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BUDGETARY AND FINANCE COMMITTEE
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Item 10 of the agenda of the
Budgetary and Finance Committee

ADOPTION OF THE REPORT OF THE BUDGETARY AND FINANCE COMMITTEE
TO THE GOVERNING COUNCIL

Draft report of the Budgetary and Finance Committee

Addendum

Rapporteur: Ms. MKHONZA Adelaide Phindile (Swaziland)

CHAPTER I. MATTERS REFERRED TO THE COMMITTEE BY THE COUNCIL

C. Focal Point for Short-Term Advisory Services

1. For its consideration of the financial implications of this subject, which was under agenda item 4 (b) of the Council's agenda, the Committee had before it a note by the Administrator, contained in document DP/1986/18, concerning the focal point for Short-term Advisory Services (STAS). The document included a request for an amount of \$112,500 to be financed from Special Programme Resources (SPR) to cover the administrative costs of STAS

from 1 January to 30 June 1987, the last six months of the 24-month experimental period, on the understanding that any savings would revert to the SPR.

2. The item was introduced by the Assistant Administrator, Bureau for Special Activities, who summarized the background to this request. STAS was now operational, and considering the fact that the type of service offered was new, addressing itself primarily to the private sector results collected within the nine months were encouraging. A long gestation period was needed to allow the United Nations staff and the private and parastatal companies and institutions to become fully acquainted with the new facility. Work carried out so far proved the existence of a vast potential demand in developing countries and a growing interest in industrialized countries. The Assistant Administrator gave further details on the nature of requests made and of candidatures received, and specified the countries which had shown interest. STAS had entered into agreements with 15 non-profit international organizations for the identification and recruitment of candidates. An increased number of requests from developing countries was expected as the potential of the programme became more widely known.

Summary of the discussion in the Committee

3. Members noted the progress achieved by STAS during the initial months of the trial period, the reaction received from developing countries proved the need for this service, which benefited both developing and developed countries. They also noted that the focal point increased UNDP relationships with the private sector and reflected changing requirements in the development process - from long-term experts only, to the inclusion of alternative solutions. Several delegations noted that the mechanism complemented others, such as the transfer of knowledge (TOKTEN), Technical Co-operation Among Developing Countries (TCDC) or the Senior Technical Advisor Recruitment

programme implemented in one country. While several delegations approved the recommendation for additional financing of the administrative costs for the focal point, others made their support contingent on further clarifications.

4. Some members expressed concern over the fact that STAS might become an exclusive modality in which experts from developing countries would not be involved. Questions pertaining to the operational terms of STAS activities were raised. Clarification was requested on the recruitment process, on how the list of experts was drawn up, on the origin of the advisors selected, on whether individual consultants were included and on the inclusion of women consultants. Several members commented on the highly technical fields of several advisors who had been selected. They wondered how STAS services could meet the needs of poorer countries and, in particular, of the least developed countries. A few members wondered how quickly the bodies approached responded to STAS requests for assistance and how speedily Governments reacted to the candidatures proposed. Another concern related to the promotional activities to publicize STAS services. One member questioned the financial aspects of the mechanism and, in particular, the source of the fees paid to the short-term consultants. Another member noted the number of requests made for use of Special Programme Resources and asked the secretariat to provide a summary paper. One member wondered what arrangements were taken with respect to countries with non-convertible currencies.

Response of the Administrator

5. In stressing the global nature of the programme, the Assistant Administrator said that STAS would welcome advisors from developing countries, adding that the list detailing the country of origin of the co-operating organizations and the nationality of the consultants would be made available. He added that the TCDC modality provided a more appropriate channel for fielding experts from developing countries, and informed members that STAS

maintained close contacts with the TCDC unit, as well as with the unit responsible for implementing the TOKTEN scheme. Concerning the status of recruitment, the first advisors would shortly be taking up their assignments in the field: they were to donate their services, and no fees would be paid. The use of individual consultants was not foreseen: in this activity, UNDP acted as an honest broker between firms from developed and developing countries, and would not itself be selecting the individual advisors. Consequently, UNDP would have no control over the gender of the advisors offered and accepted.

6. The focal point, limited to two people working full-time, had concentrated on establishing a solid data base. A gap existed between the number of requests and those actually filled. Responses from Governments were sometimes slow. In the field, resident representatives had been asked to designate one contact point, preferably national officers who have the advantage of a better knowledge of the local scene. It was expected that STAS would be most useful to the relatively more developed among the developing countries, however, all countries would have equal access to STAS and equal efforts would be made to propagate STAS in least developed countries. With regard to the promotional activities, the programme had to be explained and propagated on a continuous basis. A leaflet had been published in three languages and circulated. The professional staff member, with the assistance of two senior advisors, had organized and prepared missions to generate support and enlist the collaboration of various bodies in both developed and developing countries. Turning to the financial aspects, the Assistant Administrator explained that, during their missions, the consultants' salaries would continue to be paid by their employers. Recipients would cover travel and living costs. Arrangements could, at the request of Governments, be made to finance these expenses from indicative planning figure (IPF) resources

through umbrella projects. In countries with non-convertible currency, the difficulty would arise only with respect to travel costs.

Recommendations of the Committee

7. Following its consideration of this subject, the Budgetary and Finance Committee recommended that the governing council adopt the following decision:

The Governing Council

1. Takes note of the Administrator's Note (DP/1986/18), and of the progress made in establishing a focal point in UNDP pursuant to decision 85/13;
 2. Approves \$112,500 from the Special Programme Resources to meet the administrative costs of the programme from 1 January to 30 June 1987, on the understanding that any savings realized during the 24-month trial period would revert to the Special Programme Resources; and
 3. Looks forward to the Administrator's report to the Council at its thirty-fourth session, based on a full evaluation of the activities of the focal point, and containing a clear recommendation on whether to continue the programme.
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