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Consultative Committee on
Administrative Questions
(Personnel and General Administrative Questions)

Fifty-seventh session
New York, 30 June-23 July 1982

ICSAB REPORT ON STANDARDS OF CONDUCT
IN THE INTERNATIONAL CIVIL SERVICE

Note by the Secretary

1. It will be recalled that CCAQ(PER), after considering at its fifty-sixth session a paper (ACC/1982/PER/5) responding to ACC's request that CCAQ review the 1954 ICSAB report on standards of conduct in the international civil service, agreed that the report should be reissued without change but with a new preface, a draft of the text of which should be prepared for approval by ACC (ACC/1982/5, paras. 102-103).
2. Accordingly the Secretary presents herewith a draft of such a preface, for consideration by the Committee.
3. The Secretary would envisage that, if the report is reissued with this new preface, the preface to the 1965 issue should be retained also, for the information it gives about the origin and status of the report.

ANNEX

ICSAB "Report on Standards of Conduct
in the International Civil Service"

Draft preface to 1982 edition

This "Report on Standards of Conduct in the International Civil Service" was prepared by the International Civil Service Advisory Board (ICSAB) in 1954, at the request of the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination (ACC). The preface to the 1965 edition, which describes the origin of the report and the way in which it was prepared, also recalls that ACC had expressed the hope that it would receive wide circulation among international civil servants. That hope has been amply fulfilled; many organizations make a practice of handing a copy to each new staff member.

Certainly, much has changed in the world and in the organizations of the United Nations system in the nearly thirty years since the report was prepared. Due note must be taken of the changes; nevertheless, ACC is convinced that the basic guidance set out in the ICSAB report has lost none of its validity and pertinence for international civil servants in today's changed circumstances. ACC has therefore decided that the report should be reissued, in the belief that the advice it contains will continue to be as valuable to future generations of staff members as it has been in the past.

One of the changes which has occurred is that the body which drafted the report, ICSAB, has ceased to exist, having been replaced in 1975 by the International Civil Service Commission. The report's status is in no way diminished thereby; it was originally issued, and continues to be so, under the authority of ACC.

The most important substantive change is perhaps in the vastly increased importance in the work of the organizations of operational activities, particularly development assistance activities, which were barely beginning in the early 1950's. The report thus deals mostly with the conduct of international civil servants in the context of the conventional servicing functions of the organizations; but, even if these are no longer pre-dominant in most organizations, what is said regarding them, for example in para. 24, remains true. Similarly, the advice on conduct of staff members

serving away from headquarters given in paras. 44-49 is still pertinent, although it does not reflect the situation of staff members co-operating in projects for which the host country is responsible, nor the support which individual staff members serving in the field can now in most cases receive from field offices and project structures in their relations with national authorities; staff members being sent on mission or assigned to projects are normally given additional briefing on the special conditions in which they will be called upon to operate.

Another area where change has occurred is that of the role of elected staff representatives. Recognition of the right of staff members to participate, through their representatives, in the consideration of questions relating to their conditions of service has, happily, progressed well beyond the position described in paras. 29-30; in particular, staff representatives are now admitted to address the governing bodies of many organizations when personnel questions are being discussed. Whatever the form in which staff participation is organized, however, the basic principles of respect for mutual obligations and for the "rules of the game" recalled by ICSAB remain essential to the effective and harmonious working of the secretariats.

What has not changed is the need for the highest standards of efficiency, competence and integrity in the international civil service; without those qualities, the organizations could no longer fulfill the purposes for which they were established. The pressures which threaten the independence and impartiality of international civil servants are, however, greater today than ever; it is then all the more important that staff members, for their part, conduct themselves in a way which will enhance the image of their service and will give no foothold to attempts to influence them improperly in the performance of their duties. The executive heads trust that this report will both provide them with timely advice and, at the same time strengthen them with the knowledge that the standards they are expected to uphold are the same as have been set for staff members since the inception of the United Nations system of organizations.