

**United Nations**  
**GENERAL**  
**ASSEMBLY**

**THIRTY-NINTH SESSION**

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FIFTH COMMITTEE  
38th meeting  
held on  
Thursday, 29 November 1984  
at 3 p.m.  
New York

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**SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 38th MEETING**

Chairman: Mr. MAYCOCK (Barbados)

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

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The meeting was called to order at 3.30 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 113: JOINT INSPECTION UNIT: REPORTS OF THE JOINT INSPECTION UNIT  
(continued) (A/39/34, 87, 145 and Corr.1, 239 and Add.1, Add.1/Corr.1 and Add.2,  
299 and Add.1, Add.2 and Corr.1, 522, 602 and 603)

1. Mr. WITHEFORD (Australia) said that his delegation regarded the work of the Joint Inspection Unit as being of fundamental importance for the efficient management of the organizations of the United Nations system, and believed that it was essential to defend the independence of the Unit and its inspectors. Earlier in the session, the Fifth Committee had witnessed a telling example of the pressures which might be placed on persons whose findings, for one reason or another, threatened or caused displeasure to vested interests. Specifically, the authors of the JIU report entitled "Staff costs and some aspects of utilization of human and financial resources in the United Nations Secretariat" (A/39/522) had been criticized for reporting directly to the General Assembly rather than through the organization whose work their report scrutinized. His delegation believed that the inspectors had acted properly and noted with satisfaction that their findings would be taken fully into account in reports to be made to the General Assembly at its fortieth session. If any doubt existed as to the Unit's authority to report directly to the General Assembly, the necessary changes in its mandate should be implemented as a matter of urgency.
2. Mr. FLESHER (United States of America) said that his delegation supported the work of JIU and felt that it was essential for it to concentrate on problems which had the highest priority and relevance to the United Nations and the specialized agencies. It had been suggested that the Unit should indicate the rationale for the inclusion of each study in its reports. Member States would find such information useful and his delegation therefore endorsed that suggestion, especially in view of the high cost of each study.
3. With regard to publications policy and practice in the United Nations system, the inspectors had concluded in their report (A/39/239) that ineffective use had been made of resources and that further investigation was warranted, especially with regard to stocks of unsold publications, sales management and performance, and information on publishing costs. At the very least, the Fifth Committee should express concern over the findings of JIU and request the Secretary-General to report to the General Assembly at its next session, through the Committee on Conferences, on action taken to correct the many shortcomings and dubious expenditures revealed by the Unit.
4. Commenting on co-operation between and management of libraries of the United Nations system, he said that the recommendations contained in the JIU report (A/39/299) were useful, but agreed with the view of ACABQ (A/39/603) that further study by the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination would be appropriate before a final decision was taken on the proposed inter-library panel, financing for which must come from savings. The establishment of an inter-agency panel would help to improve efficiency, but the central issue was that libraries were not meeting users' requirements. Greater effort was necessary to identify and service the real information needs of the United Nations system.

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(Mr. Flesher, United States)

5. The independence of the Joint Inspection Unit was indispensable to the performance of its mandate. Equally important was the provision contained in that body's statute regarding the selection of inspectors. If the Unit was to fulfil its vital role and retain the respect of Member States, it was essential that only candidates possessing the highest qualifications should be recommended.

6. His delegation believed that the reports of JIU warranted a more comprehensive review than time allowed during General Assembly sessions. Subsidiary bodies of the Assembly could include in their programme of work the examination of JIU reports falling within their areas of competence, and that practice might also be extended to other specialized bodies. Moreover, JIU recommendations should receive a detailed response, positive or negative, from the appropriate bodies, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 38/229. Implementation of that resolution, coupled with the establishment of a procedure for the referral of all JIU reports to subsidiary bodies for comment and action, would ensure that the work of the Unit was given proper consideration.

AGENDA ITEM 116: PERSONNEL QUESTIONS (continued) (A/39/453, A/39/483 and Add.1 and Add.1/Corr.1; A/C.5/39/2, A/C.5/39/4 and Corr.1 and Add.1, A/C.5/39/6 and Corr.1, A/C.5/39/9, A/C.5/39/11, A/C.5/39/17 and A/C.5/39/23)

(a) COMPOSITION OF THE SECRETARIAT: REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (continued)

(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 (continued)

(c) OTHER PERSONNEL QUESTIONS: REPORTS OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (continued)

7. Mr. NEGRE (Assistant Secretary-General for Personnel Services), responding to some of the general concerns expressed during the debate on personnel questions, said that the Office of Personnel Services had noted the comments made on the need to place recruitment activities within a planning framework. The first three-year plan for recruitment had been one such effort. On the basis of the lessons learned during the past two years, a more realistic and flexible plan would be developed, coinciding with the biennium 1986-1987, in closer co-operation with the departments involved in order to agree on recruitment estimates and the most appropriate methods of filling posts. Moreover, now that the technical enhancement of the roster had been completed, OPS intended to identify and include in it a substantial number of qualified women candidates and candidates from inadequately represented countries.

8. With regard to geographical distribution, it was clear from the debate that Member States still felt that the first recruitment priority should be to implement the principles set forth in Article 101, paragraph 3, of the Charter. He shared the Fifth Committee's concern that progress in that area had not been satisfactory and reaffirmed his determination to put into effect the special measures proposed by the Secretary-General, which OPS had already begun to apply systematically in

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(Mr. Negre)

January of the current year. As to the recruitment of nationals from overrepresented countries, OPS could deal much more effectively with that problem if it had the final decision on such recruitments, which was not currently the case by virtue of paragraph 16 of the annex to General Assembly resolution 35/210.

9. Concerning the impact of competitive examinations at the P-3 level on the recruitment of nationals from developing countries with a small desirable range, he emphasized that the examination system could be used flexibly to vary the number of P-2 and P-3 posts offered to a country, depending on its representation and wishes with regard to recruitment. Moreover, national competitive examinations avoided unequal competition, particularly between candidates from the developing and developed countries. Finally, it should be noted that the promotion of staff members from the General Service category would continue to apply only to the P-1 and P-2 levels.

10. The question of the delay between the date of examination and offer of employment had also been raised. OPS was aware of that problem and was taking corrective measures. Members of the specialized boards would be asked to concentrate full-time on the grading of papers for a short period. In addition, costs, errors and delays could be avoided by using exclusively the working languages of the Secretariat in the examinations. Finally, a more efficient system for identifying vacant posts was being set up so that successful candidates could be placed more quickly than before.

11. The recruitment of women and their advancement to higher levels was a major concern. In that connection the Secretary-General had decided to appoint a senior co-ordinator on the situation of women in the Secretariat with effect from January 1985. The co-ordinator would be appointed at the Assistant Secretary-General level in the Department of Administration and Management, for an initial period of one year. In addition, the Office of Personnel Services would intensify its efforts to identify women candidates and would vigorously support their candidacies. Individual targets for each department and office would be set.

12. Questions had been raised concerning career development for staff who served on fixed-term contracts. Staff members who worked in the Secretariat for five or six years would, in fact, find that the career development system applied to them without any problem, and he urged Member States to encourage their nationals to stay for as long as possible. As was currently the case, those who left the United Nations to return to their national service would be considered for re-employment at a higher level, account being taken of experience acquired in their home countries.

13. There had been concern over the length of the process involved when a grievance by a staff member reached the stage of a formal appeal. Efforts were being made to prevent grievances or settle them at an earlier stage and to expedite the proceedings of the Joint Appeals Board. Positive results were already evident. The establishment of an office for the administration of justice to handle appeals, as had been suggested, would be counter-productive, as it would

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(Mr. Negre)

tend to increase conflicts of interest. The question of an ombudsman was still being considered by the Office of Legal Affairs, and the Secretary-General would report to the Assembly in due course.

14. The present arrangements for language incentives would continue. A decision by the Assembly on the question of the languages to be used in internal and external competitive examinations would be welcome.

15. Mr. OKEYO (Kenya) said that the concept of overrepresentation needed to be refined. Many countries had a very small desirable range, with an upper limit of perhaps seven staff members, so that they would be technically overrepresented even if they had only one additional national. Yet there were some countries which were overrepresented by up to 15 staff members. The discrepancy was clearly unfair.

16. Kenya supported the proposed appointment of a co-ordinator on the situation of women, provided that the role and authority of the Office of Personnel Services was maintained. It should be noted that the Assembly had been at pains to extend the authority of OPS in order to facilitate human resources management.

17. Mr. LADJOUZI (Algeria) said that the proposed appointment of a co-ordinator for an initial period of one year prompted a number of questions. It would surely take a number of years to evolve a consistent policy. The Committee should be provided with a statement of financial implications, and the precise terms of reference of the new post and the relationship between the co-ordinator and the Assistant Secretary-General for Personnel Services should be clarified.

18. Mr. TOMMO MONTHE (Cameroon) endorsed the comments which had just been made. In particular, it should be explained how the proposed appointment accorded with the need to strengthen the role of OPS. He wondered whether it would also be possible to appoint a co-ordinator to oversee the recruitment of nationals of developing countries to senior posts.

19. Mr. BI (Ivory Coast) said that it seemed to his delegation too that the proposed appointment might weaken the authority of OPS.

20. Mr. EL-SAFETY (Egypt) said that the Secretary-General should report to the Fifth Committee on the reasons for the decision to appoint a co-ordinator, explaining the relationship between the co-ordinator and OPS. A statement of financial and programme budget implications should also be submitted.

21. Mr. BOKHARI (Pakistan) agreed with previous speakers that the Committee should be informed of the duties of the new co-ordinator and that consideration should be given to the possibility of appointing other co-ordinators to deal with difficulties indicated by the Committee.

The meeting rose at 4.40 p.m.