



SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 54th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. TOMMO MONTHE (Cameroon)

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

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The meeting was called to order at 11.05 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 123: PERSONNEL QUESTIONS (continued) (A/40/652 and A/40/673 and Corr.1 and Add.1; A/C.5/40/5 and Add.1, A/C.5/40/6 and Corr.1, A/C.5/40/25, 27, 30, 38, 39 and A/C.5/40/59 and Corr.1)

- (a) COMPOSITION OF THE SECRETARIAT: REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (continued)
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1. Miss DURRANT (Jamaica) said that the best interests of Member States were served by an independent international civil service approaching its work with objectivity and professionalism. That required a sound personnel management system which was responsive to the evolving needs of the Organization and was perceived by the staff and Member States to be applied uniformly.

2. Progress had been made towards the goal of raising the level of representation of all unrepresented and underrepresented countries: only 13 and 15 Member States respectively fell within those categories. In that connection, her delegation foresaw serious problems in implementing the JIU recommendation for all Member States to have a specific proportion of posts at each grade from the P-1 to the Under-Secretary-General level under a weighted system. Jamaica agreed with the Secretary-General that the basic inflexibility of the proposal would create universal problems.

3. Her delegation noted from document A/40/673/Add.1 that progress had been made in improving co-operation between the Office of Personnel Services (OPS) and substantive departments, but would welcome further information. In that connection, the recommendations in document A/C.5/40/39 on the competitive examinations system were relevant. The decline in the number of P-1 and P-2 posts could be reversed only through greater co-operation between OPS and substantive departments during preparation of the programme budget. The problem should be analysed in connection with the career development system. Rectification of the situation would lead to a corresponding decline in the number of recruitments at the P-3 level, which should not be an entry-level grade for persons without the necessary professional qualifications. On-the-job performance would then be the main criterion for promotion to the P-3 level. Her delegation was not convinced of the need to extend the competitive examinations system to the P-3 level.

4. Little progress had been made in increasing the representation of women in the Secretariat. There was an apparent discrepancy between the statement in the report on the competitive examinations system that the percentage of women recruited reflected their level of participation in examinations, which had risen to 30 per cent in 1984-1985, and the fact that the percentage of women appointed at

(Miss Durrant, Jamaica)

the P-1 and P-2 levels between July 1984 and June 1985 had been 0.4 per cent and 10.9 per cent respectively. Despite the legislative mandates for improving the status of women, in 1985 women had held only 3.3 per cent of posts at the D-2 level compared with 54.3 per cent at the P-1 level. Much remained to be done if those legislative mandates were to be carried out, although the measures proposed by ICSC and the programme developed by the Co-ordinator for the Improvement of the Status of Women offered a starting point. Her delegation was pleased to note the co-operation established between the Co-ordinator and the Assistant Secretary-General for Personnel Services, whose office had primary responsibility for personnel management.

5. Improvement of the status of women was directly linked to implementation of the career development system. In that connection, her delegation was concerned that the five occupational groups identified had low career ceilings and were the very groups in which women were clustered. In developing the training component of the career development system, consideration could be given to the recommendation made many years earlier for the establishment of a staff college as a means of enhancing the competence of both Professional and General Service staff.

6. The proper administration of justice was indispensable to constructive co-operation between staff and management, and it appeared that existing procedures were no longer adequate, in view of which her delegation had no objection to the establishment of an office of Ombudsman in the United Nations. Unfortunately the Secretary-General's report (A/C.5/40/38) had not supported the proposal. Her delegation looked forward to the Secretary-General's report at the forty-first session and would welcome information on exactly how establishment of the office of Ombudsman would assist grievance procedures in the field. She noted that the impartiality of the existing grievance panels had been questioned. Staff representatives had suggested, in document A/C.5/40/59, the adoption of special measures to reduce the backlog in appeals, and her delegation would welcome the Secretary-General's comments on those proposals.

7. In addition to the need for a responsive personnel system, staff members needed to be assured of a stable system of remuneration and pension benefits. Sudden changes could have an adverse effect on the morale and performance of the staff. Her delegation therefore supported a comprehensive review of pensionable remuneration and pension benefits.

8. Mr. MURRAY (Trinidad and Tobago) reiterated his delegation's concern at the continuing violations of the Convention on the Privileges and Immunities of the United Nations and joined in the calls for strict observance of its provisions.

9. While progress had been made in reducing the number of underrepresented and unrepresented States little progress appeared to have been made in increasing the number of staff members from developing countries at the policy-formulating level. It would be interesting to have more information on certain aspects of recruitment. Specifically his delegation would welcome data on the number of appointments made at the P-4 level and above over the last two years, including the

(Mr. Murray, Trinidad and Tobago)

nationality, age and qualifications in order to trace the decline in the number of posts at the P-1 and P-2 levels. It would also like to know how many posts at those levels there had been each year since the introduction of the system of competitive examinations and how many appointments at the P-1 and P-2 levels in the past two years had resulted in requests for a correction of the entry level.

10. His delegation had always supported the examination system although it recognized that there were certain inherent dangers in it, one of them being that a person who had just completed a course of study had certain advantages over one who had been out of the academic environment for a number of years. In that regard he would welcome information on the success rate of General Service staff in those examinations.

11. While his delegation remained committed to improving the status of women in the Secretariat it was concerned by what appeared to be moves to institutionalize a department for women's affairs. The Committee was now being asked for additional resources to maintain for another two years the post of Co-ordinator for the Improvement of the Status of Women in the Secretariat, which initially had been planned for less than one year. Any attempt to separate the personnel management function into specialized gender units would be detrimental both to the Organization as a whole and to efforts to improve the status of women.

12. Another major problem confronting the Organization was the attainment of quantitative and qualitative targets in respect of equitable geographical distribution. His delegation agreed with the Joint Inspection Unit that OPS should be made directly responsible for the implementation of recruitment plans and the attainment of the objectives sought by the Assembly and that the existing ambiguity in the demarcation of recruitment responsibilities between substantive departments and OPS should be minimized (A/40/673, recommendations III and II). It agreed with the Secretary-General that the present system of desirable ranges and distribution of posts was preferable to any rigid system and it was not convinced that the application of the population factor would improve the system of desirable ranges. It looked forward to the conclusion and implementation of the comprehensive career development plan.

13. Mr. CHOWDHURY (Bangladesh) said that his delegation believed the Secretary-General should be allowed a reasonable degree of flexibility in dealing with personnel matters. However, that did not mean that delegations did not need to go into the details of personnel matters. They had to do so to expose irregularities or departures from agreed principles or policies.

14. His delegation viewed favourably the proposal to extend the system of competitive examinations to the P-3 level. It had taken note of the report on the design and implementation of the career development system (A/C.5/40/27) and was in broad agreement with the line of action proposed in it.

15. While noting from the report on the composition of the Secretariat (A/40/652) that 100 Member States were now within their desirable ranges, he pointed out that

(Mr. Chowdhury, Bangladesh)

many of them were at the lower end of their respective ranges. The aim should be to bring them closer to the mid-point. He also drew attention to the importance, referred to in resolution 37/235, of having the largest possible number of Member States represented at the higher levels of the Secretariat.

16. A significant factor destabilizing the effort to achieve geographical balance appeared to be the system of internal examinations for promotion from the General Service to the Professional category. In the period 1979-1984 some 175 persons had been promoted as a result of those examinations, whereas only 139 persons had been recruited through external examinations in the 10-year period 1974-1984. It seemed logical that a majority of posts should be filled through external examinations. Moreover, the General Service category was not subject to equitable geographical distribution and he understood that the bulk of General Service staff came from a handful of countries. A better picture of the position of the staff in the General Service category would have been available had the Secretariat complied with paragraph 6 (g) of General Assembly resolution 39/245.

17. Greater weight should be given to the population factor. It appeared from the report of the Secretary-General (A/C.5/40/6 and Corr.1) that the factors of contribution and membership had been given much greater weight than population. The suggestions in paragraphs 18 to 20 regarding the application of the population factor appeared somewhat simplistic. His delegation would like to see the Committee reconsider whether the population factor should continue to be applied to regions and whether the number of posts under the population reserve should be increased.

18. Finally, while his delegation fully agreed with the need to improve the representation of women in the Secretariat, it did not quite see how the Co-ordinator for the Improvement of the Status of Women in the Secretariat and OPS were going to play their respective roles. In that connection, he also noted that the Office of the Co-ordinator was already top-heavy and that, given the elaborate work programme proposed for that Office, it would appear that that Office was being viewed as permanent. His delegation could not encourage a parallel bureaucracy for personnel management.

19. Mr. LEWIS (Canada) said that, in his view, the question of increasing the number of women employed in the Secretariat was the most important of the various personnel issues before the Committee. It was humiliating to note that the United Nations was a model of inequality in its personnel practices. In particular, the Organization had failed to honour Article 8 of the Charter, which stated that the United Nations should place no restrictions on the eligibility of men and women to participate in any capacity and under conditions of equality in its principal and subsidiary organs. It had likewise failed to respect the various resolutions and commitments adopted on the matter.

20. The Organization was drowning in documents, from the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women to the somewhat superficial JIU report on the medium-term plan of recruitment, which together offered a sad litany of failure and neglect. The pace of progress had been extremely slow. The evidence presented

(Mr. Ntsama, Cameroon)

27. His delegation was in favour of the six-point career development system put forward by the Secretariat and hoped that all of the elements could be determined as soon as possible and in conformity with the timetable proposed by the Secretary-General. However, that system should be made flexible enough to allow Member States the freedom to fix the respective percentages of permanent and temporary staff within their desirable range.

28. Concerning the competitive examinations system, his delegation took note of the Secretary-General's evaluation of the results of using competitive examinations for posts at the P-1 and P-2 levels. Such examinations were unquestionably one of the most objective recruitment methods and his delegation was in favour of extending it to P-3 posts, provided that the Secretary-General applied the method on an experimental basis while minimizing training costs and ensuring that Member States could place candidates at all levels according to need.

29. Particular importance attached to the authority of the Office of Personnel Services. In section 1, paragraph 7, of resolution 39/245, the General Assembly had reiterated its request to the Secretary-General to strengthen the role and emphasize the authority of OPS and to report to the Assembly at its fortieth session on measures taken to that effect. His delegation wondered why no such report had been submitted and hoped that the General Assembly's request would be met at the latest by the forty-first session. Personnel management was a complex and above all thankless task and OPS needed full authority to take effective action under the present difficult circumstances.

AGENDA ITEM 17: APPOINTMENTS TO FILL VACANCIES IN SUBSIDIARY ORGANS AND OTHER APPOINTMENTS (continued)

(b) APPOINTMENT OF MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE ON CONTRIBUTIONS (A/40/102; A/C.5/40/68)

30. The CHAIRMAN drew attention to the note by the Secretary-General (A/40/102), indicating that, since the terms of office of six members of the Committee on Contributions would expire on 31 December 1985, the General Assembly would have to appoint six persons to fill the resulting vacancies. In a further note (A/C.5/40/68), the Secretary-General had communicated to the Fifth Committee the names of the six persons nominated by their respective Governments.

31. Since there were six nominations for the six vacancies, he assumed that the Committee wished to dispense with a secret ballot and to recommend by acclamation the appointment of the six persons nominated for appointment or reappointment for a three-year term of office beginning on 1 January 1986.

32. It was so decided.

(d) CONFIRMATION OF THE APPOINTMENT OF MEMBERS OF THE INVESTMENTS COMMITTEE
(A/40/104; A/C.5/40/54)

33. The CHAIRMAN said that the Secretary-General had indicated in document A/40/104 that, since the terms of office of three members of the Investments Committee would expire on 31 December 1985, the General Assembly would have to confirm the appointment by the Secretary-General of three persons to fill those vacancies. In document A/C.5/40/54 the Secretary-General indicated that, after consultation with the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Board and the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, he was submitting for confirmation by the General Assembly the reappointment of Mr. Aloysio de Andrade Faria (Brazil), Mr. B. K. Nehru (India) and Mr. Stanislaw Raczkowski (Poland). If there was no objection, he would take it that the General Assembly wished to confirm those appointments by acclamation.

34. It was so decided.

(c) APPOINTMENT OF A MEMBER OF THE BOARD OF AUDITORS (A/40/103; A/C.5/40/23 and Add.1)

35. The CHAIRMAN said that the Committee had before it a note by the Secretary-General (A/40/103) informing the General Assembly that since the term of office of the Senior President of the Audit Office of Belgium would expire on 30 June 1986 it would have to fill the resulting vacancy. In a further note (A/C.5/40/23 and Add.1), the Secretary-General had informed the General Assembly that the Government of Canada had nominated its Auditor General and the Governments of France and Italy the Senior Presidents of their respective Audit Offices. Since there were three candidates for one vacancy the Committee would have to proceed to a secret ballot.

36. At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. HASHIM (Bahrain), Mr. NTAKIBORORA (Burundi), Mrs. RODRIQUEZ (Venezuela) and Mr. ABRASZEWSKI (Poland) acted as tellers.

37. A vote was taken by secret ballot.

<u>Number of ballot papers:</u>	130
<u>Invalid ballots:</u>	1
<u>Number of valid ballots:</u>	129
<u>Astentions:</u>	0
<u>Number of members voting:</u>	129
<u>Required majority:</u>	65

Number of votes obtained:

The Auditor General of Canada:	33
Senior President of the Audit Office of France:	75
Senior President of the Audit Office of Italy:	21

38. The Senior President of the Audit Office of France, having obtained the required majority, the Committee decided to recommend his appointment as a member of the Board of Auditors for a three-year term beginning on 1 July 1986.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.