



SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 34th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. PIRSON (Belgium)

Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative  
and Budgetary Questions: Mr. MSELLE

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Medium-term planning in the United Nations

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The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 104: PERSONNEL QUESTIONS (continued)

(a) COMPOSITION OF THE SECRETARIAT: REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (continued)  
(A/34/408; A/C.5/34/CRP.2, 3 and 4)

(b) OTHER PERSONNEL QUESTIONS: REPORTS OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (continued)  
(A/C.5/34/7)

1. Mr. BLACKMAN (Barbados) said that his delegation had been among those which had worked tirelessly at the preceding session in preparing resolution 33/143, which embodied the just aspirations of the developing world, since it had been convinced that new ground had to be broken in the area of personnel policies and practices. If that resolution was not to prove abortive, the new Assistant Secretary-General for Personnel Services would require the support of all Member States; his delegation pledged its firm support and full co-operation in all personnel matters.

2. The Secretary-General's report on the composition of the Secretariat (A/34/408) was interesting not only for what it said but also for what it did not say. The report should be viewed as an interim one, as resolution 33/143 was so wide-ranging in scope that it would be necessary for the Secretary-General to make progress reports on its implementation at the next and even succeeding sessions. The Administration must be given time before any objective measurement could be made of the implementation of its provisions. His delegation was encouraged that initial steps had already been taken in the right direction. In particular, he noted with satisfaction the efforts to improve the representation of unrepresented and underrepresented States, and the adoption of measures relating to vacancy bulletins and publicity, the candidates roster and the inheritance of posts. His delegation was, however, concerned over the implementation of the provisions of resolution 33/143 relating to the recruitment of women, competitive methods of selection and, above all, the representation of developing countries at the senior and policy-making levels.

3. His Government maintained a strong interest in the status of women and had created a special government department for women's affairs. It would therefore be carefully monitoring the implementation of paragraph 6 of section III of resolution 33/143. He welcomed the guidelines established for the appointment of women to posts subject to geographical distribution and the special efforts to be made to recruit women to posts at the P-4 level and above, as well as the inclusion of women in administrative bodies within the Secretariat. He would appreciate an explanation of the very low percentage of women appointed to the 303 posts subject to geographical distribution filled in the year covered by the report.

4. His delegation understood the anxiety among General Service staff over the scheduled competitive examination. That anxiety stemmed from the fact that many of the posts earmarked as vacant were currently occupied by persons who had been

(Mr. Blackman, Barbados)

recommended for promotion to the Professional category prior to the adoption of resolution 33/143. There were also concerns over the fate of incumbents of such posts who had in-house experience but not the post-secondary qualifications required by the resolution. It was believed that too little weight was attached in the examination to specialization, and that the specialized paper was too general. His delegation would appreciate information concerning reports that in 1978 some departments had refrained from recommending for promotion otherwise eligible persons when they had become aware of the progress of negotiations on resolution 33/143. His delegation had welcomed the reassurance provided by the Assistant Secretary-General for Personnel Services that the Administration was not wedded to the holding of the examination on a specific date. It was to be hoped that the Secretary-General would be flexible and consider the just concerns of all staff. While arrangements for the examination should be left to the Secretary-General, he would welcome assurances from the Secretary-General that those concerns would not be ignored.

5. His delegation could agree to the principle of staff representation in the Fifth Committee, since the staff should not be denied a hearing by the very Committee which decided its conditions of service.

6. The current criteria governing "desirable ranges" placed the developing countries at a great disadvantage, and his delegation fully agreed that there was a need to revise those criteria. He noted that, for whatever reasons, the Caribbean region, which was usually grouped with North America, was grouped with Latin America in Group C in table C of the Secretary-General's report. The table showed that in 1979 the nationals of 28 Latin American countries had held 38 posts at the D-1 level and above, or 11 per cent of such posts, as compared with 48.7 per cent for 25 countries with developed market economies. With regard to representation at the senior levels, the regional picture for North America and the Caribbean as reflected in table 6 seemed good from a distance, but the close-up view of Barbados reflected in table 9 was far from good: not one staff member from Barbados was above the P-5 level, and Barbados had, in fact, never been represented at the senior policy-making level. Historically, Barbadian nationals had been recruited at the lowest Professional levels, and, bearing in mind Article 101, paragraph 3, of the Charter, he wondered why one Barbadian national, an eminently qualified woman with a doctorate of philosophy and considerable experience, had been recruited to a P-1 post. His delegation could not conceal its disappointment over the situation of its nationals in the Secretariat. It felt that the Secretariat had tended to penalize the nationals of small States when their representatives spoke out about unsatisfactory recruitment practices, but it would not be silenced until a method of recruitment was employed which resulted in justice for Barbadian nationals.

7. Mr. KEMAL (Pakistan) said that, although his delegation was generally reluctant to intervene in the area of personnel policy, which was traditionally the domain of the Secretary-General, it had joined in the consensus on General Assembly resolution 33/143 because it concurred in the general aim of its provisions, which was to step up the recruitment of nationals from unrepresented and underrepresented countries and increase the proportion of women in the Secretariat. It had

(Mr. Kemal, Pakistan)

also supported those provisions aimed at ensuring equal opportunities for all staff members.

8. On the question of competitive methods of selection, he trusted that every effort would be made to ensure that the planned examination would be objective and fair for all candidates. It was not for the Fifth Committee to set the dates of the examination, as practical arrangements of that kind should be left to the Secretary-General, who might well decide that more time was needed to ensure adequate preparation. He had full confidence in the judgement of the Secretary-General and was sure that he would not allow the competitive examination to jeopardize the acquired or legitimate rights of staff members. As to the format of the examination, as described in information circular SI/IC/79/66, he agreed that, from a broader perspective, exercises and questions should be relevant to the occupational group concerned rather than to any individual post. However, given the fact that many General Service staff members were already performing functions at the Professional level, such a format was likely to place those persons at a disadvantage vis-à-vis other candidates. A solution might be to allow a degree of choice among questions, to make the questions in the first examination more specific and job-related, and not to adopt the format outlined in paragraph 6 of the information circular until the transitional period was over.

9. His delegation favoured the increased recruitment of nationals from unrepresented and underrepresented countries, but was concerned over the establishment of numerical targets for that purpose. A rigid adherence to numerical targets might not be consistent with Article 101 of the Charter, especially if they were based on the existing system of desirable ranges, which gave preponderant weight to a State's contribution to the budget. The current system was favoured by the major contributors, as it safeguarded their political and financial stake in the Organization. His delegation, which did not support the philosophical underpinning of the system of desirable ranges, had nevertheless accepted its application, since the Secretary-General had traditionally refrained from imposing rigid quotas, and had consistently emphasized that adherence to any rigid mathematical formula would reduce the necessary administrative flexibility and would not be beneficial for the Organization. His delegation was, therefore, concerned over the possibility that, unless the Office of Personnel Services proceeded with due caution, implementation of resolution 33/143 might bring about a qualitative change in the Secretariat which was not in keeping with the broader interests of the Organization. That resolution should be interpreted as emphasizing the importance of recruiting nationals from unrepresented and underrepresented countries, and not as precluding the recruitment of nationals from overrepresented countries, particularly over-represented developing countries. The developing countries, in particular, already had artificially low desirable ranges owing to the heavy weight given to the contribution factor. The desirable ranges of such countries in no way reflected the capacity of their nationals to meet the requirements of Article 101 of the Charter. The recruitment policy outlined in paragraph 7 of document A/34/408 was most disquieting, especially since no mention was made of the paramount considerations for the recruitment of staff laid down in the Charter. Fifty-two developing countries were currently overrepresented,

(Mr. Kemal, Pakistan)

and if the requirement that the recruitment of nationals of overrepresented Member States was to be limited to those cases in which the Secretariat could find no qualified candidate from a Member State which was unrepresented, underrepresented, or within its desirable range, 52 developing countries would be adversely affected. Of course, further efforts were needed to improve the geographical distribution of posts in the Secretariat, but it was too early to judge the results of the Secretary-General's efforts to implement resolution 33/143. The Assembly would be in a better position to evaluate the situation in all its detail at the next session. He agreed with the representative of Barbados that the problem of the desirable ranges should be examined at the next session on the basis of a further study by the Secretary-General.

10. Mr. BUNC (Yugoslavia) said that his delegation welcomed the aims and priorities of the new Assistant-Secretary-General for Personnel Services in building a truly international Secretariat. While recognizing that the report of the Secretary-General (A/34/408) was of an interim nature, as he understood it, the majority of developing Member States were still underrepresented. Moreover, his delegation believed that the existing geographical distribution based only on the contribution criterion was undemocratic; additional criteria should be used in determining the system of desirable ranges, both weighted and unweighted.

11. It fully supported the efforts of the Secretary-General to increase the proportion of young people in order to achieve a better age balance. That could be done by taking appropriate measures to recruit young professionals and by applying the retirement-age regulations. Furthermore, as the representative of Sweden had rightly said, more equal representation of men and women in all categories should be the ultimate objective and the number of women in posts subject to geographical distribution should therefore be increased. In effect, at least 40 per cent of appointments to posts at the Professional level and above should be women. The efforts of the Secretary-General to increase the ratio of female staff by recruiting women above the normal entry levels of P-1 and P-2 were appreciated, but the increase was still minimal. The measures described in paragraph 15 of the report and the World Conference of the United Nations Decade for Women to be held in 1980 should provide the necessary basis for the recruitment of women, while at the same time ensuring observance of Article 8 of the Charter.

12. As far as the promotion of staff from the General Service category to the Professional category was concerned, the principle of competitive selection established in General Assembly resolution 33/143, section I, paragraph 1 (g), should remain valid. The modalities of its implementation were the responsibility of the Secretary-General, who should be given adequate time to work out a satisfactory solution. His delegation would be pleased to hear at the thirty-fifth session how successful the competitive examinations had been. It agreed with those other delegations which had pointed out that the Committee should not in any way become an arbiter or engage in negotiations between the staff and the Secretary-General; the execution of personnel policies and staff management had to remain his responsibility alone.

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(Mr. Bunc, Yugoslavia)

13. An efficient international civil service was of crucial importance to the future effectiveness of the United Nations system in all its diverse fields of activities; that should be the goal.

14. Mr. GOLOVKO (Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic) said that the objectives established by Article 101 of the Charter concerning the composition of the Secretariat were still far from achievement, particularly with regard to the strict observance of the principle of equitable geographical distribution of posts within the desirable ranges. He realized that it was not easy to put those principles into practice and he wished the Under-Secretary-General for Administration, Finance and Management, and the Assistant Secretary-General for Personnel Services every success in their new appointments.

15. There had been an increased use in recent years of recruitment missions abroad; long-term plans had been prepared for recruiting staff from unrepresented and underrepresented countries, and there had been structural changes in the Office of Personnel Services itself. But those efforts had largely been in vain; in 1979 for example, the number of unrepresented and underrepresented States had declined only slightly from the 1978 level, while the number of States within their desirable range had fallen from 50 to 48, with a corresponding increase from 56 to 62 in the number of overrepresented States. In that connexion, he noted with regret that the Ukrainian SSR was underrepresented.

16. The discrepancies were growing, and it must be noted that the difficulty of finding competent staff could not be alleged as an excuse for not complying with the principle of equitable geographical distribution. He firmly opposed the continuation of the practice of appointing to the Secretariat nationals of overrepresented States. General Assembly resolution 33/143 provided that unrepresented and underrepresented States should achieve their desirable ranges in the biennium 1979-1980. That requirement could only be met by giving priority in recruitment to the nationals of those States while also seeking a more even distribution of senior-level Secretariat posts.

17. He noted that the representation of nationals of the Western countries at the Under-Secretary-General and Assistant Secretary-General levels was more than four times that of the socialist States.

18. One way of achieving equitable geographical distribution was to fill vacancies created by the retirement of staff with nationals of unrepresented and underrepresented States. He therefore noted with approval the statement that the Office of Personnel Services would apply strictly the provisions regarding extensions of service of staff members, particularly from overrepresented States, beyond the normal retirement age.

19. The continuing practice of granting permanent contracts hampered efforts to improve the quality of the Secretariat by infusing new blood. As of 30 June 1979 the percentage of fixed-term contracts among the 2,797 staff occupying posts subject to geographical distribution was only 38 per cent. The Administration could obviously increase that percentage. The fact that permanent contracts were

(Mr. Golovko, Ukrainian SSR)

so much more numerous meant that certain posts were held down for decades by certain States, to the exclusion of nationals of unrepresented and underrepresented States, thus precluding any qualitative renewal of the Secretariat. The solution was the complete abolition of permanent contracts, especially where nationals of overrepresented States were concerned.

20. The United Nations was also failing to make use of the reserves of skilled manpower within its own ranks. For example, some highly qualified Ukrainian staff members who were on the promotion registers had hitherto failed to obtain promotion.

21. He opposed the promotion of staff from the General Service to the Professional category because such promotions meant that posts intended for younger professionals were encumbered by senior clerks approaching retirement age, many of whom were in any case nationals of overrepresented States. It would be better to fill such posts with nationals of unrepresented and underrepresented States. In that connexion, he endorsed the conclusion of the Joint Inspection Unit in its report on the reform of personnel policy (A/33/228). He realized that promotion from the General Service to the Professional category was specifically provided for in General Assembly resolution 33/143 and was indeed being further developed through a system of competitive examinations. He agreed with the majority view that those tests should be postponed so that the matter might be reviewed, with particular reference to the total elimination of any possibility of discrimination because of the cultural and linguistic diversity of the Secretariat.

22. The United Nations was a large international organization and therefore the staff practices prevailing in national administrations did not necessarily fit in with United Nations requirements. United Nations staff members should set an example of discipline and conscientious application, but the discussion in the Committee had turned up too many examples of the contrary.

23. The Committee had heard many suggestions designed to help the Administration to formulate a personnel policy in keeping with the provisions of the Charter. Some of those proposals had been constructive, but some seemed rather to reflect the limited interests of particular countries.

24. The Office of Personnel Services must be given a chance to put into effect the many General Assembly resolutions on personnel matters. That Office should not be asked to abandon the well-established personnel policies of the United Nations. The current criteria for desirable ranges were justified and objective, and his delegation opposed any proposal to revise them. Some proposals which had been put forward in haste were said to be founded on some superior laws of justice, but they were not compatible with a balanced and objective approach to personnel policy.

25. He hoped that any resolution on personnel matters adopted during the current session would be based on such a balanced and objective approach. In summary, the United Nations Secretariat should: (a) cease to hire Professional staff from overrepresented countries; (b) bring the representation of unrepresented and underrepresented countries up to the desirable range; (c) limit and eventually discontinue altogether the granting of permanent contracts so as to facilitate the immediate recruitment to Professional posts of nationals of underrepresented countries; and (d) strictly apply the General Assembly resolutions concerning retirement age.

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26. Mr. SOBHAN (Bangladesh) said that his delegation had voted in favour of General Assembly resolution 33/143 in the belief that it marked an important step forward in the restructuring of the Secretariat to bring it more closely into line with the current work of the United Nations. That resolution was, of course, a compromise; few subjects tended to arouse such strong feelings as did personnel matters.

27. His delegation felt that the composition of the Secretariat was unsatisfactory because it retained a distinct bias in favour of the developed countries, in particular at the D-1 level and above. Insufficient attention had been paid to the question of population and to recruitment of personnel to reflect the changing character of the Organization. It was highly anomalous that the rate of contribution of a Member State should remain the overriding consideration in determining its desirable range of posts within the Secretariat; in due course, that should cease to be the criterion. The United Nations Secretariat should ideally be a truly representative body without any concentration of personnel from any one country or region. It was particularly important to make a special effort to achieve a balance between the developed and the developing countries at all levels within the shortest possible time, due regard being paid to the presence of an adequate number of staff from the least-developed countries. In fixing desirable ranges, priority should be given not only to membership and population but also to countries in which or with which the United Nations was closely involved. The population quota element, which was integral to a fair interpretation of geographical representation, should be put into effect. If based purely on a rigid mathematical formula it could admittedly give rise to discrepancies and differences, but some kind of weighted formula could be worked out. Due regard should also be paid to the availability of suitably qualified personnel from the developing world.

28. His delegation felt that the Secretariat should examine the possibility of a restricted, and perhaps even informal, application of the principle of geographical distribution of posts to the General Service category. The possibility might be explored of recruiting personnel through United Nations offices in Member States to fill at least a few General Service posts, so that the permanent Secretariat in New York, Geneva and elsewhere would be more representative at all levels. He understood that a very substantial number of General Service staff at United Nations duty stations came from countries other than the host countries. His delegation had noted the figure in annex VI of document A/C.5/34/CRP.3 referring to staff in other categories and, in that connexion, he requested the Secretariat to provide a breakdown of the composition of the General Service category, showing the number of staff from each country, and the posts they occupied at the various United Nations offices. While in no way wishing to criticize the present recruitment policy, he believed that, if for practical considerations the Organization was to employ an increasing number of nationals from countries other than the host countries in the General Service category, then at least some opportunity should be given to countries which could readily provide personnel and had previously been unable to do so for reasons beyond their control. Unless steps were taken to broaden the base of the Secretariat, he feared that it would be increasingly difficult for people from the overwhelming majority of third world countries ever to be employed in the General Service category, no matter how

(Mr. Sobhan, Bangladesh)

qualified they might be. That was unfair and unjust. Their recruitment in their home countries would also solve the difficulty some of them faced in obtaining visas. The need for some measure of geographical representation in the General Service category was all the more important in view of the fact that 30 per cent of the staff in that category could now be promoted to the Professional category through competitive examinations - an opportunity which should be made available to as many countries as possible. He wished to make it absolutely clear, however, that his proposal was not directed against the Secretariat or any Member States, nor was it intended to undermine the position of any individual.

29. No additional expenditure was being proposed. In keeping with the principle of geographical distribution and as the membership of the Organization had grown, the Professional category had become far more representative in character, and a similar tendency should be encouraged in the composition of the General Service category, not only because it was fitting and conducive to greater efficiency, but because it would provide an opportunity for the nationals of many more Member States to find employment. His delegation would be happy to discuss its proposal in greater detail with the Secretariat.

30. He welcomed the steps taken to increase the number of women in the Secretariat and the efforts to improve the position of underrepresented countries and to reduce the number of unrepresented countries. No post should be considered the exclusive preserve of any Member State or group of States and a special effort should be made faithfully to implement that decision of the General Assembly.

31. On the question of competitive examinations for promotion to the Professional category, his delegation was concerned at the strong feelings aroused on the subject within the Secretariat. It believed that the decision to institute such examinations was correct, although it did pose some genuine difficulties for the Secretariat and for the staff. However, the problems were not intractable and, if the Secretary-General was given a little more time, it should be possible to work out a formula acceptable to all concerned. The subject of the competitive examinations could profitably be considered by the International Civil Service Commission, which could lay down guidelines in the better interests of the Organization. The ultimate goal should be to build up an international civil service which encompassed the entire United Nations system and was based on clearly established recruitment and training procedures.

32. His delegation strongly urged that there should be a detailed study to review the entire range of questions relating to personnel matters, with special reference to the criteria for fixing desirable ranges. It was hoped that the Secretariat would be able to reflect the changing character of both the membership and the work of the Organization. He was confident that all Member States would work collectively towards building a truly international civil service which was genuinely representative in character and would work with efficiency and dedication in upholding the noble principles embodied in the Charter.

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33. Mr. BROTDININGRAT (Indonesia) said that it was still too early to assess the results of the Secretary-General's efforts to implement General Assembly resolution 33/143. It appeared from the Secretary-General's report (A/34/408) that he was so far on the right track.

34. The half-yearly vacancy bulletins were useful in publicizing vacancies and thus facilitating his delegation's efforts to find suitable candidates. It was essential that the bulletins should be issued in good time and he hoped that the next one would be circulated by December of the current year.

35. Competitive examination was the best way of ensuring objectivity both in recruitment and promotion. The examination should be regarded both by the Administration and by the candidates as an opportunity rather than an obstacle to career development. He hoped that in implementing the relevant provisions of General Assembly resolution 33/143 the Administration would take into account the constructive opinions expressed by the staff.

36. One of the most important characteristics of international civil servants was their readiness to serve wherever their services were most needed. He therefore hoped to see section I, paragraph 1 (d), of resolution 33/143 fully implemented. The tendency to remain at one duty station was not in keeping with the inherent character of the international civil service.

37. The real question with regard to the provisions of resolution 33/143 regarding the geographical composition of the Secretariat was not whether the resolution was being correctly implemented, but whether the present system was really an appropriate one, and that was very much open to question. Under the present system the principle of equitable geographical distribution was neither equitable nor geographical, and the so-called desirable ranges were far from desirable for the majority of Member States.

38. The present system had resulted in a kind of "equity" in which 75 per cent of the Member States had to be content with 30 per cent of Secretariat posts, while 25 per cent enjoyed the remaining 70 per cent of posts. That inequity arose from the far too dominant role given to the contribution factor rather than to geography. Yet the amount of a State's contribution did not accurately reflect its real value if the contribution was assessed on a per capita basis. One striking statistic was that, although Indonesia was said to be overrepresented, every Indonesian national occupying a United Nations post subject to geographical distribution represented almost 10 million people. That could not be regarded as an equitable situation.

39. The present system was also confusing. It could be seen from table 3 of the Secretary-General's report (A/34/408) that the Asia and Pacific region, with an actual staff position of 14.9, was 6.5 below the midpoint of its desirable range of 21.4; thus the region was severely underrepresented. On the other hand, table 9 of the report showed that 12 out of 25 Member States of that very region were overrepresented, and only five of them were within their desirable ranges. The logical conclusion was that the Asia and Pacific region could only attain the mid-point of its desirable range if all, or at least the great majority, of its Member States were overrepresented.

(Mr. Brotodiningrat, Indonesia)

40. The fact was that the principle of equitable geographical distribution was applicable to only a small proportion (12 per cent) of the total United Nations staff. He was fully aware of the problems underlying the principle of geographical distribution but firmly believed that the system of desirable ranges was not conducive to geographical equitability and that it was time to review the system with a view to rendering the application of the principle more even-handed.

41. The Secretary-General in his report on the work of the Organization (A/34/1) had mentioned the importance of achieving an effective, stable and independent international civil service. He agreed with that sentiment; however, apart from independence from any national interests, the true notion of an international civil service must necessarily imply equitable international composition and the necessary degree of international mobility.

42. Mr. OKEYO (Kenya) said that the Secretary-General's report (A/34/408) on the implementation of General Assembly resolution 33/143 was of an interim nature. The Assistant Secretary-General for Personnel Services had only recently been appointed and needed time to settle down. He hoped there would be a more comprehensive report to the General Assembly at its thirty-fifth session.

43. The implementation of the provisions of General Assembly resolution 33/143 had encountered a great deal of hesitancy within the Secretariat; that was normal since the resolution sought to change what was familiar and to introduce new elements. He hoped that the Administration would be objective and recognize the sincere attempts of Member States to inject fairness into personnel management practices and to seek the rationalization of the management of men and women in such a manner that the concept of justice was clearly evident, with a consequent beneficial effect on morale. The intention of General Assembly resolution 33/143 had been honourable and should be interpreted to be so, and in cases where there were operational or interpretational difficulties, consultation should ensue, to ensure that that intention was not distorted.

44. The Secretary-General in his report had called for flexibility in applying the provisions regarding retirement age to certain categories of staff. His delegation would be willing to consider such exceptions but would like to know what percentage of staff the Secretary-General proposed to exempt, what duty stations were referred to in paragraph 27 of his report and how many staff members would be involved in such an exception.

45. Delegations from developing countries had become increasingly concerned in recent years about the practice of inheritance of posts within the Secretariat, and they had therefore inserted a paragraph in General Assembly resolution 33/143 to ensure that the practice was stopped. The Secretary-General had stated in paragraph 10 of his report that he had instructed all heads of departments and offices to take that guideline into account in all appointments. That step was welcome but there should be more positive action in future, especially when the replacement of heads of departments was concerned. Moreover, the last sentence of paragraph 10 dealt with staff members who were nationals of underrepresented or marginally represented Member States, though the stipulation in General Assembly resolution 33/143 had been meant to cover all States. The practice of inheritance of posts was not acceptable per se and should therefore cease.

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(Mr. Okeyo, Kenya)

46. The target figure of 40 per cent established in paragraph 1 of section II of the resolution was based on the concept that 100 per cent would constitute the percentage for women, youth and unrepresented and underrepresented Member States. The pointing out of that distinction should not be understood as a criticism but rather as an expression of support for the manner in which the Secretary-General had so far applied the provision.

47. In paragraphs 7 and 8 of his report, the Secretary-General outlined the measures he proposed to meet the 40-per-cent target. However, the last sentence of paragraph 7 appeared to be unduly rigid. It had not been intended to exclude entirely the recruitment of nationals from overrepresented States, but merely to give preference to nationals of unrepresented and underrepresented States who met the requirements of Article 101, paragraph 3, of the Charter. The setting of a target certainly had not been intended as a punitive measure with regard to the overrepresented States. Indeed, had that been so, those States themselves would hardly have given their approval to the resolution. It was important that that point should be understood and appreciated, otherwise there might be undue criticism, with politically unpalatable results. He agreed with the delegations who had expressed the view that recruitment from overrepresented countries should be reduced in proportion to the recruitment of personnel from countries within their desirable range. He objected to any assertion by any country or member of the Secretariat purporting to eliminate future recruitment from overrepresented countries.

48. The introduction of the competitive examination for promotion from the General Service to the Professional category had been prompted by a study by the Joint Inspection Unit. The object of the examination was to ensure equal opportunity for promotion for those members of the General Service staff who under the old system had no further prospects after reaching G-5, and to ensure that talent and skills adequate for the professional requirements of the Organization were made available. However, the Member States in adopting the resolution had not wished in any way to prejudice the career prospects of any staff member or group of staff. It was inevitable that such an innovation would encounter opposition, even though the object of the innovation was to introduce merit, objectivity and equality in the system.

49. At the same time, his delegation agreed with the representative of Trinidad and Tobago that many human factors were involved in the transition period and that there had been expectations on the part of staff members who had been acting in a Professional capacity before the application of General Assembly resolution 33/143. He invited the Chairman to communicate to the Secretary-General, through the Assistant-Secretary-General for Personnel Services, as assurance that those General Service staff members who were performing the duties of a P-1 or P-2 post prior to the introduction of General Assembly resolution 33/143 would have their cases handled under such transitional norms as might be devised by the Assistant-Secretary-General for Personnel Services, so that the minimum aspirations of those staff members were adequately met. He believed that such transitional measures would strengthen the hand of the Administration and yet take adequate account of the human factors involved in the implementation of the resolution.

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(Mr. Okeyo, Kenya)

50. He had deliberately chosen not to address himself to the question of desirable ranges. He agreed entirely with delegations from developing countries which had spoken before him; his contribution to that discussion would be made in 1980 when the concept of desirable ranges was to be discussed in extenso.

AGENDA ITEM 98: PROPOSED BUDGET PROGRAMME FOR THE BIENNIUM 1980-1981 (continued)  
(A/34/6 and Add.1, A/34/7)

Medium-term planning in the United Nations (A/34/38, A/34/84 and Add.1; E/AC.51/97)

51. Mr. HANSEN (Assistant Secretary-General for Programme Planning and Co-ordination) introduced the in-depth study of the medium-term planning process which the Secretary-General had been asked to prepare for consideration by CPC at its nineteenth session (E/AC.51/97).

52. The report of the Secretary-General was divided into three main parts. The first dealt with the functions of a medium-term plan. The second part which explored the weaknesses of the current process and machinery, drew on the analyses made by such bodies as Fifth Committee and CPC, as well as the opinions of the Secretariat. Such weaknesses included gaps in the programming and evaluation cycle, the frequent lack of clarity in programme narratives and the fact that the plans for the United Nations and the specialized agencies often differed so widely that they could not be used as a universal instrument for co-ordination. The main alternatives considered in the final part of the report concerned whether an inductive or deductive approach should be taken to medium-term planning, a matter to which CPC attached emphasis; whether a "rolling" or a "fixed-horizon" plan should be adopted, and whether it should take the form of a comprehensive document or, rather, stagger the planning while nevertheless covering all sectors. It also dealt with the desirable time-frame of the plan: whether the current four-year cycle should be retained, or should be extended to six years as was the case of several specialized agencies. And it discussed the most desirable organizational framework for the implementation of the plan.

53. The report did not try to reach any hard and fast conclusions, attempting rather to clarify some questions of principle and methodology. It made it plain, however, that whatever solution was finally adopted, trade-offs would be all but inevitable.

54. By the end of its debate on the Secretary-General's report and that of JIU (A/34/84), CPC had reached broad agreement that medium-term plans should be submitted less frequently and should be more concise. The introduction to the plan should be an important feature of the planning process in which policy guidelines would be set out, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 33/118, which attributed a special role to the Director-General for Development and International Economic Co-operation. The plan should cover six years, and more time should go into its preparation, with more attention being given to the functions of the various regional and sectoral bodies, and less to the managerial and organizational detail which, in recent years, had caused the documentation to swell to an enormous size. Finally, the planning structure should be based more on objectives than on organizational structures.

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(Mr. Hansen)

55. Among the issues left unresolved were whether the plan should be a rolling one or should have fixed horizons; the question of programme structure and categories, which would affect the needs both of the United Nations and of programme reviewing organs in so far as their information needs differed; the extent to which time-limits would be feasible for all types of programme, and the extent to which it would be possible to involve all bodies in the formulation of the plan. Inevitably, the more bodies involved, the longer the preparation of the plan would take. All those items had been left for further consideration by CPC at its twentieth session, and the Secretariat had been asked to prepare model medium-term programmes and to suggest a calendar for the preparation of a medium-term plan to cover the period 1984-1989.

56. Prospects for the continuation and consolidation of work on medium-term planning in 1980 were good. He hoped that it would soon be possible to move on to the application, rather than discussion in the abstract, of programmes and programme methodology.

57. Mr. BERTRAND (Joint Inspection Unit), introducing the report of JIU on medium-term planning in the United Nations (A/34/84), said that it was convenient to draw a distinction between the points relating to future medium-term plans upon which agreement had been reached among those who had so far taken part in discussing the problem, and points upon which agreement had not yet been completely attained. In the latter case there was no disagreement, but rather a general recognition that they were difficult problems, further study of which was necessary.

58. Among the points upon which agreement had been reached, he felt it important to stress that the role of medium-term plans and their relationship to programme budgets seemed to be clearly defined. The recommendations of CPC in that regard could be found in chapter II, paragraphs 71 to 73, of the report of CPC. It had been decided that plans should cover six years, that the next plan should cover the period 1984-1989, and that the time-table for the preparation of the plan should be revised. The agreement on the duration of the plan and the forthcoming plan period would allow for a draft calendar of preparation extending over a longer period than had previously been the case. Thus it would be possible to modify and improve considerably the working methods of central, sectoral, regional and technical bodies, so as to ensure the co-ordination of inputs at every level, including those of the regional economic commissions. A decision apparently of purely technical import could therefore have far-reaching consequences, leading to the better integration of United Nations economic and social activities.

59. The proposed structure of future plans had become more precise, clearer and easier to understand and the notion of "time-limited objectives" had been adopted and placed in a context which allowed its value to be more readily appreciated. In recommendations Nos. II and V of its report (A/34/84, chap. VIII) JIU advocated the establishment of an objective-based programme structure, while stressing a number of necessary distinctions between programmable and non-programmable activities and between continuous functions and time-limited target objectives. He understood the Secretary-General's hesitancy regarding those recommendations (A/34/84/Add.1, para. 13) but believed that a very important conceptual step had been taken in agreeing not to describe in the plan, at least in the same form as other activities,

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those activities which could not be programmed. Still more important, however, was the formal acceptance by the Secretary-General (A/34/84/Add.1, para. 15) of the distinction between continuous functions and activities which should be organized around time-limited objectives. The application of the notion of time-limited objectives to subprogrammes would still require a great deal of work, and in order to understand how the problems could be solved in a specific case, CPC had asked the Secretary-General to prepare for 1980 two model medium-term plan programmes.

60. Finally, the role of the introduction to the medium-term plan had been largely defined. Discussions of the matter in CPC were summarized in chapter II, paragraphs 55 to 70, of its report (A/34/38).

61. Turning to the points upon which agreement had not been reached, he stated that the discussions in CPC of the desirability of a rolling versus a fixed-horizon plan had convinced him, first, that the question was less purely technical than he had previously thought and was rather one upon which Member States should decide without relying unduly on the views of technicians, and, second, that the problem was not extremely urgent, and it was both possible and desirable to taken time to reflect on it.

62. The method of defining time-limited objectives, as referred to in recommendation No. II (d) of the JIU report, was more complex and more urgent. It entailed nothing less than reaching agreement on the type of objectives which international organizations should set themselves. As was stated in the marginal note to paragraph 5 of that report, "what is required is to increase the credibility of the international organizations by specifying limited but effective action and precise objectives". It was the right and the task of major special conferences, the General Assembly in either regular or special sessions, and the general conference of the specialized agencies to establish general and global objectives at the highest possible levels. Such objectives contained recommendations addressed both to Member States of the international community and to the secretariats of the international organizations. Member States applied the recommendations in their national policy in complete sovereignty; but the role entrusted to the secretariats of international organizations by such resolutions often had to be spelled out. When the secretariat received the funds they needed to operate, they must also receive more precise instructions on the role they must play. The function of medium-term plans and programme budgets was precisely to give such instructions. The medium-term plan, in particular, should serve "to bridge the gaps between the general and ambitious objectives set out in resolutions and the very varied outputs deriving from the day-to-day activities of the secretariats" (A/34/184). The role of the Secretariat should be defined in relatively modest terms if it was to be at the same time effective, clear and capable of being evaluated.

63. The task in hand was not to seek an absolutely new formula, such as the "new type of objective" of which the Secretary-General spoke (A/34/84/Add.1, para. 10), but more simply to improve on the content of those programmes that were correctly, clearly and modestly presented. The objectives specified for the secretariats of international organizations should aim at defying the type of contribution which

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the Organization could make in helping Member States to attain some global objective for which they were responsible; that contribution could consist of providing Member States with a number of "work tools". He believed that the notion of "work tools", which was really another way of referring to "time-limited objectives", was crucial.

64. In his view, it was essential to distinguish between three different categories of objective: first, the general objectives established by the supreme bodies representing the international community, in particular the General Assembly in its major resolutions; second, the national objectives into which General Assembly recommendations were translated by each Member State; and, third, the "work tools" which the secretariats of the international organizations should put at the disposal of Member States. So long as confusion persisted between those three levels of objectives, particularly between the first and the third, it would be very difficult, if not impossible, to understand the role of the secretariats and the function of medium-term plans. If, on the other hand, a clear-cut distinction was established, everything should fall into perspective. He had thus, in paragraphs 50 to 60 of the JIU report, tried to define possible models for time-limited objectives at the different levels of work of the Secretariat. The models constituted the modest beginnings of a methodology for establishing clear and precise programmes whose implementation could be monitored. He hoped that that method would be extensively used in preparing the two model programmes which the Secretariat would submit to CPC in 1980.

65. Certainly, work remained to be done before the medium-term plan did all that was expected of it. But the greatest difficulties had been overcome, and he was certain that the forthcoming plan would make it possible to increase the efficiency of the United Nations considerably.

The meeting rose at 6.15 p.m.