to Geneva. Here again one comes up against the office space problem.

256. An alternative to the possible transfer of interpretation staff from New York to Geneva would be a significant increase in the reliance by the Geneva Office on regular staff and a corresponding decrease in its reliance on free-lance staff. This possibility is discussed in paragraphs 175-189.

(7) The new United Nations programme and budget cycle

257. The adoption by the General Assembly of a two-year programme and budget cycle is a development which should prove helpful in rationalizing the United Nations conference programme.

258. This development has already had an impact in the economic and social field. It led ECOSOC at its 1973 sessions to renew its efforts, which had met with little success in earlier years, to schedule the meetings of most of its subsidiary bodies on a biennial rather than an annual basis. In part VIII of resolution 1768 (LIV) of 18 May 1973, ECOSOC decided that with the exception of the Council's body responsible for co-ordination, the Committee for Development Planning, the Commission on Human Rights and its Sub-Commission, and the regional economic commissions - which should meet every year unless any of the organs should decide or had decided otherwise with the concurrence of the Council - all other subsidiary bodies and expert and advisory bodies should meet biennially unless the Council decided otherwise. The Council decided further that the meetings of these other subsidiary and expert and advisory bodies should "be so timed as to ensure the submission of their report in good time for the relevant sessions of the Council and where appropriate to the Committee on Review and Appraisal and spaced so as not to overlap or follow too closely upon each other and so as to ensure that their programme objectives are fully reflected in the work programme and budget to be submitted biennially to the Council".

259. Despite this hopeful development, it was evident from the calendar of conferences (E/L.1551) submitted to the fifty-fifth session of the Council, and from the discussions there, that progress towards rationalization has thus far been limited. One reason for this is the fact that there are so many United Nations bodies now in existence in the economic and social field that it is difficult to fit all their meetings into even a two-year programme. Further, there is still a strong tendency to make exceptions for



"favourite" subsidiary bodies of ECOSOC and to permit them to hold "special sessions" which reconvert a biennial meeting pattern into an annual one. And there is the almost automatic acceptance of the creation by subsidiary bodies of ECOSOC of working groups which meet at various times throughout the year and so defeat the purpose of setting fixed meeting dates for the subsidiary body itself. (As pointed out elsewhere, this practice of creating working groups without regard to the resulting impact on the conference programme as a whole is also indulged in by subsidiary bodies of the General Assembly.) Certainly some flexibility is required but it must be a more disciplined flexibility than exists today.

260. Nevertheless, it should be possible to build upon the philosophy of the two-year programme and budget cycle in attempting to rationalize the conference programme not only in the economic and social fields but in other fields as well. One of the major reasons for changing the budget period from one to two years was the recognition that it is impossible to formulate, implement and evaluate a carefully considered programme and budget for an organization like the United Nations if it is presented on an annual basis. It is this realization which is relevant not only in the economic and social but also in other fields. It seems likely that in the case of all but the principal organs - and perhaps even in the case of some of these - meetings would be better prepared and more productive, and the decisions would more likely be implemented, if annual meeting patterns became biennial and if bodies now meeting twice a year met no more than once a year.<sup>43/</sup> Should this occur it is likely that the work of each body would receive more public attention when it did meet, and that the public image of the United Nations would be improved. It is clear that the public looks to the United Nations for action and that it does not equate with action an over-abundance of meetings which cannot be followed and a flood of resolutions which are too many to be read.

261. There naturally arises the question as to whether it would be appropriate to consider biennial sessions of the General Assembly. This would, of course, require the amendment of Article 20 of the Charter and is a matter of policy of such importance that the Inspectors would not venture to make recommendations concerning it. However,

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<sup>43/</sup> This is not a new thought. It was present in the report (A/6343) of the Ad Hoc Committee of Experts to Examine the Finances of the United Nations and the Specialized Agencies, in the report (A/7359) of the Committee on the Reorganization of the Secretariat, and in the reports of the Committee on Conferences.

because of the impact of General Assembly sessions on the conference programme as a whole, the Inspectors feel obliged to discuss in this report both the possibility of biennial Assembly sessions and certain other possible modifications in the present pattern of Assembly sessions.

262. The possibility of biennial sessions of the legislative bodies of international organizations was considered in 1966 by the Ad Hoc Committee of Experts to Examine the Finances of the United Nations and the Specialized Agencies. However, although that Committee recommended (A/6343, paragraph 104 (b)), that "those specialized agencies whose legislative bodies now meet on an annual basis should consider the possibility of biennial sessions", it made no such recommendation with respect to the General Assembly. It would seem that this position stemmed at least in part from the fact that "while the Committee reached unanimously the conclusion that the specialized agencies with an annual budget should prepare their budgets for a period of two years, there was a difference of opinion with respect to its application to the United Nations" (A/6343, paragraph 53).

263. Now that the United Nations has adopted a biennial budget cycle, Governments may wish to consider once again the possibility of biennial sessions of the General Assembly. There can be no question of the burden which these annual sessions place on Governments and on the Organization both in terms of the use of manpower and of cost. A great deal of time, money and energy could be devoted to what might be more productive purposes if General Assembly sessions could be placed on a biennial basis.

264. In considering the possibility of biennial sessions of the General Assembly, it should be recalled that two of the larger specialized agencies, UNESCO and FAO, have their legislative bodies meet only every two years<sup>44/</sup> while some of the smaller agencies (WMO, ITU and UPU) hold their General Conferences even less frequently. With ECOSOC meeting twice a year to formulate policy and programmes in the economic, social and human rights fields, with the Security Council available to deal with major political problems and with dozens of other bodies in existence discussing the whole gamut of United Nations problems throughout the year, one might conclude that the Organization would not suffer if the General Assembly met only every two years. And,

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<sup>44/</sup> ILO and WHO have thus far not changed from an annual to a biennial pattern. This would require, in the case of the ILO, an amendment of article 3 (1) of its constitution, and, in the case of the WHO, an amendment of article 13 of its constitution.

of course, the General Assembly could always be called into special, or emergency special sessions if developments so warranted.

265. There are without doubt several reasons against attempting to place meetings of the General Assembly on a biennial basis. First, of course, is the problem of amending the Charter. Secondly, there is the fear that abandonment of annual meetings might result in a decline of public interest in the United Nations and its efforts. Thirdly, the United Nations does not have a body like the Executive Board of UNESCO or the Council of the FAO which can meet between biennial sessions of the legislative body and deal with important questions which cannot appropriately be handled by ECOSOC or the Security Council. This is a very practical problem which conceivably might be dealt with by creating a governing body on the pattern of the General Committee of the General Assembly.<sup>45/</sup> Meetings of such a body would require much less servicing and would probably cost Governments and the Organization significantly less in terms of time and money, than a General Assembly session of the present type.

266. Member States may well consider that, given the fundamental nature of the United Nations and the manner in which it operates, a biennial pattern for sessions of the General Assembly is not desirable. If such were the case, an alternative possibility might be considered, especially as it would not require amendment of the Charter. This would be to decide that, in each year in which the biennial programme and budget is to be approved, the General Assembly might meet as it does today from the third Tuesday in September until mid-December but that in alternate years it might meet for only four to five weeks with a limited agenda and a limited number of committees. If annual conferences of the ILO and WHO can be concluded in three weeks and the biennial conferences of UNESCO and FAO can be concluded in four to five weeks, it might be possible to complete the sessions of the General Assembly in alternate years within a period of four to five weeks.

267. If the General Assembly met for only four to five weeks in alternate years, then it might not be unreasonable to consider its meeting away from New York in some of those years, perhaps successively in different regions of the world on a rotation basis. Such meetings of the General Assembly would comply with the criteria mentioned

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<sup>45/</sup> This body might be advised by the ACABQ on administrative and financial matters.

in paragraph 248 for obtaining a benefit for the United Nations when its meetings are held outside of New York and Geneva; they would involve the most important body of the United Nations - and so would attract considerable public attention - and they would be short enough to ensure the attendance of high-ranking governmental representatives during a major part of the sessions. If such sessions could be limited to plenary meetings plus meetings of two or three committees at the most, it is likely that they would cost Governments no more, and perhaps less, than normal ten to twelve-week sessions in New York. Further, holding such sessions away from New York might well reduce the pressure to have other Headquarters-based bodies meet abroad during the same year and this could result in savings, both in terms of the efficient use of manpower and of cost.

268. Should neither of these alternatives be considered acceptable by Member States, the General Assembly might wish to give further consideration to the suggestions concerning the duration of the General Assembly session contained in paragraphs 391-393 of the JIU report on United Nations documentation and on the organization of the proceedings of the General Assembly and its main bodies (JIU/REP/71/4 (A/8319 and Corr.1)) and to recommendation No. 1 contained in that report that "the maximum duration of a session of the General Assembly should be ten weeks". Although that recommendation was not related to the new biennial programme and budget cycle of the United Nations, it is certainly worthy of consideration in any serious attempt to rationalize the conference programme of the United Nations.

269. One of the main benefits of having the General Assembly meet only biennially, or having shorter sessions would, of course, be to make it easier to spread other United Nations conferences and meetings throughout the year and so to reduce the problems resulting from present peak conference loads.

270. Mention must be made of one problem which the new two-year programme and budget has created with respect to the conference programme. It was evident at the fifty-fifth session of the Economic and Social Council that great confusion existed as to what bodies should be involved, and what role they should play, in the formulation and approval of the programme and budget. The schedule for approving the programme and budget which was proposed by the Advisory Committee in 1972 (A/8739, paragraphs 10-13) and which apparently was approved by the General Assembly in A/RES/3043 (XXVII), stressed the need to have the comments of the programme bodies, including ECOSOC, available when the ACABQ examined the programme and budget. However, this was not the

case in 1973, and, at the fifty-fifth session of ECOSOC, many delegates appeared to believe that the ACABQ comments and recommendations should have been before the ECOSOC when it considered the programme and budget. This matter will have to be resolved if a calendar of conferences is to be drawn up intelligently.

(8) The problems created for the conference programme by the establishment and the meeting programmes of subsidiary bodies

271. It will have been noted from chapter III A that one of the criticisms of the United Nations conference programme which has been repeated over and over again has related to the creation of so many subsidiary bodies and to the lack of control by major organs over the activities of their subsidiary bodies. Such activities have included not only the meeting programmes of the subsidiary bodies themselves but also the creation by these bodies of new subsidiary bodies with their own meeting programmes.

272. As was noted in paragraph 61, the Committee on Conferences called attention in 1968 (A/7361) to the continued creation of new bodies by the General Assembly and ECOSOC "without the disbanding of existing bodies or any significant reduction in the frequency, length or servicing of meetings of these sessions". This fact has become especially important today now that it is found that there are certain absolute limits on the number of United Nations meetings which can be serviced. In such a situation it appears imperative that before the General Assembly or ECOSOC creates a new body which is expected to conduct meetings, the creating body must satisfy itself not only that there is no other body already in existence which can do the job, but also that it will be possible to provide meeting services for the new body - and when and where and at what cost those services can be provided.

273. In paragraphs 10-12 of its report (A/7361) to the twenty-third session of the General Assembly the Committee on Conferences described at length the problems resulting from substantial changes made by subsidiary bodies in the duration, timing and even the venue of particular meetings. It said that "apart from the administrative considerations, there is also an important question of principle at stake here: does any subsidiary body possess the power to depart from the meetings programme laid down by the General Assembly without first seeking the approval of its parent body?". It added that while a rigid policy was "out of the question", it was "essential nevertheless to provide that changes in the meetings programme do not seriously disrupt the deployment of conference servicing resources and other preparations made on the basis of the calendar authorized by the General Assembly". What the Committee appeared to be seeking was what has been referred to in this report as "disciplined flexibility".

274. As mentioned in paragraph 60, the Committee on Conferences suggested that the problem could be solved by giving to it the responsibility for reviewing changes proposed by subsidiary bodies in the approved calendar - other than very insignificant changes in dates - and that these changes should be subject to its "concurrence". The General Assembly went only part of the way with this suggestion and provided simply that proposals made outside the regular session of the Assembly for changes in the approved calendar would be subject to the "recommendations" of the Committee on Conferences.

275. The Inspectors believe that the solution proposed by the Committee on Conferences was the correct one. In chapter V, it is proposed that once again a committee on conferences should be established and that it should be given the authority to deal with subsidiary bodies which was proposed by its predecessor in 1968.

276. Subsidiary bodies make it difficult to maintain a rational conference programme, not only by frequently departing from the programme approved by the General Assembly, but also by creating new subsidiary bodies, usually in the form of sub-committees or working groups which require conference servicing. This matter was dealt with by ECOSOC at its fifty-fourth session when it decided (E/5367, page 34) by a vote of 25 votes to none with 2 abstentions that "its subsidiary bodies with the exception of the regional economic commissions, may not create either standing or ad hoc inter-sessional subsidiary bodies without prior approval of the Council".

277. Two points should be noted about this decision. The first is that the creation by a subsidiary body of a sessional committee can create just as much of a problem as the creation of an inter-sessional committee, if it requires additional language servicing. Consequently, such actions should be forbidden if they require language servicing in addition to that provided for the subsidiary body itself.

278. Secondly, the ECOSOC decision is not very meaningful if ECOSOC approves in a pro forma way all requests from its subsidiary bodies to create additional inter-sessional subsidiary bodies. In this connexion it is to be noted that after ECOSOC in July 1972 "reaffirmed the principle that its subsidiary organs should meet not more frequently than every other year and invited those bodies meeting more frequently to consider whether biennial meetings would not be feasible", the Committee for Development Planning reviewed its meeting programme at its ninth session. The Committee decided (E/5293) that it needed not only to hold a session every year, but also to convene three working groups every year. Although this decision involved an increase in the

number of working groups of the Committee from one to three, the increased number was included in the provisional calendar of conferences and meetings for 1974 prepared by the Secretariat (E/L.1551) and this inclusion was approved by the Council after only minimal discussion and after the Council had merely taken note of the report of the Committee for Development Planning. This is not to suggest that meetings of the working groups of the Committee for Development Planning are not useful but merely to suggest that ECOSOC might well have given more careful consideration to the necessity for additional working groups.

279. To make meaningful the ECOSOC decision that its subsidiary bodies cannot create new subsidiary bodies without the approval of ECOSOC, what is needed perhaps is a procedure along the following lines. ECOSOC might consider together, under a separate agenda item, all proposals for the creation of new subsidiary bodies in the economic and social field which require conference servicing, having before it at that time, a statement by the Secretary-General as to whether those bodies could be serviced and, if so, where, when and what cost. Prior to this consideration by ECOSOC, meetings of proposed new subsidiary bodies should not be included in provisional calendars of conferences. If ECOSOC decided to approve the creation of new bodies (this approval would be provisional and subject to General Assembly approval of meeting schedules for the bodies), it would also consider and recommend to the General Assembly the dates, places and duration of the meetings of these bodies. The General Assembly, acting initially through its committee on conferences (if created) and the Fifth Committee, would consider these recommendations along with all other proposals for the inclusion of meetings in the calendar of conferences.

280. Despite the somewhat critical comments made above concerning the lack of adequate control over subsidiary bodies in the economic and social field, it must be recognized that ECOSOC has made an effort to deal with the problem. This is not true in certain other areas where subsidiary bodies feel free to enlarge their conference activities by creating additional subsidiary bodies.

281. The evolution of the meetings programme of UNCITRAL and its working groups is an example of what has been happening. UNCITRAL was established by the General Assembly in 1966 by A/RES/2205 (XXIV). The resolution provided that the Commission should normally hold one regular session a year and that, if there were no technical difficulties, it should meet alternatively in New York and Geneva. By 1974 the meeting pattern of UNCITRAL has grown to include the Commission's own session in New York 13-17 May, a Working Group on Negotiable Instruments in New York 7-18 January, a

Working Group on International Sale of Goods in Geneva 21 January-1 February, a Working Group on International Legislation on Shipping in Geneva 4-22 February, and a Conference on Prescription (Limitation) in the International Sale of Goods in New York 20 May-14 June. (Incidentally, the approved calendar of conferences for 1974 noted under the heading "Periodicity" that the three working groups mentioned above might hold one or two sessions a year.) Thus the meeting programme of UNICTRAL was increased, by the use of inter-sessional working groups, plus a special conference, all requiring language servicing, from four weeks at its first session in 1968 to some twelve weeks in 1974.<sup>46/</sup> All the meetings were tacitly approved by the Sixth Committee of the General Assembly and there was no discussion of them when the calendar of conferences was approved by the Fifth Committee.

282. As in the case of the working groups of the Committee for Development Planning, the working groups of UNCITRAL have produced very useful results. Further UNCITRAL has always scheduled the meetings of its working groups at other than peak meeting periods. The question remains, however, whether an organization which has limited resources for the servicing of meetings can permit one subsidiary body to make its own judgement concerning the amount of those resources to be devoted to its meeting programme, without regard to the needs of other problem areas with which the organization must deal.

283. In order to deal with this problem, it is believed that the General Assembly should take a decision, similar to that of ECOSOC, providing that no subsidiary body of the Assembly may create standing or ad hoc inter-sessional subsidiary bodies without the prior approval of the Assembly. The Assembly could then consider together at each session all requests for the creation of new subsidiary bodies, having before it the advice of a committee on conferences on the availability of conference resources to service such bodies.

(9) The final approval of United Nations conference programmes

284. As indicated earlier in this report, it is believed that an essential element of a rational United Nations conference programme is the principle that the General Assembly must have the last word concerning all United Nations conferences which require meeting services and accordingly are included in the annual calendar of conferences.

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<sup>46/</sup> The 1974 total will be more than twelve weeks if at the Conference in May two or more committees meet simultaneously.



285. This fact was recognized in 1957 by Sub-Committee 9 of the Fifth Committee (see paragraph 41), it was reiterated in 1965 by the Fifth Committee itself (see paragraph 52) and it was repeated in 1968 by the Committee on the Reorganization of the Secretariat (see paragraph 135 of A/7359). In all these cases the conclusion was based upon the function of the General Assembly, under Article 17 of the Charter, to consider and approve the budget of the Organization.

286. Regardless of Charter considerations, pragmatic considerations today require acceptance of this principle. With conference resources taxed to the limit, the decision as to the use of those resources can be made intelligently only by one body, looking at the entire proposed conference programme in all fields and aware of the totality of the resources available. That body can only be the General Assembly or an organ to which it delegates this responsibility.

287. But it is not enough to say that the General Assembly must have the last word. Clearly the General Assembly cannot routinely consider the details of the calendar of conferences in plenary session. There must be one - and only one - Main Committee of the Assembly which considers the calendar and makes final recommendations to the plenary session concerning all United Nations conferences. This Committee must have the authority and responsibility to consider all proposed conferences in the light of total conference resources and be able to recommend to the plenary session a conference programme compatible with these resources. It cannot be bound by the recommendations of ECOSOC or of other Main Committees of the Assembly, although it must, of course, consider such recommendations carefully and attempt to comply with them to the extent possible.

288. Clearly the only Main Committee of the Assembly which can make final recommendations to the plenary session concerning the conference programme is the Fifth Committee. This is not only because that Committee is the appropriate one for recommending administrative arrangements and budgetary appropriations but also because it is the only body of the Assembly which sees the proposed conference programme as a whole and is aware of the totality of conference resources and how these might be used to provide optimum benefit to the Organization.

289. It may be difficult for some to accept this position. In the past, despite the fact that annually the Fifth Committee has approved a calendar of conferences and recommended it to the General Assembly, many delegations have contended that the Fifth Committee had not, and should not have, the power to refuse to include in the calendar,

meetings decided upon by substantive bodies, or even the power to modify dates, durations and venues proposed by substantive bodies. Indeed, this view has usually prevailed in cases in which controversy has arisen. For those who did not consider that conference costs were too high and who believed that Governments could cope effectively with the present level, or even an increased level of the conference programme, that position was a tenable one, so long as there were no limitations on the availability of conference resources. It is no longer a tenable position today since it is clear that there are very real limitations on United Nations conference resources and that some one body must decide how to relate total conference demands to total resources. Unless Member States are prepared to accept the concept that one Main Committee of the Assembly, namely the Fifth Committee, must make the final recommendations as to what conferences should be held in a given year, when and where and for how long, there is little hope of rationalizing the conference programme and all efforts to do so, including this study, are likely to be a waste of time.

290. There remains the question of how the Fifth Committee should arrive at its recommendations concerning the conference programme. It is proposed below that a committee on conferences should be established by the General Assembly to assist the Fifth Committee in this matter. Since it is proposed that the committee on conferences should also have other functions, the matter of its establishment and terms of reference are dealt with in a separate chapter (V).

(10) The cost of the United Nations conference programme

291. In 1966, the Ad Hoc Committee of Experts to Examine the Finances of the United Nations and the Specialized Agencies reported "that for 1967, as far as the United Nations alone is concerned, the relevant sections of the budget estimates provided for an expenditure of about \$26 million, spread over various sections of the budget, for costs directly attributable to conference activities. This is equivalent to some 20 per cent of the total United Nations budget. The corresponding figures for 1960 were about \$13 million also 20 per cent of the total budget" (A/6343, paragraph 98).

292. In its report (A/9008) on the proposed Programme Budget for the Biennium 1974-1975, the ACABQ noted that the initial estimates for section 29 (Conference Services) submitted by the Secretary-General for the biennium totalled \$62,969,000. It then stated:

"29.1 Section 29 gives the requirements of the Department of Conference Services at Headquarters and those of the Conference Services in the United Nations Office at Geneva. The estimate for 1974-1975 is \$11,066,000 or 21.3 per cent higher than the combined appropriations for 1972 and 1973. For the

reasons given in paragraph 29-15 below the rate of increase at Geneva is higher than at Headquarters.

29.2 The section does not include all United Nations requirements for conference services. The Secretary-General requests additional credits for conference services also under sections 1, 3, 6, 9, 10, 11, 14, 15, 16, 18, 20, 24 and 25 in a total amount of \$24.2 million."

293. From the foregoing it would appear that the total estimated cost of the United Nations conference programme for the biennium 1974-1975 is some \$87 million (or \$86 million taking into account the ACABQ's recommended reduction in section 29).<sup>47/</sup> It should be noted, however, that this total was calculated in a manner different from that used by the Ad Hoc Committee of Experts. The principal difference in the methods of calculation is the fact that the Committee's figures for staff costs were gross while the ACABQ's figures for such costs were net of staff assessment. There are other less significant differences such as an inclusion by the Committee of the cost of the travel of representatives to meetings and the cost of printing, both of which were excluded by the ACABQ.

294. Using the same method of calculation as was used by the Ad Hoc Committee of Experts, one concludes that total conference costs for the biennium 1974-1975 amount to about \$105 million. Thus the cost for one year of the biennium is roughly \$52.5 million or just about twice the cost for 1967.

295. It is also of interest to note that the cost of the conference programme for the 1974-1975 biennium continues to represent, as in 1960 and 1967, just about 20 per cent of the gross budget.

296. It is not considered appropriate to deal further in this report with the matter of conference costs. The JIU has dealt at length with the cost of conference documentation in its "Report on United Nations documentation and on the organization of the proceedings of the General Assembly and its main bodies" (JIU/REF/71/4 (A/8319 and Corr.1)). The matter of the cost of travel to attend United Nations meetings was dealt with in the JIU "Report on the use of travel funds in the United Nations" (JIU/REF/72/4 (A/8900)). Staff costs, which represent by far the largest part of conference costs, are constantly being reviewed by ACABQ.

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<sup>47/</sup> This ACABQ figure was based on the initial budget estimates and had to be adjusted upward to a limited extent during the twenty-eighth session of the General Assembly.

297. It is anticipated that if a committee on conferences is established as is suggested in chapter V, that committee should be of assistance in the effort to make the most economical and efficient use of conference resources. The Committee on Conferences which was in existence in the years 1967-1969 was able, even with its limited powers, to make some progress in this regard. It would be expected, of course, that any new committee which might be created would work closely with the ACABQ when dealing with matters affecting conference costs.

#### IV. POSSIBLE CHANGES IN THE PRESENT PATTERN OF CONFERENCES

##### A. Paragraph 9 of A/RES/2609 (XXIV)

###### (1) The basic principle

298. The basic principle of the present pattern of conferences which is spelled out in paragraph 9 of A/RES/2609 (XXIV) is that, apart from certain stated exceptions, "United Nations bodies shall plan to meet at their respective established headquarters". This has been the basic principle for more than twenty years. For the reasons stated in paragraphs 234-249, the Inspectors believe that this principle is a sound one and should be maintained.

299. Unfortunately, this general principle, although repeatedly reaffirmed by the General Assembly, is clearly not understood and is disregarded by a number of United Nations bodies and their secretariats. Every year certain United Nations bodies, which are not among the stated exceptions in paragraph 9 of A/RES/2609 (XXIV), deliberately "plan" to hold their meetings away from their established headquarters, despite the specific prohibition against this practice.

300. For example, in 1972 the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, a Headquarters-based body, "decided" to hold a meeting in Geneva, in 1973, despite the General Assembly mandate that it plan to meet at Headquarters. In 1973, the Committee for Development Planning, also a Headquarters-based body, "decided", subject to the approval of ECOSOC, to meet in Vienna rather than in New York, in 1974, despite the Assembly mandate that it plan to meet in New York; and this despite the fact that the meeting in Vienna would involve an additional cost of \$20,100. The fact that in this latter case the Committee was invited to meet in Vienna by UNIDO does not appear to justify a failure to comply with the Assembly's mandate.

301. Given the language of paragraph 9 of A/RES/2609 (XXIV), it seems clear that if a Headquarters-based body considers it necessary or desirable to meet away from Headquarters in the following year, it should limit itself to recommending such a course of action and explaining the reasons for it, so that the General Assembly can take these into account, along with other considerations, when approving the calendar of conferences for the coming year. Such a body should refrain from purporting to take a "decision" to meet away from Headquarters - a decision which it has no authority to take - and the Secretariat should refrain from including any such purported "decision" in the draft calendar of conferences submitted to the Fifth Committee of the General Assembly for approval. All recommendations by Headquarters-based bodies - other than

those provided for in the specific exceptions set forth in the pattern of conferences resolution - that they should meet away from Headquarters, should be submitted together to the Fifth Committee of the General Assembly (or in the first instance to any committee on conferences which may be established - see chapter V) for its consideration at the time it approves the annual calendar of conferences.

302. Although the Inspectors believe that the general principle described above should be maintained, they consider that the exceptions to that principle which are spelled out in paragraph 9 of A/RES/2609 (XXIV) require attention and these are examined in the following paragraphs.

303. In examining the various exceptions, the objective is to discover whether it is possible to shift, or even to eliminate, any of the meetings which, as a result of the exceptions, now occur at peak meeting periods. The aim is to obtain a more even distribution of meetings throughout the year. Although it may not be possible to reduce significantly the number of meetings at present peak periods, it should be possible and indeed it is essential, given the present availability of conference resources, to prevent the number from increasing. To achieve this, ways must be found to deal with the pressures to have more and more meetings in the present peak periods and especially the May-August period in Geneva.

(2) The Governing Council of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

304. The first exception provided for in paragraph 9 of A/RES/2609 (XXIV) to the general principle that United Nations bodies should plan to meet at their respective established headquarters relates to the Governing Council of UNDP. Sub-paragraph (a) of paragraph 9 provides that:

"The Governing Council of the United Nations Development Programme may, in accordance with its rules of procedure, hold one of its sessions at Geneva".

305. Pursuant to this exception, the Governing Council held its second 1973 session in Geneva at WHO headquarters from 6 June to 29 June. Its Budgetary and Finance Committee held meetings at the same location during the period 4 June to 21 June and an Ad Hoc Working Group on the Draft Statute for UNDP held meetings there during the period 4 June to 20 June. The Governing Council had held its first 1973 session in New York from 22 January to 9 February and the Budgetary and Finance Committee had met there from 18 January to 9 February.

306. The first question suggested by the foregoing is whether it is really necessary for the Governing Council (and its Budgetary and Finance Committee) always to meet twice a year. Rule 1 of the Council's rules of procedure provides that it "shall normally meet twice a year in regular session" (underlining inserted).

307. In 1968 the Committee on Conferences recommended that the General Assembly should invite the Governing Council (and a number of other bodies) to review the possibility of meeting only once a year. The General Assembly took the recommended action in A/RES/2478 (XXIII). Despite this fact, the Governing Council has continued to meet twice a year.

308. At its summer session in Geneva in 1973, the Council, on the suggestion of the Administrator, established an informal ad hoc working group which reviewed the frequency and timing of sessions of the Council as well as the volume of documentation involved. In this working group there was general agreement that "the system of two sessions a year should be maintained at least for the time being, it being recognized that the Governing Council must consider before the beginning of the next cycle its role in the country programming process, including evaluation and implementation". There was also general agreement that "the Budgetary and Finance Committee should continue to meet at each of the sessions".

309. The Inspectors are not qualified to judge whether or not two annual sessions of the Governing Council and its Budgetary and Finance Committee are really essential. However, because of the present critical situation with respect to the United Nations conference programme, they consider it desirable for the Governing Council and the General Assembly to keep this matter under continuing review.

310. The second question arising with respect to the meeting programme of the Governing Council relates to the necessity and desirability of maintaining its practice of holding its summer sessions in Geneva. The present practice<sup>48/</sup> is to meet there for three weeks in June and, as indicated earlier in this report, this is the time when the conference resources in Geneva are taxed to the limit. This limit was evident at the summer session in 1973 when the Secretariat was unable to provide interpretation services for more than two simultaneous meetings of UNDP bodies. Despite this fact, there was "general agreement" in the ad hoc working group referred

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<sup>48/</sup> This is not being followed in 1974 because of the decision to accept the invitation of the Government of the Philippines to meet in Manila.

to in paragraph 308 above, that "it would be preferable to hold a short session in January in New York and a longer session in June in Geneva or some other location. The possibility of holding the last meeting of the summer session during the first days of July should be explored".

311. If UNDP continues to hold its summer session in Geneva in June when the ILO is meeting, or extends its session into July when ECOSOC is meeting, this will make it impossible for other United Nations bodies, which at present do not meet there in this period, to be given that opportunity, unless meetings of other bodies which at present do meet there in that period, such as the International Law Commission, are scheduled at different times of the year. At the same time it should be noted that June and July are periods in which it is possible to hold some additional meetings in New York. The question arises, therefore, whether it is not possible for the Governing Council, in alternate years, to modify its present meeting schedule and hold its winter session in Geneva, when the Geneva meeting schedule is relatively light and hold its summer session in New York. This would make it possible, every other year, for some other United Nations body to have an opportunity to meet in Geneva in the summer without increasing the Geneva conference load at that time.

312. Certainly the possible change suggested is not inconsistent with paragraph 9 (a) of A/RES/2609 (XXIV) which provides that the Governing Council may in accordance with its rules of procedure, hold one of its sessions in Geneva. It is true that rule 1 of the rules of procedure of the Council states that the first session of the Council each year shall be held at United Nations Headquarters and the second at the "European Office of the United Nations" but this is subject to a proviso, namely, "unless the Governing Council decides otherwise". Thus there is no legislative reason why the Governing Council should not decide to follow the suggestion made in paragraph 311 above.

313. One possible justification for the Governing Council's meeting in Geneva in June every year is the fact that its June session immediately precedes the ECOSOC session there and accordingly those Governments which send the same persons from capitals to attend both sessions, can limit the travel cost to one round-trip fare. It is difficult to decide how much weight is to be given to this fact. The decision to hold the 1974 summer session of the Council in Manila suggests that there is no very strong justification for the Council to meet in Geneva simply because ECOSOC does. And, of course, the justification would vanish completely if ECOSOC should decide to hold its summer sessions alternately in New York and Geneva (see paragraph 357 below).



314. It is doubtful that the Governing Council's practice of meeting in Geneva in June can be justified on the basis of the convenience of the specialized agencies which are interested in following closely the meetings of the Council since the Council meets at the same time as the ILO Conference and at a time when the WHO secretariat is dealing with the post-session problems of the World Health Assembly. Further doubt is cast on this justification by the decision of the Council to meet in Manila in June 1974.

315. It is no solution to Geneva's problem to hold the summer session of the Governing Council away from both New York and Geneva; for example, in Manila. With the construction of the new conference facilities in Geneva, the problem of the peak conference period there in June does not relate to a shortage of conference rooms but to a shortage of interpreters. If the Council's meeting is held in Manila, it must be serviced from the same interpretation resources coming from Geneva and New York which would have been called on for a meeting in Geneva. Thus holding the Council's meeting away from Geneva does not reduce the strain on Geneva's staff resources or make it possible for some other body to meet in Geneva in June. As pointed out in paragraph 237, meetings held away from both New York and Geneva place an even greater strain on the already overtaxed conference staff resources than is the case when meetings are held at those two locations.

316. Accordingly it is suggested that the Governing Council and the General Assembly consider modifying the regular meeting schedule of the Governing Council so that (assuming two sessions a year continue to be held) in alternate years, the winter session of UNDP would be held in Geneva and the summer session for that year would be held in New York.

(3) The International Law Commission (ILC)

317. The second exception provided for in paragraph 9 of A/RES/2609 (XXIV) to the general principle that United Nations bodies should plan to meet at their respective headquarters relates to the ILC. Sub-paragraph (b) of paragraph 9 provides that:

"The sessions of the International Law Commission shall be held at Geneva."

318. Pursuant to this exception the ILC met in Geneva in 1973, in a normal ten-week session from 7 May to 13 July. It will be noted that this session overlapped with the World Health Assembly, the General Conference of the ILO, and part of the ECOSOC session. In the ILC's report to the twenty-eighth session of the General Assembly on that session (A/CN.4/L.204), it was stated in paragraph B.2 of chapter VII that "members of the

Commission deemed it indispensable to request a fourteen-week session for 1974".<sup>49/</sup>  
The General Assembly approved a twelve-week session from 6 May to 26 July 1974.

319. It was pointed out in paragraph 38 that the exception with respect to the ILC has existed ever since 1952. However, the 1952 resolution (A/RES/694 (VII)) provided that the ILC would meet in Geneva "only when its session could be held there without overlapping with the summer session of the Economic and Social Council". In 1957 the ILC pointed out that this prohibition against the overlap with ECOSOC created "difficulty" for a number of members of the Commission. However, Sub-Committee 9 of the Fifth Committee of the General Assembly which considered this matter, stated that the prohibition against an overlap was "directly related to the principle of the most rational and economic use of resources" and recommended that it should be maintained. This recommendation was accepted by the General Assembly in A/RES/1202 (XII).

320. In 1962 the Secretary-General pointed out (Annex 1 of A/5317) that as the Commission met for ten weeks, the proviso that it should not overlap with the Council had only been met at the expense of an overlap between the first weeks of the ILC session and other meetings in Geneva. He said that this overlap had sometimes given rise to more inconveniences and costs than would have resulted from a reasonable overlap with ECOSOC at the end of the ILC session. Accordingly, he supported the ILC request that its sessions begin the first Monday in May and end about mid-July, regardless of the overlap with ECOSOC, and A/RES/1851 (XVII) provided simply that "the annual session of the International Law Commission would be held in Geneva". In 1965 in A/RES/2116 (XX) the General Assembly changed the language of the exception in the pattern of conferences resolution relating to the ILC to its present mandatory form, namely, that the sessions of the ILC "shall" be held in Geneva.<sup>50/</sup>

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<sup>49/</sup> The ILC held a fourteen-week session in Geneva from 26 April to 30 July in 1971, an eleven-week session in Geneva from 11 May to 24 July in 1964 and two sessions of four and eleven weeks respectively in 1966. The four-week session in 1966 was held from 3 to 28 January in Monaco and the eleven-week session was held in Geneva from 4 May to 9 July.

<sup>50/</sup> This brought the language of the pattern of conferences resolution into conformity with article 12 of the Statute of the ILC which, as the result of A/RES/1647 (XVI) now reads: "The Commission shall sit at the European Office of the United Nations at Geneva. The Commission shall, however, have the right to hold meetings at other places after consultation with the Secretary-General.". Prior to the adoption of that resolution in 1955, the first sentence of article 12 of the Statute read: "The Commission shall sit at the Headquarters of the United Nations.".

321. While recognizing the importance and value of the work of the ILC which has been commended by the General Assembly on many occasions, it is considered that the pre-emption by that body of such a large segment of the choice meeting time in Geneva, without regard to the overlap with meetings of other bodies or the consequent strain on United Nations conference resources, requires examination. There are at least three questions which must be asked, namely: (a) why does the ILC have to meet for ten weeks (or at times fourteen to fifteen weeks) per year? (b) why must the ILC always meet in Geneva when its secretariat, the Codification Division of the Office of Legal Affairs, is located in New York? and (c) why must the ILC always meet in the May-July period?

322. On the matter of the length of ILC sessions, there is no question but that this is due, at least in part, to the pace at which the ILC works. The ILC usually meets only once a day<sup>51/</sup> and avoids meeting on Friday afternoons and Monday mornings, so that a three-day weekend results. It is not for the Inspectors to judge whether this pace could be quickened without detriment to the work of the ILC, but it is noted that the meeting programme of the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL), a somewhat similar body of legal experts, is far more intensive. It is also noted that in its report (A/9008/Add.14) to the twenty-eighth session of the General Assembly, the ACABQ reiterated its earlier suggestion that the ILC "consider the possibility of a somewhat tighter schedule with a view to shortening the overall duration of the session". In any case, it is open to serious question whether the Organization can afford to devote so much of its scarce conference resources to the slow-paced work of one body which has already been in existence for twenty-five years.

323. The Inspectors are not aware of any substantial justification for the ILC to hold all of its sessions in Geneva. When the matter was considered in 1952 by the Special Committee on Programme of Conferences which formulated the first pattern of conferences (see paragraph 36), the only justification mentioned (A/2323, paragraph 27) was "the

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<sup>51/</sup> In an annex to the report of the ILC to the General Assembly on the work of its twentieth session (A/7209/Rev.1, page 48) it is stated that "as to the practice of holding only one plenary meeting a day, its endorsement by the Commission has been mainly based on the need to allow sufficient time for the private and individual work of the members, and to enable the Special Rapporteur of the topic being considered, the General Rapporteur, and the members of the Drafting Committee to keep pace with the work of the Commission and fully participate in its plenary discussions". It has been noted that at the 1973 session of the ILC the Drafting Committee held ten meetings during the ten weeks of the session and that on four occasions during the last ten days of the session the ILC met twice a day in plenary session.

preference which the International Law Commission has manifested to hold its sessions in Geneva". This justification was not considered strong enough at that time to warrant the ILC's meeting in Geneva if it overlapped with ECOSOC. It is difficult to consider it to be a valid justification today, given the competing claims of other United Nations bodies and the strain on the Geneva conference resources in the May-July period.

324. In 1955 the report (A/2934) of the ILC to the General Assembly gave the following justification for amending article 12 of the ILC's Statute to provide that the Commission should sit in Geneva rather than at United Nations Headquarters:

"26. In support of this proposal, the members affirmed that the European Office affords the best conditions for their work; that the atmosphere of Geneva is more favourable than that of New York for the studies of a body of technical experts called upon to solve legal problems, setting aside the political contingencies of the moment as far as possible; that Geneva has an exceptionally well-planned law library which is more complete than that at United Nations Headquarters and contains, inter alia, a remarkable collection of legal works in European languages. The members also stressed that, in their view, the transfer of the Commission's seat from New York to Geneva was calculated to simplify arrangements for its sessions by the United Nations Secretariat."

325. Today this rationale is not very convincing. As was mentioned in paragraph 81, many United Nations bodies, not only the ILC, find it more pleasant to meet in Geneva than in New York during the May-July period and there is no obvious reason why one body should have a preferred position in this regard. Further, it is difficult to accept the view that Geneva is at all isolated from "the political contingencies of the moment", given today's world-wide press, radio and television coverage in Geneva as well as elsewhere and the number of meetings with high political content held in Geneva in the May-July period. Indeed it is questionable whether experts codifying international law today should take into account only concepts formulated in the past, in isolation from new legal concepts which are developing and are often reflected in "the political contingencies of the moment".

326. The contention that the ILC should always meet in Geneva because this enables its members to have access to the law library in the Palais des Nations is not as convincing today as it may have appeared in 1955. Since that time (in 1961) the Dag Hammarskjöld Library has been added to United Nations Headquarters in New York. This Library is described by the United Nations Office of Public Information as follows:

"The Library is highly specialized in the subjects of international law and in political, economic and social affairs and is devoted primarily to providing information, research materials and library services required by

delegations and the Secretariat. It includes a collection of documents and publications of the United Nations and the specialized agencies, as well as books, periodicals and pamphlets concerning them. The Woodrow Wilson Memorial Collection, a gift of the Woodrow Wilson Foundation, contains documents of the League of Nations and publications dealing with the League, the peace movements and international relations between the two World Wars. There is also a special collection of maps and geographical reference books.

The services of the main Library are supplemented by two branch collections in the Secretariat building - for Economic and Social Affairs, and for Legal and Security Council Affairs." 52/

327. It is difficult to believe that this Library could not produce for members of the ILC, from its own collection or from the many law libraries in New York City, whatever materials they required. Certainly if there are adequate legal materials in New York for the United Nations Office of Legal Affairs and its Codification Division, it is likely that the same would be true for the ILC itself.

328. It is difficult to understand the last reason given by the ILC for always meeting in Geneva, namely that it is calculated to simplify arrangements for its session by the United Nations Secretariat. Since the secretariat of the Commission is located in New York it should be possible for it to make arrangements for sessions of the ILC in New York more readily than for sessions in Geneva.

329. Finally, it should be noted that the pattern of conferences provides (see paragraph 335) that sessions of the UNCITRAL alternate between New York and Geneva. There would appear to be a stronger reason for the UNCITRAL rather than the ILC to meet always in Geneva because of the location of UNCTAD there. If the UNCITRAL is able to meet alternately in New York and Geneva, the same should be possible for the ILC.

330. The case for the ILC's meeting at the time it does has generally been based upon the fact that many members of the Commission are professors of law and can meet only when their universities are not in session. Thus the Secretary-General said in 1952 (A/2243) that "Members of the International Law Commission are able to meet only during the university recess, and have always met during this period. The date suggested would thus be June until the first week in August." In the annex to the report of the ILC on the work of its twentieth session (A/7209/Rev.1, page 47) the matter is put less strongly, namely, that "this time of the year [spring or early summer] has been deemed

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52/ Everyman's United Nations, Eighth Edition, page 27.

most appropriate by the Commission to facilitate the full attendance of its members and ensure the timely submission of its annual report to the immediately ensuing session of the General Assembly".

331. With respect to this justification several facts may be noted. First of all, the present meeting schedule of the ILC has not resulted in the timely submission of its reports to the Assembly. Secondly, as of today, less than half of the twenty-five members of the ILC are full-time professors so that the argument made for the ILC to meet in the university recess is based upon the convenience of some dozen individuals. Granted that these individuals are important, this does not appear to be a proper basis for constructing a pattern of conferences which affects all United Nations bodies. It seems quite likely that either the services of these same individuals could be made available by their universities at other times of the year as a contribution to the United Nations or that qualified replacements could be found who would not have the same problems.

332. This is not theoretical speculation. The ILC itself has on two occasions requested four-week sessions in the winter, and in January 1966 it met in such a four-week session. Further, there is the example of the UNCITRAL. Although that body is intergovernmental in nature, unlike the ILC, its terms of reference require that "representatives of members of the Commission shall be appointed by Member States in so far as possible from persons of eminence in the field of law of international trade". Members of the Commission have been able to produce, for service on that body, qualified legal experts whose availability for meeting is not limited to the May-July period. Indeed the UNCITRAL and its working groups do not meet at all in that period and most of their meetings are held in the January-April period.

333. If it is considered essential for the ILC to continue to meet, particularly for ten to fourteen weeks a year, during the May-July period and away from New York, then consideration should be given to holding all or at least some of the ILC sessions in Vienna, provided that interpretation services can be made available there without detriment to the conference programmes in Geneva and New York. This suggestion is developed further in paragraph 503 of this report.

334. Accordingly, it is suggested that the ILC and the General Assembly consider the following possibilities:

- (a) limit the length of ILC sessions by speeding up the pace of its work;
- (b) if all ILC sessions are to be held in the May-July period, alternate the sessions between New York and Geneva (starting late in May and running through July when held in New York);

- (c) if all ILC sessions are to be held in the May-July period and away from New York, schedule all or at least some of these in Vienna; and
- (d) if all ILC sessions are to continue to be held in Geneva, either schedule all sessions in the January-April period, or leave the ILC schedule as it is for every other year but, in the intervening years, schedule its sessions during the January-April period.

(4) The United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL)

335. The third exception to the general principle that United Nations bodies should plan to meet at their respective established headquarters relates to the UNCITRAL.

Sub-paragraph (c) of paragraph 9 of A/RES/2609 (XXIV) provides that:

"The sessions of the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law may be held, subject to the provision in paragraph 6 of General Assembly resolution 2205 (XXI) of 17 December 1966, alternately in New York and Geneva.".

Paragraph 6 of A/RES/2205 (XXI) which established UNCITRAL, provides that:

"The Commission shall normally hold one regular session a year. It shall, if there are no technical difficulties, meet alternately at United Nations Headquarters and at the United Nations Office at Geneva.".

336. UNCITRAL, whose membership was increased in 1973 from twenty-nine to thirty-six (A/RES/3108 (XXVIII)), normally meets for two weeks a year. However, in 1974 it will meet in New York for only one week (13-17 May) because of the convening of the Conference on Prescription (Limitation) in the International Sale of Goods in New York in the period 20 May-14 June. As mentioned in paragraph 281, it has established a number of working groups and in 1974 a Working Group on Negotiable Instruments met in New York 7-18 January, a Working Group on International Sale of Goods met in Geneva 21 January-1 February and a Working Group on International Legislation on Shipping met in Geneva 4-22 February.

337. It will be noted that although both sub-paragraph (c) of paragraph 9 of A/RES/2609 (XXIV) and paragraph 6 of A/RES/2205 (XXI) appear to authorize only UNCITRAL itself to meet in Geneva in alternate years, the working groups of UNCITRAL also follow the practice of meeting alternately in Geneva and New York. Thus far, the meetings of the UNCITRAL and its working groups in Geneva have created no special problems for the Geneva conference programme since they have been scheduled in periods other than the peak meeting period of May-August. It is, of course, possible that problems might

arise in the future if these other periods become more heavily used as a result of the expansion of the conference programmes of Geneva-based bodies such as UNCTAD and ECE.

338. As indicated in paragraph 282, the only problem which UNCITRAL creates for the conference programme relates to the number of its working groups meeting annually and the need to make certain that these do not require a disproportionate share of the United Nations conference resources for their servicing. Despite this question of whether the number of UNCITRAL working groups meeting annually is excessive, it can be said that other bodies, such as the ILC, might profit from adopting the working methods of UNCITRAL. That body, in addition to meeting twice a day when in plenary session, devotes only a limited amount of time to plenary sessions (attended by twenty-nine members) and allocates a considerably larger amount of time to working groups which in some cases consist of as few as eight members. As was said by the Director-General of UNESCO in 1966 (Evaluation of UNESCO's Activities (1964-1965) and Future Prospects (14 C/4)) the time has probably come "for a critical review of current meeting practices, still largely based on what it is customary to do". It may well be that the relatively new UNCITRAL meeting arrangements are more productive today than the "customary" meeting format still followed by the ILC.

(5) United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation (UNSCEAR)

339. The fourth exception to the general principle that United Nations bodies should plan to meet at their respective established headquarters relates to UNSCEAR.<sup>53/</sup> Sub-paragraph (d) of paragraph 9 of A/RES/2609 (XXIV) provides that:

"The United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation (as well as the Scientific and Technical Sub-Committee and the Legal Sub-Committee of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space) may meet in Geneva if the exigencies of their work so require".<sup>54/</sup>

340. Although UNSCEAR was established under A/RES/913 (X) in 1955, the quoted sub-paragraph first appeared in a pattern of conferences resolution in 1965 (A/RES/2116 (XX)).

341. Pursuant to this exception, the UNSCEAR was last scheduled to meet in Geneva 24-28 September 1973 but the meeting was cancelled. Whenever the Committee, which meets once a year, has met in Geneva in the past (15-26 November 1965; 28 August-8 September 1967; 21-25 September 1970), its meetings have been held outside the peak conference period of May-August (except for a few days in 1967) and have lasted less than two weeks.

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<sup>53/</sup> By A/RES/3154 (XXVIII), part C, the General Assembly increased the UNSCEAR membership from fifteen to twenty Governments.

<sup>54/</sup> Brackets inserted.



342. When considering the next resolution on the pattern of conferences, the General Assembly will have to decide whether a change is called for in the text set forth in sub-paragraph (d) of paragraph 9 of A/RES/2609 (XXIV) in view of the change in the location of the UNSCEAR secretariat. On the Fifth Committee's recommendation (A/9450/Add.1, paragraph 90), the General Assembly decided, on 18 December 1973, to transfer the secretariat to Vienna with effect from 1 January 1974.

343. In view of this development, the Assembly will have to decide whether it wishes UNSCEAR to meet always in Vienna in the future - in which case no special provision relating to UNSCEAR will need to be included in the pattern of conferences resolution - or whether it wishes UNSCEAR to continue to have the possibility, as at present, to meet also in New York and Geneva. If the second alternative is chosen, an appropriate provision will have to be included in the pattern of conferences resolution.

344. If the decision is to permit UNSCEAR to meet in New York and Geneva as well as Vienna, then care must be taken to ensure that its meetings at these locations are not scheduled at peak meeting periods there.

345. In 1974 UNSCEAR is scheduled to meet in Vienna 14-18 October. The decision to meet in Vienna in 1974 was taken in 1973 in response to an invitation from IAEA and was not related to the movement of the UNSCEAR secretariat to Vienna.

(6) Sub-Committees of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space

346. As indicated in paragraph 339, sub-paragraph (d) of paragraph 9 of A/RES/2609 (XXIV) provides for a fifth exception to the general principle that United Nations bodies should plan to meet at their respective established headquarters. This exception relates to the two Sub-Committees of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, namely, the Scientific and Technical Sub-Committee and the Legal Sub-Committee. It provides that these two bodies "may meet at Geneva if the exigencies of their work so require".

347. These two Sub-Committees were established by the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space in 1962. In 1963 the Committee decided that the two Sub-Committees should meet away from Headquarters in 1964 and the Secretary-General stated, in his 1963 report (A/5638) on the pattern of conferences, that some changes in the pattern might be necessary in the future to provide for such meetings. The present provision for meetings of the Sub-Committees away from Headquarters was approved by the General Assembly in 1965 (A/RES/2116 (XX)).

348. Despite the authorization to meet in Geneva, since 1967 the Scientific and Technical Sub-Committee has always met in New York. The Legal Sub-Committee met each year in Geneva in the years 1966-1972, usually in June or July, but decided in 1972 to meet alternately in Geneva and New York in the future. In 1974 the Scientific and Technical Sub-Committee met in New York 15-26 April and the Legal Sub-Committee met in Geneva 6-31 May.

349. It is to be noted that the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space itself always meets in New York and in 1974 will meet there 1-12 July. In addition to its two Sub-Committees, the Committee has established two working groups, the Working Group on Navigation Satellite Systems and the Working Group on Direct Broadcast Satellites; and the Scientific and Technical Sub-Committee has established a Working Group on Remote Sensing of Earth by Satellites. Prior to 1974, all of these have always met in New York. However, this year the Working Group on Direct Broadcast Satellites met in Geneva 11-22 March, although it is questionable whether such a working group is covered by the provisions of sub-paragraph (d) of paragraph 9 of A/RES/2609 (XXIV).

350. In view of the fact that the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space itself, its Scientific and Technical Sub-Committee and, with one exception, the working groups, have always met in New York, it is difficult to understand how the "exigencies of its work" can require the Legal Sub-Committee to meet in Geneva every other year. This, plus the fact that the Scientific and Technical Sub-Committee always meets in New York, leads one to question the necessity for the provision relating to the outer space sub-committees which is contained in sub-paragraph (d) of paragraph 9 of A/RES/2609 (XXIV). The General Assembly may wish to review the need for this provision.

351. If the Legal Sub-Committee is to continue to meet in Geneva in alternate years, then an attempt should be made to avoid scheduling its meetings during peak conference periods in the Palais des Nations, as was the case this year.

(7) Economic and Social Council

352. The sixth exception to the general principle that United Nations bodies should plan to meet at their respective established headquarters relates to ECOSOC. Sub-paragraph (e) of paragraph 9 of A/RES/2609 (XXIV) provides that:

"The regular summer sessions of the Economic and Social Council may be held in Geneva provided that the closing date falls at least six weeks before the opening of the regular session of the General Assembly".

353. The holding of the summer session of ECOSOC in Geneva has been a regular feature of the United Nations conference programme since 1948 and was incorporated into the first formal pattern of conferences in 1952. The normal meeting time is July and in 1974 ECOSOC is scheduled to meet in Geneva during the period 3 July-2 August. The spring session is held in New York and in 1974 was held from 22 April to 24 May.

354. When in 1952 the Special Committee on Programme of Conferences considered the matter of the location of the summer session of ECOSOC, there was a difference of opinion in the Committee. The report of the Special Committee (A/2323) stated that "those who considered that the Economic and Social Council should meet every year in Geneva ... spoke of the close relationship between the work of the Economic and Social Council and that of the specialized agencies. The Economic and Social Council had met every year in Geneva from 1948 to 1951 and had decided to meet there again in 1953. Political, as well as functional, considerations made frequent sessions of the Economic and Social Council in Geneva desirable and there would be administrative and financial advantages in making the arrangement permanent. Such an arrangement, however, would have satisfactory results only if it were regularly carried out". Certain other delegations, however, "thought that the administrative advantages to be derived from the annual scheduling of meetings of the Economic and Social Council in Geneva had been exaggerated".

355. The Special Committee also had before it the view expressed by the representatives of the specialized agencies that "the summer sessions of the Economic and Social Council held in Geneva would ensure fuller and high-level representation and more effective programme co-ordination, while reducing the travel costs of representatives".

356. The proposal that ECOSOC should hold its summer session in Geneva every year was approved in the Special Committee by a vote of 6 to 4, with 2 abstentions.

357. Apparently in 1952 the only alternative to having the summer session of ECOSOC in Geneva was considered to be to hold both the spring and summer sessions of ECOSOC in New York. However, as in the case of the Governing Council of UNDP, there is another alternative. In alternate years it would be possible for ECOSOC to have its spring session in Geneva (it would be helpful if this session could commence at the beginning of April instead of 22 April as in 1974), and its summer session in New York. Such a move would give another United Nations body a chance to meet in Geneva in July from time to time, without adding to the present peak meeting load in Geneva in that month.

358. It appears doubtful that such a change in the ECOSOC meeting schedule would have a significant adverse effect on the participation of the specialized agencies in the work of ECOSOC, particularly in view of the sizable liaison offices which the larger agencies maintain at United Nations Headquarters in New York.

359. Because ECOSOC is a principal organ of the United Nations and its summer sessions in Geneva have been such a central feature of the annual United Nations calendar of conferences since 1948, and because as recently as 30 July 1971 (E/1623 (LI)) ECOSOC decided to arrange its programme of work "to provide for ... a session in the third quarter of the calendar year at Geneva", it is very doubtful that either ECOSOC or the General Assembly will wish to consider the possible modification in the meeting schedule mentioned above as a regular feature of the calendar of conferences. However, this possibility should be kept in mind for the future for it might prove to be desirable from time to time to hold a United Nations conference of major importance - such as a Law of the Sea Conference - in Geneva in July, and this would require the displacement of certain meetings now scheduled in Geneva in that month.

360. Since ECOSOC has been and still is engaged in the rationalization of its conference programme, it is not considered appropriate for this study to deal further with the ECOSOC meeting programme.

(8) The functional commissions and committees of the Economic and Social Council

361. The seventh exception to the general principle that United Nations bodies should plan to meet at their respective established headquarters relates to the functional commissions and committees of ECOSOC and the provisions dealing with this exception are contained in sub-paragraphs (f), (g) and (h) of A/RES/2609 (XXIV) which are quoted in paragraph 365.

362. The principle that the functional commissions<sup>55/</sup> of ECOSOC might meet in Geneva has been included in the United Nations pattern of conferences since 1952. At that time the provision which was set forth in paragraph 1 (b) of A/RES/694 (VII) was a quite limited one and read as follows:

"Sessions of a functional commission or of functional commissions (but preferably not more than one) of the Economic and Social Council, to be determined by the Economic and Social Council, would meet in Geneva without overlap for a total period not exceeding five weeks between mid-March and the end of April."

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<sup>55/</sup> The functional commissions of ECOSOC are the following: the Statistical Commission, the Population Commission, the Commission for Social Development, the Commission on Human Rights, the Commission on the Status of Women and the Commission on Narcotic Drugs.

363. In 1957 Sub-Committee 9 of the Fifth Committee recommended (A/C.5/731) a change in the provision to reflect the fact that Geneva could handle two functional commission sessions a year, provided there was no overlap, and the fact that the secretariat of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs had been moved to Geneva in 1955. Accordingly, the General Assembly, in A/RES/1202 (XII) modified the 1952 provision to read as follows:

"Not more than one functional commission of the Economic and Social Council, to be determined by that Council, in addition to the Commission on Narcotic Drugs, may meet annually in Geneva; a session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs may, in exceptional circumstances, and by decision of the Economic and Social Council in consultation with the Secretary-General, be held in New York; in such years one other functional commission may meet in Geneva in its place without overlap." 56/

364. In 1963 the Secretary-General reported (A/5638) to the General Assembly his belief that "some changes in the present pattern of conferences might well be necessary in the future, to provide for ... other functional commissions of the Economic and Social Council to meet in Geneva in the latter part of the year". In commenting on the Secretary-General's report, the ACABQ stated (A/5647) that it "was given to understand that this suggestion would apply to organs of a technical character, such as the Statistical Commission and the Population Commission, the servicing of which would not require the presence in Geneva of substantive personnel needed for the regular session of the General Assembly in New York".

365. In January 1965 the Secretary-General suggested (A/5867) a rewording of the 1957 provision and the addition of new language, providing that three additional functional commissions or committees of ECOSOC might meet each year in Geneva in the September-December period. The General Assembly in A/RES/2116 (XX) approved this suggestion and adopted the following provisions, which appear as sub-paragraphs (f), (g) and (h) of paragraph 9 of A/RES/2609 (XXIV) and are still in effect today:

- "(f) One Headquarters-based functional commission of the Economic and Social Council, to be determined by the Council, may meet at Geneva during the period from January to April;
- (g) Sessions of not more than three other Headquarters-based functional commissions or committees of the Economic and Social Council may, by decision of the Council taken after consultation with the Secretary-General, be held at Geneva during the period from September to December without overlap;

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56/ Since 1955 the Commission on Narcotic Drugs has met in New York only once (1957).

- (h) In addition, a session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs may, in exceptional circumstances and by decision of the Economic and Social Council taken after consultation with the Secretary-General, be held in New York; in that event, one other functional commission of the Council may meet at Geneva in its place".

366. When in 1965 the Secretary-General proposed that committees of ECOSOC be included among those bodies which might meet in Geneva, he gave no explanation for this proposal. In its report on the matter (A/5889), the ACABQ failed to comment on this point and the subject was not discussed in the Fifth Committee. There is thus no guidance as to which ECOSOC committees were intended to be included or why. Presumably all the standing committees<sup>57/</sup> of the ECOSOC can take advantage of this provision if ECOSOC approves.

367. The language of the sub-paragraphs of the 1969 resolution which are quoted above appears to have been expanded by interpretation to include in the authorization to meet in Geneva, the Sub-Commission on the Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities, which meets in Geneva in alternate years, working groups of that Sub-Commission and of the various functional commissions, and what are termed (E/5453) "expert bodies".<sup>58/</sup>

368. In 1973 the meetings in Geneva of the functional commissions, the Sub-Commission on the Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities and various committees and expert bodies of ECOSOC were the following:

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<sup>57/</sup> The standing committees of ECOSOC include: the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination; the Committee for Housing, Building and Planning; the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations; the Committee on Natural Resources; the Committee on Science and Technology for Development; the Committee on Review and Appraisal; and the Committee on Negotiations with Inter-Governmental Agencies.

<sup>58/</sup> Such "expert bodies" include: the Advisory Committee on the Application of Science and Technology to Development; the Ad Hoc Group of Experts on Tax Treaties between Developed and Developing Countries; the Committee on Crime Prevention and Control; the Committee for Development Planning; the Ad Hoc Expert Group on Tax Reform; the Meeting of Experts on the United Nations Programme in Public Administration; the Committee of Experts on the Transport of Dangerous Goods; and the Group of Eminent Persons to Study the Impact of Multinational Corporations on Development and on International Relations.

Commission on Narcotic Drugs .....	-	22 January-9 February
Commission on Human Rights ( <u>ad hoc</u> committee on periodic reports) .....	-	19-23 February
Commission on Human Rights .....	-	26 February-6 April
Statistical Commission - Working Group on International Statistical Programmes and Co-ordination .....	-	2-4 July
Commission on Human Rights - Sub-Commission on the Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities and Working Group .	-	13 August-14 September
Committee on Housing, Building and Planning	-	15-26 October
Population Commission .....	-	29 October-9 November
Advisory Committee on the Application of Science and Technology to Development .....	-	12-23 November
<u>Ad Hoc</u> Group of Experts on Tax Treaties between Developed and Developing Countries .	-	3-14 December

369. From the foregoing several facts will be noted. First of all, despite the specific language of the sub-paragraphs quoted above, five rather than three Headquarters-based subsidiary bodies of ECOSOC planned to meet in Geneva in the second half of 1973 (the same is true for 1974). Further, despite the fact that the pattern of conferences resolution authorized meetings in Geneva in the second half of the year only during the September-December period, in 1973 a working group of the Statistical Commission met in Geneva in July (a similar meeting is planned in 1974), a working group of the Sub-Commission on the Prevention of Discrimination and the Protection of Minorities met there in August and the Sub-Commission itself began its meeting there in August. All of this suggests that either the authorization for the functional commissions and committees of ECOSOC to meet in Geneva needs to be complied with more strictly in the future or that the provisions of the pattern of conferences resolution relating to those commissions and committees should be revised to reflect whatever might be the intention of ECOSOC and the General Assembly today. If the provisions are amended to authorize more meetings in Geneva, it should be made clear that these must not be scheduled for the May-August period.

370. At its spring session in 1973 ECOSOC decided in resolution 1768 (LIV) (operative paragraph 16) that the calendar of conferences should be so arranged that:

- "(a) the Council's body responsible for co-ordination, the Committee for Development Planning, the Committee on Human Rights, and its Sub-Commission and the regional economic commissions meet every year unless any of these organs decide or have decided otherwise, with the concurrence of the Council; and

- (b) all other subsidiary and expert or advisory bodies meet biennially unless the Council decides otherwise, and their meetings be so timed as to ensure the submission of their reports in good time for the relevant sessions of the Council and where appropriate to the Committee on Review and Appraisal, and spaced so as not to overlap or follow too closely upon each other and so as to ensure that their programme objectives are fully reflected in the work programmes and budget to be submitted biennially to the Council".

371. It is too early to assess the effect of resolution 1768 (LIV) on the pattern of conferences. It would appear from E/L.1551 that, if subsidiary bodies of ECOSOC are to meet the Council's criteria spelled out in the resolution, it may be more difficult than formerly to fit their meetings into the time available in Geneva. It also appears from the 1974 calendar of conferences approved by ECOSOC in July 1973 that it has already made exceptions to its decision concerning biennial meetings of subsidiary bodies in the cases of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs (special session), the Population Commission (special session) and the Committee on Science and Technology.

372. It does not appear appropriate at this time to make any suggestions for the modification of the meeting patterns of the subsidiary bodies of the Council. It seems preferable to wait until it is possible to assess the degree of success achieved by the Council itself in its present efforts to rationalize the meeting programmes of these bodies. In this connexion it should be noted that in resolution 1768 (LIV) the Council decided (operative paragraph 11):

"that a review of the terms of reference of its subsidiary bodies should be undertaken, and that this review should be made on the basis of an assessment and reorientation of their role, particularly in the implementation of the International Development Strategy, taking due account of the responsibilities of the other organs and agencies of the United Nations system".

373. At its organizational session in January 1974, ECOSOC decided (decision 1 (LVI), paragraph 1 (a)) to conduct this review at its fifty-sixth session. The results of this review were not known at the time of the preparation of this report.

374. Apart from the foregoing, the General Assembly may well wish to amend the text which appears in sub-paragraph (h) of paragraph 9 of A/RES/2609 (XXIV) to reflect the fact that the Human Rights Division of the Secretariat is being moved from New York to Geneva. The Assembly may wish to authorize the Commission on Human Rights, like the Commission on Narcotic Drugs, to meet in New York as well as Geneva, although the conditions for meeting in New York may be different for the two Commissions.



(9) The regional economic commissions

375. The final exception to the principle that United Nations bodies should plan to meet at their respective established headquarters relates to the regional economic commissions. It is set forth in sub-paragraph (i) of paragraph 9 of A/RES/2609 (XXIV) and reads as follows:

"The regular sessions of the Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Economic Commission for Africa, as well as meetings of their subsidiary bodies, may be held away from their headquarters when the commission concerned so decides, subject, in the case of regular sessions of the commissions, to the approval of the Economic and Social Council and of the General Assembly."

376. This exception relating to the regional economic commissions differs in character from the other exceptions contained in paragraph 9. First of all, all the other exceptions relate to meetings of United Nations bodies at the Office of the United Nations at Geneva or at United Nations Headquarters in New York. Secondly, the provision relating to the regional economic commissions was included in the pattern of conferences resolution for the first time in 1957 (A/RES/1202 (XII)) as an exception to the principle embodied in paragraph 10 of A/RES/2609 (XXIV). That principle permits United Nations bodies to meet away from their established headquarters only when a Government issuing an invitation for a session to be held within its territory has agreed to defray the expenses involved. This principle, which is discussed further in paragraphs 393-417 was proposed by the ACABQ (A/3624) in 1957. The Secretary-General, while supporting the principle, stated (A/C.5/722) that "a reservation should, however, be entered as regards the Economic Commissions for Asia and the Far East and Latin America (the only two commissions then existing, apart from ECE) since there are special reasons in favour of holding their sessions in different places within the regions served by those commissions" (bracketed words inserted).

377. In supporting the Secretary-General, Sub-Committee 9 of the Fifth Committee stated "that there are also valid grounds, in the Sub-Committee's view, for exceptions in the case of the subsidiary bodies of the regional economic commissions. Experience has shown that in virtually every case, the Government in whose territory the meeting is held defrays either the whole or a major part of the extra costs. The Sub-Committee has taken this fact into account when making its recommendations".

378. In 1962 in A/RES/1851 (XVII), the General Assembly included the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) along with the Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East (ECAFE) and the Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLA) in the authorization to the

commissions to meet away from their established headquarters. The Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) has never been included in this authorization although the reasons for this appear not to have been stated in any United Nations document. Presumably when the next pattern of conferences resolution is formulated by the General Assembly, it will wish to consider the inclusion of the newly-established (E/RES/1818 (LV)) Economic Commission for Western Asia (ECWA) in the authorization to meet away from established headquarters.

379. Since the General Assembly has indicated in A/RES/2960 (XXVII) that the emphasis in this study should be placed on a pattern of conferences involving New York, Geneva and Vienna, and since only very rarely has United Nations Headquarters or the Geneva Office been called upon to lend conference staff to the regional economic commissions, this study does not deal with the conference programmes of the commissions. It will be recalled that in its report on the ECAFE (JIU/REP/69/6 (E/4781)), the JIU examined the conference programme of that body and recommended a substantial reduction. In response to this recommendation the Secretary-General reported in 1970 (E/4781/Add.1) that "concerning the Inspectors' observations on the ECAFE calendar of meetings, a special effort is being made and it is expected that in 1971 the number of meetings will be reduced by one-third or more". It is noted that although the total number of ECAFE meetings declined from fifty scheduled for the 1969/70 programme (E/4650) to twenty-five scheduled for the 1971/72 programme (E/5020), the total scheduled for the 1973/74 programme (E/5277) was forty.

B. Paragraph 8 of A/RES/2609 (XXIV) - meetings other than those covered by the calendar of conferences

380. In addition to the provisions of paragraph 9 of A/RES/2609 (XXIV) dealt with above, that resolution contains a number of other provisions which relate to the pattern of conferences. The first of these is contained in paragraph 8 which reads as follows:

"Decides that no meeting other than those covered by the calendar of conferences for 1970 shall be convened except for emergency meetings".

381. On the face of it, it might be considered that this provision is no longer in effect since it refers only to the year 1970. However, although the resolutions on the pattern of conferences for 1970 and 1971 decided "to continue in force" only paragraph 9 of A/RES/2609 (XXIV), the 1972 resolution (A/RES/2960 (XXVII)), which called for this study, reaffirmed "the applicability of paragraphs 8 to 12 of

General Assembly resolution 2609 (XXIV) of 16 December 1969, which relate to the pattern of conferences and meetings".

382. The provision contained in paragraph 8 has a peculiar history. It was originally inserted in the 1957 pattern of conferences resolution (A/RES/1202 (XII)) on the initiative of the Secretary-General to provide him with authority and guidelines for regulating the frequency and meeting places of "ad hoc or subsidiary bodies and conferences". The provision in the 1957 resolution read as follows:

"4. Decides that as a general rule any meeting, other than an emergency meeting, not covered by the basic programme for a given year shall not be held during that year; the General Assembly nevertheless authorizes the Secretary-General, within a financial limit to be set annually in the resolution relating to unforeseen and extraordinary expenses, to decide when and where any body or ad hoc conference not covered by the basic annual programme shall meet; in the event that the decision of the Secretary-General is not accepted, the final decision in the matter shall be taken by the Assembly at its next regular session".

383. In commenting on this paragraph at the twelfth session of the General Assembly, Sub-Committee 9 of the Fifth Committee stated (A/C.5/731) that:

"The recommended provision, which has no counterpart in the existing pattern, would apply only to bodies or conferences ... for which ... the General Assembly has not made budgetary provision. Typical examples of meetings which might come within its scope are those of the various commodity conferences held from time to time under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council.".

384. In his report to the General Assembly on the pattern of conferences in January 1965 (A/5867), the Secretary-General stated:

"Special reference may also be made to operative paragraph 4 of the draft resolution. Initially - in the 1957 resolution - this provision was intended principally to cover the meetings of the various commodity conferences held, at intervals, under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council. In recent years, however, and despite the fact that an agreed programme cannot - in the nature of these conferences - be established some twelve to eighteen months in advance, a specific amount has been appropriated under section 2 of the annual budget (\$45,000 in each of the years 1963 and 1964) for the general purpose of holding commodity conferences, with additional financing being provided, if required, under paragraphs 1 and 1 (c) of the annual resolution relating to unforeseen and extraordinary expenses. This arrangement has worked satisfactorily and the Secretary-General favours the retention of paragraph 4, both for the commodity conferences and for other conferences coming within the scope of its provisions. At the same time it is necessary to emphasize that the paragraph as a whole is qualified and governed by the first sentence. Its provisions cannot therefore legitimately be invoked unless the proposed session is demonstrably of an emergency nature.".

385. In its report to the General Assembly in 1965 (A/5889), the ACABQ made the following comments and suggestions:

"The Advisory Committee is of the opinion that the present wording of operative paragraph 4 of General Assembly resolution 1202 (XII) of 13 December 1957 as amended by resolution 1851 (XVII) of 19 December 1962<sup>59/</sup> lends itself to ambiguous interpretation. The present text of that paragraph leaves the door wide open to proceed with arrangements for any body or any ad hoc conference to meet without regard to the basic annual programme. The Advisory Committee considers it important that in principle such exceptions to the basic programme for a given year be excluded from operative paragraph 4 altogether. The Committee therefore suggests that the text of paragraph 4 of the draft resolution as proposed in A/5867, annex II be formulated as follows:

'Decides that any meeting, other than an emergency meeting (in the sense of a meeting which cannot be deferred without serious detriment to the United Nations), not covered by the basic programme for a given year shall not be held during that year.'".

386. The proposal of the ACABQ for the wording of operative paragraph 4 was accepted by the General Assembly in A/RES/2116 (XX).

387. In its report (A/7361) to the twenty-third session of the General Assembly in 1968, the Committee on Conferences proposed that the paragraph in question be reworded as follows:

"Decides that no meetings not covered by the calendar for 1969 shall be convened, except for an emergency meeting in the sense of a meeting which cannot be deferred without serious detriment to the United Nations".

388. In the Fifth Committee at the twenty-third session of the General Assembly, the delegation of Pakistan proposed inter alia that the phrase "in the sense of a meeting which cannot be deferred without serious detriment to the United Nations" be deleted. With respect to this proposed amendment the Chairman of the Committee on Conferences observed at the 1293rd meeting that:

"everything depended on the idea of what an emergency meeting was. If the expression 'emergency meeting' was interpreted to mean a genuinely urgent meeting which had to be held in order to forestall grave consequences for the Organization, then it was possible for the words in question to be deleted. It had been the intention of the Committee on Conferences on that point that the approved calendar of meetings would be modified only if exceptional circumstances required the convening of an emergency meeting. In the light of that interpretation, the Committee on Conferences could accept the amendment submitted by the delegation of Pakistan".

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<sup>59/</sup> The amendment did not relate to operative paragraph 4 (foot-note inserted).

In response, the representative of Pakistan stated that:

"In view of the suggestions made by the Chairman of that Committee, which in general were acceptable to the Pakistan delegation, he would not press for his delegation's amendments to be put to the vote."

389. The paragraph as amended was then approved by the Fifth Committee with only a slight drafting change.

390. In view of the foregoing, it would seem that proper interpretation of this paragraph, which became paragraph 8 of A/RES/2609 (XXIV), is that given by the Chairman of the Committee on Conferences in the Fifth Committee at the twenty-third session of the General Assembly and which is quoted above.

391. In so far as the Inspectors can ascertain from the Secretariat, there is no record that the provisions of this paragraph have ever been formally invoked by the Secretary-General to bar the convening of a meeting not included in the calendar of conferences nor has it been formally invoked to justify an "emergency meeting". However there have been occasions when the Secretariat has felt it appropriate to bring paragraph 8 informally to the attention of delegations, and, as a result of this action, certain contemplated additional meetings have not been proposed.

392. It appears desirable that this paragraph should be retained in future pattern of conference resolutions, particularly in view of the present serious limitation on conference staff resources. Further, the presence of such a paragraph, if it is enforced, should assist the Secretariat to plan the use of its limited resources, with greater assurance that disruptions in the arrangements made on the basis of the approved calendar will not occur. The provision in the paragraph for "emergency meetings", as that phrase was interpreted by the Chairman of the Committee on Conferences, provides sufficient "disciplined flexibility" to safeguard the interests of the Organization. For the paragraph to be meaningful however, it must be invoked by the Secretariat on all appropriate occasions; and the determination of whether or not an emergency existed could be made by the governmental committee on conferences recommended in chapter V of this report.

- C. Paragraph 10 of A/RES/2609 (XXIV) - meetings held away from established headquarters on the invitation of Governments which agree to pay the additional costs

393. Paragraph 10 of A/RES/2609 (XXIV) reads as follows:

"Decides that United Nations bodies may hold sessions away from their established headquarters when a Government issuing an invitation for a session to be held within its territory has agreed to defray, after consultation with the Secretary-General as to their nature and possible extent, the actual additional costs directly or indirectly involved".

394. The principle incorporated in paragraph 10 first appeared in 1957 in paragraph 2 (e) of A/RES/1202 (XII), the text of which read as follows:

"Meetings may be held away from the established headquarters of any body in other cases where a Government issuing an invitation for a meeting to be held within its territory has agreed to defray, after consultation with the Secretary-General as to their nature and possible extent, the additional costs involved".

395. It will be noted from the foregoing that the language in which the principle was stated more than fifteen years ago was substantively identical with that used in paragraph 10 of A/RES/2609 (XXIV).

396. This principle had its origin in recommendations of the ACABQ in its 1957 report (A/3624). Paragraph 42 of that report stated:

"The Advisory Committee would ... emphasize the need to develop a policy whereby no meetings of United Nations bodies would be held away from their normal headquarters locations unless any extra costs were met by the host Governments concerned".

397. In its 1957 report (A/C.5/731) to the twelfth session of the General Assembly, Sub-Committee 9 of the Fifth Committee stated the following:

"Such a provision is necessary, in the Sub-Committee's opinion, if the basic principle regarding the most economical use of resources is to be fulfilled. The text makes clear that the Government on whose territory the meeting is to be held has itself taken the initiative in the matter. It is therefore fitting that the inviting Government should be consulted with regard to the commitments which it thus assumes; the additional costs would involve the provision of necessary services and supplies as well as a direct financial contribution. As a corollary to this process of consultation, the agreement of the inviting Government to the amount and nature of the expenditure should be regarded as a prerequisite to the acceptance of its invitation."

398. In his 1965 report (A/5867) to the nineteenth session of the General Assembly, the Secretary-General commented as follows on this principle:

"The holding of sessions away from Headquarters or other authorized meeting place upon the invitation of a Government, as dealt with in operative paragraph 2 (f), calls for special comment. Such sessions normally give rise to additional costs. But extra cost is not the sole factor that has to be weighed in such cases, for the factor of efficiency is also present, in the sense of the effect on the work programme of the division or section of the Secretariat which services the body concerned. While there may be compelling reasons for accepting a host Government's invitation, it is idle to pretend that the absence of a number of staff members, including senior officials, for a given period of time is without impact on the continuing work of the Secretariat unit. The Secretary-General would therefore submit that whenever such invitations are extended, the interested body should have regard to both factors. From the financial point of view, the additional costs must be worked out with care so that the sum total of actual costs that are likely to be incurred, including, where appropriate the cost of any replacement of staff, may be stated with precision. Where the second factor is concerned, the true extra cost cannot, in fact, be determined and expressed in monetary terms; the factor as such nevertheless merits attention before a decision is taken for or against the proposal."

399. This statement of the Secretary-General is important but has consistently been disregarded when Governments have extended invitations to United Nations bodies to meet away from their headquarters. In such cases, very little attention has been given to the impact of such meetings away from established headquarters on the continuing work of the Secretariat, a matter discussed in paragraphs 236-239.

400. Up until the twenty-sixth session of the General Assembly in 1971, there was no formal suggestion for modification of the principle embodied in paragraph 10 of A/RES/2609 (XXIV) or in the application of that principle. It is true that on occasion there were, in practice, distortions in the application of the principle which were designed to reduce the "additional costs" to be paid by inviting Governments. These distortions were brought about, in cases where invitations were issued by Governments to bodies based at United Nations Headquarters in New York, by assuming that those bodies would have met in Geneva rather than in New York if no invitation had been issued, and by then calculating the "additional costs" on the basis of what the costs would have been in Geneva. So long as the principle set forth in A/RES/2609 (XXIV) continues to have the approval of the General Assembly, it is clearly improper to calculate "additional costs" in the manner indicated unless it is certain that the bodies accepting invitations would, in fact, have met in Geneva in the absence of the invitations.

401. At its twenty-sixth session, the General Assembly took note of a decision of the Fifth Committee contained in document A/8607, to recommend that the Secretary-General, with the co-operation and assistance of the Director-General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), study the full operation of the methods of financing by IAEA of certain meetings and conferences of the Agency held away from its headquarters and report as appropriate to the General Assembly at its twenty-seventh session on the possible application of those same methods to similar United Nations conferences and meetings held away from United Nations Headquarters.

402. The Secretary-General submitted the requested report on this matter to the twenty-seventh session of the General Assembly in document A/C.5/1482.

403. In his report, the Secretary-General pointed out that the IAEA procedures in question "apply only to scientific seminars and symposia held by IAEA and not to meetings of policy-making organs. For the latter, the procedures applied by the Agency are similar to those followed by the United Nations".

404. The IAEA procedures relating to the financing of seminars and symposia were developed to overcome problems resulting from the application in certain of these cases<sup>60/</sup> of the normal rule that a host country pay all additional costs. They were based upon the fact that if a host country were situated at a great distance from the headquarters of the IAEA or the host country did not have readily available the necessary conference and other facilities, the additional costs could be exorbitant. They represented an attempt to equalize the burden of hostship on member States situated both near to and far from Vienna, to minimize the extra costs to individual member States, and particularly developing countries, of acting as host to meetings, and as a result, to achieve not only a financial but also a geographical balance in the holding of meetings.

405. Under the procedures introduced by the IAEA in 1970, a flat rate is charged to the host country per meeting, irrespective of location. This charge is \$7,000 per meeting for developed countries and not less than \$3,500 per meeting for developing countries. In accordance with agreements between the Agency and host Governments, all flat rate charges are credited to a special clearing account. This account is not a part of any specific IAEA programme under the regular budget, so that the costs associated with

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<sup>60/</sup> Of the total of some thirteen to seventeen seminars and symposia held annually by the IAEA, almost half are held away from Vienna on the basis of governmental invitation. Generally 200-300 persons, mainly scientists, participate in these meetings.



individual Agency programmes are not affected by the location of meetings outside Vienna. The IAEA programmes are charged in respect of only those costs which would have been incurred if the meeting had been held in Vienna. Additional costs arising as a result of holding the meeting away from Vienna are charged against the special clearing account. Since individual contributions for specific meetings rarely correspond to the actual costs of holding these meetings, savings achieved in respect of some meetings are utilized to offset deficits sustained in respect of others.

406. In paragraph 10 of his report, the Secretary-General summarized the elements which had made for the success of the IAEA procedures as applied to seminars and symposia. He then stated the following conclusion in paragraph 11 of his report:

"With respect to meetings held by United Nations bodies away from Headquarters, the Secretary-General considers that the possible applicability of a method similar to the one used by IAEA is rather limited, primarily because none of the essential elements summarized in paragraph 10 above exist, either wholly or in part, in the present structure of the planning and organization of United Nations meetings, with the possible exception of seminars financed from technical assistance funds."

407. In addition, the Secretary-General stated the following in paragraph 12 of his report:

"However, it may be possible to apply the method of financing meetings used by IAEA, or a modified form of this method, to a few of the technical meetings organized by the United Nations Industrial Development Organization, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, the Centre for Housing, Building and Planning and the Resources and Transport Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs".

408. In paragraph 14 of his report the Secretary-General noted that the Joint Inspection Unit had been requested to make the present study concerning the United Nations pattern of conferences and suggested that the information set out in his report "might be referred to the JIU for its use in its review of the pattern of conferences, so that, in respect of the question of the method of financing meetings held away from Headquarters that unit may take into account the IAEA practices in so far as they may be applicable".

409. At the meeting of the Fifth Committee of the General Assembly on 4 December 1972, one delegation referred to paragraph 14 of the Secretary-General's report and stated (A/C.5/SR.1451) that "the conclusion contained in paragraph 14 was a useful one, but understood it to mean that the Joint Inspection Unit would not be asked to pass judgement on whether the IAEA system should or should not be applied in the United Nations. That was a policy issue and only the Fifth Committee and the General Assembly

could take a decision on it. JIU should simply make a procedural, advisory recommendation to the Fifth Committee on how best the IAEA methods could be used from the financial and administrative point of view if a decision to apply them was taken".

410. No other delegation spoke on this matter in the Fifth Committee (or subsequently in the plenary session).

411. The Fifth Committee referred the Secretary-General's recommendation to the ACABQ for comment and the summary record of the meeting of that Committee on 6 December 1972 (A/C.5/SR.1544) reflected the Committee's view as follows:

"Mr. Rhodes (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) said that the Advisory Committee had considered the proposal made by the Secretary-General in paragraph 14 of document A/C.5/1482, and, on balance, considered it a reasonable one. He used the words on balance because it was arguable that the task was more one for the Secretary-General than for JIU. Nevertheless, since the financing of meetings away from Headquarters was clearly related to the pattern of conferences there was some advantage in studying the questions concurrently. Moreover, the Secretary-General would have an opportunity to study JIU's report. For those reasons, the Advisory Committee endorsed the proposals made in paragraph 14 of document A/C.5/1482."

412. The Fifth Committee then decided (A/C.5/SR.1545) to "recommend to the General Assembly that it should approve the Secretary-General's suggestion, in paragraph 14 of his report (A/C.5/1482), that the information set out in the report might be referred to the Joint Inspection Unit for its use in its review of the pattern of conferences". This recommendation was adopted by the General Assembly on 15 December 1972 (A/PV.2111).

413. It will be noted from the foregoing that the information contained in the Secretary-General's report was simply referred to the Joint Inspection Unit "for its use" in connexion with the present report. There was no indication in the proceedings of the Fifth Committee of the way in which the Joint Inspection Unit was expected to make use of the information. As mentioned above, the only delegation which discussed the matter indicated its belief that the Joint Inspection Unit was not being asked "to pass judgement on whether the IAEA system should or should not be applied in the United Nations". It is not readily apparent what that delegation had in mind when it went on to suggest that the Joint Inspection Unit should simply make a procedural advisory recommendation on how best the IAEA methods should be used from the financial and administrative point of view if a decision to apply them were taken. Clearly such a recommendation would be much more appropriate for the Secretary-General or for the ACABQ than for the JIU; in any case it is difficult to understand how a recommendation

of the kind mentioned could be made without knowledge of the extent to which it was intended that IAEA methods should be applied to United Nations meetings.

414. It has not been found possible to attempt to relate the information contained in the Secretary-General's report in a meaningful way to the present study. In view of the major problems relating to the pattern of conferences and to the conference programme itself to which this study has attempted to address itself, it has not appeared appropriate or desirable to devote attention to possible new methods of financing United Nations seminars and technical studies, a subject the Secretary-General is perfectly competent to deal with. Indeed, the Secretary-General offered in paragraph 13 of his report "to pursue this matter further or formulate an experimental plan for the application of a similar method of financing to a few United Nations meetings to be held away from Headquarters", but the Fifth Committee did not accept the offer or even discuss the suggestion.

415. If it was intended - despite the statement of the only delegation which spoke in the Fifth Committee - that this study should explore the possibility and desirability of applying IAEA procedures to United Nations meetings other than seminars and technical meetings, then there are several comments to be made. First of all, there is little reason to disagree with the Secretary-General's conclusion that the IAEA procedures are simply not applicable to regular United Nations meetings. When one realizes how the United Nations meetings differ from one another in size, length and particularly cost, it becomes apparent how difficult it would be to apply the "flat rate" approach of the IAEA to such meetings.

416. Further, in view of what has been pointed out in earlier sections of this report concerning the now clearly apparent limitations on United Nations conference resources and in the light of the mandate of the General Assembly to make the most rational and economic use of these resources, it would appear unwise, at least at this time, to modify paragraph 10 of A/RES/2609 (XXIV) to encourage more meetings away from the established headquarters of United Nations bodies. It is recognized, as stated in paragraph 248, that there are advantages in holding United Nations meetings in various parts of the world and indeed mention has been made in paragraph 267 of the possibility of holding General Assembly sessions, of a limited duration, away from New York from time to time. However, in the present situation, it is essential to give weight to the Secretary-General's reminder in his 1965 report (A/5867), that attention must be paid not only to the identifiable monetary costs of holding meetings away from

Headquarters but to the impact of such meetings on the efficiency with which the continuing work of the Organization is conducted. This reminder is even more relevant today than it was in 1965.

417. There is one additional point which should be noted. In 1974 there have already been two instances in which Governments have issued invitations - which have been accepted - to hold in their countries this year conferences which were scheduled for other locations in the 1974 calendar of conferences approved by the General Assembly. The Government of the Philippines invited the Governing Council of UNDP to meet in June in Manila rather than in Geneva, and the Government of Mexico invited the UNCTAD Working Group on Charter of Economic Rights and Duties of States to meet in June in Mexico City rather than in Geneva. These changes have created problems for the Geneva Office, since, although the meetings are to be held elsewhere, the Geneva Office will still have to provide the interpretation services which it would have had to provide for these conferences in Geneva. Problems arise both because it is necessary to allocate more interpretation staff for a conference when it is held away from headquarters in order to meet emergencies which could be met at headquarters by adjusting other meetings, and because free-lance staff prepared to service a conference in Geneva are not necessarily able or willing to service a conference held elsewhere. Thus the fact that the Secretariat had been able to provide interpretation services for conferences when they were scheduled in Geneva does not necessarily mean that it can provide adequate services when the conferences are moved elsewhere. Accordingly, the General Assembly may wish to add to the paragraph in the pattern of conferences resolution which deals with meetings held abroad in response to governmental invitation, a provision that such invitations must be issued in the calendar year prior to that in which the conference concerned is scheduled to be held, and sufficiently early to be taken into account by the proposed committee on conferences and to be included in the approved calendar of conferences.

D. Paragraph 11 of A/RES/2609 (XXIV) - major special conferences

418. Paragraph 11 of A/RES/2609 (XXIV) reads as follows:

"Decides that, as a general rule, not more than one major special conference shall be scheduled in any one year".

419. The term major special conference first appeared in the Secretary-General's 1963 report (A/5638) to the General Assembly on the review of the pattern of conferences. In paragraph 16 of that report he stated:

"Finally, in considering the question of containing the totality of the meetings in the conference programme, account must be taken of major special conferences convened under the auspices of the United Nations. Annex II of this report contains a list of the special conferences that have been held since 1958 and illustrates clearly their growth in number and frequency. The Secretary-General would strongly urge that, as a general rule and until it has been possible to rationalize the normal annual programme of United Nations meetings no more than one major special conference be scheduled annually."

420. The ACABQ's report (A/5647) to the eighteenth session of the General Assembly endorsed the Secretary-General's recommendation and the resolution of the General Assembly (A/RES/1987 (XVIII)) contained the following paragraph:

"4. Decides that, as a general rule, and at least until it becomes possible to rationalize the regular annual programme of conferences, not more than one major special conference shall be scheduled annually."

421. In his report to the nineteenth session of the General Assembly (A/5867), the Secretary-General referred to the paragraph just quoted and stated:

"The Secretary-General believes that a similar provision should be incorporated in the proposed new resolution with the following amendments: (a) the omission of the subordinate clause '... and at least until it becomes possible to rationalize the regular annual programme of conferences ...', which, as involving a subjective judgement, is somewhat imprecise, and (b) the addition of the words 'of the United Nations'. The proposed paragraph reads as follows:

'5. Decides that, as a general rule, not more than one major special conference of the United Nations should be scheduled annually.'"

422. No decision was taken on this matter at the nineteenth session and at the twentieth session the Secretary-General proposed (A/5979) a slightly modified version of the paragraph reading as follows:

"Decides that not more than one major special conference of the United Nations shall be scheduled in any one year."

423. This language proposed by the Secretary-General was included by the General Assembly in its resolution A/RES/2116 (XX).

424. In 1967 the Secretary-General submitted to the Committee on Conferences a note on the definition of the term "major special conferences". The note concluded that, while a precise definition was lacking, the general intent of the term could be adduced (from certain examples which were given) as applying to a "conference outside the regular, recurrent pattern of meetings of organs of the United Nations and their

subsidiary bodies, and one which involves a considerable workload for the substantive preparation and/or its pre-session, in-session and post-session documentation and meetings services".

425. The Committee on Conferences considered, however, that "such a broad interpretation is not sufficient for application under the absolute wording of resolution 2116 (XX)" and accordingly decided to study the matter further during 1968.

426. In paragraph 29 of its 1968 report (A/7361), the Committee on Conferences stated the following:

"The Committee agreed that it would be appropriate to describe 'special' conferences as those that are not part of the regular programme, that are convened in response to particular resolutions of the General Assembly or the Economic and Social Council, and for which specific additional budgetary provision is made. The Committee agreed, too, that it was possible to identify the principal criteria which, taken singly or collectively, would help determine the point at which special conferences assumed 'major' proportions. A description of these principal characteristics, namely, number of participants, cost, duration, and level of services required, is contained in Annex I. However, it does not appear feasible at this time, on the basis of one or all of those factors, to devise a useful working definition of the term 'major special conference' that would be relevant in all situations." (underlining inserted).

427. The Committee also stated the following in paragraph 30 of its report:

"The Committee considers that the question must be approached pragmatically. Each special conference proposed should be regarded separately in terms of the implications for Member States and servicing burden imposed upon the Secretariat. The main determining factor here must be the existing workload of the conference programme already planned. For example, a special conference convened at a time of relative slack might present no significant problems; but if sought during an already overcrowded period it would more readily assume serious dimensions in terms of its likely administrative impact. The Committee wishes to reiterate that if the Assembly decides to convene a special conference to which exceptional importance is attached, the corollary is that it will also be prepared to postpone other meetings, if, as a result of scarce resources, the success of the special conference would otherwise be impaired. This consideration underlines the importance of treating the question of special conferences within the context of a continuing review of the over-all programme of conferences and meetings." (underlining inserted).

428. Finally, the Committee recommended that the pattern of conferences resolution should refer only to a "special conference" rather than a "major special conference", and that the words "as a general rule" should be added, so that the paragraph would read:

"Decides that, as a general rule, no more than one special conference shall be scheduled in any one year".

429. At the twenty-third session of the General Assembly, there were objections to the wording proposed by the Committee on Conferences on the ground that "a chronological factor had thereby been introduced, for the provision as it stood meant that as soon as one special conference had been inserted into the conference schedule, no other suggestions for special conferences could be considered for that year, even if they were more deserving".

430. In reply to this objection the Chairman of the Committee on Conferences stated, inter alia, that the paragraph, as worded by the Committee:

"merely expressed a general principle and did not impose any 'ceiling' on the number of special conferences. The number of special conferences which could be properly serviced during a given year depended on the number of recurrent meetings scheduled for that year. In one year it might be possible to hold only one, or at the most two, special conferences. In another year, when the number of recurrent meetings was somewhat smaller, more special conferences could be held, if Member States so desired. The general rule that not more than one special conference should be scheduled in any one year was not substantially different from the corresponding provision in resolution 2116 (XX)." (underling inserted).

431. Subsequently, the Chairman of the Committee on Conferences agreed to the restoration of the word "major" in the paragraph and, in A/RES/2478 (XXIII), the General Assembly approved the wording of the provision as it now appears in paragraph 11 of A/RES/2609 (XXIV).

432. In the Fifth Committee at the twenty-third session of the General Assembly, the Chairman of the Committee on Conferences stated that "the question of special conferences was really a very important one when the meetings programme as a whole and the related problems came to be examined. The Committee on Conferences therefore considered that any resolution on the programme of conferences and meetings as a whole should make reference to the question". Although one can readily agree with the Chairman of the Committee on Conferences concerning the importance of special conferences, it is doubtful whether, as now worded, paragraph 11 of A/RES/2609 (XXIV), is a meaningful or useful provision for dealing with problems related to special conferences. There seems to be little point in stating that as a general rule, not more than one major special conference shall be held in any one year if, as explained by the Chairman of the Committee on Conferences, the language is not intended to impose a "ceiling" on special conferences.

433. There is particularly little point in continuing to repeat the provisions of paragraph 11 when year after year the United Nations continues to convene more than one special conference. As long ago as 1962, the Secretary-General pointed out in his report (A/5317) to the General Assembly that in each year since 1957 the United Nations had convened more than one "large special conference" and that in 1958 and 1961 it had convened as many as five. It now appears that in 1974 the United Nations will convene a Conference of Plenipotentiaries on Prescription (Limitation) in the International Sale of Goods, a Conference on the Law of the Sea, a World Population Conference and a World Food Conference and it has already reconvened the Conference on a Code of Conduct for Liner Conferences. To these must be added the Conference of the Committee on Disarmament and the session of the Committee on the Question of Defining Aggression, both of which, although not involving all Member States, are technically "special conferences" as defined by the Committee on Conferences. Additionally in 1974, the Secretary-General is required by Security Council resolution 344 (1973) "to provide all necessary assistance and facilities" for the work of the Middle East Peace Conference which was convened in the Palais des Nations on 21 December 1973. Finally, the Sixth Special Session of the General Assembly was held in New York 9 April-2 May 1974.

434. The picture looks no different for the immediate future. The ACABQ has pointed out in its report (A/9345) to the twenty-eighth session of the General Assembly that at least fourteen special conferences are planned or proposed for the period 1974-1977.

435. Accordingly it is believed that paragraph 11 of A/RES/2609 (XXIV) should not be repeated in future resolutions on the pattern of conferences and that, as proposed by the ACABQ in A/9345 "a more realistic formula for controlling the number of major special conferences should be devised".

436. If we put to one side the questions of cost and convenience to Governments<sup>61/</sup> the problem of holding special conferences becomes primarily one of availability of conference resources, both physical and staffing, in relation to workload.

437. Although it may not be too difficult, in terms of physical conference resources, to arrive at a "realistic formula" concerning the number of weeks of special conferences which can be convened annually without adversely affecting the regular conference programme, the situation is different when one tries to formulate a conclusion in terms

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<sup>61/</sup> The Inspectors are not in a position to comment on how much Member States should be prepared to spend annually for special conferences nor can they appropriately make a judgement as to what is convenient for Member States.



of conference staff resources. Whereas the regular conference programme in New York and a part of the regular conference programme in Geneva are serviced by conference staff which hold established posts and whose availability can accordingly be accurately estimated, a significant part of the regular conference programme in Geneva, and almost the entire special conference programme of the United Nations, are serviced by free-lance staff, employed on a temporary-assistance basis. The availability of such staff, particularly the free-lance interpreters, at any date more than a few months in the future simply cannot be determined today with any degree of assurance.<sup>62/</sup>

438. The reason for this situation has been spelled out in paragraphs 141-190 above, namely, the fact that there is a limited pool of free-lance staff and the same free-lance staff being sought by United Nations are being recruited for the conferences of the specialized agencies and for other international conferences of all kinds.

439. When one attempts to develop "a more realistic formula" for convening conferences in the absence of any real assurance as to the staff resources which might be available to service them, and lacking any advance certainty as to the length and servicing requirements of any given special conference which might be convened in the future, one is impelled to recall the advice given by the Committee on Conferences in paragraph 30 of its 1968 report (A/7361) which is quoted in part above. When one adopts the "pragmatic approach" suggested by that Committee and analyzes the existing situation with respect to the convening of special conferences, the following emerges:

- (a) There is today a limit, although not a clearly defined one, on the conference staff resources and particularly the interpretation resources available to the United Nations;
- (b) A large part of these staff resources is devoted to servicing the regular programme of recurrent meetings;

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<sup>62/</sup> In the case of the Law of the Sea Conference in 1974, the Secretariat was able to advise the twenty-eighth session of the General Assembly that free-lance interpreters would not be available in June 1974; however, it could not say with any assurance when free-lance interpreters would be available at other times of the year. When the General Assembly adopted A/RES/3067 (XXVIII) convening the conference in Caracas during the period 20 June to 29 August 1974, the Secretariat was not certain whether or where it would be able to find the necessary interpretation staff although the Department of Conference Services thought it had reason to believe that interpreters would be available.

- (c) Only the balance of the staff resources can be used for special conferences and its magnitude will limit the number of possible special conferences unless this magnitude can be increased by diverting staff resources from the regular programme to the special conference programme;
- (d) The United Nations has in the past felt it desirable to schedule as many as five large special conferences in a single year and is planning to convene at least fourteen during the next four years;
- (e) Recent experience<sup>63/</sup> suggests that the probable availability to the United Nations of conference staff resources during 1974 and the next few years will be, at best,<sup>64/</sup> barely adequate - and may well be inadequate - to handle a special conference programme of the magnitude of that for 1974 which includes inter alia five special conferences involving the entire membership;

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<sup>63/</sup> After the Government of Venezuela had invited the United Nations to hold the Law of the Sea Conference in Caracas from 14 May to 19 July 1974, the Secretary-General advised the First Committee of the General Assembly at its twenty-eighth session in document A/C.1/L.649 that "all the servicing resources available from the regular establishment of the Organization, as well as those available from the free-lance market, are already committed in June 1974 to servicing scheduled meetings". As a result the Conference was rescheduled for the period 20 June-29 August 1974. However, to make even this possible, the dates for the meetings of UNCITRAL and the Conference on Prescription (Limitation) in the International Sale of Goods had to be changed. Similarly, to make possible the resumption of the Conference on a Code of Conduct for Liner Conferences in March 1974, the meeting of the UNCTAD Committee on Shipping had to be postponed until July 1974 and the "second session" of the Inter-Governmental Preparatory Group on Conventions on International Inter-Modal Transport had to be postponed from July 1974 until 1975. Further, as mentioned in paragraph 76, the Secretary-General informed the Sixth Special Session of the General Assembly, with respect to a proposal to create an ad hoc committee of the special programme which would meet for three weeks in May/June 1974, that "in view of the fact that most of the existing staff as well as the free-lance language staff in New York and Geneva have already been committed to other meetings, ... it may be extremely difficult for the Secretary-General to provide the necessary conference services to the ad hoc committee during this period unless some of the meetings which have already been approved for this period are rescheduled.

<sup>64/</sup> The assumption here is that there will be no increase in the regular conference programme. If there is any significant increase in the regular programme, it will be impossible to carry out a special conference programme of the size of that scheduled for 1974.

- (f) It must be assumed that if the General Assembly approves more special conferences than can be serviced with the qualified conference staff which would remain available if the entire regular programme were carried out as scheduled, the Assembly intends that a part of the regular programme should be rescheduled, or cancelled if rescheduling is not possible;
- (g) If the General Assembly is to continue to vote special conference programmes of the kind approved for 1974 and proposed for 1975,<sup>65/</sup> and if there is not to be too significant an adverse impact on the regular conference programme in terms of rescheduling or cancellation, the special conferences must be scheduled more carefully than at present throughout the non-General Assembly period to avoid, in so far as possible, overlapping with one another, or with peak meeting periods of the regular programme.

440. There is another factor which must be taken into account in attempting to arrive at a more realistic formula for the convening of special conferences. This is the fact that of the special conferences convened in any one year, there are frequently several in the same "programme sector". For example, in 1975 there are envisaged an International Conference of Plenipotentiaries on the Representation of States in their Relations with International Organizations which is to meet in Vienna for nine weeks from 12 February to 15 April. In addition there is also tentatively scheduled a resumed session of the Law of the Sea Conference to meet for eight weeks, also in Vienna. Both of these can be characterized as "legal conferences" although the Law of the Sea Conference was convened by the First Committee of the General Assembly. The question arises as to whether, given the situation described above with respect to the convening of special conferences, such a concentration of conference staff resources in one programme sector in any one year is appropriate and, if it is, what can be done to make it possible.

441. In view of the foregoing, several courses of action are open to the General Assembly with respect to the convening of special conferences. Since thus far only a very few difficulties have arisen in connexion with the convening of such conferences, it might be thought best to leave matters as they are and trust that existing procedures will prove adequate to deal with the special conference problem, at least

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<sup>65/</sup> As of 1 May 1974, six major special conferences were already scheduled or proposed for 1975.

during the next few years. It is suggested, however, that this is not a desirable course to follow. As discussed at length in paragraphs 141-190, the shortage of qualified free-lance conference staff, particularly interpretation staff, has become increasingly serious during the past few years and the evidence is very strong that it will continue to grow more acute. The problem which arose at the twenty-eighth session of the General Assembly with respect to the Law of the Sea Conference and several similar situations which have arisen in the course of 1974<sup>66/</sup> support this view. Because of the shortage of qualified interpretation staff, the Secretariat has been compelled to plan to recruit for the special conference programme in 1974, interpreters whose qualifications are considered to be substandard or have not been tested. All this suggests that if the United Nations continues to rely heavily on free-lance staff to service its special conference programme, some new procedures must be developed to deal with the matter.

442. A second possible approach is to have the General Assembly decide how many weeks of regular and special conferences it wishes to convene annually and then to attempt to recruit as regular staff members a sufficient number of interpreters to service these conference programmes. Assuming that it were possible to agree on the number of weeks of meetings for both the regular and special programmes, there would exist at least two other problems. There would be a need to spread the meetings evenly throughout the year to avoid having periods of time in which regular staff interpreters were idle - and some one United Nations body would have to be responsible for ensuring this result. However, this need for spreading out meetings exists in any case and so does not constitute a real objection to this second possible approach. The real difficulty with this approach is the probability that until new training programmes are developed - and this will probably require several years - the United Nations will be unable to recruit the required number of interpreters as regular staff members. Thus for the reasons mentioned in paragraph 187, there appears to be no prospect in the immediate future of solving the special conference problem by recruiting sufficient regular interpretation staff to make it possible to forego reliance on free-lance staff. This does not mean, of course, that the advantages of this approach should be ignored in the future if and when candidates for recruitment as regular staff members become available.

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<sup>66/</sup> See foot-note 63 on page 134.

443. A third possible approach to this problem under present circumstances which would appear to be more consistent with the ACABQ's view that "a more realistic formula for controlling the number of major special conferences should be devised", and with the view of the Committee on Conferences quoted in paragraph 427, would be to attempt to retain the spirit of paragraph 11 of A/RES/2609 (XXIV) and to up-date it in the light of today's circumstances. This would involve a recognition of the factors mentioned in paragraph 439, and in particular, of the limited quantity of conference staff resources available to the United Nations today, and of the desire of the General Assembly, as evidenced by its decision at its twenty-eighth session, to convene in one year as many as five special conferences involving the entire United Nations membership.

444. If it adopts this approach, the General Assembly may wish to decide that, as a general rule, not more than five special conferences involving the entire membership should be convened in any one year. It may also decide that, as a general rule, not more than one such conference in any one year should involve the same programme sector and, for this purpose, might arbitrarily establish five programme sectors such as the political (including decolonization questions), scientific, economic, social, and legal sectors.<sup>67/</sup>

445. If this were done it would enable the United Nations to convene annually as many as five "major" (in the sense of all Member States participation) conferences covering a broad range of subject matter, with only a limited possibility, assuming no increase in the number of non-United Nations international conferences, that the regular programme (if it did not exceed its present level) would have to be cut back significantly as a result. If circumstances caused the General Assembly to decide that there should be more than five such special conferences in any given year, it would have to be recognized that the regular conference programme would almost certainly require significant readjustment or curtailment as a result.

446. Limiting each programme sector to one large special conference a year would compel the ECOSOC and the Main Committees of the General Assembly dealing with various programme sectors to decide what particular subjects in their area of interest deserved priority treatment in any given year in the form of a "major" special conference.

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<sup>67/</sup> Such division into sectors is already pretty well established in the terms of reference of the Main Committees of the General Assembly.

Moreover, such a limitation would enable the governmental bodies and the Secretariat staff responsible for each sector to concentrate full attention on only one such conference a year and tend to ensure more adequate preparation than has sometimes been the case in the past.

447. If such an approach were adopted it would be important for its successful operation to spread the special conferences throughout the non-General Assembly period of the year so as to avoid overlapping to the greatest possible extent with one another and with peak meeting periods in the regular programme. Similarly, the conferences should be so spread among New York, Geneva and Vienna (and in appropriate cases other locations for which governmental invitations are forthcoming) that no one centre would be overburdened by having special conferences at a time when its regular programme was very heavy.<sup>68/</sup> Perhaps the various programme sectors could take turns in having their conferences convened at the more desirable and the less desirable times of the year.

448. For such an approach to be viable, special conferences would, in the future, have to be scheduled in the interest of the conference programme as a whole rather than to suit the convenience of the convening bodies; accordingly, it could no longer be left to the bodies which convened special conferences to fix definitely the dates (within the year) and locations of such conferences. Some one United Nations body would have to decide on the dates and locations for all special conferences. This seems to be an appropriate task for the Fifth Committee, acting on the advice of a special committee dealing with conferences (see chapter V). This special committee and the Fifth Committee would, of course, take into account to the extent possible the views concerning the timing and locations of conferences expressed by the bodies convening them and would not propose changes unless they considered them essential.

449. There might well be occasions when those responsible for one programme sector would see no need for a special conference dealing with that sector in a particular year whereas those responsible for one or more other sectors would wish more than one special conference in that year. This again would appear to be a matter for decision by the Fifth Committee acting on the advice of a special committee on conferences. The general rule to be applied might well be that more than one special conference would be permissible in a programme sector provided that the total of five special conferences

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<sup>68/</sup> Spreading special conferences geographically will not solve problems resulting from a shortage of interpreters and may indeed compound those problems.

for all sectors was not exceeded and the Fifth Committee found that the regular conference programme would not be significantly disrupted as a result. If it were decided to hold two conferences in the same programme sector, both of them could not be given the more desirable meeting dates or locations.

450. There is then the problem which was suggested in the 1968 report of the Committee on Conferences, namely that of making certain that it is possible to service properly all special conferences which are convened by the United Nations. It is not only conceivable but quite probable that unless steps are taken to increase conference staff resources, it will be found in a particular year that those resources do not suffice for the full servicing of both the special conferences proposed, and the regular programme of recurrent meetings already planned. As the Committee on Conferences suggested, it must be assumed in such a case that the General Assembly would wish to reschedule or cancel certain meetings of subsidiary bodies in the regular programme to provide resources for the servicing of special conferences. The body to make this decision, because of its responsibility for the annual calendar of conferences, is clearly the Fifth Committee, again acting on the advice of a special committee on conferences. When making such a decision in a situation in which more than one special conference is proposed for a single programme sector, the Fifth Committee would be expected to find the necessary staff resources by rescheduling or cancelling meetings in the regular programme which deal with that same programme sector.<sup>69/</sup>

451. If the Fifth Committee is to perform the tasks mentioned in the preceding paragraphs - even with the assistance of a special committee on conferences - then all proposals for special conferences will have to be submitted to it early in the Assembly session, probably no later than 15 October. This will be essential to enable the Fifth Committee to see the total conference load - both regular and special - as a whole and to work out problems of scheduling with respect to both timing and location so that the conference load can be spread as evenly as possible and that the least possible damage is being done to the regular conference programme.

452. In considering this approach to the convening of special conferences, it cannot be emphasized too strongly that so long as the present shortage of conference staff resources exists, the General Assembly cannot hope to convene as many as five large

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<sup>69/</sup> Just as the meeting of the UNCTAD Committee on Shipping was postponed from March to July of 1974 to permit the resumption of the Conference on a Code of Conduct for Liner Conferences.

special conferences a year and, at the same time, to have a minimal chance of proper conference servicing unless it limits the regular conference programme to its present size. It cannot, as in the case of the 1974 calendar of conferences, convene two large special "legal" conferences and at the same time lengthen the session of the International Law Commission from ten to twelve weeks, and expect to have all of these bodies serviced with qualified interpretation staff. Similarly, the General Assembly cannot maintain the present level of special conferences and at the same time approve the expansion of the ECE meeting programme by 5 to 10 per cent a year as is presently envisaged by the Secretariat of that Commission (see paragraph 124). It must clearly choose between having a large special conference programme and having an expanding regular conference programme - it cannot have both in present circumstances.

453. The possible approach suggested here will have no chance of success without greater effort on the part of the Secretariat. As suggested elsewhere in this report, the Secretary-General must take steps, in co-operation with the specialized agencies, to arrest the decline in the availability of conference staff resources and must recommend steps which will ensure the availability of adequate and qualified resources in the future. The Secretariat must, at all times, be more fully aware than it is today of the availability - or lack - of such resources and it must inform governmental bodies, and particularly the Fifth Committee and any special committee on conferences which might be created, more fully and forcefully than at present, of situations in which resources are not available for conferences being proposed. It must, of course, comply with the spirit of whatever decision is made by the General Assembly with respect to special conferences and Secretariat units must not attempt to circumvent such a decision in order to secure preferential treatment for their area of interest.

454. Finally, an approach such as that outlined above - like any other approach - cannot succeed unless Governments sincerely try to make it a success. Government representatives must view each special conference in which they are personally interested as a part of a total programme in which their Governments have an interest and they must be careful not to cause significant damage to the total programme by over-emphasizing the importance and the requirements of a particular special conference. There is no chance of having a rational conference programme if governmental representatives in any one body insist, as some have in the past, that the special conference in which they are interested must have absolute priority over all other meetings. Governments must impress on all their representatives the fact that the conference staff resources of the United Nations are limited today as they have not been in the past and that the



success of all important special United Nations conferences depends upon the extent to which Governments co-operate in accepting decisions designed to ensure the most rational use of those resources. Governments must be willing to respect recommendations of the Fifth Committee as to the timing and location of all special conferences included in each annual calendar of conferences.

455. Despite the emphasis which has been placed upon the fact that the approach suggested is feasible only if a number of conditions are met, there is the obvious danger that the conditions will be ignored or forgotten, that the suggested "maximum" of five special conferences a year will be taken to be a minimum and that each programme sector will endeavour to arrange for a special conference each year. Because of this danger it might be wise to attempt to limit the number of special conferences to no more than three a year for the immediate future, or at least until a committee on conferences can assure the General Assembly that the necessary language resources are available and that it has been able to reconcile the requirements of the regular conference programme with the desire to hold as many as five special conferences a year. A newly-established committee on conferences should be given an adequate opportunity to study the problem fully before it makes its recommendations.

E. Paragraph 12 of A/RES/2609 (XXIV) - compliance with recommendations of the Ad Hoc Committee of Experts to Examine the Finances of the United Nations and the Specialized Agencies

456. Paragraph 12 of A/RES/2609 (XXIV) reads as follows:

"Urges all organs and subsidiary bodies of the United Nations to plan their future conferences and meetings in accordance with the following recommendations of the Ad Hoc Committee of Experts to Examine the Finances of the United Nations and the Specialized Agencies:

- (i) Priorities should be established for fixing the areas and programmes of meetings and conferences on a long-term basis;
- (ii) The availability of human and physical resources necessary for servicing conferences should be determined and taken into account;
- (iii) The financial ability of the organizations and of Member States to meet the requirements necessary to hold conferences should be determined and taken into account;
- (iv) An adequate interval of time should be allowed between conferences of the same body or of a similar nature".

457. This provision first appeared as paragraph 9 of the 1968 resolution on the pattern of conferences (A/RES/2478 (XXIII)) and was repeated verbatim in paragraph 12 of A/RES/2609 (XXIV).

458. The recommendations of the Ad Hoc Committee of Experts to which reference is made in the quoted paragraph were formulated in 1966 and were approved unanimously by the Fifth Committee and by the General Assembly in A/RES/2150 (XXI). Despite that fact it is obvious that very little attention has been paid to their implementation.

459. It is suggested that the principal reason for the failure to comply with the exhortation to implement these recommendations is the fact that it is addressed too broadly, i.e. to all organs and subsidiary bodies of the United Nations. The inclusion of all such bodies in the exhortation has meant that no single body has felt that it had a significant responsibility to implement the recommendations.

460. A second reason for the failure to implement these recommendations is the fact that an exhortation alone is simply not enough to secure results in this area - real pressure must be exerted to bring about the results desired.

461. Given this situation, there are several actions, already mentioned in earlier sections of the report, which the General Assembly might take. One would be to centralize responsibility for conferences in a committee on conferences reporting to the Fifth Committee. Such a committee could ensure that "the availability of human and physical resources necessary for servicing conferences should be determined and taken into account", before the calendars of conferences were approved by the Fifth Committee. It could also recommend to individual organs and subsidiary bodies, and to the Fifth Committee, the "appropriate intervals of time which should be allowed between conferences of the same body or of a similar nature". It could forcefully support its views on this second point by demonstrating the status of availability of conference resources.

462. So far as the establishment of "priorities" is concerned, it is clear that a simple exhortation to do this will accomplish nothing. However, the General Assembly could force those responsible for the various programme sectors to determine and respect priorities. It could decide that because of the limitation on conference resources, the regular conference programme cannot be increased. This would compel those responsible for each programme sector to determine priorities within the present level of the regular programme in that sector. The Assembly could also limit special conferences to

one per year in each programme sector - with the qualifications mentioned in paragraph 449 above - and could thus force those responsible for each programme sector to determine special conference priorities for that sector. And it could give a committee on conferences and the Fifth Committee the last word on priorities between programme sectors if that issue should arise.

463. With respect to the exhortation to consider "the financial ability of the organizations and Member States to meet the requirements necessary to hold conferences", there is little point in urging this upon a large number of organs and subsidiary bodies which are not in a position to formulate a judgement on this matter. The factor of cost can be meaningful only if the General Assembly itself sets a ceiling on conference expenditure and experience suggests that it is not likely to do this.

464. In view of the foregoing there seems to be little point in repeating paragraph 12 in future resolutions on the pattern of conferences.

V. THE NEED FOR A COMMITTEE ON CONFERENCES

465. At the commencement of this study, the Inspectors involved in it were not inclined to give serious consideration to the possible establishment of a committee on conferences. After all, such a body had been established by the General Assembly in 1966 (A/RES/2239 (XXI)) on an experimental basis, subject to review in 1969, and in that year the Assembly had decided (A/RES/2609 (XXIV)) not to reconstitute the membership of the Committee. There appeared to be a widespread belief that this experience had demonstrated rather conclusively that such a committee had little chance to assist effectively in rationalizing the United Nations conference programme.

466. Further, the Inspectors had particular doubts about the wisdom of establishing a committee to deal with the problem in view of the fact that a common criticism of the programme itself was that its size resulted from the tendency to propose new committees to solve problems which existing bodies found difficult to deal with.

467. However, despite this initial lack of enthusiasm for the idea, the study has led the Inspectors to conclude that such a committee is essential in the present circumstances.

468. First of all, the very fact that the present study has been called for demonstrates that the concern which led the General Assembly to establish the Committee on Conferences in 1966 still exists. It is still necessary to find some method of ensuring that the General Assembly intelligently formulates and supervises the conference programme of the Organization.

469. Further, the situation today is even more serious than it was in 1966 and the need for a central point for controlling the programme is more demonstrable. Today, the size of the conference programme is limited by the availability of interpretation staff and it clearly can no longer be left to individual bodies to determine how much of the limited conference resources they will use. The General Assembly must have the last word on how such resources are to be used and it obviously requires advice and guidance as to how to do this.

470. As pointed out earlier in this report, the Fifth Committee of the Assembly is the Main Committee of that body which must deal with the conference programme. However, the Fifth Committee has two limitations. It simply does not have the time to deal with the details of the conference programme. Secondly, it meets only during the General Assembly sessions and it cannot therefore deal with problems which arise between sessions.

471. When one looks for existing organs which might be able both to advise the Fifth Committee and to act between Assembly sessions, one finds only two possibilities, the Secretariat and the ACABQ.

472. The Secretariat of course, possesses a complete knowledge of all the details of the conference programme and of available conference resources and is in a position to draw up a rational calendar of conferences, tailored to resources availability. Further it is able to act between Assembly sessions. However, as the servant of Member Governments, the Secretariat is not in a position to choose between competing demands of governmental bodies when drawing up a calendar of conferences, nor is it in a position, between sessions of the Assembly, to overrule governmental bodies which wish to change the dates or locations of their session or to hold additional sessions. As the Secretary-General stated in paragraph 7 of his report (A/8790) to the twenty-seventh session of the General Assembly, if on some occasions the representatives of Member States serving on a particular intergovernmental body do not find it possible to arrange the work of the body in accordance with rules laid down by the General Assembly "the Secretary-General must, for his part, accept the decision of the body".

473. It should be further noted that conferences are linked very closely to the substantive units of the Secretariat which service them. There is little doubt that the Department of Conference Services at Headquarters would be under impossible pressure from many Secretariat units if it were called upon to recommend to the Fifth Committee which conferences should have priority and when and where they should be held.

474. When one considers the ACABQ, one concludes readily that it is a body qualified to advise the Fifth Committee concerning the conference programme and also to act for the General Assembly between sessions of that body. It performs both of those functions today. It not only submits reports to the Fifth Committee on various administrative and budgetary questions, including administrative and budgetary aspects of the conference programme, but also, between Assembly sessions, exercises the power to concur, or to refuse to concur, in requests by the Secretary-General to enter into financial commitments to meet unforeseen and extraordinary expenses.

475. Thus the ACABQ would appear to be an ideal body for the desired purpose, except for two considerations. First of all, it is not governmental; its thirteen members are elected by the General Assembly and they serve in their individual capacities. Governmental committees might be reluctant to accept as final decisions made by this Committee between sessions of the General Assembly. Experience has shown that while

Governments almost always accept the views of the ACABQ with respect to proposals made by the Secretary-General, they are less inclined to accept those views when they clash with proposals of governmental bodies. Moreover, even assuming that the expert character of the ACABQ is not a real handicap, there is the simple fact that the work programme of the ACABQ is already so heavy that it cannot be asked to undertake the tasks which are considered necessary with respect to the conference programme. These are detailed below.

476. Accordingly, if the Secretariat and the ACABQ are ruled out, one is forced to think seriously about the possibility and desirability of establishing, once again, a governmental committee on conferences.

477. The first fact which one notes when considering this matter is that, contrary to the understanding of many, the General Assembly never decided to abandon the concept of a committee on conferences. On the contrary, in operative paragraph 4 of A/RES/2609 (XXIV), the Assembly decided "to reconsider at its twenty-fifth session the question of the membership and terms of reference of the Committee on Conferences, and in the meantime not to reconstitute the membership of the Committee". In operative paragraph 6 of that same resolution, the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit to the twenty-fifth session the study which the JIU was subsequently requested (A/RES/2960 (XXVII)) to complete and which is reflected in this report. Since at its twenty-fifth session the General Assembly did not receive the full study requested of the Secretary-General, it was presumably for that reason that it did not reconsider the membership and terms of reference of the Committee on Conferences. It would seem appropriate for the Assembly to take up this matter at the twenty-ninth session, since it will then have received from the JIU the study which it requested.

478. When one examines why the Committee on Conferences did not achieve satisfactory results in the 1967-1969 period, one notes that the General Assembly conceded in operative paragraph 2 of A/RES/2609 (XXIV) that this failure was due "to the reasons set forth in the report of the Committee on Conferences". When one turns to the Committee's report (A/7626), one finds that the explanation is simple and straightforward - the Committee was not given adequate terms of reference or sufficient power. The position in which the Committee found itself has been described in paragraph 66 and the description will not be repeated here. Suffice it to recall the Committee's statement that it had "reached the unanimous conclusion that the General Assembly would have to strengthen the Committee's terms of reference, perhaps give it more

specific guidelines, if it was to perform the task assigned to it ... and that if this was not found possible, its tenure should not be extended further".

479. It would appear from the foregoing that a committee on conferences might be able to be effective in helping to rationalize the conference programme if it were provided with proper authority and terms of reference. There are some who concede this but they consider it unlikely that the Assembly will delegate adequate power to such a committee. They particularly doubt that it will give to the committee the necessary inter-sessional authority to control the desire of various governmental committees to hold unscheduled sessions or to change the dates, locations or durations of their sessions.

480. It is recognized that there is little point in establishing a committee on conferences if its powers are limited to those given to the committee established in 1966. However, there are precedents for giving small committees very extensive authority to deal with matters of great interest to Governments and committees having such authority have been very successful. As mentioned above, the ACABQ has been given the power between sessions of the General Assembly to act on behalf of that body to concur, or to refuse to concur, in requests by the Secretary-General for authority to enter into financial commitments.<sup>70/</sup> The eleven-member expert Committee on Contributions formulates for the General Assembly a scale of assessments which governs the payment of regular budget contributions by Member States and its recommended scales of assessment have always been accepted by the Assembly without change. Given these examples, there is in principle no reason why a small governmental committee, like the earlier Committee on Conferences, should not be given the authority to act on behalf of the Assembly in concurring, or refusing to concur, between Assembly sessions in requests for new conferences not included in the approved calendar of conferences or for changes in the dates, locations and durations of conferences already scheduled.

481. In the view of the Inspectors, a committee on conferences should have terms of reference which enable it:

- (a) to recommend to the Fifth Committee the pattern of conferences to be adopted by the Assembly and the changes to be made in that pattern as circumstances change;

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<sup>70/</sup> Up to an amount of \$10 million in the case of commitments relating to the maintenance of peace and security as a result of a decision of the Security Council.

- (b) to construct for the Fifth Committee the annual calendar of conferences to be approved by the Assembly;
- (c) to recommend to the Fifth Committee, in the light of the ceiling imposed on the level of the conference programme at any given time by the shortage of interpretation staff, how to decide among competing claims to meet at preferred meeting periods, such as that of May-August in Geneva (this is particularly necessary in the case of important special conferences);
- (d) to recommend to the Fifth Committee how to spread the conference programme more evenly throughout the year and to reduce peak meeting periods such as the May-August period in Geneva;
- (e) to act for the General Assembly between sessions to decide upon requests for new meetings not included in the approved calendar of conferences for the year, upon requests for changes in dates and locations of meetings already in the approved calendar and upon what meetings, if any, must be cancelled or rescheduled because of a decision to hold a special session of the General Assembly or because of any other development which results in an unexpected shortage of conference staff to service meetings included in the approved calendar;
- (f) to advise the Fifth Committee on the pace of the recommended changeover by the Geneva Office from reliance on free-lance interpretation staff to the recruitment of regular interpretation staff and on the number of interpretation teams required there, on the steps required to produce candidates for employment as regular interpretation staff and on the progress made in this regard in developing training programmes, securing governmental assistance etc. (recommendations concerning these matters should be closely co-ordinated with the ACABQ);
- (g) to keep the Fifth Committee informed of the progress being made by the United Nations and the specialized agencies in co-ordinating conference schedules and the use of interpretation staff.

482. In order to be effective, the committee on conferences must be small. It would appear that a membership of twelve to fifteen would be ideal and it will be recalled that the previous Committee had a membership of fifteen. Although the committee should be governmental in character, the member Governments should take great care to ensure



that their representatives on the committee are relatively senior, are experienced and familiar with the United Nations conference programme, and are in a position to attend all sessions of the committee.

483. It is essential, of course, that a committee on conferences have the full support of the Secretariat. It also is important that its secretariat work closely with that of the ACABQ. And it is to be hoped that this report will be of assistance to the committee in carrying out what will be a very difficult task.

484. It cannot be emphasized too strongly that this proposal for a committee on conferences is linked very closely with the existence of a new problem facing the Organization, namely the limitation imposed on the conference programme by the limited availability of interpreters. In the past, there has always appeared to be an adequate number of interpretation staff to service the level of the conference programme then existing or contemplated and it was not considered necessary, even if it appeared to some to be desirable, to make a choice among competing claims for the use of that staff. Today, the situation is different and it is clear that such a choice must be made, and must be made intelligently. It appears that a committee on conferences, properly staffed and possessing adequate authority, provides the best hope of arriving at such an intelligent choice.

## VI. INCLUSION OF VIENNA IN THE UNITED NATIONS PATTERN OF CONFERENCES

485. General Assembly resolution 2960 (XXVII) of 21 December 1972 which requested the Joint Inspection Unit to make the present study, was the first to name Vienna in connexion with the United Nations pattern of conferences. Operative paragraph 5 of the resolution reads in part as follows:

"Requests the Joint Inspection Unit, in particular, to prepare the study requested in paragraph 6 of resolution 2609 (XXIV), including a model pattern of conferences for New York, Geneva and Vienna as recommended by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions in paragraph 9 of its report ...".

486. As a matter of fact, paragraph 9 of the report (A/8868) of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions did not mention Vienna and spoke only of a "model pattern of conferences for New York and Geneva". However, in speaking of the proposed study, the ACABQ said in paragraph 4 of its report that "due regard must also be had to the situation in Vienna". In the Fifth Committee of the General Assembly at its twenty-seventh session, the representative of Austria referred to this statement of the ACABQ and suggested that Vienna be mentioned along with New York and Geneva in operative paragraph 5 of the resolution before the Fifth Committee and this was agreed to by the Committee.

487. It should be recognized that even had there been no specific reference to Vienna in A/RES/2960 (XXVII), that city would nevertheless have had to be considered as being in the present United Nations pattern of conferences by virtue of the location there of the headquarters of UNIDO, and now UNSCEAR as well. As had been pointed out earlier in this report, a basic principle of the pattern of conferences is that, apart from certain stated exceptions, "United Nations bodies shall plan to meet at their respective established headquarters". Thus Vienna, as well as Nairobi where UNEP is headquartered and Addis Ababa, Bangkok, Beirut and Santiago where regional economic commissions are headquartered, are included in the existing pattern of conferences along with New York and Geneva. However, thus far New York and Geneva have been the principal conference centres in the United Nations pattern of conferences and the mention of Vienna along with these two cities in A/RES/2960 (XXVII) suggests that the General Assembly wished the Joint Inspection Unit to give consideration to the feasibility of placing Vienna on a level comparable to that of New York and Geneva.

488. In the course of consultations between the Austrian Foreign Ministry and the Inspectors on this matter, there was handed to the Inspectors a memorandum dated 18 March 1974 setting forth the views of the Austrian Government with respect to the inclusion of Vienna in the United Nations pattern of conferences. A copy of this memorandum has now been circulated as a General Assembly document (A/9589). It is referred to hereafter in this report as the Austrian Memorandum.

489. In considering the position of Vienna with respect to the United Nations pattern of conferences, a distinction must be drawn between the period 1975-1977 and the period thereafter. This is, in part, because this report is concerned primarily with the next United Nations pattern of conferences which presumably will cover only the 1975-1977 period. Prior to 1965, the General Assembly formulated patterns of conferences for five-year periods but in 1965 the ACABQ recommended (A/5889) that the length of the periods be reduced to three years and this was approved by the General Assembly in A/RES/2116 (XX). Given the present uncertainties with respect to the future of the United Nations conference programme, there is no apparent reason to attempt to establish the next pattern of conferences for a period longer than three years.

490. There is an equally important reason for distinguishing between the 1975-1977 period and the period thereafter when considering the position at Vienna. This is the fact that the Austrian Government is presently constructing in the Donaupark in Vienna an International Centre consisting of permanent headquarters office buildings to accommodate the secretariats of IAEA, UNIDO and UNSCEAR (and possibly other United Nations Secretariat units), an International Conference Building which the Austrian Government is prepared to place "at the disposal of the United Nations" on certain conditions and an Austrian Conference Centre designed to serve primarily, although not exclusively, intergovernmental conferences. The completion of these buildings will presumably change the situation in Vienna very significantly in so far as United Nations conferences are concerned, but none of the buildings is expected to be completed before 1978.

491. One of the major differences at the present time between New York and Geneva on the one hand, and Vienna on the other, is the fact that in the first two cities the United Nations owns and controls its conference facilities whereas in Vienna the United Nations owns no conference rooms and controls only one small conference room in the provisional headquarters building of UNIDO. All other conference facilities used by the United Nations in Vienna in the past and those available to it in the 1975-1977 period

are Austrian-owned and controlled.<sup>71/</sup> These are described in paragraph 5 of the Austrian Memorandum.

492. Past United Nations conferences in Vienna and those presently scheduled in 1974 and 1975 (except for the smaller UNIDO meetings) have been or will be held in the Hofburg Conference Centre which is managed for the Austrian Government by a commercial firm. Since the principal objective of this firm is to book as many conferences as possible, the facilities in the Hofburg are not always available to the United Nations, particularly on short notice. However, as indicated in paragraph 3 of the Austrian Memorandum, it has been possible to schedule a number of important United Nations conferences in the Hofburg in the past and two more are scheduled, one tentatively, in 1975. Further, it is stated in paragraph 7 of the Austrian Memorandum that "as a rule, an advance booking of six months is sufficient for larger congresses (more than 300 participants), provided that the dates envisaged are somewhat flexible. Conferences with fewer participants or of less than two weeks duration can be booked on shorter notice". It should also be noted that an additional wing in the Hofburg has now been adapted for conferences. It comprises two conference rooms of "board-room size"<sup>72/</sup> which are not under the control of the commercial firm mentioned above but are under the exclusive control of the Austrian Foreign Ministry.

493. A second major difference between New York and Geneva on the one hand, and Vienna on the other, relates to simultaneous interpretation staff. In the first two locations, the United Nations has a significant number of interpreters employed as regular staff members plus the possibility of recruiting free-lance interpretation staff locally. In the case of Vienna, the United Nations has, in the employ of UNIDO, only four regular staff interpreters, can borrow only a very small number from IAEA (which has only seven interpreters) and can recruit almost no fully-qualified free-lance interpreters locally. Thus, for almost every United Nations meeting in Vienna (except most UNIDO meetings), the United Nations must import interpreters from locations such as Geneva, Paris and London. Although as stated in paragraph 23 of the Austrian Memorandum, it

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<sup>71/</sup> Except for four small conference rooms, including the Board of Governors' Room mentioned in paragraph 6 of the Austrian Memorandum, in the provisional headquarters building of IAEA which the United Nations may be able to arrange to use. The largest of these, the Board Room, will accommodate twenty-five to thirty-four delegates at tables, with two advisers behind each, plus thirty to forty observers.

<sup>72/</sup> These rooms will each accommodate at tables 112 delegates, each with two advisers behind. They will accommodate up to 160 delegates at tables if the number of advisers behind is reduced from two to one.

has been found possible in the past to recruit the necessary interpretation staff either locally or elsewhere in Europe, there is no assurance that this will continue to be the case in view of the shortage of such staff which has developed in Europe in the last year or two.

494. A third difference at present between Vienna on the one hand, and New York and Geneva on the other, lies in the fact that, except for UNIDO and UNSCEAR, Vienna has no substantive units of the Secretariat headquartered there. In this respect it differs more from New York than from Geneva although Geneva has considerably more substantive units than Vienna.<sup>73/</sup> This means that for all United Nations meetings except those of UNIDO and UNSCEAR, substantive staff must be brought from New York or Geneva.

495. In connexion with this last point, it should be noted that it is stated in paragraph 18 of the Austrian Memorandum that "if required, Austria is ... prepared to provide temporary accommodation for smaller units of the United Nations Secretariat before the completion of the Permanent Headquarters Buildings in 1978". Should the General Assembly decide to take advantage of this opportunity to locate additional substantive units of the Secretariat in Vienna during the 1975-1977 period, the need to bring substantive staff to Vienna for meetings would be reduced accordingly.

496. There is an important point which offsets, to a very considerable extent, the problem arising from the need to bring interpretation and substantive staff to Vienna for United Nations meetings there. This is the fact that in paragraph 16 of its Memorandum, the Austrian Government has committed itself during the 1975-1977 period "to defray in accordance with General Assembly resolution 2609 (XXIV) the actual additional costs of conferences held in Vienna over and above the costs involved were the conferences held in Geneva as far as these costs are not covered by the United Nations regular budget and except in cases where the respective substantive unit of the United Nations Secretariat is transferred to Vienna".

497. Two points must be made about this financial commitment. The first is that the payment of "additional costs" does not eliminate the element of "disruption", discussed in paragraphs 236-239 of this report, which occurs when staff must be brought from the established headquarters of United Nations bodies to attend meetings held elsewhere. The second and more important point is that the Austrian financial commitment, which is

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<sup>73/</sup> Units in Geneva include UNCTAD, ECE, UNHCR, Human Rights Division, Division of Narcotic Drugs, UN Fund for Drug Abuse Control, INCB, Office for Disaster Relief Co-ordinator, etc..

made in paragraph 16 of its Memorandum, is "in accordance with General Assembly resolution 2609 (XXIV)" only if it refers exclusively to meetings of Geneva-based bodies or to meetings of Headquarters-based bodies which are scheduled to be held in Geneva. If a Headquarters-based body is scheduled to meet in New York but accepts an Austrian Government invitation to meet in Vienna, then under the provisions of paragraph 10 of A/RES/2609 (XXIV) the Austrian Government would be expected to pay the costs additional to those which would have been incurred had the body met in New York (not Geneva).

498. A final point which must be noted in the situation in Vienna in the 1975-1977 period is one which is referred to in paragraphs 19 and 20 of the Austrian Memorandum, that of hotel accommodation. In the consultations between the Austrian authorities and the Inspectors on the facilities for United Nations conferences in Vienna, it was conceded by the former that at present the hotel situation in Vienna is very "tight" in the period from April to October. The Inspectors are unable to judge whether the hotels now being constructed or planned in Vienna, as described in paragraph 19 of the Austrian Memorandum, will solve the problem in the 1975-1977 period. However, they note from paragraph 20 of the Memorandum that both the City of Vienna and the Austrian Foreign Ministry are prepared to help conference participants to secure hotel accommodation.

499. Given the foregoing, it would appear that the 1975-1977 period provides the United Nations with an opportunity to test the potential of Vienna to become a major United Nations conference centre, comparable to New York and Geneva, by scheduling more conferences there than in the past. Indeed, this process is already under way with the scheduling in Vienna, for a period of nine weeks early in 1975, of the United Nations Conference on the Representation of States in their Relations with International Organizations and the tentative scheduling there, for eight weeks in 1975, of a resumed session of the Law of the Sea Conference. Such conferences will test whether or not problems of any magnitude exist with respect to such matters as the scheduling of conferences, the adequacy of existing conference facilities, the availability of a sufficient number of qualified interpreters and the possibility of securing satisfactory hotel accommodation.

500. To make such a test in the 1975-1977 period, the General Assembly might wish to take the following decisions with respect to the further involvement of Vienna in the United Nations pattern of conferences in that period. It might first of all decide

that the Headquarters-based United Nations bodies which are authorized under the provisions of the present pattern of conferences resolution to meet in Geneva<sup>74/</sup> might also meet in Vienna. It might also decide that certain Geneva-based bodies which are authorized to, or have met in New York, such as the Commission on Narcotic Drugs and the Commission on Human Rights, might also meet in Vienna. And finally, it might decide that meetings of the Economic Commission for Europe and the Executive Committee of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees<sup>75/</sup> might be held in Vienna as well as in Geneva. As has been noted in paragraphs 496 and 497, the Austrian Government is prepared to pay the additional costs of holding such meetings in Vienna.

501. If it were decided to give such an authorization to the bodies named to meet in Vienna, it should be given with the proviso that the bodies named might meet in Vienna if (a) conference facilities for such meetings could be made available without adversely affecting the meeting scheduled of IAEA, UNIDO or UNSCEAR and (b) interpretation staff were or could be made available in Vienna without adversely affecting the servicing of other United Nations meetings scheduled in Geneva or at Headquarters.

502. The condition mentioned in (b) in the preceding paragraph is suggested because of the present need to bring interpreters from elsewhere, especially Geneva, for any sizable United Nations meeting in Vienna. It would be difficult to justify increasing the United Nations conference programme in Vienna at the cost of making it more difficult to service meetings in Geneva where the United Nations has just completed, at great expense, the construction of new conference rooms, some of which have not even been used as yet.

503. A further action the General Assembly might wish to consider with respect to the 1975-1977 period relates to the annual sessions of the International Law Commission (see chapter IV (A (3))). That body now meets in Geneva each year in the May-July period when the facilities there are taxed to the absolute limit. Further, although the ILC has in the past normally met for ten weeks each year, it recommended in 1973 that it meet for fourteen weeks in 1974 and the General Assembly approved a twelve-week session, thus adding to Geneva's problems. Accordingly, the General Assembly might wish to

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<sup>74/</sup> These are the Governing Council of UNDP, ILC, UNCITRAL, the Scientific and Technical and the Legal Sub-Committees of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, the regular summer session of ECOSOC and the functional commissions and committees of ECOSOC.

<sup>75/</sup> The High Commissioner for Refugees has a small office in Vienna.

request the Secretary-General to explore the possibility of making arrangements so that the ILC, which is a small body of only twenty-five members and normally meets only once a day for four days a week<sup>76/</sup>, could hold all its annual sessions in Vienna. This would not only help reduce what the ACABQ has called the "uneconomical accumulation of meetings during particular periods of the year" at Geneva but would also be consistent with the pattern which has been developing of holding more United Nations legal conferences in Vienna. It might also enable the ILC to meet for the length of time it considered necessary. However, at the present time meetings of the ILC in Vienna in the May-July period would probably require bringing interpreters from Geneva or New York at a time when they could not be spared.<sup>77/</sup> Accordingly, a decision to hold all ILC sessions in Vienna should be subject to condition (b) set forth in paragraph 501, namely, that interpretation services could be provided without adversely affecting the conference programmes in Geneva and New York.

504. Turning now to the period after 1977, it is obvious that the action now being taken and contemplated by the Austrian Government will provide in that period a much greater potential than will exist in the 1975-1977 period for the holding of United Nations conferences in Vienna. The Austrian Memorandum and the statements of the Austrian representative in the Fifth Committee at the twenty-eighth session of the General Assembly have described the construction of conference facilities and office buildings which is under way in the Donaupark in Vienna and it is unnecessary to repeat the details here. However, certain points must be noted.

505. First of all, the Austrian Government has stated in paragraph 15 of its Memorandum, as it did in its intervention in the Fifth Committee of the General Assembly, that it "is prepared to put the International Conference Building presently under construction in the Donaupark at the disposal of the United Nations ...". This building contains eleven conference rooms, which are described in paragraph 11 of the Memorandum.<sup>78/</sup>

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<sup>76/</sup> During three weeks of the ILC sessions, there is held an International Law Seminar which meets during that part of the day (morning or afternoon) when the ILC is not in session.

<sup>77/</sup> The interpreters presently available in Vienna, although not fully utilized at all times, undoubtedly could not be put completely at the disposal of the ILC for a twelve-week period.

<sup>78/</sup> The two large rooms mentioned in paragraph 11 (a) of the Austrian Memorandum which are intended to be Board Rooms for UNIDO and IAEA, will each accommodate at tables between fifty-nine and sixty-seven delegates, each with two advisers seated behind, when



506. It has not been possible thus far to clarify what would be the legal status of the International Conference Building if it were put "at the disposal of the United Nations". It will be recalled that when the Donaupark project was first formulated in 1967, the Austrian Government offered office space and conference rooms to UNIDO and IAEA on the basis of a ninety-nine year lease at a nominal rental of one schilling a year. Such a lease arrangement would place the International Conference Building in a legal status different from United Nations Headquarters in New York<sup>79/</sup> and the Palais des Nations in Geneva<sup>80/</sup>, although in practice the situation might not be very different. In any case, it would appear from paragraph 16 of the Austrian Memorandum that the "definitive status" of the International Conference Building has yet to be established and must await further clarification.

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set up in a format of the type normally used for United Nations meetings. They will accommodate up to 101 delegates at tables if the number of advisers is reduced from two to one.

The somewhat smaller room mentioned in paragraph 11 (b) of the Austrian Memorandum will accommodate at tables some forty delegates, each with two advisers seated behind, when set up in a United Nations conference room format. It will accommodate up to eighty-eight delegates at tables if the number of advisers behind is reduced from two to one.

The eight small conference rooms mentioned in paragraph 11 (c) of the Austrian Memorandum will each accommodate at tables some twenty-two delegates, each with two advisers behind, when set up in a United Nations conference room format. They will accommodate up to thirty-two delegates at tables if the number of advisers behind is reduced from two to one. When four of the eight small rooms are transformed into two larger rooms by removing mobile partitions, each of the larger rooms will accommodate at tables thirty-eight delegates, each with two advisers behind; they will accommodate up to sixty delegates at tables if the number of advisers is reduced from two to one. When the other four small rooms are transformed into one large room by removing mobile partitions, this large room will accommodate approximately the same number of delegates and advisers as the two large rooms mentioned in the first paragraph of this foot-note.

<sup>79/</sup> In New York the United Nations owns the Headquarters office and conference buildings and the land upon which they are located. It does, of course, rent outside office space.

<sup>80/</sup> In Geneva the United Nations owns the conference and office buildings which constitute the Palais des Nations. It has the right to occupy the land upon which the Palais des Nations is located but has no sub-soil ownership rights. It has rented outside office space at times and has paid a fee to use conference rooms in the WHO building.

507. It will also be noted from paragraph 15 of the Austrian Memorandum that it is intended that the placing of the International Conference Building at the disposal of the United Nations should be "on the understanding that, in establishing the conference calendar, priority will be given to the requirements of IAEA". It would appear from this language that the Austrian Government intends to bring about, with respect to the International Conference Building, an arrangement similar to that which exists in Geneva where both the WHO and the ILO hold meetings (their annual general conferences) in the Palais des Nations in the months of May and June respectively.<sup>81/</sup>

508. The position of IAEA with respect to the proposed arrangement was stated in a letter dated 5 April 1974 addressed by that organization to the Inspectors. That letter, after referring to the Austrian Memorandum, reads in part as follows:

"With regard to the 1978 situation, it is now planned that three small meeting rooms in the IAEA secretariat tower will be equipped for simultaneous interpretation into three or four languages. In this light, we have reviewed our meeting room requirements. We expect therefore that we shall be able to accommodate a substantial number of smaller international meetings in these rooms.

We are therefore able to make a corresponding reduction in our requirements for conference facilities in the centre itself. It will be sufficient if the IAEA has one large conference room (for the meetings of the Board and for scientific symposia) and two smaller meeting rooms of the octant shape and size capable of seating about 150 participants in lecture-hall configuration or about 30 delegates seated at the table. It would be understood that when the

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<sup>81/</sup> The right of ILO to use the Palais des Nations is contained in article 4 of an "Agreement concerning the execution of the transfer to the United Nations of certain assets of the League of Nations" which was signed at Geneva on 19 July 1946 and came into force the same day. Article 4 reads in part as follows:

"(a) The International Labour Organisation may use the Assembly Hall, together with the necessary committee rooms, office accommodation and other facilities connected therewith, at times and on financial terms to be agreed from time to time between the United Nations and the International Labour Organisation;"

There is no formal agreement today between the United Nations and the WHO for the use of the Palais des Nations by the latter. This use is a matter of custom stemming from the fact that the WHO occupied offices in the Palais before its present office building was constructed and, under a formal agreement dated 15 February 1950, used the conference rooms there (see paragraph 201).

IAEA was not using any of these three rooms, it would make them available at no charge for UN use.

The IAEA would relinquish any priority claim to the use of the Common Room, the second board room and the remaining six smaller conference rooms. It would, however, also be understood that if the IAEA could not accommodate its needs in its three rooms, it would be able to obtain meeting space from the UN, to the extent that the latter's priorities permit, also on a cost-free basis."

509. It would appear from the foregoing that the proposed arrangement for the use of the International Conference Building, as understood by IAEA, would be somewhat different from that existing in Geneva with respect to the use of the Palais des Nations. Accordingly some further clarification of the proposed arrangement seems to be called for.

510. It is somewhat difficult to judge at this time the extent to which the acceptance by the United Nations of the International Conference Building, on the terms envisaged by the Austrian Government, would enable the United Nations to convene in Vienna conferences additional to those presently held there.

511. There is, first of all, the fact that the arrangements envisaged between the United Nations and IAEA for the use of the International Conference Building will result in a situation somewhat different from that existing in Geneva as a result of the arrangements between the United Nations and the ILO and WHO for the use of the Palais des Nations. In Geneva the ILO and WHO use the Palais only for their annual general conferences<sup>82/</sup> which last for periods of only about three weeks each. In contrast, IAEA would apparently expect in 1978 and thereafter to have the use of one of the two largest conference rooms and two of the small conference rooms in the International Conference Building on a year-round basis, subject to the understanding "that when the IAEA was not using any of these three rooms, it would make them available at no charge for UN use".<sup>83/</sup>

512. There is the further fact that the International Conference Building will be used for all UNIDO and UNSCEAR meetings in Vienna throughout the year. On the basis of its present conference programme, UNIDO would expect to use the second of the largest

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<sup>82/</sup> The ILO has also used the Palais for its European Regional Conferences. The second of these was held in January 1974 and lasted for some ten days.

<sup>83/</sup> It is not clear at this time whether the United Nations would be able to book these rooms in advance and, if so, on what conditions.

conference rooms nine weeks a year, the third largest room ten weeks a year and each of four small conference rooms an average of some fifteen weeks a year. However, UNIDO anticipates some expansion of its conference programme by 1978 and estimates that in that year it will use the second of the two largest conference rooms twelve weeks a year, the third largest conference room fifteen weeks a year and each of four small conference rooms seventeen to twenty-five weeks per year.

513. Because of the recent decision to move its secretariat to Vienna, the future conference schedule of UNSCEAR in Vienna has not yet been projected. However, on the basis of experience, UNSCEAR would appear to require, for up to two weeks a year, two conference rooms, each accommodating some twenty individuals at tables with seats for two advisers behind each.

514. It thus appears at this time that the potential assured annual use by the United Nations of the International Conference Building for meetings which otherwise would be held in New York or Geneva would consist basically of the use of one of the two largest conference rooms for some forty weeks, the use of the third largest room for some thirty-seven weeks, the use of two of the small conference rooms for the entire year and the use of four other of the small conference rooms for some twenty-seven to thirty-five weeks.<sup>84/</sup> Of special interest is the fact that UNIDO anticipates almost no meetings, and none in the larger rooms, in the July-August period which is a peak meeting period in Geneva.

515. There is another important fact which conditions the possibility of holding in the International Conference Building United Nations conferences which would otherwise be held in New York or Geneva. This is the size of the conference rooms in that building. As indicated in the foot-note to paragraph 505, the largest conference rooms planned for the building will accommodate at tables between fifty-nine and sixty-seven delegates, each with two advisers seated behind, when set up in a format of a type normally used for United Nations meetings. Thus, while these rooms will accommodate meetings of the Industrial Development Board of UNIDO (forty-five members) and the Board of Governors of IAEA (thirty-four members), they were not designed for and will not accommodate the general conferences of these organizations at which all Member States are represented. This means that it would not be possible for the United Nations to use the International Conference Building for conferences including participants of all Member States,

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<sup>84/</sup> It is recognized that these are maximum figures and that there are weeks in the year when traditionally no meetings are held.

such as the Law of the Sea Conference.<sup>85/</sup> It would be possible, however, with perhaps one reservation, to use the building for the meetings of those bodies with respect to which the suggestion has been made in paragraph 500 that they might be authorized by the General Assembly to meet in Vienna. The reservation relates to possible meetings of ECOSOC (fifty-four delegations) and the Governing Council of UNDP (forty-eight delegations). The possibility of these bodies meeting in the International Conference Building would depend upon whether arrangements could be made with IAEA and UNIDO to ensure the availability for the Governing Council of UNDP of at least two - and for ECOSOC at least three - large conference rooms simultaneously. It is too early to say whether this would be possible, although the recent decision by the Austrian authorities to make it possible, through the use of mobile partitions, to convert four of the small conference rooms into one large room approximately the size of the two largest rooms will certainly assist in this regard. This decision was taken after the issuance of the Austrian Memorandum and accordingly is not reflected therein.

516. It is also too early to make a judgement on the possible use for larger United Nations conferences of the Austrian Conference Centre, mentioned in paragraph 8 of the Austrian Memorandum. That Centre will be constructed in the Donaupark immediately adjacent to the permanent headquarters buildings of UNIDO and IAEA and the International Conference Building. It has been designed primarily to be used for intergovernmental conferences - although it is expected to be used also for "commercial" conferences - and would be able to accommodate the largest United Nations conferences, including sessions of the General Assembly. It is not expected to be completed until 1981.

517. In addition to announcing its intention to place the International Conference Building at the disposal of the United Nations, the Austrian Government has stated, in paragraph 17 of its Memorandum, and in its interventions in the Fifth Committee of the General Assembly, its decision to offer office accommodation in the Donaupark "for additional units of the Secretariat comprising a total number of several hundred persons". It added that "While the specific conditions for the accommodation of such units of the Secretariat will have to be agreed between the United Nations and the Austrian Federal Government, Austria is prepared to offer to the United Nations favourable conditions on a non-commercial basis".

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<sup>85/</sup> Such conferences could, of course, be held in other buildings in Vienna.

518. If the United Nations decides to accept the Austrian offer of office space and moves additional substantive units of the Secretariat to Vienna, then that city will automatically play a larger role in the United Nations pattern of conferences since the United Nations bodies serviced by those substantive units would normally be expected to meet in Vienna. In advance of any such decision, it is, of course, impossible to suggest what specific United Nations meetings should be held in Vienna as a result.

519. It should be noted in this connexion that, although the intention of the Austrian Government to place the International Conference Building at the disposal of the United Nations and to make office space available in the Donaupark for additional units of the Secretariat was announced to the General Assembly at its last session, that body has, as yet, taken no action with respect to these offers.<sup>86/</sup>

520. In paragraph 16 of the Austrian Memorandum which deals with financial arrangements in connexion with the holding of United Nations conferences in Vienna, it is stated that "As to financial arrangements from 1978 on these will have to be considered at a later stage in the light of the definitive status of the International Conference Building and other eventual changes in the presence of the United Nations in Vienna".

521. It is clear from the foregoing that, although there are promising possibilities for expanding the United Nations conference programme in Vienna after 1977 - thanks to the efforts and generous offers of the Austrian Government - the uncertainties about the future situation there, about the future conference programme of the United Nations and about the reaction of the General Assembly to the Austrian offers are such that the Inspectors are not in a position to make specific suggestions with respect to the nature of such a possible expansion. They believe, however, that they should make the following recommendations:

- (i) the Secretary-General of the United Nations should initiate consultations with the Austrian Government aimed at exploring fully the possibilities which now exist as a result of the Austrian offers with respect to the International Conference Building and the provision of office space for Secretariat units in Vienna. He should report to the General Assembly on the result of his exploration and on the manner in which the United Nations

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<sup>86/</sup> However, the Assembly's decision to transfer the small secretariat (two Professional and two General Service staff) of UNSCEAR to Vienna appears responsive to the Austrian Government's offer to provide provisional accommodation for Secretariat units prior to the completion of the Donaupark buildings.

might be able to take advantage of these possibilities, and on whether there are obstacles to this course of action. Inter alia, he should report on whether certain Secretariat units might profitably be located in Vienna;

- (ii) the Secretary-General should also consider and report to the General Assembly on measures which might be taken to provide conference servicing for additional United Nations meetings which might be held in Vienna;
- (iii) the Secretary-General should explore with IAEA the possibility of making arrangements between the United Nations and IAEA for use of the International Conference Building which would provide the United Nations with the maximum possibility of scheduling there a significant number of conferences in addition to those of UNIDO and UNSCEAR;
- (iv) the ACABQ might look into and report to the General Assembly on the administrative and budgetary aspects of the Austrian offers.

## VII. SUMMARY OF PRINCIPAL CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

### 1. The need for continuing governmental supervision of the conference programme

The United Nations conference programme is dynamic and it cannot be rationalized or controlled for any significant period of time merely by constructing a "model pattern of conferences". It requires close governmental attention and supervision on a continuing basis.

### 2. The role of the General Assembly and its Fifth Committee

There is required today an acceptance of the principle that the General Assembly must have the last word with respect to the convening, the timing and the location of all United Nations conferences<sup>1/</sup> and that it is the Fifth Committee of the General Assembly which must decide upon the final recommendations to be made to the plenary session concerning the holding of all such conferences. Given the limitation today on the level of the United Nations conference programme as a result of the limited availability of interpretation staff, it is not possible to have a rational conference programme if individual United Nations bodies are permitted to make the final determination as to when, where and for how long they will meet. (See paragraphs 284-290 and 448.)

### 3. The role of a committee on conferences

To assist the Fifth Committee in its construction of a manageable conference programme and in the supervision of that programme, there is a need to establish a standing governmental committee on conferences somewhat similar to that which existed in the 1967-1969 period but having greater authority and additional functions. Such a committee is required to advise the Fifth Committee of the General Assembly on all matters relating to the conference programme, just as the ACABQ advises that Committee on administrative and budgetary questions. The ACABQ is too fully occupied today to advise the Fifth Committee on the details of the conference programme. In particular, a committee on conferences is required:

- (a) to recommend to the Fifth Committee the pattern of conferences to be adopted by the Assembly and the changes to be made in that pattern as circumstances change;

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<sup>1/</sup> With the exception of meetings of the Security Council, of course.



- (b) to construct for the Fifth Committee the annual calendar of conferences to be approved by the Assembly;
- (c) to recommend to the Fifth Committee, in the light of the ceiling imposed on the level of the conference programme at any given time by the availability of interpretation staff, how to decide among competing claims to meet at preferred meeting periods, such as that of May-August in Geneva (this is particularly necessary in the case of important special conferences);
- (d) to recommend to the Fifth Committee how to spread the conference programme more evenly throughout the year and to reduce peak meeting periods such as the May-August period in Geneva;
- (e) to act for the General Assembly between sessions to decide upon:
  - (i) requests for new meetings not included in the approved calendar of conferences for the year; (ii) requests for changes in dates and locations of meetings already in the approved calendar; and (iii) what meetings, if any, must be cancelled or rescheduled because of a decision to hold a special session of the General Assembly or because of any other development which results in an unexpected shortage of conference staff to service meetings included in the approved calendar;
- (f) to advise the Fifth Committee on: (i) the pace of the recommended change-over by the Geneva Office from reliance on free-lance interpretation staff to the recruitment of regular interpretation staff and on the number of interpretation teams required there; (ii) the steps required to produce candidates for employment as regular interpretation staff; and (iii) the progress made in this regard in developing training programmes, securing governmental assistance etc. (recommendations concerning these matters should be closely co-ordinated with the ACABQ);
- (g) to keep the Fifth Committee informed of the progress being made by the United Nations and the specialized agencies in co-ordinating conference schedules and the use of interpretation staff.

A newly-established committee on conferences must have terms of reference adequate to carry out the foregoing functions and others which may be entrusted to it. It must be governmental since it must deal with requests and proposals of governmental bodies

and with conflicting claims of such bodies. It must be small - preferably with a membership of no more than twelve to fifteen - to be effective. Governments which are members of the committee must make certain that their representatives are of a relatively senior level, are knowledgeable concerning the conference programme and are able to devote the necessary time to the work of the committee. (See paragraphs 465-484.)

4. The problem of providing interpretation services

Although the United Nations has an adequate number of conference rooms to accommodate its present conference programme, it faces a serious problem today in providing interpretation services for that programme. The same problem is faced by the specialized agencies. It relates primarily, although not exclusively, to the use of free-lance interpretation staff and appears to be becoming rapidly more acute. The problem results from: (a) the increased demand for such staff as a result of the increase in the number of conferences of the United Nations, the specialized agencies and various intergovernmental and other bodies; (b) the fact that Russian-language free-lance interpretation staff are disappearing from the market and are not being replaced; (c) the fact that there are very few free-lance Chinese-language interpreters; and (d) the lack of adequate training programmes to produce a sufficient number of qualified free-lance interpreters. As a result, the United Nations is already using some sub-standard free-lance interpreters in Geneva's peak meeting period of May-August and, even so, is unable to find sufficient interpreters to provide for any increase in that level of meetings.

Because of this situation, it is recommended that the United Nations phase out as rapidly as feasible its reliance on free-lance interpretation staff in the Geneva Office and set as its objective the employment there, within the next few years, of some fifteen regular staff interpretation teams which should be able to service a conference programme of today's size. Such an expansion should be conditioned upon the levelling off of the Geneva conference programme by reducing the May-August peak conference load by some 25 per cent and spreading that percentage of meetings throughout the balance of the year. It should also be conditioned on consultations with the specialized agencies to explore the possible pooling of regular interpretation staff or at least the use by the agencies of any excess regular interpretation staff capacity the Geneva Office may from time to time develop.

At the same time, it is clear that it will be difficult to recruit the necessary regular staff to replace free-lance staff. A large percentage of existing free-lance staff is not eligible for United Nations employment because of age, and many of such staff do not find United Nations salary levels attractive. It has not been possible for the last two years to recruit a sufficient number of qualified interpreters to fill the existing established posts for Chinese- and Russian-language interpreters. Accordingly, it is recommended that the Secretariat, in co-operation with the specialized agencies, should arrange for adequate training programmes, should broaden their recruitment policies and intensify their recruitment efforts, should seek governmental assistance in finding candidates for recruitment and should review their grading standards for interpreters in order to make certain that these will attract qualified candidates. (See paragraphs 141-190.)

5. The level of the conference programme under present circumstances

Pending the outcome of the efforts to solve the interpretation problem and to even out the Geneva Office conference programme, the present overall level of the United Nations conference programme should not be significantly increased. The future development of the programme and the future level of the number of interpretation teams to be employed should be the subject of consideration by the proposed committee on conferences. (See paragraphs 106, 132, 141-190 and 481.)

6. Co-ordination within the United Nations and with the specialized agencies

Particularly in view of the problems now facing the United Nations with respect to its conference programme, there is a need for improved co-ordination between Headquarters and the Geneva Office in the handling of certain aspects of that programme. Similarly there is a need for improved co-ordination between the United Nations and the specialized agencies, particularly with regard to the development and use of conference staff resources. (See paragraphs 191-207 and 214-233.)

7. The high standard of conference servicing under difficult conditions

Despite the lapses of the Secretariat in the area of co-ordination and its failure to take or to recommend to the General Assembly adequate measures to deal with the deteriorating situation with respect to interpretation services, it must be recognized that the Secretariat officials dealing with administration of the conference programme and the conference-servicing staff have maintained a high standard of servicing for United Nations conferences. This has been true even though these officials have been

subjected on almost a year-round basis to heavy pressures and often to excessive demands. (See paragraphs 74, 75, 106, 109, 128, 135 and 192.)

8. The request of the General Assembly for "a model pattern of conferences"

In response to the General Assembly's request for "a model pattern of conferences", chapter IV of this report reviews in detail the history and the content of the present pattern and suggests a number of possible changes designed to reduce the uneconomical accumulation of meetings during particular periods of the year and to bring about a more effective use of the conference resources of the United Nations. (See paragraphs 298-464.)

9. The inclusion of Vienna in the pattern of conferences

In response to the General Assembly's request for a pattern of conferences including Vienna along with New York and Geneva, this report examines in chapter VI the factors involved in establishing Vienna as a major United Nations conference centre on a level comparable with that of New York and Geneva.

In view of the offer by the Austrian Government to the United Nations of conference facilities and office space in Vienna to become available in 1978, it is recommended that the Secretary-General of the United Nations should initiate consultations with that Government to explore the possibilities provided by this offer and to determine whether or not there are any obstacles to its acceptance by the United Nations. The Secretary-General should also consult with IAEA, which is expected to occupy jointly with the United Nations a part of the same new premises, in order to arrive at co-ordinated arrangements for the use of the premises. Further, in view of the global shortage of interpretation staff mentioned in this report, the Secretary-General should consider what arrangements might be made to ensure the adequate servicing of United Nations conferences in Vienna by qualified interpretation staff.

In order to test the potential of Vienna to become a major United Nations conference centre, comparable with New York and Geneva, the General Assembly might wish, during the 1975-1977 period, to authorize Headquarters-based bodies which are now authorized under the provisions of the present pattern of conferences resolution to meet in Geneva, to meet also in Vienna. It might also authorize certain Geneva-based bodies to meet in Vienna during that period. It might consider the possibility of having the International Law Commission meet regularly in Vienna. (See paragraphs 485-521.)

10. The basic principle of the pattern of conferences

The present basic principle of the United Nations pattern of conferences, namely, that United Nations bodies should normally meet where their substantive secretariats are headquartered, should be maintained. (See paragraphs 234-249 and 298-302.)

11. The financing of meetings held away from headquarters on governmental invitations

The United Nations should maintain the principle that Governments inviting United Nations bodies to meet in their countries should pay the extra costs involved. Such invitations should be issued no later than the calendar year prior to that in which the conferences in question are to be held and early enough for meetings based upon them to be considered by the proposed committee on conferences and included in the calendar of conferences submitted to the Fifth Committee, for approval. (See paragraphs 393-417.)

12. Major special conferences

The principle embodied in paragraph 11 of A/RES/2609 (XXIV), namely, that there should be no more than one major special conference a year, should be modified to provide that no more than five major (in the sense of all Member Government participation) special conferences should be held in any one year. If there are not adequate staff resources to service both the regular conference programme and the special conferences approved by the General Assembly, then the regular programme should be cut back to the extent necessary on the basis of recommendations of the proposed committee on conferences. For this reason and until the proposed committee on conferences has had a chance to become operational and study this matter, it is suggested that the number of special conferences be initially limited to no more than three a year. (See paragraphs 418-455.)

13. The difficulty of transferring conference staff from New York to Geneva

The transfer of conference staff from New York to Geneva for the purpose of avoiding the problem of "extra costs" for meetings of Headquarters-based bodies held there, is not a feasible or desirable way to deal with the problem not only because of the extra cost of maintaining staff in Geneva at the present time but, more importantly, for other practical considerations related to the efficient servicing of the conference programme. A preferable alternative, in so far as interpretation staff are concerned, is the employment by the Geneva Office, as proposed in this report, of additional regular staff interpreter teams rather than a reliance on free-lance interpreters. (See paragraphs 250-256.)

14. Relationship of the biennial programme and budget cycle to the pattern of General Assembly sessions

Although no recommendation is made concerning the matter, there is discussed briefly in this report the relationship between the new biennial programme and budget cycle of the United Nations and the possibility of adopting a biennial pattern for General Assembly sessions or of holding sessions of limited duration, perhaps away from New York from time to time, in alternate years. (See paragraphs 261-269.)

15. The control of subsidiary bodies and their meeting programmes

The creation of subsidiary bodies and the meeting programme of those bodies must be more carefully controlled than in the past. They should not be permitted to change significantly the duration and timing or to make any change in the venue of meetings provided for in the annual calendar of conferences except with the approval of the proposed committee on conferences. They should not be permitted to create either standing or ad hoc inter-sessional bodies without the approval of parent bodies. They should not be permitted to create sessional bodies which require the services of additional interpretation staff. The use of small working groups may be more effective in some cases than extended meetings of large parent bodies but the number of such working groups meeting in any one year must be carefully limited. (See paragraphs 271-283.)

16. The size of subsidiary bodies

The General Assembly might wish to consider requesting an appropriate body to make a study of the optimum size of subsidiary bodies. (See paragraph 83.)

17. The cost of the United Nations conference programme

For the biennium 1974-1975, the cost of the conference programme is about \$105 million or about 20 per cent of the gross budget. (See paragraphs 291-297.)

Annex I

FULL TEXT OF A/RES/2609 (XXIV) - PATTERN OF CONFERENCES

The General Assembly,

Recalling its resolutions 1202 (XII) of 13 December 1957, 1851 (XVII) of 19 December 1962, 1987 (XVIII) of 17 December 1963, 2116 (XX) of 21 December 1965, 2239 (XXI) of 20 December 1966, 2361 (XXII) of 19 December 1967 and 2478 (XXIII) of 21 December 1968,

Noting that Governments are finding it increasingly difficult to provide effective representation at an ever-increasing number of conferences and committee meetings, which in turn give rise to excessive documentation,

Believing that the ability of the United Nations to engage in programmes of value to the Governments and peoples of Member States might be enhanced if there were fewer meetings and if such meetings were better prepared,

Recalling that, by the terms of resolution 2239 (XXI), the Committee on Conferences was established on an experimental basis subject to review by the General Assembly at its twenty-fourth session, and its members were appointed for a three-year period ending 31 December 1969,

Welcoming Economic and Social Council resolution 1460 (XLVII) of 8 August 1969 relating to the calendar of conferences and meetings in the economic, social and human rights fields,

1. Takes note of the report of the Committee on Conferences;<sup>33/</sup>
2. Expresses regret that, for the reasons set forth in the report of the Committee on Conferences, the efforts of the Committee to bring about a more orderly and manageable calendar of conferences have not produced satisfactory results;
3. Expresses its appreciation of the services rendered by the Committee on Conferences, and in particular of the measure of success that it has achieved in reducing documentation;
4. Decides to reconsider at its twenty-fifth session the questions of the membership and terms of reference of the Committee on Conferences, and in the meantime not to reconstitute the membership of the Committee;

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<sup>33/</sup> Official Records of the General Assembly, Twenty-fourth Session, Supplement No. 26 (A/7626 and Corr.1 and 2).

5. Approves the calendar of conferences and meetings of the United Nations for 1970 contained in annex I to the report of the Committee on Conferences, amended to provide as follows:

(a) The Committee on the Peaceful Uses of the Sea-Bed and the Ocean Floor beyond the Limits of National Jurisdiction shall hold its summer session at Geneva from 3 to 28 August 1970;

(b) The Special Committee on the Question of Defining Aggression shall resume its work in accordance with General Assembly resolution 2330 (XXII) of 18 December 1967, at Geneva, in the second half of 1970;

(c) The Special Committee on Principles of International Law concerning Friendly Relations and Co-operation among States may meet at Geneva or any other suitable place for which the Secretary-General receives an invitation, at a time in the first half of 1970 to be determined in consultation with the Secretary-General;

(d) The Working Group on Direct Broadcast Satellites of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space shall meet in New York in May 1970;

(e) The Special Committee on Peace-keeping Operations shall hold its sessions in New York at times to be determined in consultation with the Secretary-General;

(f) The Preparatory Committee for the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment shall hold its meetings in New York at a time to be determined in consultation with the Secretary-General;

6. Requests the Secretary-General:

(a) To complete the study provided for in Economic and Social Council resolution 1460 (XLVII) by widening its field of application to the whole area of conferences and meetings held by subsidiary organs of the General Assembly;

(b) To incorporate in this study, taking into account views expressed in and suggestions presented to the General Assembly as well as other relevant considerations, proposals concerning the calendar of conferences for 1971 and the following years, which would allow for the most rational and economic use possible of the administrative premises and staff assigned to conference and meeting services both at Headquarters in New York and at the United Nations Office at Geneva;



7. Requests the Secretary-General, without prejudice to the provisions of Economic and Social Council resolution 1460 (XLVII), to present the study referred to in paragraph 6 above to the General Assembly at its twenty-fifth session;

8. Decides that no meetings other than those covered by the calendar of conferences for 1970 shall be convened, except for emergency meetings;

9. Reaffirms, for application in 1970 - without restricting the right of the Economic and Social Council and the Secretary-General to make recommendations to the General Assembly in the light of the study referred to in paragraph 6 above - the general principle that, in drawing up the schedule of conferences and meetings for 1971, United Nations bodies shall plan to meet at their respective established headquarters, with the following exceptions:

(a) The Governing Council of the United Nations Development Programme may, in accordance with its rules of procedure, hold one of its sessions at Geneva;

(b) The sessions of the International Law Commission shall be held at Geneva;

(c) The sessions of the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law may be held, subject to the provision in paragraph 6 of General Assembly resolution 2205 (XXI) of 17 December 1966, alternately in New York and at Geneva;

(d) The United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation, as well as the Scientific and Technical Sub-Committee and the Legal Sub-Committee of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, may meet at Geneva if the exigencies of their work so require;

(e) The regular summer session of the Economic and Social Council may be held at Geneva provided that the closing date falls at least six weeks before the opening of the regular session of the General Assembly;

(f) One Headquarters-based functional commission of the Economic and Social Council, to be determined by the Council, may meet at Geneva during the period from January to April;

(g) Sessions of not more than three other Headquarters-based functional commissions or committees of the Economic and Social Council may, by decision of the Council taken after consultation with the Secretary-General, be held at Geneva during the period from September to December without overlap;

(h) In addition, a session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs may, in exceptional circumstances and by decision of the Economic and Social Council taken after consultation with the Secretary-General, be held in New York; in that event, one other functional commission of the Council may meet at Geneva in its place;

(i) The regular sessions of the Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Economic Commission for Africa, as well as meetings of their subsidiary bodies, may be held away from their headquarters when the commission concerned so decides, subject, in the case of regular sessions of the commissions, to the approval of the Economic and Social Council and of the General Assembly;

10. Decides that United Nations bodies may hold sessions away from their established headquarters when a Government issuing an invitation for a session to be held within its territory has agreed to defray, after consultation with the Secretary-General as to their nature and possible extent, the actual additional costs directly or indirectly involved;

11. Decides that, as a general rule, not more than one major special conference shall be scheduled in any one year;

12. Urges all organs and subsidiary bodies of the United Nations to plan their future conferences and meetings in accordance with the following recommendations of the Ad Hoc Committee of Experts to Examine the Finances of the United Nations and the Specialized Agencies:

- "(i) Priorities should be established for fixing the areas and programmes of meetings and conferences on a long-term basis;
- "(ii) The availability of human and physical resources necessary for servicing conferences should be determined and taken into account;
- "(iii) The financial ability of the organizations and of member States to meet the requirements necessary to hold conferences should be determined and taken into account;
- "(iv) An adequate interval of time should be allowed between conferences of the same body or of a similar nature";<sup>34/</sup>

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<sup>34/</sup> Ibid., Twenty-first Session, Annexes, agenda item 80, document A/6343, para.104 (k).

13. Requests the Secretary-General to submit to the General Assembly at its twenty-fifth session a calendar of conferences for 1971 and preliminary calendars of conferences for 1972 and 1973;

14. Notes that the Economic and Social Council has already achieved a certain measure of success in reducing the number of meetings of its subsidiary bodies, as described in paragraphs 615 to 629 of its report for the period 3 August 1968 to 8 August 1969,<sup>35/</sup> and that the Trade and Development Board has examined proposals for improving the machinery of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development,<sup>36/</sup> and urges both bodies to continue their efforts to reduce the number of meetings of their subsidiary bodies without impairing effective positive action on worth-while programmes;

15. Takes note of the comments of the Joint Inspection Unit in paragraph 198 of its report<sup>37/</sup> on the need for improving the United Nations meetings system, and requests it to submit a report to the General Assembly at its twenty-fifth session, through the appropriate channel, setting forth its views on possible improvements in the system used by the United Nations in handling and processing documents before, during and after meetings, including sessions of the General Assembly, and in the organization of the proceedings at such meetings.

1836th plenary meeting,  
16 December 1969.

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<sup>35/</sup> Ibid., Twenty-fourth Session, Supplement No.3 (A/7603 and Corr.1).

<sup>36/</sup> Ibid., Supplement No.16 (A/7616), part three, chapter VI.

<sup>37/</sup> A/7576 and Corr.1, annex.



Annex II

CONFERENCE ROOMS AT UNITED NATIONS HEADQUARTERS  
AND THEIR USE IN 1973 AND 1974

THIS ANNEX INCLUDES:

- A LISTING OF CONFERENCE ROOMS WHICH ARE EQUIPPED FOR  
SIMULTANEOUS INTERPRETATION, TOGETHER WITH THE SEATING  
CAPACITY OF EACH ROOM;
- A CHART SHOWING THE USE OF EACH OF THESE ROOMS IN 1973;
- A CHART SHOWING, AS OF 28 JANUARY 1974, THE PROJECTED USE  
OF EACH OF THESE ROOMS IN 1974.



### Conference Rooms at United Nations Headquarters

United Nations Headquarters has thirteen conference rooms which are equipped for simultaneous interpretation (6 language channels) and are air-conditioned. Their designations and their seating capacity for delegates and advisers are as follows (in order of seating capacity at the table):

<u>Designation</u>	<u>Seating Capacity</u>
1. General Assembly Hall	414 delegates at the table 414 advisers directly behind 160 additional advisers and observers
2. Conference Room No.3	150 delegates at the table <sup>1/</sup> 284 advisers directly behind 38 additional advisers and observers
3. Conference Room No.4	150 delegates at the table <sup>1/</sup> 284 advisers directly behind 29 additional advisers and observers
4. Trusteeship Council Chamber	150 delegates at the table 150 delegates directly behind 48 additional advisers and observers
5. Conference Room No.1	150 delegates at the table <sup>1/</sup> 150 advisers directly behind 38 additional advisers and observers
6. Conference Room No.2	150 delegates at the table <sup>1/</sup> 150 advisers directly behind 38 additional advisers and observers
7. Economic and Social Council Chamber	54 delegates at the table 108 advisers directly behind 56 seats at the table for specialized agencies, NGO's and for official observers 54 seats for advisers
8. Conference Room No.8	33 delegates at the table 56 advisers directly behind
9. Conference Room No.5 )	29 delegates at the table
10. Conference Room No.6 )	51 advisers directly behind
11. Conference Room No.7 )	11 additional advisers and observers
12. Security Council Chamber	21 delegates at the table 84 advisers directly behind 251 additional advisers and observers
13. Conference Room No.13	19 delegates at the table <sup>2/</sup> 6 advisers and observers

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<sup>1/</sup> It should be noted, however, that delegates are reluctant to occupy the eight seats at the centre of the horseshoe seating arrangement in this room.

<sup>2/</sup> As used by the ACABQ, this room will not accommodate as many as 19 "delegates" at the table.

