

local offices of the UNDP in countries where there are a substantial number of students studying under the program. This has the effect of reducing the time required to respond to a given inquiry. For example, the responsibility for the renewal of scholarships (where the renewal is for the course for which the award was granted, and where the student has satisfactorily completed his year of study) has been transferred to these local offices. Also, the selection of new candidates has been facilitated by more on-the-spot interviews by these offices. In addition, while taking into account the individual interests and aspirations of students, greater priority has been accorded to the manpower needs of the countries concerned as they become independent or achieve majority rule. In this connection the local UNDP offices have been encouraged to assist fellowship-holders in their efforts to obtain employment and to maintain contact with them after graduation.

In examining the report of the Secretary-General, member states will note that the program was able in the period 1975/76 to make only 126 new awards, as opposed to 634 in the previous year. The Advisory Board considers this a matter which should be of great concern to members, as it concerns the future development of the program. While a small percentage of this decline can be attributed to the exceptional awards made late in the previous year, as detailed in Paragraph 9 of the Secretary-General's report, the key factor resides in the tremendously increased costs of the program. For example, in 1973/74 the average cost per fellowship amounted to \$1,300. The average cost per fellowship in 1975/76 rose to \$1,750 and the estimate for 1976/77, based on our present experience, is \$2,000. Inflation, of course, is a major factor in the increase in educational and training costs. Equally significant is the fact that the program is no longer able to make a significant proportion of awards in countries, such as Zaire, where the cost of study was heavily subsidized by the government concerned. As the program increasingly bears the real cost of awards, the average cost can be expected to continue to rise markedly.

Member states will recall that at the twenty-ninth session in 1974, following the independence of Guinea Bissau and anticipating the independence of the other countries under Portuguese administration in Africa, the General Assembly decided to continue — as a transitional measure — assistance to students of those countries. My predecessor suggested at that time that the resolution's provisions might entail continued assistance to those students already studying under the program to the conclusion of their studies and new awards to students of those territories, for a period, to permit the coming into effect of bilateral and multilateral technical-assistance programs. It has transpired, in fact, that the transitional period for new awards to these students has been approximately one year after independence. The Advisory Committee recommended in March 1976 that the program should accord priority to individuals from those three countries which had not yet achieved independence or majority rule — that is, South Africa, Rhodesia and Namibia. Subsequently, the tremendous financial strain on the program required that the small number of new awards be devoted exclusively to applicants from those three groups.

The program is at present receiving voluntary contributions in the order of \$1.6 million a year. Thus, when we consider prospects for 1976/77, it becomes evident that the total number of fellowship-holders will in the next reporting period decrease very substantially if additional voluntary contributions are not received. I do not wish to suggest that it is possible to establish precisely what the optimum level of the program in a given year should be. What is evident is that the situation existing in Southern Africa at the present time puts tremendous and valid demands on us to which we should find a means of responding. This year, several hundred well-qualified students had to be refused. They were invited to reapply next year, when, it is hoped, more awards would be available.

I am pleased to introduce on behalf of 39 member states the resolution which is traditionally adopted on this item. In doing so I would underline our thanks for the generosity of those member states which have made contributions to the program, in terms of cash contributions, or in terms of places offered in their national universities. I would also wish to extend our appreciation to the governments of countries in Africa and elsewhere which are acting as hosts to these young people. Their support for the program and their attention to the needs of the students is of immeasurable worth. I wish to underline our thanks to the devoted personnel of the United Nations Secretariat here in New York and as well to those of the UNDP local offices and of others in Europe and elsewhere, whose service has greatly enhanced the program's effectiveness.

The resolution before us differs little in substance from those adopted in recent years, there is, however, one substantive difference. In accordance with the decision of the Advisory Committee taken in September 1975, and drawn to your attention by my predecessor at this time last year, the resolution no longer seeks a transitional allocation from the United Nations budget. This decision was based on the belief that the program has matured through the development of a significant level of voluntary contributions, and that future fund raising efforts would benefit from the fully voluntary funding mechanism originally envisaged. Indeed a number of countries which made generous increases in their contributions last year kept this factor, as well as greatly-increased costs, in mind when presenting their requests to their respective treasuries. We appeal to those governments now considering the future level of their contributions in relation to levels established two or three years ago to bear this factor in mind.

In conclusion, I wish to commend to the member states this resolution, which we hope will be adopted by consensus as in previous years. I wish also to urge their continuing support for this useful and productive program.