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at 10.30 a.m.  
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 55th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. TOMMO MONTHE (Cameroon)

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

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AGENDA ITEM 119: ADMINISTRATIVE AND BUDGETARY CO-ORDINATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS WITH THE SPECIALIZED AGENCIES AND THE INTERNATIONAL ATOMIC ENERGY AGENCY

- (a) REPORT OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON ADMINISTRATIVE AND BUDGETARY QUESTIONS

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The meeting was called to order at 11.20 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 123: PERSONNEL QUESTIONS (continued) (A/40/7/Add.13, 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)
- (b) RESPECT FOR THE PRIVILEGES AND IMMUNITIES OF OFFICIALS OF THE UNITED NATIONS AND THE SPECIALIZED AGENCIES AND RELATED ORGANIZATIONS: REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (continued)
- (c) OTHER PERSONNEL QUESTIONS: REPORTS OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (continued)

1. Mr. REED (United States of America) said that his delegation was concerned over the time and cost involved in resolving personnel disputes and supported the Advisory Committee's recommendations aimed at streamlining appeals procedures. In that connection, it might prove more efficient for cases to go directly to the Administrative Tribunal, thereby dispensing with the Joint Appeals Board.

2. In view of the problems in the system, it was premature to contemplate a single Administrative Tribunal. The Administrative Tribunals of both the United Nations and the International Labour Organisation were functioning well. In that regard, his delegation wished to have a list of all the cases being processed by the Office of Personnel Services (OPS), with an indication of when each had been received. The same information should be provided on cases before the Joint Appeals Board. Before each session of the Administrative Tribunal, a docket should be made available containing a summary of the complaint in each case. The Secretary-General should submit recommendations to the forty-first session for a workable system of administrative justice which would be inexpensive, speedy and fair.

3. The United States delegation had noted the remarks of ICSC on the Organization's positive experience with competitive examinations. His Government favoured examinations at the P-1 and P-2 levels, but objected to the current practice of restricting eligibility to candidates from unrepresented and underrepresented countries. There were many able individuals from other countries who were anxious to pursue careers in international organizations. A way must be found to encourage applicants from unrepresented and underrepresented countries without discriminating against candidates from other countries.

4. It was regrettable that the 25 per cent goal for the representation of women in geographical posts had not been met; efforts must be intensified. In particular, there were very few women from Africa, Eastern Europe and the Middle East in Professional posts, in view of which his delegation wished to know what measures would be taken to recruit more women from those areas. Further, he asked what was being done to promote women to senior positions and whether exit interviews had been conducted among women who had left the Organization to determine the reason. There was, however, no need for a special unit to oversee

(Mr. Reed, United States)

the recruitment of women. What was required was a change in attitudes, including attitudes in Member States. In general his delegation supported the programme of work outlined in document A/C.5/40/30.

5. The United States noted the appropriateness of the ICSC recommendation that after-service health insurance should be provided in overseas duty stations, but was not prepared to approve funding until details of the proposed changes were provided. His delegation was opposed to the provision of assistance to staff members with disabled children, since that was not an area in which an employer had any responsibility. The United States also opposed the proposed long-service step for professional staff, since there should be a clearly-defined minimum and maximum for work performed at a particular level.

6. The proposals put forward by the Secretary-General on the career development system were interesting, but some would fail because of major problems such as the earmarking of posts for unrepresented or underrepresented nationalities and for nationals of particular countries or regions. His delegation wished to know what the Secretary-General planned to do about those problems. His Government would also like information on the mobility of the Professional staff, including the average number of reassignments and the average number of years of assignment at each duty station. It was regrettable that no mention had been made of rewarding those who showed merit and ability. Good performance must be the key element in any system of career development.

7. ICSC should re-examine the problems attending the education grant, which had largely lost its original purpose, and report to the Assembly at the forty-first session. The United States welcomed the growing support for an increase in the retirement age to 62 for all staff, a policy followed by several international organizations. Indeed, his Government favoured abolishing the mandatory retirement age altogether. Organizations suffered a loss when staff members retired at an age when they still had much to contribute. ICSC should review the matter and report back at the forty-first session. His delegation was concerned over delays in recruitment, which should be completed within strict time-limits.

8. Article 101 of the Charter lay at the very heart of what the United Nations was and should be. Yet the Secretary-General's report on the composition of the Secretariat made only passing reference to the paramount considerations in employing staff of efficiency, competence and integrity, with due regard to geographical distribution. There was no mention in the report of the quality or character of new employees, or of efforts to find efficient and competent individuals. The United States was greatly concerned that a person's country of origin seemed to count more than whether he could perform efficiently. The Secretariat must be dedicated to the highest standards. In that connection, his delegation wished to know what was being done to correct the failure of some Member States to respect the independence of the international civil service. The continuing allegiance of nationals of certain countries to their Governments rather than to the United Nations mocked the dedication of countless others to the highest ideals of international service. In conclusion, his delegation trusted that with

(Mr. Reed, United States)

good will and initiative Member States would be able to resolve the issues of concern to his delegation and improve personnel administration at the United Nations.

9. Mr. JEMAIL (Tunisia) said that personnel management was a central concern in the Organization and geographical distribution a key element in ensuring balance. In that connection, considerable progress had been made on a broad front, so that, for example, 54.6 per cent of the staff recruited between July 1984 and June 1985 were nationals of unrepresented or underrepresented States. Candidates from developing countries should be recruited by all departments at every level to ensure appropriate balance within the Secretariat. Such an undertaking would, however, be lengthy, and there should be some flexibility in the application of desirable ranges.

10. Women continued to be outnumbered by men within the Secretariat, especially at the P-5 level and above. Between July 1984 and June 1985 only 19.2 per cent of the staff recruited to geographical posts were women. Further action was necessary to increase the percentage of women employed in such posts. In that connection, his delegation had welcomed the appointment of the Co-ordinator for the Improvement of the Status of Women. The concentration of women in service rather than substantive departments meant that they had little influence on policy formulation. His delegation therefore favoured the adoption of a programme of action for improving the status of women in the Secretariat. It was the implementation of the plan of action, however, which caused his delegation some concern. It seemed that with the appointment of the Co-ordinator there were two personnel chiefs, which had not been the aim of the Assembly. There might be some conflict with respect to areas of competence, which would defeat the desired objective. Accordingly, his delegation would welcome additional information on the exact authority vested in the Co-ordinator and on the composition of the high-level steering committee referred to in the Secretary-General's report (A/C.5/40/30). Further, since the post of Co-ordinator had been established on a temporary basis, the plan of action could be developed by OPS.

11. It would be useful to have available a report on the classification of posts. Particular priority should be accorded to General Service staff members, to enable them to move into the Professional category without undue difficulty. Such a policy could be complemented by the adoption of recruitment by competitive examination at the P-3 level. There was no doubt that recruitment by examination resulted in the selection of the most competent staff. Further, internal examinations had led to an increase in the number of women in the Professional category.

12. Finally, his delegation thought that the office of Ombudsman could be initially established on an experimental basis for a two-year period. The post should be offered to a former staff member, since such an individual would have experience of the Organization but possess a measure of independence.

13. Mr. REFSHAL (Norway), speaking on behalf of the Nordic countries, commended the efforts of the Secretary-General to secure a truly multinational and independent staff with the highest standards of efficiency, competence and integrity, in accordance with both paragraph 2 of Article 100 and paragraph 3 of Article 101 of the Charter. In that regard, like the staff of the Organization, Member States should be encouraged to rededicate themselves to the purposes and principles for which the United Nations stood.

14. The report of the Secretary-General on the composition of the Secretariat (A/40/652) stated that substantial progress had been made in 1985 towards the achievement of an equitable geographical balance in the Secretariat. "Substantial progress" was a subjective evaluation, which, now that the medium-term plan of recruitment was drawing to an end, naturally invited a comparison of the present situation with that obtaining at the time when the plan had been introduced. From the figures furnished by the Assistant Secretary-General for Personnel Services, for that period, it appeared that the number of unrepresented Member States had been reduced from 17 to 11 and that of underrepresented States from 26 to 13. With regard to overrepresented countries, however, although appointments had been held within the 10 per cent target, their number still seemed to have increased. Also, while 100 Member States were now within range in the Secretariat for the first time, that still left 59 countries, or more than 37 per cent of the Organization's membership, outside their ranges. Those results could not be regarded as satisfactory and the various suggestions made by the Joint Inspection Unit to achieve an equitable geographical distribution therefore deserved careful consideration.

15. A particular recruitment problem related to the status of women in the Secretariat. While the proportion of women in geographical posts might be approaching the 25 per cent target set for 1982, the overall situation remained dismal. As the Secretary-General pointed out in his report, there were severe disparities in women's representation according to grade, in their distribution across occupations and departments, and in their distribution by region and origin. That report nevertheless gave an impression of both realism and energy, which nourished hope for improvement in the future through the implementation of the proposed action programme to overcome the obstacles to women's integration into the substantive work of the Organization.

16. The Nordic countries saw merit in the proposal to establish an office of Ombudsman in the United Nations, but it would have to be a full-time position with adequate support staff and the person selected should probably come from outside the system so as not to be associated with any branch or department of the United Nations bureaucracy. Clearly, moreover, the Ombudsman must have access to all information and to all levels of the Secretariat. Lastly, there might be reservations about the idea that the Ombudsman should be available to all people at all times. The concept of the Ombudsman being a social counsellor was not necessarily what the United Nations required most.

17. Concerning the issue of respect for the privileges and immunities of officials of the United Nations system, it was gratifying to learn from the Secretary-General's report (A/C.5/40/25) that a number of staff members mentioned



(Mr. Refshal, Norway)

in the previous annual report had now been released or amnestied. The Nordic countries noted in particular the amnesty granted by the Ethiopian authorities to the two ECA staff members detained since 1979 and welcomed the undertaking by those authorities to review the cases of two other staff members still under detention. The number of arrests and detentions of United Nations officials in the current reporting period was high, although in most cases the organizations could exercise their right of functional protection or could obtain the release of the detainees. However, the increasing number of cases involving abductions and detentions by armed groups and individuals was a cause for extreme concern. Nothing could justify such practices and the Nordic countries wished to remind all Member States which might have influence with such groups or individuals of their duty to co-operate with the Secretary-General and the executive heads to secure functional protection of United Nations staff.

18. Mr. PIERRE (Guyana) said that while it was encouraging to see that some 100 Member States were currently within their respective ranges and that 54.6 per cent of the staff recruited in the past year came from unrepresented or underrepresented countries, his delegation was concerned at the persistent imbalance in the geographical representation of staff in the Secretariat. Naturally, geographical representation was not the sole criterion to be considered when recruiting staff. It was also necessary to ensure that the staff recruited had the highest possible qualifications and were of the highest calibre. In that connection he reiterated his delegation's support for increased utilization of fixed-term contracts in filling vacancies in the Secretariat.

19. Competitive examinations had proved to be an effective means for recruiting staff from unrepresented and underrepresented countries. However, his delegation could not support the proposal to extend that system to recruitment at the P-3 level. He pledged his delegation's full support for the examinations for promotion from the General Service to the Professional category while, at the same time, reiterating the warning that the geographical imbalance prevailing in the General Service category might easily be transmitted to the Professional category, particularly if preference was given to internal promotion at the expense of external recruitment.

20. His delegation anxiously awaited the implementation of a new career development system. In the meantime the existing system should be improved, particularly with a view to facilitating the employment and upward mobility of women in the Secretariat. His delegation had been disappointed at the failure of the United Nations system to come to grips with the issue of the status of women. It fully supported the efforts of the Secretariat and the Co-ordinator for the Improvement of the Status of Women in the Secretariat to deal with that critical issue and stressed the need to increase the number of women in policy-formulating posts. He noted with particular concern the failure of the Secretariat to meet the 25 per cent target for the proportion of women in posts subject to geographical distribution and pointed out that that target was no longer in tune with reality and should be raised to at least 30 per cent.

21. Mr. KOBAYASHI (Japan) said that while Japan continued to be underrepresented in the Secretariat, the situation with respect to many other countries had improved. He welcomed the fact that OPS had exceeded the 40 per cent target for the proportion of appointments of nationals from unrepresented and underrepresented countries and that appointments of nationals from overrepresented countries had been reduced to 10 per cent and expressed the hope that a second medium-term plan of action on recruitment would be launched. While a number of major recruitment steps had already been initiated by OPS, further action was needed to streamline the recruitment process by centralizing and simplifying the decision-making process; to collect and analyse information on the education and employment system of each Member State; and to extend the use of recruitment missions as a means of filling posts at the P-3 or higher levels. In order to satisfy the provision in the Charter concerning the necessity of securing the highest standards of efficiency, competence and integrity, while paying due regard to the principle of equitable geographical distribution, greater efforts should be made to actively seek out truly qualified staff members instead of waiting for such persons to apply.
22. He suggested that the next report on the composition of the Secretariat should include data concerning the number of staff members at each grade and step and the number of staff members, by age. In order for the Committee to be able to arrive at a proper judgment on the desirability of creating long-service steps it should have, before the end of the current session, information on the actual number of staff members, by step, especially those at the top step of each grade. Data on the age of the staff was also indispensable in order to properly debate the question of the mandatory age of separation.
23. The external examinations had been helpful in improving the geographical distribution of the Secretariat. With regard to the extension of the competitive examination system to the P-3 level it was not clear to his delegation whether serving staff members could take that examination as a means of obtaining promotion. In any event, eligibility criteria must be clearly defined and must differ from those for competitive examinations at the P-1/P-2 level. His delegation nevertheless supported the introduction of competitive examinations at the P-3 level on an experimental basis provided that further clarifications were provided before the experiment was started. A career development system with such features as job rotation and change of duty stations should be introduced as soon as possible for junior staff members recruited through competitive examinations.
24. Regarding the establishment of an office of Ombudsman (A/C.5/40/38) his delegation would like to know what kind of disputes and grievances such a person would be expected to deal with, how many such disputes were currently at issue and how they were dealt with. Such information should be provided at the forty-first session. Moreover, if a proposal was made to create such an office, he suggested that the Secretary-General should report in greater detail on how the various existing recourse procedures, both formal and informal, would be simplified.
25. While appreciating the progress that had been made in increasing the number of female staff members in the Professional category and above, he stressed that the efforts to improve the representation of women in the Secretariat should not adversely affect efforts to achieve equitable geographical distribution.

(Mr. Kobayashi, Japan)

26. Member States should view seriously the concern expressed by the Secretary-General regarding interference by Member States in the promotion, transfer, or reassignment and recruitment of staff members. At the same time he said that the situation could be greatly eased if mutual trust between the Secretary-General and Member States was strengthened.

27. He drew attention to the need for more systematic rotation and movement of staff and to the need for transparency in personnel administration. In that connection he asked the Secretary-General to provide the Committee with information so that it could determine whether the reclassification exercise was being carried out with respect for due process and said that the concluding statement made by the Chairman of the International Civil Service Commission should be borne in mind.

AGENDA ITEM 119: ADMINISTRATIVE AND BUDGETARY CO-ORDINATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS WITH THE SPECIALIZED AGENCIES AND THE INTERNATIONAL ATOMIC ENERGY AGENCY

(a) REPORT OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON ADMINISTRATIVE AND BUDGETARY QUESTIONS (A/40/769)

28. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions), introducing the report of the Committee (A/40/769), said that it contained tables of comparative data on various aspects of administrative and budgetary co-ordination in the United Nations system. The content of the tables was explained in paragraphs 5-13. The Committee was still having some difficulty in collecting the analytical data on extrabudgetary resources.

29. The data contained in table D.1 related to funds contributed directly to organizations while those in table D.2 related to actual or estimated expenditure by the organizations concerned. For the reasons given in paragraph 10, the information in the two tables were not directly comparable. The Advisory Committee intended to continue discussions with the representatives of the specialized agencies with a view to arriving at an acceptable format for presenting information on extrabudgetary resources.

30. Mr. KHIZHNIK (Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic) said that the information supplied in the report of the Advisory Committee (A/40/769) clearly showed the need for more active co-ordination between all branches of the United Nations system for the effective and economic use of material and human resources. That was essential above all to limit the rates of increase in the regular budgets which, as the ACABQ report indicated, continued to grow and which, in 1986, would amount to more than \$1.73 billion, an increase of almost \$1 billion over the past 10 years.

31. In his delegation's view, it was a profound mistake to think that further financial inflows were the only way to enhance effectiveness. The Advisory Committee's report, indeed, provided evidence to the contrary, showing that some of the specialized agencies, in dealing with budgetary problems from the standpoint of cost-effectiveness, had stabilized or even reduced their budgets. That positive experience should be used in the financial and administrative operation of the other international organizations. There was considerable potential for doing so and efforts must be made in particular to identify obsolete, marginal or ineffective programmes that could be cut back or terminated.



(Mr. Khizhniak, Ukrainian SSR)

32. One of the causes of budgetary growth was, of course, inflation. The influence of inflation and currency fluctuations on the United Nations budget was by no means a new issue and, following General Assembly resolution 3528 (XXX), at least eight reports had been prepared by the Secretariat on that subject. Virtually all of them, however, had suffered from the same defect - discussing the causes and forms of inflation at inordinate length without analysing or drawing conclusions about the impact of inflation and monetary instability on the budget of the United Nations. The latest report was no exception. Moreover, it failed to reflect the fact, as clearly recognized in a number of General Assembly resolutions, that many Member States were not responsible for the losses that the budget of the United Nations experienced as a result of the monetary phenomena that occurred in countries in which the United Nations made its main expenditures, or the need to establish procedures that could help to meet those budget costs in the most appropriate way. His delegation hoped that the United Nations and its specialized agencies would finally take steps to ensure that costs resulting from inflation were covered through economies and internal budgetary adjustments and also from the contributions, including voluntary contributions, of the developed market-economy countries in which branches of the United Nations incurring such costs were located.

33. An important way to achieve economies in all organizations of the United Nations system was to make effective use of existing staff, whose pay accounted for some 80 per cent of regular budget expenditures. Rising staff costs were the result both of the growth of salaries and allowances and the continued increase in the number of staff members. In that regard, it was worth citing the positive examples set by certain specialized agencies, which had succeeded in levelling off or reducing the rate of growth in their establishments. Effectiveness should be enhanced through greater productivity and responsibility and through improved management methods. That required more qualitative co-ordination of activities within the United Nations system.

34. One example of such co-ordination would be the establishment of a unified conference service at the Vienna International Centre, allowing maximum efficiency and cost-effectiveness while retaining United Nations administrative responsibility. Attention should also be given to the proposal to link conference services at Vienna, New York and Geneva into a single system. That, as the Secretary-General had indicated in his report submitted at the thirty-ninth session (document A/C.5/39/39), would create important opportunities for eliminating or reducing certain costs of conference servicing as well as for service improvements. Documents could be translated and typed at whatever location spare capacity existed and electronically transmitted to conference sites for local reproduction.

35. It was again alarming to note the growth of expenditures on technical co-operation activities, which in 1986 would amount to 21.3 per cent of the combined regular budgets of the United Nations and the specialized agencies. His delegation's position of principle was that programmes of technical co-operation should be funded exclusively on a voluntary basis and that all the expenditures of the United Nations and its specialized agencies on activities carried out for UNDP should be defrayed in full by the Programme itself.

The meeting rose at 12.55 p.m.