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INTERNATIONAL CIVIL SERVICE ADVISORY BOARD

CAREER PROSPECTS IN  
THE INTERNATIONAL CIVIL SERVICE

Introduction

1. The Board is glad that, at a time when the United Nations is approaching its twentieth anniversary, it should have an opportunity to consider one of the major administrative problems affecting the international organizations which are so necessary in a community of nations whose members are increasingly inter-dependent. It is time, the Board believes, for a reaffirmation of faith in the concept of an effective international civil service. In its 1954 Report on the Standards of Conduct in the International Civil Service, the Board stated its belief that such a service requires a substantial corps of career staff. That is still the view of the Board.

2. The present report originated in a request by the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination, in 1963, that the Board should advise it on the scope of a study, to be made in 1964, of the question "what should be considered a normal career in the international civil service".

ACC's reasons for referring the matter to the Board

3. ACC stated that thus far comparatively little attention had been paid to the question of career prospects for the staff because most of the organizations had been in existence for periods which were much shorter than the length of an average career. As time passed, however, the question became of increasing importance. It was evident that some staff had made little progress in terms of promotion, and that there were others who appeared to have little prospect of further advancement. It became possible, also, to ascertain the impact of various personnel policies and experiences in respect of such matters as age of recruitment and age of retirement.

4. ACC pointed out that the matter was of obvious importance to the staff, which would welcome a study by the Board. ACC felt that in the minds of the staff the problem was mainly one of promotion prospects. Lack of homogeneity in the secretariats, and the irregularity of the in-flow and the out-flow of staff, made it difficult to give new entrants any clear idea of what sort of career they could reasonably expect in the organizations, and made it equally difficult for serving staff to discern any pattern or regularity in promotion in relation to length of service. Staff tended to form their own expectations on what a career ought to be, and to be dissatisfied when reality did not come up to expectations.

5. Because of the complexity of the matter, ACC in 1963 limited itself to consulting the Board on what the scope of the study should be. It provided, by way of example, certain data relating to the United Nations Secretariat, and suggested a number of questions which seemed to warrant examination.

The Board's suggestions on the scope of the study

6. After discussing the matter with representatives of the organizations, and of the United Nations Headquarters Staff Council, the Board advised the Secretary-General, as Chairman of the ACC, that in its view the study should be primarily directed towards examination of any concrete problems existing or likely to arise within the next ten years. It felt that such an examination would be more likely to lead to useful action than merely an abstract study of what a "career" should mean for an individual, since the latter would have to be based on premises which might be invalidated in a comparatively short time in view of the rapidly changing circumstances of international activities.

7. In addition to the points suggested by the ACC as requiring examination, there were a number of others on which the Board considered that it would be helpful to have information, if this could be provided without imposing an unduly heavy burden on the secretariats. A list of these points was given to the Secretary-General. The scope of the study, as defined by the Board, accordingly covered the following main topics:

(a) The extent to which there are age limits for appointments to the various grades, and the extent to which these appointments are made by

- (i) competitive examination, or
- (ii) other competitive selective processes.

(b) The actual age balance of the secretariats and any immediate problems arising therefrom, including possible problems attributable to large-scale recruitment over a short period during the organizational stages after the creation of an agency or a new programme of work.

(c) The composition of the staff, in terms of fields of work, and the ratio of the number of higher grade posts to lower grade within broadly similar fields of work (i.e. fields of work requiring the same sort of qualifications); and the extent to which the Professional category in each organization was a homogeneous category in which all staff should have the same career expectations, and the extent to which the category should be considered to consist, at least notionally, of separate groups of staff for career purposes.

(d) Promotion experience; the rate of turnover and the occurrence of vacancies; and the extent to which, and the conditions under which, these vacancies were or should be filled by appointment from outside rather than by promotion, and the effect of the policy on efficiency and morale.

(e) Transfer of staff both as between places and between organizations, and the problems arising therefrom; the extent to which staff in the very small organizations should be able to expect the possibility of broadening their prospects by transfer within the United Nations family as a whole; and the extent to which there was a relationship in practice between promotion and mobility (that is, transfer from one office to another, or from one section to another within a department or office).

(f) Security of tenure, compensation for termination of appointment, and the extent to which it might be desirable to make provision for a career service for experts engaged in the technical aid programmes.

8. The substance of the matter was examined by the Board at its Twelfth session, held in Geneva from 7 - 21 July 1964. The evidence submitted to the Board is summarized in the annex to this report.

#### The composition of the secretariats

9. The secretariats are for the most part filled by career staff - that is, staff with permanent appointments. They are drawn from many different professions and are recruited at many different ages and grades. In the specialized organizations, such as FAO, WHO or ICAO there is and always will be a greater need for technical specialists to enter at a relatively late age after acquiring practical experience outside. For such staff, a "career" in the organization means not a lifetime of service but the completion of a career begun elsewhere.

10. Among the career staff, there is no doubt a variety of motivation in joining the international service. Some primarily desire a secure job with adequate promotion. Others may be less interested in remuneration but have a deeply-felt ambition for a really challenging job. Such psychological differentiations between staff members in the same age groups and with the same training are often over-looked, but they are not infrequently as important as purely professional considerations.

#### The chief problems at the present time

##### (a) The general position

11. From the evidence which it received, the Board formed the impression that, in the past ten years, promotion experience generally has been good, and comparatively few staff have been denied advancement in levels below P-4. There are, however, certain staff groups in most of the organizations for whom vacancies at level P-4 have not been available.

12. To a large extent, the experience of the past has been due to the considerable expansion in the programmes of most of the organizations. It cannot be assumed that future experience will be as good; and there are indeed reasons for thinking that it may be less satisfactory and that, in the absence of changes in the present system, the organizations may be unable to offer career advancement sufficiently attractive to obtain the quality of recruits which is needed.

13. This conclusion rests partly upon data regarding age distribution of present staff and ratios of numbers of posts in the various grades; and partly upon the fact that in recent years the more active and extended application of the principle of geographical distribution of staff has resulted in a substantial increase in the number of fixed-term appointments, made at all levels but proportionately more in the higher grades.

(b) Geographical distribution

14. The Board understands the reasons for and the benefits gained by the organizations through a wide geographical distribution, necessitating in varying degree appointments to higher levels from outside. It is, however, the duty of the Board to consider what effect this policy has upon legitimate aspirations of individuals who intend to make a life career in the international civil service. Between the years 1959 and 1963 the proportion of staff in the UN on fixed-term contracts increased from 16.6% to 29.7%. During the year ended 31 August 1963, 147 fixed-term appointments out of a total of 176 were made to posts to which geographical distribution is applicable. Of the total number of 413 fixed-term staff in such posts at 31 August 1963, 32 were in D-1 and D-2 posts, 41 in P-5 and 77 in P-4. Virtually all these represent appointments from outside which have precluded the promotion of greater numbers of career staff (since a promotion to a high level post creates a series of vacancies at lower levels).

15. It is inevitable that a policy which results in filling a relatively large proportion of middle and higher grade posts by outside recruitment should create uncertainty and apprehension in the minds of existing staff. No matter what past experience has been, they must doubt whether the years ahead will offer a truly satisfactory career. In a national service career staff may normally assume that all vacancies which arise will be available for promotion. In international organizations opportunities may be circumscribed by the reduction in the number of vacancies available for promotion purposes as a result of the outside recruitment above the normal entrance levels. There is therefore justification for devising some system which, subject to administrative safeguards, will give greater assurance of a reasonable degree of advancement for the competent official, without infringing upon the policy of improving the geographical distribution of the total staff.

(c) Special position of the languages service

16. Lack of promotion in the languages service is not attributable to the consequences of the policy of geographical distribution, which is not applied to the posts concerned. The difficulties here are due to a combination of factors related to the structure of the service and the nature of the work.

17. The structure of the service is based on the normal grading system, the level for a fully-qualified translator being P-3. Except in the United Nations, which in 1963 upgraded a number of its revisers and interpreters from P-4 to P-5, the only substantial avenue of promotion open to the translator is to the grade of reviser P-4, the proportion of revisers to translators being one to three. The reviser, however, is essentially a senior translator; there is no great difference between the skill and responsibility of his work and that of the experienced translator whose work can be issued without revision. The translator therefore has reason to feel that he ought to attain the P-4 level through the mere increase in experience. Similar considerations apply to many of the interpreters.

18. As regards the nature of the work, the languages staff must, as the Salary Review Committee pointed out in 1956 (A/3209, para. 42), necessarily do work which is, in a sense, routine, even though it demands high educational standards and great skill. The problem of providing them with job satisfaction is therefore particularly acute. The group is so large - it numbers over 750 in the seven larger organizations - that its very size makes it difficult to do a great deal by way of transferring its members to other types of work, even for limited periods. Moreover, the fact that so many of the languages staff come from countries which are highly represented is an additional impediment to their transfer to posts where geographical distribution considerations apply.

19. The personnel aspects of this special situation warrant, in the view of the Board, more searching attention by administrations.

(d) The technical specialists and scientists

20. Several of the specialized agencies necessarily have to recruit a large number of staff who are specialists in a particular field of work in medicine, agriculture, the natural sciences, etc. Because their practical experience has had to be acquired outside the organization, they are usually in their forties when they join. The number of posts in their specialization may be very small - perhaps only one - and opportunities for promotion are often virtually nil unless they have administrative capacity and can move out of their own particular field. The best specialists however are not necessarily attracted by administrative work, and in any event the number of administrative vacancies - heads of technical divisions and the like - is limited. Some specialists therefore tend to remain in their entry grade for the whole of their period of service until retirement, and the agencies have found that this is liable to give them a sense of frustration.

What should the career be?

21. An initial requirement in deciding what can be regarded as a reasonable career is to determine how far the existing Professional category consists, at least notionally, of different groups of staff, each of which can reasonably be given the same minimum career prospects. ACC itself has so far not given the Board a clear indication of its views on this matter.

22. In spite of this, the Board has, however, felt that it should attempt to answer the question, and has directed its attention to the following points:

- (a) what are the common groups in the Professional category for all or most organizations;
- (b) what should be the assured expectations for the competent and satisfactory official in these groups;
- (c) what arrangement would be needed to enable these expectations to be realised?

23. Point (a) received some consideration by the Board during its review of the question of common grading standards in 1960 (ICSAB/IX/5), and the Board, after again discussing the matter, has arrived at the conclusion that the common groups in the Professional category to which common career prospects could be applied are, broadly, the following:

Economists  
Educationists  
General Administrative Officer  
Language Officers (Translators, Interpreters, Editors and Revisers)  
Legal Officers  
Political Affairs Officers  
Public Information Officers  
Social Affairs Officers  
Statisticians

24. This list may not be exhaustive; some librarians, for example, may have to be included. The Board nevertheless feels that in spite of the admittedly heterogeneous character of the Professional category, the kinds of work in the list contain a common denominator with a sufficient degree of validity to justify common career prospects for the staff concerned. There may be other groups of staff whose employment is limited to one or two organizations, but to whom the common pattern would be applicable.

25. With respect to point (b), the Board considers that it would be reasonable to provide that, subject to certain administrative safe-guards which are discussed below, the competent and satisfactory official in these groups should be assured that he can reach the maximum of level P-4. The staff representatives suggested that there should be automatic advancement to the maximum of level P-5. The Board considers, however, that acceptance of the suggestion would cause acute difficulties in the grading of the higher level supervisory posts where it is essential that adequate recognition be given in the grading structure to differences in levels of responsibility.

26. The Board emphasises, nevertheless, that an assurance that a competent staff member will proceed to the maximum of P-4 in no way indicates that this should be regarded as a ceiling. In the Board's view, members of the career staff should be eligible for advancement to all grades up to and including D-2. Advancement to level P-5 and above must, however, be made on the basis of competitive selection, and be dependent on vacancies.

27. In this connection, the Board would point out that before an official is appointed or transferred to a supervisory post - whatever its level - the organization should ensure that he possesses the requisite supervisory abilities. These are not necessarily obtained by a period of service in lower level posts. This is not to say that there are no posts at P-5 or above which are suitable only for staff with supervisory ability, but where that ability is needed it is imperative that it should exist.

Arrangements to enable the expectations to be met

28. There seem to be three possible ways of enabling such an assured expectation to be met:

- (a) the replacement of the present grading structure by a system of time-advancement up to level P-4;
- (b) a merger of grades P-3 and P-4 (if it were certain that there would always be sufficient vacancies at P-3/P-4 to permit promotion from P-2);
- (c) a system of some form of personal promotion in the case of individuals fully competent for advancement but for whom no vacancies exist in the manning table.

29. Of the three, the Board believes that the first method is the most desirable. It therefore recommends that ACC should endeavour to formulate, for the groups of staff referred to in paragraph 23, a career advancement plan covering grades P-2 through P-4 on the following lines:

Promotion to P-2 step 1 normally after 4 years in P-1 (including the probationary period) as recommended by the Board in 1961;

P-3 step 1 after a further 7 years;

P-4 step 1 after a further 7 years.

30. Under such a plan, entry to the P-1 grade would be the normal practice for the young recruit who joins a UN organization when, or shortly after, he leaves the university. The Board would recall that in its report on Methods of Recruitment in 1950 it stressed the need for the recruitment of young high quality university graduates before they have commenced careers elsewhere. Without such recruitment standards, the plan may well fail. If, as the Board was informed, there are difficulties about arranging the normal type of competitive examination before initial appointments are made, then there should certainly be an examination at the end of the probationary period, in the case of the junior entrants. In any event, the scheme would require provision for two years probation, during which there should be a thorough assessment of the staff member's qualifications for service and for prospective development. During this period, all staff should be expected to acquire a working knowledge of a second working language.

31. Thereafter, the plan seems to the Board to need the following conditions:

(a) annual evaluation of performance, with the possibility of granting one increment in addition to the normal annual increment if the services are especially satisfactory, or of withholding the normal annual increment if they are below the level required;

(b) efficiency bars, possibly accompanied by a written examination at the levels corresponding to the present maximum of the P-2 and of the P-3 grades;

(c) evidence of the willingness on the part of the incumbent to serve in other duty stations or in other organizations;

(d) wherever desirable, sufficient opportunity for refresher or development training, at intervals appropriate to the kind of work.

32. The "average" official entering at P-1 would thus reach the minimum of P-4 after 18 years and the maximum of P-4 after 28 years service, by which time he will normally be in his fifties. Provision would, however, have to be made for entry at a point above the minimum, in certain cases, since the organizations are likely to continue to recruit staff at all ages. This should create no difficulty.

33. Under the plan, advancement would not depend on the availability of vacancies in the higher range. Budgeting and manning tables would not have to take account of grades, but solely of movements in individual salaries. The cost of the scheme can not be precisely estimated, but the Board was informed that, at least as regards the United Nations, the cost would not be heavy by comparison with the cost of retaining the present system on the assumption that future promotion experience would be the same as that over the past few years.



That is, however, an assumption which the Board believes can not be safely accepted. Nevertheless, the Board is convinced that the advantages to be gained by the adoption of a plan on the above lines, through increased staff satisfaction, better morale and stability, would outweigh its cost.

34. It may be objected that the plan runs contrary to the generally accepted principle of classification of posts by their level of responsibility. So far as concerns the type of post referred to in para. 23, the Board believes that the existing grades P-2 to P-4 merge one into the other. By an appropriate system of internal staff transfers, coupled with properly applied efficiency barriers, it should be possible in the main to ensure that the level of an official's salary is reasonably related to the level of his responsibilities.

35. The Board emphasises, however, that a scheme of the above nature will not succeed unless the conditions are firmly applied and high standards demanded. One of the most essential needs in any system of advancement is that it should be fair, and be seen by the staff to be fair. A system which gives the same rewards to the average as to the above average will cause dissatisfaction to precisely those members of the staff whom the organization most needs.

36. In this connection, it must be recognized that the administrations of the organizations are subject to constant internal and external pressures which make objective judgement difficult. The Board suggest, therefore, that consideration be given to appointing an outside administrator of wide experience to any review board set up to determine whether staff should proceed beyond the efficiency barriers. There would be advantages if the same external member could sit on the review boards of several organizations, in order to develop uniform standards. The Board would in any event follow closely the application of the scheme, and would ask to be provided with annual data showing, for example, the proportion of the staff receiving extra increments, or not earning increments, and the proportion passing the efficiency barriers.

Staff not covered by the plan

37. The plan does not include the servicing staff mentioned in ACC's report. The Board suggests that ACC should examine the possibility of reviving the idea, first put forward by the Flemming Committee in 1949 (A/C.5/331) that this group of staff should be classified in a separate category. Within such a category it would be possible to give a clearer indication of career prospects, though promotion from this category to the Professional category would always be possible for those with the necessary qualifications and ability.

38. Special attention would also need to be given to the position of staff promoted from the General Service to the Professional category, of whom there are over 500 in the six larger organizations. Such promotion recognizes special ability and valuable service, and persons so promoted should in no way be precluded from obtaining further advancement. On the other hand, it would not be appropriate to guarantee, or to imply, that they should normally have an assured progression to the maximum of level P-4. In many cases their age when promoted to the Professional category would preclude this possibility, but the Board considers that the matter should not be left to chance. It accordingly recommends that ACC should consider, possibly in connection with the question of the third category referred to in paragraph 37 how best to meet the reasonable expectations of such staff. It might also consider what should in future be the appropriate criteria for advancement from the General Service category, bearing in mind any possible consequences from the point of view of geographical distribution.



29. Finally, the Board recognises that, at least for the time being, the proposed career advancement plan would not be suitable for the group of scientific specialists referred to in paragraph 20. The requirements of the organizations for staff in this group are very different and they are reflected in the levels of recruitment, which vary from P-3 to P-5, or even to P-6 where the grade exists. The Board believes that appointment to such posts should continue as at present, but it hopes that ACC will consider the extent to which a comparable plan could be evolved for the specialists by defining sub-groups which should have common career expectations in all the organizations while taking account of the differing needs.

40. Meanwhile, the Board recognises that the plan may give some difficulty in those agencies which contain large numbers of specialists or scientific staff of many kinds, whose grading must be related to that of each other and of the "common groups" covered by the plan. The detailed application of the plan is probably easiest in the United Nations Secretariat. Within the two weeks of its session, it was impossible for the Board to take account of every variety of circumstance in all the organizations. Nevertheless, the Board believes that ACC could, without excessive difficulty, through the normal CCAQ machinery, work out what adjustments may be needed to make the general plan applicable in all the organizations to the common groups of staff, without creating difficulty in respect of other groups.

#### The necessity for staff training and transfers

41. It will be noted that the plan requires that sufficient opportunity be provided for refresher or development training. The Board firmly believes that training is an essential part of a sound personnel policy and that the organizations should - if they have not already done so - make arrangements for a systematic and continuing training programme, covering general orientation, in-service, refresher and development training. Such a programme would result in increased efficiency. It would also contribute to an improvement of morale by providing the staff with a possibility of further development and with a welcome change from the routine of their work. Even if training involves additional expenditure, it would in the end result in savings. The Board has already, in its 1950 Report on In-Service Training in the United Nations and the Specialized Agencies (CO-ORD/Civil Service/4), touched upon some aspects of the problem and it will in due course re-examine the whole question.

42. A closely related method of staff development could be provided by a systematic transfer policy, covering transfers within the organization, between duty-stations and between organizations of the United Nations family. Such transfers, the Board believes, are a necessary feature of sound personnel management. They can do much to widen the horizon and personality of staff members, to increase their usefulness to their organization and to counteract job fatigue and staleness. Transfers can often be arranged in a way which helps to solve personal problems of staff members; they can materially help in improving co-ordination between organizations. Inter-organization transfers need not necessarily be permanent, but could also take the form of secondments for limited periods. It was for these reasons that evidence of a willingness to serve in other duty stations and in other organizations was laid down as one of the conditions for advancement under the career plan proposed above. The Board understands that ACC has recently revised the inter-agency transfer agreement and it anticipates that it will now be put to greater use. In this connection, it was gratified by the support given by the staff representatives to a policy of inter-agency transfers.

Question of early retirement

43. Under the present regulations of the Joint Staff Pension Fund, an official may retire at the age of 55 with an immediate annuity, regardless of his length of service. If he does so, however, his earned pension, based on his length of service, is reduced by approximately 30%. This reduction, although correct on a strict actuarial basis, is so heavy that no official in practice has taken advantage of the provision. ACC suggested that where such an official had completed 25 years' service, the reduction should be much smaller. Under the Pensions Fund of the League of Nations, reduction in comparable circumstances was 17%.

44. Apart altogether from the amount of the reduction, the Board agrees with a comment of ACC that there should, in any event, be a stipulated minimum period of service before retirement at age 55 is permitted. Judging, however, by experience in national administrations where comparable arrangements have been made, the Board doubts whether a lower reduction factor, as suggested by ACC, would do much to increase promotion opportunities. The majority of staff would be likely to prefer to continue work until normal age; and it might well be, if early retirement was solely at the option of the official, that the few who would elect to retire early would be the above-average staff whom the organizations could least afford to lose.

45. Nevertheless, the Board believes that there are valid reasons why early retirement should, in international organizations, be facilitated. For some staff, a continuous expatriate service of 25 years in the circumstances of international organizations, often in a milieu totally different from that of the home country, probably seems a sufficiently lengthy period. There will be some whose legitimate expectations have been frustrated through no fault of their own, and others who are discouraged by having achieved only the bare minimum expectations. The Board agrees with ACC that both stagnation and frustration can be expensive in international organizations. It believes therefore that improvement in the conditions for early retirement would be valuable even though its value in practice might be largely psychological.

46. The Board recommends therefore that in the event of retirement between ages 55 and 60, the reduction in the pension should, provided the official has completed 25 years' service, and subject to further examination of the cost aspect, be 2% for each year before 60 - that is, a 10% reduction at age 55.

47. The Board was informed by the Secretary of the Joint Staff Pension Board that if it is the case, as seems likely, that only a limited number of staff will in practice take advantage of the opportunity to retire early, the cost of the proposal could probably be absorbed by the existing resources of the Fund, though the Consulting Actuary would need to examine the matter more closely.

48. The Board was also informed that the organizations were giving separate consideration, in connection with a study of termination indemnities, to the question of premature retirement at the option of the organization of those staff who for one reason or another had lost their value to the organization.

SUMMARY OF THE EVIDENCE SUBMITTED TO THE BOARDThe evidence from ACC

1. In 1964 ACC submitted to the ICSAB a comprehensive paper covering the points listed by the Board in 1963. The paper included statistical data provided by the UN, ILO, WHO, UNESCO, ITU, ICAO and FAO. Differences in the nature and structure of organizations sometimes made close comparisons between their statistics difficult, but the material provided was on the whole adequate for the Board's purpose.

2. In ACC's view, the principal questions were:

(a) What constituted a reasonable career expectation for the various groups of staff?

(b) To the extent, if any, that it was not being met, what remedies were desirable?

(c) Whether existing personnel policy enabled staff to feel that, apart altogether from promotion prospects, their careers provided sufficient interest, variety and job satisfaction. The fact that about a half of the professional staff in service in 1951 left the larger organizations in the ensuing decade, for reasons other than age-retirement, might be an indication of the size of this particular problem.

3. With respect to the question at 2(a), ACC stated that as regards the "fully professional" official who entered in the junior P-1/P-2 grades expecting to spend his whole working life in the organization, it did not see how good quality staff could be attracted unless:

(a) the "average" official could be reasonably sure of reaching about the top of P-4 by retirement;

(b) the "above average" could go to P-5 and above and, in the case of the exceptionally competent, could feel that he had a reasonable prospect of reaching D-2, or at any rate that his chances of becoming a Director depended only on his merits and that barriers of nationality would not be placed in his way.

4. It was more difficult to decide what should be the expectations of the "fully professional" who spent only the latter part of his career in the organization, or the official who could not be considered as professional in the full sense. The former might be a specialist who entered at P-4 or P-5 in his middle forties. He might not be so much interested in the question of promotion possibilities as in the opportunity of being able to work 20 years in his own sphere in the international field with the prospect of a reasonable pension at the end of his service. Yet experience in organizations such as FAO suggested that such staff began to feel a sense of frustration and failure if they remained indefinitely in their entry-grade. There might be a need in such cases to improve the possibilities of promotion from P-4 to P-5 and to introduce a P-6. WHO in fact already used the D-1 scale as a P-6 grade - that is, as the top of the professional category rather than the bottom of the Directorial category.

5. With respect to those who were not fully professional, in the sense that in general their work did not normally have a high intellectual content requiring a university education, ACC felt that the principal (but not the only) distinction was between the "servicing" type of post, as defined by the Flemming Committee in 1949, and the other types; but the "others" also contained groups (e.g. nurses) which must expect to have more limited prospects. Within the servicing group there would always be some possibility of movement to fully professional work, but to the extent that staff remained in the servicing field the ACC felt that P-2 or P-3 was an acceptable normal expectation for the "average" official, depending on his type of work. The "above average" should have the possibility of going further, but the proportion of higher-grade posts would probably be smaller than in the case of the top-grade posts in the fully professional group.

6. With respect to the question at 2(b), ACC invited special attention to two particular aspects, (a) the need to ensure that level D-2 was in practice, as well as in theory, a level of the career service which could be reached by the most outstanding of the career staff, and (b) the position of the satisfactory as well as the outstanding staff member. The question of access to the top posts was important not so much because of the number of staff concerned but because of its impact on the attractiveness of the career offered. Larger numbers of staff were, however, affected by the second question whether there was adequate opportunity for the satisfactory official. For the most part there did appear to be adequate opportunity, but there were some unsatisfactory areas in some organizations. The actual position was illustrated by the following table:

NUMBER OF PROMOTIONS OBTAINED BY STAFF WHO WERE IN SERVICE  
THROUGHOUT 1951 - 1962

| Organization      | No. staff<br>in service<br>since 1951 | Numbers of staff who received |                       |                        |                          |                         |
|-------------------|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|
|                   |                                       | no<br>promo-<br>tions         | one<br>promo-<br>tion | two<br>promo-<br>tions | three<br>promo-<br>tions | four<br>promo-<br>tions |
| UN                | 655                                   | 179                           | 310                   | 135                    | 28                       | 3                       |
| WHO               | 145                                   | 31                            | 68                    | 40                     | 6                        | -                       |
| ILO <sup>1/</sup> | 155                                   | 36                            | 67                    | 30                     | 19                       | 3                       |
| ICAO              | 75                                    | 13                            | 29                    | 27                     | 5                        | 1                       |
| FAO               | 127                                   | 26                            | 60                    | 30                     | 10                       | 1                       |

1/ Making an arbitrary assumption that half the P-2/P-3 staff in 1962 were P-2, and the other half P-3; and that all those of the 1951 group of P-2/P-3 who reached P-4 or above were P-3 in 1951.

7. The majority of those who received no promotion were in grades P-3 and P-4. In this connection ACC recalled that the Salary Review Committee in 1956 felt that in many cases the difference between P-3 and P-4 career posts in the UN was largely a difference in the age and experience of the incumbent. This was, and remained, the UN's own conclusion. The Salary Committee rejected a UN proposal that grades P-3 and P-4 should be coupled only because it would have given too high a maximum.

for too many staff (A/3209, para. 60 et seq) and because the long scale would be inappropriate for some of the more specialized staff in the organizations. The UN suggested that the question should be re-examined. Some of the other organizations also felt that, while differences in grading standards among the organizations partly obscured the true position, a rigid application of the concept of grading posts was not conducive to the development of the career potential of staff in highly specialized organizations, and made no allowance for recognition of the value of a staff member's services as distinct from the theoretical grading of his functions.

8. ACC agreed that there would be risks in loosening classification standards where they should reflect clear differences in levels of responsibility; in the long run this might be detrimental to both discipline and effort. It suggested, however, that the Board might wish to consider how far it would be reasonable to permit "personal promotions" in the higher grade. It drew the attention of the Board to the observations of the UN Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions on certain aspects of this problem (A/5507, para. 125-144). ACC agreed that while it would be preferable to find ways of securing more vacancies at P-4 and above which would provide career possibilities rather than loosen classification standards in the higher grades, it was unlikely that it would ever be possible to fill all vacancies by promotion. The technical organizations such as FAO, WHO or ICAO must continue to draw on outside expertise for the higher ranks, and in the other organizations, there was reason to think that it was improbable that the proportion of outside recruitment could be much reduced.

9. Moreover, in the light of experience, ACC believed that, no matter what measures of alleviation the Board might suggest, there was likely to remain a problem of officials whose careers fell short of legitimate expectations. While such a situation must exist in national services, it was probably more detrimental in the case of the international secretariats. Stagnation and frustration could be very expensive in certain of the services of international organizations. ACC hoped therefore that the Board would examine the question whether, subject to some reasonably long minimum period of service, there should be provision for early retirement.

10. With regard to the third question, the organizations stressed the need for adequate staff training and for increasing the opportunities for staff, and particularly scientific staff, to undertake advanced study, to obtain a variety of experience, and to apply their skills in different geographical areas and in different cultural settings. Several organizations thought that it might be desirable to make arrangements for sabbatical leave for selected staff. Amongst other things, this would be valuable in enabling technical staff to keep up to date with developments in their speciality, and might make it less necessary to fill higher grade specialist posts by appointment from outside.

#### The views of the United Nations and of the related agencies

11. In addition to the views put forward by ACC, individual organizations, notably UN, FAO and IAEA, submitted separate papers supported by oral introductions. Others made statements on their position.

12. The representative of United Nations pointed out that the recent accession of a large number of new Member States and the measures taken to maintain the universality of the Secretariat had created a situation which inevitably appeared to the serving staff to be detrimental to their prospects. The present promotion system was apt to overlook the satisfactory, as contrasted to the exceptional, staff member. The fundamental concern of the UN was thus to provide assurance of a reasonable career for any satisfactory staff member. To that effect, UN suggested a time scale to the top of P-4, coupled with a system of efficiency bars. The P-5 grade would serve, together with the grades D-1 and D-2, for supervisory posts at different levels of responsibility, to be filled by selection on merit and mobility.

13. The representative of FAO, without presenting specific proposals, said that his organization was contemplating the introduction of a system of exceptional personal promotions, with the possible extension of the Professional category to the level of P-6. He added that a pronouncement by the Board on this matter would assist his organization in reaching conclusions on the point.

14. The representative of IAEA felt that the time had come for a new approach to the interlinked problems of promotion and grading of posts. This would, in his view, call for a system of advancement based on a combination of seniority and merit as evidenced by efficiency bars at various points of the career. He therefore suggested a time scale covering the present grades from P-1 to P-6 (as applied in WHO) with efficiency bars at approximately the bottom of P-3 and of P-5. He also noted, while supporting inter-agency transfers as a further improvement of promotion prospects, that nobody, and least of all the staff associations, would wish to see the practice abandoned of giving precedence to agency candidates over equally qualified applicants from other organizations, and that as long as this remained the accepted practice, opportunities for transfer would be few.

15. The representative of WHO underlined the rather unique position of his organization in having achieved a full merger of its regular secretariat and of its project staffs. WHO remained firmly of the opinion that, with the addition of a P-6 grade and a corresponding suppression of the D-1 grade, the present grading system was satisfactory for its needs.

16. The representative of ILO recalled that his organization operated on the basis of a rigid establishment and that it had the highest proportion of permanent staff. Its main promotion bottleneck was due to the insufficient number of posts in grade P-4. Grades P-2 and P-3 had been merged into a single time scale, but the ILO had not found this arrangement satisfactory. It proposed, therefore, to adopt the same grading structure as the other agencies. Altogether, the ILO felt that a grade system, similar to the present one, was preferable to a time scale, provided that difficulties arising from the bottleneck could be eliminated.

#### The views of the staff representatives

17. The Federation of International Civil Servants Association (FICSA) submitted a paper summarizing its views on the problems of career prospects. This paper was supplemented by an oral statement, following which detailed questions and comments from members of the Board provided the staff representatives with a full opportunity of presenting and explaining their position. The UN Headquarters Staff Committee also presented its views, which were very close to those of FICSA.



18. The representatives of the staff considered that for all staff who could be regarded as fully professional, P-5 was the reasonable level which the so-called "average" staff member should expect to reach. In addition, the staff member who also possessed high administrative skill, organizational powers or diplomatic expertise should be able to go to the D-1 and D-2 levels. While recognizing that in practice some element of geographical distribution might have to enter into promotion to the D-2 level, FICSA felt that all Directorial grades should be open to career staff.

19. FICSA considered that by professional staff should be understood (a) those requiring the formal academic and technical preparation indispensable for entry into normal professional life, e.g. economists, scientists, technicians, lawyers, doctors, etc.; (b) a second group comprising linguists, editors, interpreters, etc.; and (c) thirdly, the group of posts of an administrative and organizational character where some formal academic training was useful, whether in law, arts or science, and where further training in business or administrative methods was also an advantage.

20. For such staff, FICSA suggested the adoption of a system which, in effect, would superimpose a time scale on top of the existing grading structure, up to level P-5. Exceptionally good staff would thus still be able to be promoted from P-2 to P-3, P-3 to P-4, etc., but those who were not so promoted would (unless they were clearly unsatisfactory) still be advanced automatically to the top of P-5 subject to efficiency bars which might be placed between P-3 and P-4 and between P-4 and P-5. These bars should be administered by a Joint Efficiency Board of administration and staff representatives. Promotion by outstanding merit should still be handled by a Promotion Board composed of administration and staff representatives.

21. The FICSA proposal would naturally result in abandoning the present organizational structure of the category as expressed by rigid manning tables. As understood by the Board, FICSA's position, however, was that grades should be retained to permit deserving staff members to obtain an acceleration of promotion which would otherwise not be possible under the strict application of a time scale.

22. On other aspects of the problem of career prospects, FICSA expressed strong support for a strengthening of the inter-agency transfer machinery and for widening its application, as well as for a more systematic policy of training, including provision for sabbatical leave. It concurred with the view of ACC that arrangements should be made to facilitate early retirement as from the age of 55.

23. The UN Staff Committee, while agreeing generally with FICSA on the points summarized above, stated that, although staff opinions differed on the question, there were arguments in favour of placing posts of a technical or servicing character (such as printing or procurement officer) in a separate category.

24. All the staff representatives recognized the need for geographical distribution among the staff, but expressed serious concern at the extent to which fixed-term appointments were made from outside the secretariats to higher level posts. They stressed that the increase in both the number and percentage of fixed-term appointments had affected the prospects of the career staff. In the interests both of improving existing morale and ensuring satisfactory future recruitment, they were convinced that changes in the existing structure were essential if a reasonable career was to be open to the kind of person who was recruited for life-time service.