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To: Members of the Committee on
Executive Board Administrative Matters

From: The Committee Secretary

Subject: Electronic Data Processing (EDP) Equipment in
Offices of Executive Directors - Comments of
Advisors and Assistants to Executive Directors

The attached paper which was prepared by a group of Advisors and Assistants to Executive Directors is being circulated for information at the request of a member of the Committee in connection with the Committee's forthcoming discussions on electronic data processing support for Offices of Executive Directors.

Att: (1)

Other Distribution:
Members of the Executive Board



EDP IN EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS' OFFICES

1. An open meeting of Technical Assistants and Advisors reviewed this subject on July 22, 1986.
2. The discussion brought out the very different requirements of the individual offices reflecting different working patterns, areas of specialist knowledge, the natures of the constituencies concerned etc. Some offices, for example, expressed a strong interest in additional computer and database facilities. Others were more concerned to enhance their word processing capability or regarded access to a facsimile machine or direct links with the cable room as their main priority. There was also widespread concern about the potential cost implications of a major expansion of facilities in this area when the overall budgetary constraints on the staff were very tight. Some felt that the proposed baseline system did not have sufficient flexibility to meet their individual requirements and that there was a danger this equipment might not be fully utilised in all cases.
3. In the light of these concerns the possibility of setting individual EDP budgets for each Executive Director's office was considered. This would allow offices to tailor their EDP more closely to their own working practices while still providing an appropriate degree of control over the total cost. This would possibly allow an office to choose at some stage a facsimile machine or an office copier if they felt this was preferable as an alternative to additional computing facilities. There was general interest in the staff's opinion of the feasibility of such an arrangement. It has also been suggested that, as a first step, it might be possible to establish a shared computing facility, with one or two PCs linked to the appropriate database, as a way of giving Directors who want it access to these facilities quickly and cheaply.
4. On more specific issues there was a wide range of views expressed on the importance and urgency of allowing Executive Directors to have access to the Fund's databases as they are developed. Some felt strongly that Executive Directors should have the same information as members of staff and that this should, in particular, include the ability to access the IFS database as soon as possible. Others felt that this was less important and were concerned that in some cases the quality of information supplied to the Fund might decline if there were a perception that the information was being more widely distributed. It was generally recognised that it was difficult to assess the scale of this problem, and thus the appropriate response, in the absence of further information. It was suggested that the Bureau of Statistics might be asked to provide more information explaining the nature and extent of these sensitivities.

5. On the nature of the computing system that should be eventually adopted, several points were made:

- in general, several favoured a multi-stage approach with progress beyond an initial system only after careful evaluation of the costs and benefits involved;
- it was essential that the multi-user system should have adequate word processing capabilities and should be able to use the best word processing software;
- some, although by no means all, felt that they would benefit from being able to generate drafts on their own work stations which could then be amended by their support staff. If this were to be possible however some form of networking would seem to be required as it was felt that the ability to transfer documents only via discs was of limited benefit when, for example, several documents on a disc were required simultaneously by different individuals;
- it was noted that the baseline system would not add significantly to offices' current word processing capabilities because it would not be compatible with most existing systems.

July 29, 1986