



Secretariat

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INFORMATION CIRCULAR

To: Members of the Staff

From: The Under-Secretary-General for Administration and Management

Subject: MEMBERSHIP OF THE PANEL OF COUNSEL

1. In his report to the General Assembly of 3 November 1987, 1/ the Secretary-General announced a programme of reform in the internal appellate and disciplinary systems of the Organization. A number of related announcements will be made in the near future.
2. An important aspect of a smooth-functioning system of administrative justice is adequate access for staff members to necessary information, advice and, where required, representation before the Joint Appeals Board, the Joint Disciplinary Committee, the Administrative Tribunal or elsewhere. While such advice can often be obtained from a diversity of sources in the Secretariat - for instance, the Staff Counsellor, personnel officers, staff representatives - a focal point for individual problems has, in the past, been the Panel of Counsel. This voluntary group of staff members and retired staff members exists to assist colleagues by providing them with objective and expert counselling in regard to work-related problems under the Staff Rules, including assistance with correspondence related to such problems. Counsel have on many occasions been able to resolve such questions informally, thus avoiding time-consuming litigation. The Panel is often especially useful to staff members at duty stations away from Headquarters. They are sometimes particularly in need of colleagues at Headquarters who are able to assist and, if necessary, defend their cases.
3. Members of the Panel at Headquarters are current and retired staff members, preferably with administrative or legal experience, of all grades, and drawn from every part of the Secretariat, the United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations Children's Fund, who are willing to volunteer some of their time, knowledge and experience to assist colleagues. The Administration has recently reinstated the role of Co-ordinator of the Panel, and, further, now provides

secretarial and other logistical assistance. The Panel is also fully supported by the staff committees. It functions independently of both staff and Administration so as to exercise a substantial measure of autonomy and self-regulation.

4. The Secretary-General intends to issue a revised list of members of the Panel of Counsel at Headquarters in the near future. While membership has substantially increased in recent years, the Panel is always in need of members with appropriate knowledge and experience. It is now also resuming its programme of information and training seminars. It should be noted that many counsel have obtained on-the-job-training by following such seminars or working as co-counsel with other experienced colleagues.

5. Service as counsel is a generous expression of the ideals which motivate the international civil service and is recognized and supported by the Administration in that spirit. Staff members interested in membership should contact the Co-ordinator in Room DC2-401, extensions 33954 and 33957, by 18 March 1988.

6. Staff members serving at duty stations away from Headquarters are also encouraged to contact the Co-ordinator. Arrangements are under way to re-establish a panel at Geneva.

Notes

1/ A/C.5/42/28.
