ADMINISTRATIVE AND FINANCIAL QUESTIONS

Absence on Military Service

Note by the Executive Secretary

1. In August 1963 the Executive Secretary made certain proposals concerning the above question, which are contained in document L/2055.

2. These proposals were considered in the first instance by the Committee on Budget, Finance and Administration at its meeting in September 1963, and the following is quoted from the Committee's report (L/2064):

"The Committee discussed extensively the proposal contained in this document on which opinions were divided. Some members recommended acceptance of the proposals, for which a strong case could be made out on grounds of fairness and equity. Other members felt that a deviation from the practice followed by the United Nations and all other specialized agencies, with the exception of the ILO, was undesirable in principle, and that the matter should be referred to the appropriate inter-agency bodies for further study. A suggestion that the Executive Secretary's recommendation be accepted pending the elaboration of a common rule for all organizations applying the common system did not receive unanimous support. In the circumstances, the Committee felt that the Council might wish to give further consideration to this matter."

3. The Council, at its December meeting, decided that this question should be referred to the CONTRACTING PARTIES for consideration at their next session.

4. Meanwhile the Executive Secretary has looked into the possibility of referring the matter to the appropriate inter-agency body for further study in the hope that a common rule could be elaborated as suggested by some of the members of the Committee on Budget, Finance and Administration.

5. In this connexion it was ascertained that the matter was extensively debated at the eleventh session of the Consultative Committee on Administrative Questions in 1951, when the policy at present followed by the United Nations was agreed upon
in broad outline by the majority of the organizations represented (ILO, the International Bank and the Universal Postal Union adopting a less restrictive policy).

6. Informal consultations with the United Nations and other specialized agencies have shown that there is at present little chance of a common rule being agreed upon, and particularly the United Nations would be likely to oppose a change in the present system, as - for various reasons - this might have wider implications in that organization.

7. For the GATT the problem is a minor one and concerns at present only three staff members. It may, therefore, well be taken as an example of a case where there is room for a legitimate difference in practice between organizations.

8. If, however, the CONTRACTING PARTIES should feel that, as a matter of principle, a deviation from the majority rule would be undesirable, they may wish to consider the following alternative proposal whereby absence on military service remains, as prescribed by the UN staff rules, chargeable in full to special leave without pay or accrued annual leave, but on the understanding that the Executive Secretary, as a matter of administrative discretion, may grant up to a maximum of ten working days additional leave to staff members regularly called up for short periods on military service.

9. The above administrative discretion would only be used in connexion with recurring short military refresher courses referred to in paragraph 3 of document L/2055.

Point for decision: Paragraph 8.