



SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 12th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. MARVILLE (Barbados)

later: Mr. SEKYI (Ghana)

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

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The meeting was called to order at 10.30 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 100: PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 1978-1979 (continued)

Establishment of an information services unit in the Department of International Economic and Social Affairs (A/33/7/Add.2; A/C.5/33/4)

1. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) said that, in paragraph 1 of its report (A/33/7/Add.2), the Advisory Committee recalled the decision of the General Assembly at its thirty-second session on the establishment of an information services unit in the former Department of Economic and Social Affairs (ESA). The Assembly had also requested the Secretary-General to report on the progress made in carrying out an inventory and processing of unpublished documents in ESA so that a decision could be taken at the thirty-third session on the question of using computer services for the processed material. After considering the report in document A/C.5/33/4 and the oral information supplied to it by representatives of the Secretary-General, the Advisory Committee had concluded that there had been limited progress.
2. The report covered five months of work, and during that period the Information Services Unit had processed about 600 documents which were considered by five organizational units to contain material of lasting value. The limited progress in the matter has been caused primarily by the restructuring of the former Department of Economic and Social Affairs. Indeed, it would be noted that the documents before the Fifth Committee concerned the new Department of International Economic and Social Affairs. The splitting of the former ESA meant that the volume of unpublished material to be processed was now in two main departments.
3. The Advisory Committee referred in paragraph 6 of its report to the intention of the new Department of Technical Co-operation for Development to establish in the near future computer-assisted information systems and services. The Advisory Committee cautioned against the development of unco-ordinated conflicting departmental information systems in the economic and social sectors of the Secretariat. It believed that unless there was careful co-ordination at the conceptual and implementation stages those information systems might become an expensive impediment in the implementation of approved work programmes. Previously the Advisory Committee and the Fifth Committee had been informed that the information programme being developed for the Department of International Economic and Social Affairs would be a subsystem of the bibliographical information system (UNBIS) operated by the Dag Hammarskjöld Library. However, as the Advisory Committee indicated in paragraph 7 of its report, that was no longer the case.
4. In view of the small amount of material processed to date, the need for consultation between the two new departments formed from the former Department of Economic and Social Affairs, and the apparent lack of closer involvement of the Electronic Data Processing and Information Systems Service in the question, the

(Mr. Mselle)

Advisory Committee, in paragraph 10 of its report, was recommending that no decision should be taken on the question of computer-assisted information services to cover unpublished material in the Department of International Economic and Social Affairs. Paragraph 9 of that Committee's report contained a series of other recommendations, including a request that the Secretary-General furnish a detailed breakdown of start-up and operating costs of any proposals he might make to the Assembly at its thirty-fourth session. He himself wished to make it quite clear that the Advisory Committee was not against computer-assisted information services to Secretariat departments and units; what worried the Advisory Committee was that, unless those services were carefully thought out and well co-ordinated, they might not be as useful to the Organization as had been originally claimed.

5. Mr. HANSEN (Assistant Secretary-General for Programme Planning and Co-ordination) said that it would be recalled that at the preceding session the General Assembly had approved a two-year pilot programme financed from extrabudgetary resources relating to the establishment of an information services unit in the former Department of Economic and Social Affairs. The activities undertaken during the period covered by the Secretary-General's report (A/5/33/4) had been focused, first, on developing a system to make the bulk of research and project-oriented information produced by and for the Department of International Economic and Social Affairs (IESA) more readily and widely accessible, and secondly, on ensuring co-ordination with substantive units engaged in information analysis and dissemination activities. Since the General Assembly was being asked to decide at the current session whether or not data-processing equipment should be used in that pilot effort, important new information which should be taken into account had been included in paragraphs 35 to 48 of the Secretary-General's report.

6. The point had been reached where it was no longer economic to continue the "inventory" suggested by the Advisory Committee at the preceding session without utilizing some kind of inexpensive data-processing equipment to keep track of the data that had been selected and analysed. At the time the Secretary-General's report had been drafted, approximately 600 reports and studies had been prepared for machine-processing, and since that time, some 200 more documents had been processed, for a total of 800 documents, each of which had been coded and indexed with an average of 20 to 30 retrieval elements.

7. Since extrabudgetary resources had already been provided for the project for a two-year period ending in December 1979, at which time the General Assembly would have to decide whether or not the programme should be financed from the regular budget, it would be more cost-effective to set up a pilot system so that sample system outputs would be available for examination by the Fifth Committee at the next session. For that reason, the technical experts involved in the pilot project had recommended the use of automatic data-processing equipment for the remaining period. In fact, unless computerization was introduced, it would be virtually impossible to make any effective test of the system's utility.

8. The basic approach taken by IESA was fully in keeping with the Advisory Committee's desire for a careful and fully co-ordinated approach to information systems development. Particular care had been taken to ensure that the IESA system

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(Mr. Hansen)

was in harmony with the efforts of various intergovernmental bodies to promote and complement the information systems already being developed by ILO, UNESCO, FAO, UNIDO, and the regional economic commissions.

9. It was difficult to provide a detailed reply to questions raised concerning the relationship between the United Nations Bibliographic Information System (UNBIS) of the Dag Hammarskjöld Library and the development information system of IESA in the absence of any technical document which fully described UNBIS. It was the hope of the Secretariat that, while UNBIS was still in a pilot stage, substantive offices, including the Information Services Unit, would be consulted regarding their users' requirements for systems outputs expected from UNBIS. It should be technologically feasible for the information systems activities of IESA to be linked to UNBIS at Headquarters, while at the same time maintaining compatibility and complementarity with relevant outside systems, provided that basic international guidelines and standards were adopted by UNBIS. It had been indicated in an information circular concerning UNBIS (ST/IC/78/43) that any organizational units wishing to be a subsystem of UNBIS would be responsible for developing terminology classification schemes for their subject areas. Accordingly, the point raised in paragraph 5 of the Advisory Committee's report concerning the difference between the indexing vocabulary used by ISU and that of UNBIS would not seem to pose a major problem. Furthermore, as indicated in paragraph 15 of the Secretary-General's report, the revised version of the Macrothesaurus selected by IESA for its system was one of the most widely used among international information systems in the economic and social sectors. The indexing vocabulary for UNBIS was currently being developed for the Library by a consultant, and it was to be hoped that, when completed, it would reflect the genuine needs of users, who, of course, included the staff of IESA.

10. As to the seeming lack of co-ordination between the Department of International Economic and Social Affairs and the Department of Technical Co-operation for Development referred to in paragraph 6 of the Advisory Committee's report, plans to ensure close co-operation were under consideration. He assured the Committee that no duplication of efforts or proliferation of unco-ordinated systems would take place. He agreed fully with the opinion expressed in paragraph 7 of the Advisory Committee's report and had consistently advocated co-ordination among information systems and the necessity of common indexing terms. IESA had been an active participant in the ACC Working Party on Indexing Documents and a supporter of the Inter-Organization Board for Information Systems and Related Activities (IOB). It had consulted on numerous occasions various organizations of the United Nations family with a view to ensuring consistency, complementarity, and compatibility with their work. As to interdepartmental co-ordination in the Secretariat, the IESA information system was being developed along the lines approved by the Information Systems Board of the Secretariat referred to in paragraph 8 of the Advisory Committee's report. Inasmuch as IESA was represented on that Board, it was able to help promote co-ordination of the various information systems activities of the Secretariat.

11. The input worksheet which was being used by the Information Services Unit had been selected on the grounds that it was compatible with other relevant information

systems within the United Nations family and that it met the basic requirements of any new international information system. It could, however, be revised if necessary to ensure greater compatibility as long as it conformed to basic international guidelines and standards.

12. It should be noted that the two-year work plan for the Information Services Unit had been designed to serve a number of purposes. It would provide IESA with a tool for making repeated and wide use of the information it collected and generated and would give it an opportunity to report on the administrative and technical experience acquired in creating and using a substantive information system in the social and economic sectors. In addition, a data base created by the system during the two-year pilot period could be widely used by existing systems even if the programme were not continued beyond 1979. All aspects of the work being carried out by the Information Services Unit would, therefore, serve a practical purpose. He urged the Committee to authorize the use of data-processing equipment for the remaining months of the project, especially since extrabudgetary resources had already been set aside for that purpose the previous year.

13. Mr. THOMAS (Trinidad and Tobago) asked the Assistant Secretary-General whether the Information Systems Board had, in fact, met to review the work which the Information Services Unit (ISU) had already completed. He also wished to know to what extent the IESA system was compatible with UNBIS with regard to indexing and coding; and, if it was not compatible with UNBIS, how it might be dovetailed with it at some later stage. He wondered whether there were plans to make ISU a subsystem of UNBIS and, if not, what the reasons for that decision were and what advantages ISU hoped to gain by not being a subsystem of UNBIS.

14. Mrs. DERRE (France) said her delegation was apprehensive of the tendency of Secretariat units to request information services of their own. The original purpose of establishing an information unit in the former Department of Economic and Social Affairs had been to facilitate the use of studies conducted at great expense for the Department by consultants. In his report, the Secretary-General had referred to the reorganization of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs into two new departments, which had resulted in some delays in the work of the Information Services Unit (ISU). In that connexion, she noted that the information to be stored in ISU would be useful to both the Department of International Economic and Social Affairs and the Department of Technical Co-operation for Development, and she asked whether there were plans for ISU to service both of the new Departments.

15. The Advisory Committee was apparently concerned to see that the system being used in the Department of International Economic and Social Affairs differed from the one operated by the Dag Hammarskjöld Library. Although very technical questions were involved, no precise information was available on the respective systems. To her mind, they were not intended for the same users; consultants' studies would be geared more towards experts than towards the general public.

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(Mrs. Derré, France)

16. The bibliographical information system operated by the Library was apparently not being fully used. She would like to know in what universities and in what countries the system was used and whether there were terminals in any of the developing countries.

17. Her delegation would like information on the costs of the various types of computers which could be used and wondered about the possibility of co-operation with specialized agencies which had computer-assisted information systems, with a view to saving money. Though not opposed in principle to the proposals concerning the Information Services Unit, her delegation did not agree with all the Advisory Committee's conclusions. Since there were extrabudgetary funds available to allow the Unit to continue its work until the end of 1979, it should be allowed to continue that work. The Committee could then examine the results at the thirty-fourth session. Sometime in the near future, however, consideration would have to be given to undertaking a wide-ranging study of the data banks being established in the United Nations family, with the aim of reducing costs, avoiding duplication and centralizing the information systems.

18. The CHAIRMAN said that copies of the Assistant Secretary-General's statement were available at the information desk.

19. Mr. GARRIDO (Philippines) said that, as one of the proponents of the establishment of an information services unit in the Department of International Economic and Social Affairs, his delegation expected that by 1979 the number of worksheets completed would be even greater than at the moment. He inquired whether the Secretariat had set a target for the number of worksheets to be completed by 1979, when the extrabudgetary resources in support of the programme would cease. He hoped there would be no obstacle to the achievement of whatever target might have been set.

20. Information-gathering systems were highly important, especially for the regional commissions. When a Member State in a given region required information, it would be useful if such information could be available at the headquarters of the respective commission.

21. His delegation hoped that the pilot system referred to by the Assistant Secretary-General would be demonstrated to delegations at the thirty-fourth session, when the Committee would have to decide whether to continue the project under the regular budget. Pending the availability of a comprehensive computerized system for the United Nations, continued use would have to be made of existing systems, such as the Information Services Unit. His delegation supported the recommendations made by the Advisory Committee in paragraphs 8, 9 and 10 of its report (A/33/7/Add.2).

22. Mr. KUYAMA (Japan) said that his delegation recognized the usefulness of developing an information system, both as a vehicle for the dissemination of information and as a feedback mechanism. It endorsed the Secretary-General's view that an important reason for the development of such a system was to provide the users with an educational instrument from which they could learn to identify their needs more precisely and obtain more comprehensive information than they were accustomed to retrieving through conventional systems (A/C.5/33/4, para. 42).

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(Mr. Kuyama, Japan)

Information-systems-related activities within and outside the United Nations should be thoroughly co-ordinated. The newly planned system should be linked with other relevant systems if it was to be most useful.

23. His delegation was doubtful whether the establishment of an information services unit in the Department of International Economic and Social Affairs had been thoroughly thought out and precisely formulated, and had questions regarding the co-ordination and financial aspects of the proposal. In considering whether computerization of the information system should be undertaken as a result of the eventual establishment of the Information Services Unit, the Committee should give serious thought not only to such concerns and questions, but also to whether progress thus far achieved in the establishment of an information services unit, as reflected, for instance, in its nature and location, was in accordance with the intended principles and objectives of the restructuring of the economic and social sectors of the United Nations system envisaged in General Assembly resolution 32/197. In that connexion, his delegation wished primarily to draw the attention of the Committee to the possibility of the proliferation of separate information systems within the Secretariat as a result of its restructuring. The Advisory Committee had already cautioned against such a possibility and stressed the need to integrate those systems. His delegation endorsed the view that it would be premature for the General Assembly to pronounce itself at its current session on whether computerization of the information system being considered by the Committee should be undertaken.

24. Mr. HANSEN (Assistant Secretary-General for Programme Planning and Co-ordination), in response to the remarks by the representative of Trinidad and Tobago concerning the Information Systems Board, said that the Board had approved the establishment of the Information Services Unit. However, since it had not met in 1978, it had not reviewed developments regarding the Unit and thus had not been able to pronounce itself on the Unit's performance. He hoped to be able to give a detailed reply at a subsequent meeting to the question by the same representative on dovetailing the project with the bibliographical information system operated by the Dag Hammarskjöld Library. He had not yet been able to ascertain the exact status of that system. As to the definition of the subsystem-system relationship, one could speak of such a relationship whenever all imaginable parameters or a few crucial parameters were identical. To the extent that the same indexing vocabulary was used for related subject-matters, it would be proper to define one of the systems as a subsystem.

25. The representative of France had referred to the unease with which intergovernmental organizations witnessed the creation of new groups of information systems. An attempt was being made not to increase the already large number of such systems in the United Nations family, but rather to integrate and interlink them so that information could be provided from the same basic indexing vocabulary. The same representative had warned that restructuring should not lead to any further proliferation of information systems. Discussions were taking place on ways of ensuring that the resources of the Department of International Economic and Social Affairs and of the Department of Technical Co-operation for Development became even more complementary than they were already. He hoped to be able to report at a later date on the efforts to pool resources and provide a common information system, which was the only reasonable approach. He understood that the Department of Technical Co-operation for Development would be using the same indexing vocabulary and Macrothesaurus used thus far in the experiment by the Department of International Economic and Social Affairs.

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(Mr. Hansen)

26. He would deal at a subsequent meeting with the question raised by the representative of France concerning the costs of the various types of computers which could be used. He understood, however, that a new generation of inexpensive mini-computers would be used. He would also answer at a subsequent meeting the questions put by the representatives of the Philippines and Japan. For the time being, he wished to stress the importance of co-ordination and the fact that the Unit in the Department of International Economic and Social Affairs was using the same conceptual framework and the same indexing vocabulary being used by most United Nations organizations active in the economic and social field.

27. Mr. Sekyi (Ghana) took the Chair.

28. Mr. THOMAS (Trinidad and Tobago) said that, given the co-ordination role of the Information Systems Board, his delegation was surprised that it had not met to consider the proposal concerning the Information Services Unit before the proposal was brought to the Fifth Committee. His delegation reserved its position on the question pending fuller information from the Secretariat.

29. Mr. PALAMARCHUK (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that the Committee had not taken a decision to have the statement by the Assistant Secretary-General distributed to members. That procedure had definite financial implications and his delegation was anxious to know how the costs would be met.

30. Mr. PIRSON (Belgium) asked whether he could take it that, if the Secretariat continued the work entrusted to it in 1977 and used computers, the related expenditure would be met from extrabudgetary resources until the end of 1979.

31. Mr. SADDLER (United States of America) said that, inasmuch as the Committee would have to decide on the use of computers, when discussion of the item was resumed a representative of the departments dealing with computers should be present to respond to questions raised.

32. Mr. BELYAEV (Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic) said that fuller information on the item would enable the Committee to have an even more valuable discussion. Much useful information was to be found in the report by the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination on information systems within the United Nations family (E/AC.51/90). Reports such as that one should be referred to in the list of documents related to the item.

33. The CHAIRMAN said that the Secretary of the Committee would take into account the remarks made by the representative of the Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic.

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AGENDA ITEM 110: PERSONNEL QUESTIONS (continued)

- (a) COMPOSITION OF THE SECRETARIAT: REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (continued)
(A/33/176)
- (b) OTHER PERSONNEL QUESTIONS: REPORTS OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (continued)
(A/33/228; A/C.5/33/2)

AGENDA ITEM 106: JOINT INSPECTION UNIT: REPORTS OF THE JOINT INSPECTION UNIT
(continued)

Women in the Professional category and above in the United Nations system: report of the Joint Inspection Unit (continued) (A/33/105)

34. Mr. LADOR (Israel) said that the documents before the Committee demonstrated that no real improvement in the staffing of the Secretariat could be brought about by introducing new artificial elements into the calculation of the desirable ranges or by establishing new criteria. A real improvement could be made only by a change of attitude in the entire United Nations membership regarding the role and purpose of a truly international Secretariat, in other words, by a return to the ideals of the Charter. If those ideals were to be fulfilled with the help of the Secretariat, the latter should be composed of individuals meeting the highest standards of efficiency, competence and integrity, in accordance with Article 101 of the Charter; influence must not be a substitute for those criteria.

35. He wished to make it clear that his Government was in agreement with recruitment on the basis of equitable geographical distribution in so far as people so recruited met the requisite standards. However, it was opposed to the recruitment of additional staff from already over-represented countries on the pretext of improving geographical distribution. Such recruitment took place at the expense of countries such as his own, which were below the bottom of the desirable range and which found that even their most highly-qualified candidates for recruitment were unsuccessful. It seemed to his delegation that some countries were more equal than others in respect of the composition of the Secretariat and the distribution of posts among Member countries. If the constraints upon persons responsible for recruitment were removed rather than strengthened, and if a free hand was given to recruit qualified personnel in all areas of the Organization's activities, the Committee would be spared its annual acrimonious debate and could devote more time to other important subjects.

36. Competitive examinations should be adapted to the conditions of each of the Member States and should guide the recruitment policies of the departments concerned. A recruitment mission should be dispatched to his country to correct the current imbalance of its representation in the Secretariat.

37. Miss MUCK (Austria) said that little progress had been made towards finding solutions to personnel problems, in particular to that of the recruitment of women in the Professional category. A programme of action was therefore necessary, the elaboration of which would be facilitated by the documents before the Committee.

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(Miss Muck, Austria)

38. Only 20 per cent of the staff in the Professional category and above were women, a ridiculously low percentage, and the situation showed no signs of changing. At the current rate of progress, it would take approximately a century to attain the equality that the Organization had hoped to bring about by 1980, while it would require three centuries to achieve equality at the P-5 level and above.

39. The Assistant Secretary-General for Personnel Services had said at a recent meeting that the Committee should not attach too much importance to figures and that if he was unable to find a qualified candidate fulfilling all the desired requirements whose recruitment would improve the statistics, he preferred to appoint a qualified candidate even if the appointment was to the detriment of those statistics. If such instances were exceptional, they would be permissible; but it was clear from the tables in the documents under study that they were the norm. She found it difficult to believe that only by way of exception could candidates from under-represented or unrepresented countries be found who possessed the necessary qualifications.

40. Since it was no longer enough to adopt resolutions setting out objectives which were not attained, the Committee should consider other possible courses of action.

41. The report of the Secretary-General on the composition of the Secretariat stated that heads of departments had made efforts to attain the objectives established by the General Assembly; unfortunately those efforts had produced few results and it was regrettable that the report proposed no more effective methods for the future.

42. The report of the Joint Inspection Unit on women in the Professional category and above in the United Nations system (A/33/105) contained 16 recommendations, a number of which reaffirmed the principles on which there was general agreement but which did not constitute courses of action. Others proposed amendments to the staff rules concerning the employment of married couples at field duty stations and the relaxing of certain rules concerning part-time work; although such measures might, in the long term, help increase the number of women recruited and should be implemented, they would not immediately increase the percentage of women employed in the Secretariat. She believed, however, that special attention should be paid to recommendations 4, 6 and 16, which provided practical means for effective action, although specific details were not given.

43. The JIU report on the implementation of the personnel policy reforms (A/33/228) approved by the General Assembly in 1974 contained recommendations which, if implemented, would facilitate the recruitment of women to Professional posts. Recommendation No. 3 of that report, concerning the improved use of the roster of candidates, made more specific proposals than did recommendations 6 and 16 of document A/33/105 with regard to recruitment missions and the publicity to be given to the roster. In that respect, document A/33/228 stated that women candidates numbered only 8.8 per cent of the roster total, whereas it was desirable that they should number at least 30 per cent. In her view, women candidates should

(Miss Muck, Austria)

in fact make up 50 per cent of the names on the roster. If the use of the roster was made compulsory, as was suggested in document A/33/228, that would give meaning to recommendation 9 in document A/33/105, which proposed that when a woman candidate, recommended by the Office of Personnel, was rejected by the head of a department, a detailed justification of the rejection should be required.

44. The implementation of recommendation No. 2 of document A/33/228, respecting the organization of competitive examinations for the passage of General Service staff members to the Professional category would also increase opportunities for the recruitment of women. It would make for equality of opportunity for men and women, which was necessary since, although the latter represented 64 per cent of General Service staff members, fewer women than men were promoted to the Professional category. In addition, the institution of such an examination and the reduction of the number of posts to be allocated in that manner would open up new possibilities for the outside recruitment of qualified women candidates. The implementation of recommendation No. 5 in the same report would also promote equality of opportunity, particularly if the proposed publicity measures were adopted.

45. After study of the various measures proposed, she was sure that action was possible if there was a genuine desire to increase the proportion of women in the Professional category and above. She therefore hoped that information would be provided on those measures and requested the Assistant Secretary-General for Personnel Services to tell the Committee how many recruitment missions would be organized in 1979 and 1980, in how many countries and with what means; whether they would also involve examinations for the recruitment of young Professional staff, and if so, in how many countries would the examinations be held and approximately how many posts would be set aside in advance; what specific measures would be taken to promote the recruitment of women by means of such missions and examinations; what publicity measures would be adopted and how many reconnaissance missions designed exclusively to increase the number of roster candidates would be organized in 1979 and 1980; the dates and places of the competitive examinations for transfer from General Service to the Professional category; whether the use of the roster would be made compulsory as from 1979; what regulations would be made to implement recommendation 9 of document A/33/105; and at what level the person responsible for the concerns and interests of women would be appointed, if the measure was adopted by the General Assembly, and what powers would be assigned to that person. She hoped that the replies to her questions would enable the Committee to establish a specific programme, implementation of which could begin within the next two years.

46. The information given in the note by the Secretary-General on recruitment missions (A/C.5/33/CRP.1) was woefully incomplete and unsatisfactory and did not correspond to the requirements set out in resolution 32/17 B. The note did not disclose how many persons had taken part in the missions or the cost involved, and the few details supplied concerning publicity revealed that it had been quite inadequate, which was undoubtedly the reason for the poor results obtained. She therefore requested that the detailed information required by resolution 32/17 B should be supplied as soon as possible; the matter could then be given further consideration.

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(Miss Muck, Austria)

47. Turning to the subject of the implementation of the personnel policy reforms approved by the General Assembly in 1974, she asked when the report on the provisional classification of posts, referred to in document A/C.5/33/2 would be available. Her delegation supported all the recommendations contained in the JIU report (A/33/228) and hoped that it would also be possible to elaborate a specific programme for their implementation, giving lists of measures and time-limits. Ideally, the Secretariat should indicate the measures it proposed to adopt; they could then be considered by the Working Group and incorporated into a specific programme which the Committee could adopt and which the Secretariat could undertake to execute. She suggested that the list of measures still to be taken, set forth in the table in annex I to the report, could be used as a basis for the elaboration of that programme.

48. Mr. LASCARRO (Colombia) said that his delegation could support most of the recommendations made by JIU without any reservation. The recommendations would undoubtedly help to ensure better personnel administration.

49. It was not completely convinced by the executive heads' objections concerning the establishment of a common recruitment service in Geneva. Perhaps the alternative suggested by the United States could be introduced without major problems.

50. It appeared that the recruitment of women into the Professional and higher categories of the United Nations system was proceeding unbelievably slowly. Certainly some countries, notably developing ones, had difficulties in presenting female candidates who met all the entrance requirements, and there were cases in which women from developing countries had missed the chance to work for the Organization owing to their family commitments, lack of support from their Governments or their insufficient qualifications. The Committee had heard statements by the Secretariat to the effect that recruitment missions had been sent to developing countries, particularly to recruit women. Yet he had heard no word of such a mission visiting his country in recent years.

51. His delegation generally agreed with the data on the geographical composition of the Secretariat contained in document A/33/176 and with the comments of countries which were under-represented. But it could not accept the clear over-representation of certain countries of the Latin American region in all areas and at all levels of the Secretariat, still less the fact that staff members from those countries increased in number every year. Informal inquiries had revealed that there was a "gentleman's agreement" amongst United Nations personnel not to recommend the appointment of staff from those countries. According to the figures, however, the agreement was not being carried out. In that regard, his delegation would be glad to be informed whether the abnormal situation in ECLA improved or deteriorated.

52. Mr. LAHLOU (Morocco) said that the difficulties the Secretary-General was facing in implementing the reforms called for in General Assembly resolution 32/17 A and B stemmed from the fact that the Secretariat had to strike a balance

(Mr. Lahlou, Morocco)

between ensuring the proper and smooth running of the Organization and offering the opportunity for competent and skilled persons from under-represented countries to contribute to the activities of the United Nations. But in fact, the observance of the principle of equitable geographical distribution should not affect the choice of staff available to the Organization, for integrity, competence and skill were not the exclusive preserve of any country or number of countries; on the contrary, the effect should be to bring much-needed new blood into the ranks of the Secretariat. Suitable candidates could be found in all countries for even the higher posts in the system, and it was up to the Secretary-General to break the deadlock over the appointment of personnel to such posts.

53. The notion of a desirable range of posts for a given region was no longer valid. It did not reflect the true wishes of countries but was simply an indicator, which was in any case not observed. It could not be claimed that a country was represented in the Secretariat because its region was represented or even over-represented. There was a striking imbalance in the North African region, to which Morocco belonged. The Secretariat should provide complete figures for the region, indicating the number and level of representatives from every country, from the Nile to the Atlantic, who were working in the United Nations. Such a comparative study would demonstrate that his country was the most poorly represented, and would assist the Secretariat by drawing the attention of Governments to the necessity of providing competent candidates for United Nations posts.

54. Recruitment missions had not succeeded in overcoming the obstacle, because they had not worked hand in hand with the administrations of the countries they visited. In the area of recruitment, co-ordination between the United Nations and the Member States was essential.

55. Senior posts in the Secretariat vacated by retiring staff should be the first to be made available to nationals of developing and under-represented countries in accordance with General Assembly resolution 3417 (XXX), which laid down guidelines entirely in accordance with Article 101 of the Charter.

56. Mr. RICHTER (German Democratic Republic) drew attention to resolution 31/26 which invited the Secretary-General "to give priority to the recruitment of candidates from among nationals of unrepresented and under-represented Member States". Yet the report of the Secretary-General (A/33/176) indicated that the group of Eastern European States was grossly under-represented in the Secretariat. That situation should be corrected without delay. Not least, effective measures should be taken to increase the number of nationals of the German Democratic Republic in the Secretariat. His country, with a desirable range of from 24 to 33 posts, in fact was represented by only eight nationals. The low level of recruitment from the German Democratic Republic was the less understandable in that a number of highly qualified specialists, who in every respect met the standards required, had filed applications and proved in their interviews that they complied with the requirements of "the highest standards of efficiency, competence and integrity". He appreciated the efforts of the Office of Personnel Services to remedy the deficiencies, including the dispatch of a recruitment mission to his

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(Mr. Richter, German Democratic Republic)

country in 1977. It was to be hoped that the report on the mission would indicate that the Secretariat intended to take specific measures as a result, rather than just putting interviewed candidates on the roster. Such measures should also meet with an appropriate response on the part of the heads of various departments, in particular the political and economic departments, who had overlooked applicants from his country in recent years. He wondered whether the Secretary-General had considered introducing administrative arrangements to ensure that the Office of Personnel Services would in future play a more active role vis-à-vis the heads of departments.

57. The important thing was not to increase the number of recruits from under-represented States, but rather to bring about a genuine reduction in the recruitment of nationals of over-represented States. In that connexion, he drew attention to an earlier proposal to the effect that the appointment of candidates from over-represented countries should be completely halted until current imbalances were rectified.

58. His delegation could not understand why 96 applicants from over-represented countries had been recruited since the thirty-second session of the General Assembly. It could not but note that the personnel policies of various senior officers of the Secretariat reflected certain trends of a political nature which were incompatible with United Nations resolutions and redolent of times that had long since passed.

59. The large number of retirements from senior-level posts anticipated over the forthcoming two years should be used to ensure more equitable geographical distribution in the Secretariat. While it was important to appoint women and younger people, the pursuit of that objective should not increase the over-representation of certain countries still further. His delegation noted with interest that the number of staff over 60 years of age had fallen compared with the preceding year; but since there had still been 101 international civil servants aged 60 or over working at the Secretariat on 30 June 1978, a great deal clearly remained to be done.

60. The JIU report on the implementation of the personnel policy reforms approved by the General Assembly in 1974 (A/33/228) largely met with the approval of his delegation. It pointed to a number of short-comings in recruitment policy. For example, 51 out of 53 international civil servants recruited from the General Service category by means of competitive examinations came from over-represented or well-represented countries. That trend was unhealthy and illustrated that international civil servants should be recruited from among the General Service staff only in exceptional cases. It was also disquieting that the educational standards of the persons concerned were frequently lower than those normally required.

61. His delegation had strong doubts regarding the advisability of so-called competitive examinations for young Professional staff members. It would be more

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appropriate if young applicants acquired additional linguistic and professional qualifications in their own countries prior to working at the United Nations. Such training already took place in the German Democratic Republic.

62. His delegation could not associate itself with the idea set forth in document A/33/1 (Part XI) of achieving a balance between international civil service career personnel and personnel seconded by Governments. The idea ran counter to the position repeatedly expressed by numerous delegations that a career civil service at the United Nations would be an impediment to the constant renewal of the Secretariat through the recruitment and appointment of new, flexible and talented staff inspired by fresh ideas. Moreover, it was not compatible with the conclusions drawn in document A/33/176. Much remained to be done before one could justifiably speak of progress towards the various objectives set out by the General Assembly with regard to the achievement of an equitable geographical distribution of staff.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.