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FIFTH COMMITTEE
30th meeting
held on
Monday, 19 November 1984
at 10.30 a.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 30th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. MAYCOCK (Barbados)

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

CONTENTS

AGENDA ITEM 118: UNITED NATIONS PENSION SYSTEM: REPORT OF THE UNITED NATIONS
JOINT STAFF PENSION BOARD (continued)

AGENDA ITEM 117: UNITED NATIONS COMMON SYSTEM (continued)

- (a) REPORT OF THE INTERNATIONAL CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION
- (b) REPORTS OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

AGENDA ITEM 116: PERSONNEL QUESTIONS (continued)

- (a) COMPOSITION OF THE SECRETARIAT: REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL
- (b) RESPECT FOR THE PRIVILEGES AND IMMUNITIES OF OFFICIALS OF THE UNITED
NATIONS AND THE SPECIALIZED AGENCIES AND RELATED ORGANIZATIONS: REPORT
OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL
- (c) OTHER PERSONNEL QUESTIONS: REPORTS OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

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Distr. GENERAL
A/C.5/39/SR.30
28 November 1984
ENGLISH
ORIGINAL: FRENCH

The meeting was called to order at 10.50 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 118: UNITED NATIONS PENSION SYSTEM: REPORT OF THE UNITED NATIONS JOINT STAFF PENSION BOARD (continued) (A/39/9 and Corr.1, A/39/30 and Corr.1, A/39/608; A/C.5/39/15 and Corr.1, A/C.5/39/29)

1. Mr. KUTTNER (United States of America) pointed out that the adoption of the provisions in section III of resolution 38/233 had been motivated by the feeling, shared by several Member States, that the pensions of United Nations staff were too high. His delegation, therefore, had serious reservations about the two recommendations made by ICSC and approved by the Pension Board.

2. with regard to the first recommendation, the methodology used by ICSC to establish a new scale of pensionable remuneration was oversimplified because it consisted in maintaining the same relationship between pensions of the United Nations system and the United States civil service as between the net remuneration of the two services. For the period from 1 October 1983 to 30 September 1984, that relationship - the "margin" of the Noblemaire principle - was some 17 per cent according to the Commission's report; if, however, account was taken of the 7.2 per cent adjustment for the cost-of-living differential between New York and Washington, the actual margin was about 25 per cent. Calculations made by the United States indicated that the difference was substantially larger. His delegation questioned whether the margin should be included in the computation of pensions since, in the case of retirees, there was no reason to incorporate an expatriation factor or, indeed, to include the cost-of-living differential between New York and Washington. Moreover, according to the regulations of the United States federal civil service, retirees who elected to provide survivor benefits for their spouses must take a 10 per cent reduction in their pensions, a provision which did not exist under the United Nations scheme. Approximately three quarters of United States civil servants nevertheless chose that option and, for that reason, United States civil service pensions were 7.5 per cent lower than those of the United Nations. His delegation could not therefore accept a scale of pensionable remuneration that would produce pensions more than one third higher - the total difference being in the range of 35 to 40 per cent - than those of the comparator service.

3. Neither could his delegation accept the second recommendation, whereby the current scale would be increased by 5.4 per cent and would then remain unchanged until overtaken by the amount proposed in the new scale, which would require almost 10 years at the most senior levels, according to the Advisory Committee. Pension entitlements were already extremely generous and, as the representative of Austria had pointed out, reducing pensionable remuneration would not begin to affect any current employees until 1987.

4. Some of the Pension Board's recommendations designed to reduce the actuarial imbalance were gratifying but others were disappointing. The Board had reaffirmed its recommendation that the total rate of contribution should be increased to 24 per cent; the proposed new increases had no obvious justification and should be

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(Mr. Kuttner, United States)

re-examined on the basis of the General Assembly's conclusions concerning the level of pensionable remuneration. At the same time, his delegation hoped that during the session the Committee would adopt the other previous recommendation reaffirmed by the Board and would increase the statutory age of separation to 62. That position was based on social and demographic considerations, and also on the fact that a large number of staff would thus contribute for a longer period to the Fund. In addition, the argument that the current limit favoured unrepresented and underrepresented countries was not convincing.

5. In proposing that the discount rate for the lump-sum commutation should be increased to 6.5 per cent, the Pension Board had taken a step in the right direction, but without correcting the problems created by the introduction of the concept of acquired rights. The lump-sum commutation represented the actuarial value of future periodic payments and therefore had no relationship to the contributions paid by the participant. The only relevant interest rate was the current long-term interest rate for a period corresponding to the expected lifetime of the beneficiary. If account was taken of past interest rates on the ground of preserving acquired rights, then remuneration over an equally long period should be used in calculating the level of pension entitlement. In general, his delegation was not sure whether actuarial savings as a consequence of the lump-sum commutation made up for the unfavourable image created in the press, public opinion and members of the United States Congress by the payment of large amounts of money to United Nations officials upon retirement.

6. His delegation was in favour of the recommendation to reduce the first cost-of-living adjustment due after 1 January 1985 by 1.5 per cent. In its view, that measure should be applied to both current pensions and new pensions, whatever the amount, since retirees with small pensions were usually in receipt of other pensions or social security benefits from their own Governments.

7. On the understanding that the actuarial cost of early retirements was approximately 6 per cent per year, his delegation believed that the recommendation made by the Pension Board in paragraph 33 of its report should also apply to individuals with more than 30 years of service. Similarly, it endorsed the recommendation that the United States dollar track should be capped at 120 per cent of the local track, although it would have preferred a cap at 110 per cent. Lastly, for the same reasons as given by the Pension Board (A/39/9, paras. 100 and 101), it approved the recommendation concerning the exclusion provision in article 21 of the Regulations of the Pension Fund (para. 102). It would vote in favour of section IV of the draft resolution submitted for adoption by the General Assembly and asked for an additional sentence to be added, requesting the Pension Board to consider the complete deletion of the exclusion provision in article 21 and to report on the results of such consideration to the General Assembly at its fortieth session.

8. His delegation was pleased with the percentage return on investments in the Fund over the past year, which was due to the efficiency of Headquarters staff responsible for managing the portfolio and to the sound advice of the Investments Committee. The secretariat of the Fund and the members of the Pension Board had also performed their tasks in an exemplary manner.

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9. Mr. FERNANDEZ-MAROTO (Spain) referred to the management principles of the Fund and the objectives of resolution 38/233 and noted that as at 1 January 1984 and on the basis of the valuation as of 31 December 1982, the actuarial imbalance was equal to 4.04 per cent of pensionable remuneration (A/39/608, para. 3). In order to correct that imbalance the Board proposed, inter alia, to raise to 6.5 per cent the discount rate used for lump-sum commutation. His delegation agreed with the view expressed by the Advisory Committee in paragraph 10 of its report with regard to acquired rights and saw no need to employ four rates as from 1985 when the use of a single, realistic rate would mean lower payments. Since longer life expectancies would in some measure diminish the effects of increasing the discount rate (A/39/608, para. 8) that rate could be raised above 6.5 per cent.

10. With respect to the reduction factor for early retirement, his delegation endorsed the recommendation made by the Board (A/39/9, para. 33) and approved by the Advisory Committee (A/39/608, para. 17).

11. Contrary to paragraph 36 of the Board's report, his delegation saw nothing arbitrary in the imposition of a ceiling on the highest levels of pension, as requested by the General Assembly in resolution 38/233. The resolution would have to be applied if the new scale of pensionable remuneration proposed by ICSC for the Professional and higher categories led to the payment of abnormally high pensions.

12. With regard to the review of the two-track system followed to determine the initial amount of the pension and its subsequent adjustment, his delegation noted that the recommendation that the "United States dollar track" should be capped at 120 per cent of the "local track" was the result of a compromise. A cap at 110 per cent would be preferable and would double the expected actuarial saving, which would then amount to 0.36 per cent of pensionable remuneration. The Board's recommendations in paragraphs 46 and 47 of its report were quite acceptable.

13. His delegation also endorsed the other economy measures proposed by the Board in paragraph 57 and its previous recommendation that the statutory age of separation should be raised to 62 (para. 58), as long as the latter measure had no adverse effects on personnel policy.

14. As to the second of the recommendations reaffirmed by the Board (para. 58), his delegation agreed with the Advisory Committee that the implementation of the recommended schedule of increases should be taken up by the General Assembly at its fortieth session in the light of the results of the actuarial valuation as at 31 December 1984 (A/39/608, para. 28). It had noted that the measures recommended by the Board would virtually eliminate the actuarial imbalance revealed by the valuation as at 31 December 1982 but felt that it was still essential to proceed with the greatest caution.

15. His delegation had serious reservations concerning the increase in pensionable remuneration proposed by ICSC, and there were two reasons for those reservations: first, the gap between the pensions resulting from the new scale and those paid by the Federal Administration of the United States would become even wider because ICSC had based its calculations, inter alia, on an excessive adjustment

(Mr. Fernandez-Maroto, Spain)

(9.6 per cent) in the post adjustment for New York; secondly, as the representative of Japan had noted, there was no reason to take account of expatriation factors in the retirement benefits of United Nations staff.

16. Finally, his delegation approved an amount of \$6,729,600 for the administrative expenses of the Board in 1984, as recommended by the Advisory Committee (A/39/608, para. 35), and endorsed the recommendations concerning staffing (paras. 40, 43 and 44), which would result in reductions totalling \$34,600.

17. Mr. FORBES (Ireland), speaking on behalf of the 10 States members of the European Economic Community, said that a civilization could often be judged by the manner in which it treated its older citizens. It was therefore important that the United Nations should operate a pension system that fully acknowledged the value of the contribution made by its retired staff members and provided them with a fair income, protected against the effects of economic upheaval or excessive monetary fluctuations. Those basic ideas must, however, be interpreted and implemented in the light of prevailing economic, social and political realities. It was in that spirit that the 10 countries of the EEC wished to comment on the report of the Joint Staff Pension Board (A/39/9), while paying tribute to the efforts of the Board and being fully aware that the recommendations made by it constituted a package inasmuch as they were the result of a compromise among the various parties.

18. In the past year, the Board's main task had been to examine, in accordance with resolution 38/233, various proposals for the reduction or elimination of the actuarial imbalance that in the long term threatened the financial stability of the Fund. With respect to the proposal to increase to a realistic level the interest rate used to calculate the amount of the lump-sum commutation, the EEC States welcomed the Board's suggestion that the discount rate should be set at 6.5 per cent in respect of service performed after 31 December 1984. However, in view of the proliferation of discount rates in effect, they saw no reason why the new rate should not also be applied, from 1 January 1985, to service already performed. They felt that the discount rate was not an acquired right but should reflect market trends and agreed with the opinion of the Advisory Committee as contained in paragraph 10 of its report on the United Nations pension system (A/39/608). As to the determination of the lump sum in net equivalent terms, they understood the difficulties involved in view of the varying tax régimes of Member States and therefore felt that the Board should keep the matter under review.

19. The EEC States considered that the proposals concerning the statutory age of separation (A/39/9, para. 58) and the early retirement provisions (A/39/9, paras. 31-33) were important elements in the package of measures proposed by the Board. As far as the former were concerned, they saw a clear actuarial advantage in raising the age of separation to 62, as FAO had already done. With regard to the latter, they welcomed the Board's recommendation that the reduction factor for participants who retired between the ages of 55 and 60 with at least 25 years but less than 30 years of contributory service should be increased from 2 per cent to 3 per cent for every year below age 60.

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(Mr. Forbes, Ireland)

20. The EEC States recognized that on the technical level the Pension Board was right in saying that a ceiling on the highest levels of pensions would hardly improve the actuarial balance of the Fund. They would suggest, nevertheless, that the Board should further consider that possibility on the grounds of fairness and comparability, and in the context of current trends in national public service remuneration. Also, the retirement benefits for top-salaried United Nations employees were far in excess of those provided in the comparator United States service. Although the EEC States agreed that there was an argument for a comprehensive comparability approach in applying the Noblemaire principle, they would point out that a wide divergence could be unfavourable to the United Nations remuneration system and expose it to adverse criticism. They would like the Pension Board to re-examine the matter and report on it to the General Assembly at its fortieth session.

21. The two-track system used to determine the initial amount of the pension and its subsequent adjustment had been introduced in the early 1970s to compensate for currency fluctuations. The scheme had been aimed at protecting pensioners from a loss of purchasing power because of the weak dollar. Conversely, pensioners should not receive windfall gains from a rise in the value of the dollar. The EEC States therefore agreed with the Board's recommendation that a cap should be introduced to ensure that the United States dollar track did not exceed 120 per cent of the local track. That 20-percentage-point margin was still very generous and should be kept under examination in the context of international exchange rate developments. The EEC States were pleased to note the Board's recommendation concerning the periodicity of adjustment of benefits (A/39/9, para. 46), which in most cases would be reduced from twice a year to once a year, in order to reflect the lower inflation rates in recent years.

22. In paragraph 58 of its report, the Pension Board referred to the possibility of raising the total rate of contribution to 24 per cent. It should be noted, however, that although the General Assembly had agreed to an increase of 0.75 per cent at its thirty-eighth session, it had not committed itself to any further increases. It would have to revert to that matter at its fortieth session in the light of the actuarial valuation as at 31 December 1984.

23. The Board had also reviewed other subjects, such as the effect of marriage and its dissolution on benefits from the Fund, and had promised to submit a more detailed report on that question to the General Assembly. The EEC States stressed in that connection, that matters subject to legal decisions in cases of marriage dissolution should not become the concern of the United Nations pension system.

24. The EEC States remained concerned at the relatively poor real rate of return from investments, which, despite the recent improvement, had been only 1.5 per cent over the past 24 years, whereas the rate assumed in the actuarial projection was 3 per cent. They welcomed the recent geographical diversification of investments but stressed that, in managing the investments of the Fund, the criteria of safety, profitability and convertibility should prevail. They asked the Pension Board to review more closely the level of estimated investment costs for 1985, particularly

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(Mr. Forbes, Ireland)

advisory and custodial fees. Meanwhile, they would appreciate additional information on that question and on the provision of a large increase for 1985 in the cost of travel for the investment management staff.

25. Referring to paragraph 102 of the report of the Pension Board, he said that in view of the flexibility of article 21, paragraph (a) (ii), of the Regulations of the Fund, there was no reason to limit further the scope of the exclusion provision.

26. The EEC States commended the International Civil Service Commission and the Pension Board for their efforts to comply with the request made by the General Assembly in section III, paragraph 2, of resolution 38/233. ICSC had noted the concerns expressed by some members of the Fifth Committee because levels of United Nations pensionable remuneration had grown at twice the rate of those in the United States federal civil service during the years 1971-1983. The EEC States did not know whether the changes in pensionable remuneration proposed by ICSC would fully address those concerns. In any case, they welcomed the realignment in favour of those on lower salaries. They believed that the proposed new scale should be implemented from 1 January 1985 for all staff at the levels under consideration and noted with satisfaction that it would have a positive effect on the actuarial balance of the Fund. Some members of EEC intended to submit a proposal that any future modification of pensionable remuneration should be submitted to the General Assembly for a decision and that administrative measures should be taken to that end.

27. ICSC had also recommended a 5.4 per cent adjustment of pensionable remuneration in respect of the Professional and higher categories as from 1 October. If, as the EEC States had proposed, the new levels of pensionable remuneration recommended by ICSC came into effect for all staff as from 1 January 1985, the EEC States would not oppose the implementation for three months of the 5.4 per cent adjustment.

28. In concluding, he reiterated the view of the EEC countries that the United Nations pension system should operate on an equitable and sound basis.

AGENDA ITEM 117: UNITED NATIONS COMMON SYSTEM (continued)

(a) REPORT OF THE INTERNATIONAL CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION (A/39/30 and Corr.1, A/39/522 and Corr.1 and Add.1; A/C.5/39/18, A/C.5/39/27; A/C.5/39/L.8)

(b) REPORTS OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (A/C.5/39/13, A/C.5/39/26)

29. Mr. BHATIA (Pakistan) observed that the system of salaries, allowances and pensions extended far beyond the United Nations and affected all the agencies which, like the United Nations, applied the common system. The General Assembly had repeatedly stressed the need to preserve the unity of that system, without which the recruitment and administration of staff in the many participating organizations would be a chaotic exercise. Conditions of service were a matter for various bodies, especially the International Civil Service Commission. There was a

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(Mr. Bhatia, Pakistan)

tendency in some quarters, however, to question the Commission's competence and capacity to perform its functions in that area. Many statistics had been introduced into the debate, some of them of dubious value and likely to cause confusion. The Commission's report indicated, however, that its decisions and recommendations had been made on the basis of discussions at the expert level and in consultation with other United Nations agencies, which funded nearly 60 per cent of the ICSC budget. Consequently, his delegation had no doubt that the Commission possessed the necessary integrity and competence to perform the functions entrusted to it by the General Assembly.

30. The decision of ICSC to increase the post adjustment index for New York, the base city, by 9.6 per cent had given rise to controversy between those concerned with the financial implications of that increase and those who upheld the statutory propriety of that decision. Concerning the first of those points of view, his delegation believed that the results of the in-depth study by the Commission and the Advisory Committee on Post Adjustment Questions corrected the imbalances and errors that had occurred in the case of New York. It should be noted that the Commission's decisions would not only bring New York into line with other duty stations but would also lead to savings, since the post adjustment classifications for Geneva and Vienna would be reduced by four multiplier points and one multiplier point respectively. As to the statutory validity of the Commission's decision, that question should be considered with reference to articles 10 and 11 of its statute, which clearly authorized ICSC to establish the classification of duty stations for the purposes of post adjustment. Consequently, any recommendation by the Fifth Committee to revoke the Commission's decision needed to be examined with regard to its legal aspects and the risks that it presented for the stability of the common system.

31. His delegation noted that the new classification for New York would lead to a margin of 24 per cent between remuneration for the Professional and higher categories in the United Nations and that of staff in the United States federal civil service. In the absence of agreed limits, it was difficult to judge whether that increase was in keeping with the Noblemaire principle. While sharing the concerns of Member States anxious not to increase the burden of their financial responsibilities, his delegation emphasized the inherent difficulties in any comparison between a national civil service and the international civil service. Nevertheless, it might be appropriate for ICSC to consider the suggestion, made in the course of the discussion on agenda item 117, to limit variations in that margin and to submit a report on that subject to the General Assembly at its fortieth session.

32. It should not be forgotten, for example, that there were marked differences in the definitions and methods used in the United States civil service and the United Nations system to calculate pensionable remuneration. In the United States civil service, gross salaries were reviewed on an annual basis. In the United Nations, on the other hand, gross salaries had not been changed since 1975, except for the consolidation of a part of post adjustment. There were also differences in terms of the average length of service, which was under 20 years at the United Nations

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(Mr. Bhatia, Pakistan)

but 27 years in the United States civil service. Calculation of pensionable remuneration should therefore contain a compensation for the relatively short period of service.

33. The last adjustment to the scale of pensionable remuneration for Professional and higher categories in the United Nations dated back to 1 October 1982. Given that the United States CPI had increased by 5.4 per cent between 1 July 1982 and 1 July 1984, thus exceeding the threshold requirement in article 54 (b) of the Fund's Regulations, his delegation felt that the explanations given by ICSC in paragraphs 56 and 60 of its report (A/39/30) were convincing. Any discrepancy between United Nations agencies would be most damaging to the unity of the common system. Moreover, the adoption of the new scale and the adjustment procedure explained in paragraphs 51 and 52 of the ICSC report would make it possible to fix pensionable remuneration at an appropriate level over a period of time and would delay any future increase.

34. As the Secretary-General had already observed, Governments generally gave multilateralism a lower priority than national interest. The discussion on agenda item 117 was no exception to that rule. However, there was also a growing sense of the international interest, the common good of humanity and the need to preserve the world's resources for the benefit of future generations. It was quite natural that Governments should have different ideas about the proper functioning of the United Nations system. In order for that system to work better, there was an urgent need to strike a fair balance between national and international interests.

35. Mr. FERNANDEZ-MAROTO (Spain) observed that, while the Noblemaire principle was unanimously supported, there was considerable debate as to its specific applications, and particularly the size of the margin between United Nations remuneration and that of the comparator service. According to ICSC, that margin must be determined in a "pragmatic" manner, but the question was whether, after so many years, it might not be worth while to identify specific and properly quantified objective criteria which would avoid further controversy over that problem. However, before evaluating that margin in percentage terms, it was necessary to reach agreement on the parameters of the comparison. It was regrettable that neither the method of comparison nor the determination of the parameters to be compared had yet been elaborated definitively.

36. In the mean time, real questions and situations had still to be resolved, such as the 9.6 per cent increase which ICSC had decided to apply to the New York post adjustment index. With that increase, the margin in question would certainly reach limits which could only be termed excessive. In addition, ICSC had acted without seeking the advice of the General Assembly, which had simply requested the Commission, in resolution 31/141, to keep under continual review the evolution of the relationship between the two levels of remuneration concerned.

37. His delegation thus had reservations concerning the decision of ICSC, whose approach in the matter was open to question. Since a solution had to be found, however, it might be based on the very interesting proposals made by the Japanese

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(Mr. Fernandez-Maroto, Spain)

delegation at an earlier meeting. In any event, the Committee should receive information which was as comprehensive as possible concerning the financial implications of the ICSC decision.

38. With respect to the level of pensionable remuneration, he referred to his delegation's statement under item 118 on retirement benefits and the report of the Joint Staff Pension Board.

39. ICSC had recommended to the General Assembly that, subject to certain conditions, an additional step for long service should be added at levels P-1 to P-5. His delegation had no objection to the new measure, which would come into effect on 1 January 1985, provided that the conditions envisaged were rigorously respected.

AGENDA ITEM 116: PERSONNEL QUESTIONS (continued)

- (a) COMPOSITION OF THE SECRETARIAT: REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (A/39/453)
- (b) RESPECT FOR THE PRIVILEGES AND IMMUNITIES OF OFFICIALS OF THE UNITED NATIONS AND THE SPECIALIZED AGENCIES AND RELATED ORGANIZATIONS: REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (A/C.5/39/17)
- (c) OTHER PERSONNEL QUESTIONS: REPORTS OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (A/39/483 and Corr.1 and Add.1; A/C.5/39/2, 4 and Add.1, 6 and Corr.1, 9, 11 and 23)

40. Miss DURRANT (Jamaica) said that at the thirty-sixth session the Secretary-General had stated that the staff of the Secretariat should be independent, in other words, it should enjoy freedom from external pressures, display absolute impartiality in its work and be immune from the influence of Member States. He had added that the latter should be convinced that every staff member was unwavering in his commitment to the exclusively international nature of his responsibilities. As far as personnel policy was concerned, while guidelines had been established, they must accelerate, not retard, the delivery of services to Member States. Major problems still existed in that area, particularly with regard to respect for the privileges and immunities of United Nations officials and the independence of the international civil service.

41. As the staff representatives had stated in paragraph 4 of their report (A/C.5/39/23): "The Organization's ability to carry out its programmes requires the mutual commitment of individuals and Member States to perform their functions in accordance with the Charter and to respect fully the role of officials in carrying out those functions." Her delegation therefore appealed to all Member States to co-operate with the Secretary-General in clarifying the nature of the charges brought against United Nations staff. There were still 19 outstanding cases. It would be difficult to accept some of the measures proposed by the staff representatives. Nevertheless, as was stated in paragraph 9 of their report: "Above all, States members of the international community should use the full measure of their influence to bring about full compliance with all the provisions of the Charter."

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(Miss Durrant, Jamaica)

42. Her delegation attached great importance to the independence of the Secretariat and expected all United Nations officials to discharge their functions with the utmost objectivity and professionalism. The Secretariat should not cite resolutions calling for equitable geographical representation as reasons for their inability to find qualified staff of the right nationalities. Recruitment on an equitable geographical basis was not inconsistent with efficiency.

43. In that context, her delegation supported a system of career development for all categories of staff. According to the Assistant Secretary-General for Personnel Services, there were objective constraints. It was therefore necessary for the Office of Personnel Services and the substantive departments to co-operate more closely in drawing up the programme budget. It was impossible to streamline programmes, recruit and train staff and provide for upward mobility in the current circumstances. That explained the ever-increasing reliance on external experts and consultants. The proposed career development system should take account of all those problems.

44. The system of competitive examinations provided an objective basis for recruitment and promotion, but there were grounds for fearing that the current examination for promotion from the General Service to the Professional category tended to raise false hopes and to frustrate ambitions. Those who had already passed the examination should not be required to resit it, but should have their names placed on a roster from which the selection would then be made. Finally, staff members recruited at the P-2 level should take the competitive examination, which should, for the time being, be limited to the entry level only. Subsequently, the staff member's performance should be the only criterion for promotion.

45. It was gratifying that the two parties concerned continued to participate in the work of the Staff Management Co-ordination Committee, which could offer valuable insights into the use of resources and priority-setting. It was therefore surprising that the meetings of the Committee had been reduced from two to only one a year.

46. According to the staff representatives, there was a crisis in the administration of justice in the United Nations Secretariat (A/C.5/39/23, para. 23), a judgement confirmed by the Assistant Secretary-General for Personnel Services. That was a serious situation, which was bound to have deleterious effects on the morale, performance and levels of efficiency of the staff. It was to be hoped that the review being undertaken by the Secretariat would be concluded as swiftly as possible, and that its conclusions would take account of the suggestions for reform made by the staff representatives.

47. The General Assembly had, on several occasions, adopted resolutions calling for an improvement in the status of women in the Secretariat, particularly with regard to recruitment. According to the Assistant Secretary-General for Personnel Services, the progress made had been disappointing. Member States and the Secretariat blamed each other. The statistics in the report on the composition of

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(Miss Durrant, Jamaica)

the Secretariat (A/39/453) and in the report by the staff representatives (A/C.5/39/23) made dismal reading: for example, in 13 years women had gained only one D-2 post. Although the number of women employed in the Secretariat had increased, 75 per cent of all women in posts subject to geographical distribution were at the P-3 level or below.

48. Various measures could be considered in order to rectify the situation: examination and implementation, where appropriate, of strategies adopted by Governments; greater use of the Department of Public Information and the United Nations Radio Service, particularly in connection with recruitment missions; greater attention to applications from individuals, instead of relying exclusively on recommendations by Governments; examination of promotion procedures to ensure the promotion of women on the roster; participation by women in training programmes, leading to accelerated promotion. Those strategies should be co-ordinated by a specially designated senior official.

49. The recommendations contained in the report of the Secretary-General on personnel policies (A/C.5/39/9) were interesting, but her delegation could not support the reservation at specific posts and the use of special publicity and recruitment procedures for women candidates. No post should be the preserve of either sex. If posts were to be earmarked in that way, then 50 per cent of the posts at the P-4 level and above should be reserved for women.

50. Mr. NASHASHIBI (Jordan) said that, in order to be efficacious, a system of career development had to form part of an integrated human resources plan based on the principle set forth in Article 101 of the Charter and therefore meeting the requirement of equitable geographical distribution. In order to ensure geographical equity, no high-level post should be set aside for a particular country, and staff training activities should be strengthened. The debate on geographical distribution, which was resumed each year, had lasted too long; it was time for the Secretariat to take practical steps.

51. Mr. ENEH (Nigeria) said that Article 101 of the Charter emphasized not only the qualities of efficiency, competence and integrity in the staff but also the principle of equitable geographical distribution. He therefore regretted that the measures taken in implementation of General Assembly resolution 35/210 to redress the geographical imbalance in the Secretariat had fallen short of their objective, since 24 Member States continued to be underrepresented while 15 others were still unrepresented. Moreover, the target of 40 per cent of all vacancies reserved for nationals of such countries had not been met. That being so, the decision to suspend recruitment for six months had not, perhaps, been altogether judicious.

52. The Secretariat had endeavoured without much success to adopt a quantitative approach to the problem of geographical distribution by introducing a medium-term recruitment plan, holding competitive examinations at the P-1 and P-2 levels, which it now proposed to extend to the P-3 level, and organizing competitive examinations at the national level. All those measures, although undoubtedly steps in the right direction, failed to take account of another dimension of the problem, namely,

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(Mr. Eneh, Nigeria)

insufficient commitment. In view of the urgency of the problem, adequate resources should be released in order to carry out an active recruitment policy.

53. Nationals of developing countries should be recruited to policy-making positions where they would be involved in policy formulation in the area of economic and social development which was of critical importance to those countries. In order to overcome resistance to effective human resources planning, it was essential that the Secretary-General should show firm resolve to take steps along the lines indicated in General Assembly resolution 35/210; the role of the Office of Personnel Services vis-à-vis the departments needed to be strengthened to that end.

54. As the United Nations Decade for Women drew to a close, the Secretariat should redouble its efforts to recruit more women to senior posts and offer better career prospects to those already in the system.

55. Career development was a welcome concept, provided that it was extended to all categories of staff. The extension of recruitment by competitive examination seemed to be sound, it being understood that any technical problems would be resolved in accordance with the recommendations appearing in the Joint Inspection Unit's report (A/39/483).

56. In order to improve staff-management relations, conciliation and appeals procedures should be reviewed and the appointment of an ombudsman should be given active consideration.

57. Lastly, with regard to the security of United Nations staff, which was generally acknowledged to be a sensitive matter, his delegation urged the Secretary-General to continue his efforts to ensure the protection of all international civil servants.

58. Mr. ROY (India) said that the paramount consideration in recruitment should be to find candidates possessing the highest standards of efficiency, competence and integrity, as Article 101 of the Charter expressly stipulated. The need to pay due regard to geographical distribution was mentioned in the Article in second place, and should therefore be secondary to the search for fresh talent. Recruitment confined to a few countries might jeopardize the Organization's efficiency. In that connection, his delegation hoped that the practice of advertising vacancies purely as a matter of form, when it was known that the posts had already been filled, had been relegated to the past.

59. It was by no means sure that the decision to suspend recruitment for a period of six months, which had been taken without consulting Member States, would strengthen the Secretariat. Since the programme budget approved by the General Assembly in 1983 had been an austerity budget, there was no reason to adopt such a measure a mere six months after the beginning of the budget's execution, especially as the dollar continued to strengthen in relation to other currencies.

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(Mr. Roy, India)

60. In calculating desirable ranges, the various factors taken into consideration - contribution, membership and population - should be given more appropriate weights. If the population factor received greater weight, the geographical distribution of posts would be more equitable.

61. Recruitment by competitive examination to P-1 and P-2 posts had been accepted by almost all delegations; the extension of that method of recruitment to P-3 posts was a rather more delicate matter, since candidates recruited at that level had to possess some professional experience in addition to the necessary qualifications. The best method of filling such posts would seem to be by interview. ICSC should consider the matter at its next session and report to the General Assembly at its fortieth session. The Secretary-General would then report on the subject in 1986, when personnel questions would again be taken up.

62. In order to improve the representation of women in the Secretariat, measures should be envisaged by the Secretariat, by Member States and by women themselves.

63. Delays in recruiting staff for the regional commissions were far too long and interfered with the programme performance of the commissions. Vigorous corrective measures should be taken as a matter of priority to reduce those delays.

64. The CHAIRMAN said that the Committee had concluded the general debate on agenda item 116.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.