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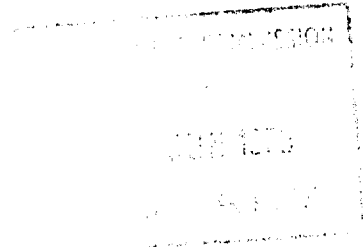
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Item 9 of the Provisional Agenda



WORK PROGRAMME AND PRIORITIES

1980 - 1981

(Note of the Executive Secretary)

1. The United Nations prepares budgets on a biennial basis in accordance with specific instructions and mandates of pertinent legislative organs. The programme budget contained in document E/ECWA/74 constitutes the Commission's Work Programme and Priorities for the period 1980-1981.

2. Thus, the programme budget was prepared in accordance with instructions and policy directives received early 1979 from United Nations Headquarters. These instructions, in so far as format and presentation are concerned, embodied a new approach to programme budgeting introducing the subprogramme and programme element levels as bases for resource and monitoring purposes.

3. The policy directives for the budget period 1980-1981 were based on a zero-growth approach and called consequently for a rearrangement of priorities and redeployment of existing resources.

4. The zero-growth policy presented for the ECWA secretariat serious problems in formulating a realistic programme budget which would meet the need for strengthening of existing priority areas and support services as well as introducing new activities. The ECWA secretariat was of the opinion that in view of the recent establishment of the Commission, the zero-growth principle as adopted was difficult to adhere to particularly that the special situation of ECWA had on several occasions been recognized by the legislative and other organs of the United Nations. It was against this background that the ECWA secretariat proposed to be the Secretary-General budget estimates which reflected a considerable growth as compared to the 1978-1979 budget.

(a) A strengthening of substantive programmes in:

- statistics with 3 professional and 6 local-level posts;
- development planning, projections and policies with 3 professional and 3 local-level posts; and
- natural resources with one local-level post;

(b) A strengthening of support programmes in the areas of:

- programme planning with one professional and one local-level posts;
- personnel services with one professional and two local-level posts; and
- general services with two professional and 24 local-level posts;

(c) The establishment of new activities such as:

- cartography with 2 professional and two local level posts;
- environment and co-ordination with 2 professional and one local level posts;
- telecommunications with one professional post;
- electronic data processing with 2 professional and two local level posts; and
- programme evaluation with 2 professional and one local level posts.

The total number of new posts proposed to the Secretary-General was 19 professional and 43 local level posts.

5. Upon consideration by the Budget Division at Headquarters and in view of the severe budgetary limitations, the Secretary-General agreed in principle to recommend to the General Assembly the following new posts:

- development planning, projections and policies - one professional and two local level posts;
- natural resources - one local level post;
- programme evaluation - one professional and one local level posts;
- statistics - one professional and two local level posts.

Three additional professional and 6 local level posts will be proposed to the legislative organs of the United Nations. The document under consideration E/ECWA/74 presents the budget estimates under review by the United Nations secretariat to be forwarded to the legislative bodies.

6. The ECWA secretariat, although appreciative of the severe budgetary constraints the organization is facing, views the minimal growth proposed for the Commission with concern. Particularly, the fact that a number of new activities cannot be introduced constitutes a considerable setback. Although policy directives called for a rearrangement of priorities and redeployment from existing resources to new activities, the ECWA secretariat was of the opinion - having considered the nature of the Commission's programmes - that only a very marginal redeployment could be proposed to meet new needs.