



SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 32nd MEETING

Chairman: Mr. NTAKIBIRORA (Burundi)

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

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The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 111: PROGRAMME PLANNING (continued) (A/37/6/Add.3, A/41/6 and Add.1, 38 and Corr.1 and Corr.2, 226, 318 and Add.1 and Add.1/Corr.1, and A/41/670)

1. Mr. BELYAEV (Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic) said that he wished to make a number of comments on the documents pertaining to the item under consideration without prejudice to the ongoing consultations on the administrative and financial functioning of the United Nations. It was the view of his delegation that the recommendations made by the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination (CPC) on revisions to the medium-term plan for the period 1984-1989, which had taken into account decisions taken by intergovernmental organs over the past two years, would ensure the better fulfilment through United Nations programmes of the Organization's obligations under the Charter. It wished in particular to support the recommendations of CPC on the reformulation of chapter 2 and those relating to revisions of a number of subprogrammes under chapter 21. The efforts of CPC not only to examine revisions to the medium-term plan but to delete ineffective and unjustified activities were significant. Nevertheless, CPC would be able to contribute more effectively to the improved co-ordination of United Nations programmes were it not for the existing unsatisfactory planning procedures of the United Nations. The proposals of the Secretariat for revisions to the medium-term plan had once again consisted entirely in the addition of new activities without any indication of an intention to implement the many General Assembly resolutions calling for the identification and curtailment of activities which were ineffective or obsolete. His delegation was firmly convinced that neither CPC nor any other intergovernmental organ was in a position to substitute for the United Nations Secretariat in implementing the Organization's programme activities and gathering and presenting operational information on the implementation of those programmes. It was for that reason that it was prepared to support the addition to the medium-term plan of a new chapter 31, entitled "Planning and co-ordination of programmes". The programme envisaged under that chapter would have the specific objective of ensuring that the Secretariat took practical steps to ensure consistency in the programme activities of the United Nations and its specialized agencies, as well as the most effective and productive implementation of programmes. It was to be hoped that a final decision on the establishment of that important programme would be taken with due regard for recommendation 32 of the Group of High-level Intergovernmental Experts.

2. With regard to the report on the programme performance of the United Nations for the biennium 1984-1985, CPC had formulated a number of useful recommendations designed to ensure a radical improvement in the format and content of future reports. His delegation supported those recommendations and expected practical measures to be taken by the Secretariat towards their implementation. It fully shared the serious concern expressed by CPC with regard both to the low rate of implementation of programmes and to cases of open disregard for General Assembly decisions by a number of Secretariat units. The programme managers concerned should take all necessary measures to ensure the elimination of such shortcomings.

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(Mr. Belyaev, Byelorussian SSR)

3. Despite evidence of continued enthusiasm for the creation of a special machinery for evaluation, intergovernmental organs were still unable to obtain any tangible results indicating the effectiveness of established units and systems. Moreover, in a number of Secretariat units which were subject to special evaluation procedures, almost half the activities provided for in 1984-1985 programmes had remained unimplemented. His delegation therefore believed that the functioning of the Secretariat could be made more efficient not through the creation of new bureaucratic structures but by taking all possible measures to strengthen managerial control at all levels and increasing the individual sense of responsibility of programme managers. His delegation shared the view of the Advisory Committee that the proliferation of evaluation units in the Secretariat should be curtailed. It also wished to express support for various other recommendations made by CPC, including those relating to the improvement of its own work, the improvement of planning and co-ordination methodology and the hiring and use of consultants. It hoped that those and other recommendations of CPC would be strictly and faithfully implemented by the Secretariat.

4. Ms. MUSTONEN (Finland), speaking on behalf of the Nordic countries, reserved the right to comment at a later stage on the status of the programme planning system, following the conclusion of consultations on the report of the Group of High-level Intergovernmental Experts. The recommendations of CPC relating to priority setting and the proposed broad managerial approach in reviewing the draft programme budget were of positive value. On the subject of programme performance, although the monitoring of such performance constituted an essential part of programme planning procedures, it was currently necessary for Member States to take decisions without sufficient background information on the rate of implementation of programme activities and the use of resources for those activities. It was therefore necessary to establish closer linkage between programme performance reports and reports on budget performance, with a view to making performance monitoring an ongoing process. The low implementation rate of some areas of activity, as noted in the report on programme performance of the United Nations for the biennium 1984-1985, particularly with regard to high-priority activities in the Department of Public Information, were a cause of concern.

5. The Nordic delegations concurred in general with the recommendations of CPC, but felt that the results of past cross-organizational analyses were somewhat disappointing. They shared the concern of CPC for the lack of effective follow-up to its conclusions and the recommendations arising from its consideration of the analyses and called upon United Nations bodies to pay greater attention to such recommendations. The Nordic delegations reaffirmed their support for CPC in its capacity as the principal organ of the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly with responsibility for planning, programming and co-ordination.

AGENDA ITEM 117: PERSONNEL QUESTIONS (continued) (A/41/627; A/C.5/41/2, 6, 12 and Corr.1, 18, 29 and 39; A/C.5/41/CRP.2)

6. Mr. RAICHEV (Bulgaria) said that his delegation supported the proposal of the Joint Inspection Unit in document A/40/673 that the mid-point should become the upper limit of each desirable range, with the effect that any State with more of its nationals in geographic posts than the mid-point of its range would then be

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(Mr. Raichev, Bulgaria)

considered over-represented. The existing system whereby an upward flexibility of 15 per cent above the mid-point was permitted had allowed certain countries to maintain representation well above the upper limit of their range over long periods of time. With regard to the observation of the Secretary-General in document A/C.5/41/6 that the proposal would make it very difficult to carry out the work of the Organization if qualified nationals of countries below the mid-point were not always readily available, his delegation believed that the Secretary-General, by retaining his authority to recruit candidates from over-represented countries in such cases, would avoid any possible difficulty, while adoption of the proposal would help to establish a comparatively lower level of over-representation.

7. A major reason for the increase in over-representation was the fact that under the current competitive examination system General Service staff members who were nationals of over-represented countries could be promoted to the Professional category, his delegation therefore recommended that the Fifth Committee should decide to suspend that procedure temporarily. Further steps should be taken to bring about a real improvement in the status of women in the Secretariat, with due regard for the principle of equitable geographical distribution.

8. Mr. KAMALUDDIN (Afghanistan) said that the efficiency of the United Nations depended to a large extent on the performance of the Secretariat and its staff. The major principles to be observed in the appointment of staff were the necessity of securing the highest standards of efficiency, competence and integrity and the principle of equitable geographical distribution. Despite the duplication of work and reduction in productivity caused by the rapid expansion of the Secretariat structure over the years, his delegation remained convinced that adherence to those principles would inevitably promote the efficiency of the Organization.

9. It was clear from document A/41/627 that some progress had been made in correcting the levels of representation of Member States in the Secretariat, bearing in mind the separation of the staff of UNIDO and the current freeze on recruitment. However, the current complex situation demanded that a ban be imposed on the appointment of large numbers of personnel from over-represented countries, while recruitment from unrepresented and under-represented countries should continue to be a high-priority task. A more just and balanced geographical distribution of posts could also be achieved through a reduction in the number of permanent appointments and a corresponding increase in the number of fixed-term contracts, in connection with which recommendations 55 and 57 in the report of the Group of High-level Intergovernmental Experts merited careful consideration.

10. With respect to the improvement of the status of women, his delegation noted that the increase in the percentage of women employed by the Secretariat during the past year fell far short of the target established by the General Assembly. Major steps should be taken to promote the appointment of women, in full conformity with the principle of equitable geographical distribution, particularly to senior and policy-formulating posts. The efforts of the Secretary-General in that connection were welcome.

(Mr. Kamaluddin, Afghanistan)

11. With regard to the privileges and immunities of officials of the United Nations and the specialized agencies and related organizations, his delegation fully shared the concern expressed for the safety and security of staff members. It fully respected the Charter of the United Nations, the Convention on the Privileges and Immunities of the United Nations and relevant General Assembly resolutions. It also reaffirmed the need for absolute respect by the staff of international organizations for the laws and customs of individual Member States. The individuals whose names appeared at the beginning of table 2 in document A/C.5/41/12 had been arrested on charges of engaging in anti-State activities of which the Afghan security forces had undeniable proof. His Government had assured the United Nations agencies concerned that full rights of defence would be accorded to the detainees and that any final decision on their cases would be immediately communicated to those agencies. The Afghan authorities had always permitted United Nations representatives to visit the detainees, and those representatives had expressed satisfaction at the conduct of the authorities. It should be recalled that locally recruited staff members of an international organization were primarily nationals of their own countries and therefore subject to those countries' jurisdiction. Practical measures should be taken to ensure that staff members, and particularly locally recruited employees, of an international organization, did not abuse the privileges and immunities accorded to them.

12. In conclusion, his delegation wished to express its profound concern over the decision of the United States to restrict the travel of some United Nations staff on the basis of their nationality. It continued to give its full support to the position of the Secretary-General on that issue.

13. Mr. LEWIS (Canada) referring to the question of privileges and immunities of officials of the United Nations, said that his delegation was concerned about the fate of United Nations staff members, including Mr. Alec Collett, who had been kidnapped in Lebanon in March 1985 and was still being held captive, and Mr. Liviu Bota, who, despite repeated requests by the Secretary-General, had not been allowed to travel to New York to submit his resignation in accordance with the United Nations Staff Regulations. The latter case involved indefensible behaviour by the Government in engaging in his arbitrary detention, a detention which mocked the relevant provision of the Charter of the United Nations.

14. His Government was preoccupied by the issue of the status of women in the Secretariat not only because the equality of women was a principle of Canadian policy but also because failure to achieve equality would be in violation of Articles 1 and 8 of the Charter. The issue required sustained attention because it was so intractable. In that connection, he welcomed the perseverance and determination of the Assistant Secretary-General and the Co-ordinator for the Improvement of the Status of Women in the Secretariat in seeking to improve the situation. His delegation welcomed the establishment of the Steering Committee for the Improvement of the Status of Women in the Secretariat, which was systematically addressing the fundamental problem, that of attitude. It also welcomed the fact that the Secretary-General had embraced all the recommendations of the Steering Committee. However, despite those positive developments, the situation had not

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(Mr. Lewis, Canada)

changed significantly; in fact it had regressed. The situation with regard to the appointments of women to posts at the D-2 level and above was particularly discouraging. The Secretariat alone was not to blame; Member States, more than half of which had signed the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, had failed to nominate women for senior posts in the Organization. Every effort must be made to appoint women to senior posts and his Government was determined to continue applying pressure until there was concrete evidence of a change in the situation. Canada would, for its part, make every effort to contribute to a solution of the problem, including by nominating female candidates for senior posts.

15. Mr. MURRAY (United Kingdom), speaking on behalf of the States members of the European Community, said that with regard to the question of privileges and immunities of officials of the United Nations, the Twelve noted with regret the marked deterioration in the situation reported on in document A/C.5/41/12 and hoped to see an early and satisfactory conclusion to all the cases especially those in which the Secretary-General had intervened personally. They wished in particular to express concern over the cases of Mr. Alec Collett and Mr. Liviu Bota. The Twelve appealed to those responsible for the arbitrary detention of international civil servants to put an end to the situation and hoped to see an overall improvement in the report for next year.

16. With regard to the composition of the Secretariat, the Twelve noted that the separation of UNIDO and the recruitment freeze in 1986 had not helped to achieve a more equitable distribution of staff by nationality and gender. However, achievement of equitable geographical distribution should remain an important goal for the Secretary-General, bearing in mind always the Charter's emphasis on efficiency, competence and integrity as the paramount consideration in the recruitment of staff. With regard to the desirable ranges for the geographical distribution of staff, the Twelve took note of the statistical exercises which had produced a number of alternative bases for the calculation of those ranges. They saw no need at present for a change in the basis for the desirable ranges, although careful regard must continue to be paid to the methods and factors involved.

17. The Twelve noted that the financial crisis had had an impact on the status of women in the Secretariat. Although the percentage of women in posts subject to geographical distribution had increased since 1985, a change in the data base applied to the statistics obscured the considerable net loss of women in the Professional category and above. They recognized the efforts being made to improve the present imperfect structure, but, while noting the the Secretary-General's proposals, they believed that the Secretariat could not fully realize its objective of improving the status of women in the Secretariat unless Member States nominated sufficient numbers of qualified women candidates.

18. General Service personnel constituted 70 per cent of all United Nations staff and were no less deserving of attention by the General Assembly than other categories.

(Mr. Murray, United Kingdom)

19. On the administration of justice in the United Nations, the Twelve countries welcomed the Secretary-General's report on the possible establishment of an Ombudsman, and in particular the new measures to streamline appeals procedures. They saw certain merits in the proposal for an Ombudsman but wished to be sure that such an institution would be an improvement and not merely an addition to the many layers of administration already existing in that area.

20. Mention must be made of factors which exerted a major influence over the personnel area and almost all other fields of United Nations endeavour, namely the financial crisis, the freeze on recruitment and the proposals of the Group of High-level Intergovernmental Experts. Any substantial reductions in staff must inevitably affect the environment in which the Office of Personnel Services sought to implement the various relevant legislative instructions. In the circumstances, the task of doing so and achieving the goals set out would be even more difficult. None the less, the Twelve supported the increased emphasis being placed on training, career development, rotation and mobility of staff and on the need for improved methods of performance evaluation and recruitment through competitive examination. They considered that the pressures on the Secretary-General were real and thought that Member States should be more than usually aware of his prerogatives as chief administrative officer. In that respect, they recognized the need to resume recruitment once conditions allowed, since otherwise the Organization would surely stagnate.

21. Mr. HERIJANTO (Indonesia) noted that the dominant factor in the current system of determining the desirable ranges for the geographical distribution of staff was contributions. His delegation considered that in carrying out the review called for in General Assembly resolutions 35/10 and 40/258 A, the Secretary-General was to take into account the need to achieve a balanced application of all factors relevant to the calculation of the desirable ranges, particularly the population factor. Any refinement of the methodology for calculating the desirable ranges should be consistent with article 101, paragraph 3, of the Charter. In that context, he noted the increased weight given to the membership factor; although his delegation would have preferred to see the population factor given more weight, it was pleased that it had at least been incorporated in the ranges of individual Member States. Annexes III and IV to the Secretary-General's report (A/C.5/41/6) enabled Member States to see for the first time the effect of population on their desirable ranges. It should be borne in mind that under the existing scheme the population factor was intended only to provide the Secretary-General with added flexibility. The Secretary-General had other means at his disposal as Chief Administrative Officer. Therefore, the approach outlined in Annexes III and IV deserved serious consideration since it was aimed at meeting the requirements of Article 101, paragraph 3, of the Charter.

22. As to the current composition of the Secretariat, his delegation noted that the separation of the staff of UNIDO as of 1 January 1986 and the suspension of recruitment as of March 1986 due to the present financial crisis would have a bearing on the desirable ranges as well as on the representation of Member States in the Secretariat. The situation would also be affected by any action taken by

(Mr. Herijanto, Indonesia)

the General Assembly on the recommendations of the Group of High-level Intergovernmental Experts. Therefore, the question should be considered further in the light of such action. His delegation looked forward to considering the new base figure proposed by the Secretary-General for the purpose of achieving a firm basis for calculating future desirable ranges. He hoped that the recruitment freeze would be lifted as soon as possible, thereby facilitating the process of correcting the unbalanced situation of geographical distribution in the Secretariat.

23. Mr. SUKAYRI (Jordan) said that the principle of equitable geographical distribution was a matter of serious concern to many countries. Plans must be laid to ensure a fair allocation of geographical posts at all levels of the Secretariat as soon as the recruitment freeze was lifted, especially if the General Assembly accepted the deep cuts in staff recommended by the Group of High-level Intergovernmental Experts. Staff cuts must not prejudice the interests of the least well-represented countries in the Secretariat. On the other hand, concern for equitable geographical distribution should not blind delegations to the need to ensure that the Secretariat was staffed by people of the highest efficiency, competence and integrity.

24. The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, the subregion to which his country belonged, had in recent years had a very large number of vacant posts - over 30 per cent in 1985. It was true that some countries of the subregion were unrepresented or under-represented in the Commission, but that was chiefly because they lacked qualified staff and needed to retain the expertise available to them for internal development. Accordingly, his delegation repeated a suggestion made at the previous session: that the vacant posts in ESCWA should be filled with staff from other countries in the subregion. The recruitment freeze should be lifted in the case of ESCWA to allow the necessary appointments to be made.

25. His delegation was happy to see the Secretary-General's interest in improving the status of women but cautioned that the need for a geographically balanced, high-quality body of staff must not be forgotten. The rule stipulating mandatory retirement at the age of 60 should be strictly observed, for it encouraged the recruitment and subsequent career development of qualified women and made for a fairer geographical balance of staff.

26. He expressed support for the principle that international civil servants must be guaranteed personal security and the privileges and immunities stipulated in international agreements so that they could carry out their functions unhampered. Of equal importance, however, was that international civil servants should respect the laws of the countries where they were serving.

27. His delegation supported the proposal to establish an office of Ombudsman in the United Nations, as had already been done in some other organizations. Such an office tended to simplify recourse and internal appeals procedures. He urged the Secretariat to continue its study of the matter.

28. Mrs. ARCHINI (Italy) said that her delegation fully supported the views expressed by the United Kingdom representative on behalf of the Twelve members of the European Community, but wished to voice its extreme dissatisfaction at the number of Italians employed in posts subject to geographical distribution within the Secretariat. Once again, her country was well below the bottom of its desirable range. Italy had been under-represented since the thirty-eighth session of the General Assembly although, since that time, its assessed voluntary contributions to the Organization had increased substantially.

29. Italy had been one of a number of countries visited by a special recruitment mission in March 1986. Careful preparations had been made for the mission, at considerable administrative and financial cost to the Italian authorities. However, the recruitment freeze, which had been imposed after the mission had ended, had prevented completion of the recruitment procedures for the candidates selected during the mission. Those candidates were still vainly waiting for their legitimate aspirations to be fulfilled, and had had no definite word from the Secretariat as to when that might be. The effects of such a disappointment on the candidates, and the damage to the image and the credibility of the United Nations, should not be underestimated. Her delegation therefore called on the Office of Personnel Services to complete the recruitment procedures. Such a step was long overdue and would constitute a legitimate exception to the recruitment freeze, without prejudice to any later decision taken in the light of the Organization's financial circumstances and the recommendations of the Group of High-level Intergovernmental Experts.

30. To maintain an effective and dynamic administration, any move to streamline the staff must be accompanied by a policy of recruitment by competitive methods in order to provide the United Nations with qualified staff, notably from the unrepresented and under-represented countries, in full respect for the Charter.

31. In short, her delegation demanded corrective measures to restore Italian staff to an equitable level in the Secretariat (by, among other things, competitive examinations, which it would like to see extended to recruitment at the P-3 level); it remained willing to co-operate with the Secretariat in organizing the national examinations which should have been held in Italy in 1986.

32. Mr. ZONGWE MITONGA (Zaire) commented that document A/41/627 revealed a marked drop in the number of nationals from several countries, including his own, serving in geographical posts. His delegation was very concerned because Zaire had in any event been at the bottom of the geographical distribution tables for a number of years, despite its geographical size and its contributions to the United Nations system. Several African and other countries had acquired high-level posts while his own had no staff member above the P-4 level, for all the seniority of the Zairians at that grade.

33. His country was the current chairman of the group of countries using French as their official language. He therefore wished to emphasize the importance of language training for all senior Secretariat officials, in order to ensure the universal character of the Organization. Documents must be issued and discussions

(Mr. Zonqwe Mitonga, Zaire)

in all United Nations bodies and working groups rendered in all official languages in order to permit all delegations to take an effective part in the work of the United Nations. His delegation had made a proposal in the Third Committee emphasizing the obligation to use all official United Nations languages on an equitable and rational basis. It would also continue to insist on the equitable geographical distribution of staff members, which went hand-in-hand with the principle of linguistic balance.

34. His delegation applauded the efforts, albeit slow, to raise the number of women Professional staff working in the Secretariat to 30 per cent of the total by 1990. The task was the more difficult because attainment of that goal was not the only objective: in matters of recruitment and promotions, the other aspects of the representation problem must be borne in mind at all times. The method used to calculate desirable ranges thus merited attention. He suggested that a sound basis for the calculations would be a base figure higher than the actual number of geographical posts occupied but lower than the total number of geographical posts covered by the regular budget and extrabudgetary funds. His delegation had noted the comments made by other delegations on paragraph 4 of General Assembly resolution 40/258 A. Using the population factor to redefine desirable ranges would be to his country's advantage, but would only raise the issue of equitable distribution once again. The Chinese delegation had suggested another means of incorporating the population factor: should the Secretary-General be called upon to study the matter further, the Chinese suggestion should also be considered.

35. The position of the General Service staff merited careful consideration, partly because of the size of the group and the range of its activities, and partly because of its competence and the quality of its work. His delegation welcomed the report of the Secretary-General on the matter (A/C.5/41/29) but believed that further consideration was needed in order to devise a more streamlined and uniform recruitment procedure, grade structure and promotion mechanism.

36. Mr. WESTPHAL (Federal Republic of Germany) said that the statement made by the United Kingdom representative on behalf of the European Community fully reflected the position of his Government. As a Member State severely under-represented in the United Nations Secretariat, however, his country was disappointed by the latter's efforts between 1 July 1985 and 30 June 1986 to correct the imbalance in the geographical representation of Member States. Of 188 appointments, only 45 had been of nationals of unrepresented or under-represented Member States, whereas in the previous year more than 50 per cent of all appointments had been of nationals from those two categories.

37. Stressing that competitive examinations were only one of many measures mandated by the General Assembly to correct the existing imbalances in the Secretariat, he voiced dissatisfaction with the decision to defer appointment of successful candidates from the competitive examinations held in 1985. His delegation believed that at least some candidates could have been recruited without undue strain on the Organization. It firmly supported the Secretary-General's intention to resume recruitment at the P-1 and P-2 levels as soon as possible, and

(Mr. Westphal, Federal Republic of Germany)

held that the first candidates to be recruited must be the successful candidates from the competitive examinations held in 1985. It also fully endorsed the view of the Assistant Secretary-General for Personnel Services that the competitive examinations for P-1 and P-2 posts scheduled for 1986 must be held in 1987. Everything must be done to extend competitive methods of selection, examinations in particular.

38. Mr. THORSTEINSSON (Iceland), speaking also on behalf of the delegations of Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden, said that the Nordic countries took an active interest in all aspects of personnel questions. They shared the view of the Secretary-General that the efficient functioning of the Secretariat was absolutely essential to the future of the Organization. That required not only guarantees of integrity, efficiency and competence on the part of the staff, but also faithful respect by Member States for the principles of independence and protection from interference. The Nordic delegations had noted with concern the increase in the number of cases of violations by Member States of the immunity of United Nations officials. It was imperative that in the performance of their official duties United Nations staff should be protected from loss of freedom. The Secretary-General and the other executive heads must be given continued support in their efforts to clarify the nature of each case, to secure the necessary personal protection and to restore persecuted United Nations officials to their normal functions. Some of the cases described in the Secretary-General's report (A/C.5/41/12) were indicative of a need to stress once more the duty of all Member States to co-operate fully with the Secretary-General in that regard.

39. The Nordic countries were also concerned over the substantial net decrease in the number of women in the Professional category during the past year. The corrective measures outlined in the Secretary-General's report (A/C.5/41/18) were reassuring and the Nordic countries looked forward to hearing what results had been achieved at the next session. They fully expected the Secretary-General to reach the modest target of 30 per cent of posts subject to geographical distribution by the year 1990. They had noted the views of the staff representatives as expressed in document A/C.5/41/39, and believed that the measures outlined in paragraph 18, aimed at improving the opportunities for women in the Secretariat, merited closer attention.

40. The Nordic countries had also noted the information provided on the new job classification of the General Service and related categories in New York (A/C.5/41/30) and felt that, while certain aspects of the programme were debatable, it was important to support the Secretary-General's recommendations on the issue. The new structure should therefore be approved as soon as possible.

41. Although consideration of the question of establishing an office of Ombudsman in the Secretariat had been postponed to the next session of the General Assembly, the Nordic countries wished to comment briefly on the recommendation. The concept had first been introduced in the Nordic countries, where parliaments had created the office to advise them on administrative problems and to act as intermediaries between the citizens and the public authorities. The appointment of an Ombudsman

(Mr. Thorsteinsson, Iceland)

would be a positive step, but it must be part of a process of reform aimed at simplifying the current procedures, not a new mechanism that would complicate the administration of the Secretariat further.

42. In conclusion, the Nordic countries wished to reiterate their firm support for the Secretary-General, in his capacity as chief administrative officer, in exercising his difficult task in the area of personnel management.

43. Mr. JOSHI (Nepal) said that his delegation had supported and would continue to support any measure aimed at improving the efficiency and quality of the Organization's human resources. It had been gratified to learn from the reports of the Secretary-General on the composition of the Secretariat that a number of important steps had been taken to correct the existing imbalances in the geographical representation of Member States. The 40 per cent target set by the General Assembly for the proportion of appointments of nationals of unrepresented and under-represented countries had been achieved for the first time under the medium-term plan for 1983-1985. As far as appointments between 1 July 1985 and 30 June 1986 were concerned, however, 69 per cent for nationals of Member States that were already within range seemed rather too high. The Secretary-General should continue to give the utmost importance to recruiting staff on the widest possible geographical basis, due consideration being given to nationals of the least developed countries.

44. It appeared from the report of the Secretary-General on the status of women in the Secretariat (A/C.5/41/18) that women were particularly hard hit by the financial crisis facing the Organization. His delegation hoped that efforts would continue to improve the status of women in the Secretariat and that the goal would be given the priority it deserved. It regretted that it had not been possible to implement the work plan presented by the Secretary-General to the General Assembly at its the fortieth session because of the financial crisis. It commended the role played by the Steering Committee and the Co-ordinator for the Improvement of the Status of Women in seeking to implement the action programme, and trusted that their recommendations would help to overcome the current constraints.

45. Many of the anomalies and defects generally found in national bureaucracies seemed unfortunately to have crept into the Secretariat as well. As the President of the Staff Committee had pointed out, little attention had been paid to the steady deterioration of the concept of a career based on merit and fairness. There was also general dissatisfaction among staff over the lack of incentives and of proper training facilities for enhancing their professional expertise. The absence of an adequate career development scheme was one of the most serious impediments to efficiency, and the resulting low morale was currently intensified by the mood of uncertainty that prevailed as a result of the proposed staff reductions and a general feeling that treatment in matters of promotion, transfer and appeals was not fair. He noted that there had been an increasing number of appeals and claims each year from the staff. According to the note on the administration of justice in the United Nations (A/41/640), it cost the United Nations \$24,000 to process each case filed with the Joint Appeals Board with the total cost running well over \$2 million a year. Clearly, the mechanism should be improved and his delegation was ready to support the establishment of an office of Ombudsman as proposed.

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46. Miss COHEN-ORANTES (Guatemala) said that, while other personnel questions were equally important and as closely linked to the efficiency of the functioning of the United Nations, the status of women in the Secretariat was likely to be hardest hit by measures to alleviate the current financial crisis. Her delegation shared the concern expressed by the Secretary-General in that connection and thanked him for the steps that had been taken to protect the modest progress achieved with so much effort over the past 40 years. In response to the Secretary-General's appeal, Guatemala would intensify its support for the programmes initiated by the Office of the Co-ordinator in order to prevent the current crisis from having any further impact on the prospects for improving the status of women in the United Nations.

47. To enable the Secretariat to fulfil its responsibility in that respect, all Member States must take action to permit the contribution of women to the substantive work of the Organization to be increased and thus enable it to function more efficiently. Her delegation urged all States Members, and particularly the developing countries, to nominate and support female candidates for senior posts. They would thus be working with the Secretariat to solve one of the most serious problems currently confronting the Organization, the shortage of qualified women internal candidates to fill vacancies in the higher echelons.

48. The statistical data in the various reports demonstrated the magnitude of the problem. It had emerged from the Steering Committee's first report that at that time women held only 3 of the 30 posts at the Assistant Secretary-General level and none of the posts at the Under-Secretary-General level. There was only a token presence of women at the P-5, D-1, and D-2 levels. Three of every four women in the Professional category were in fact engaged in service functions, administration, the library, the language services or public information. In the past four years, 40 per cent of the male staff recruited had entered at P-4 or above, while only 16 per cent of women candidates had entered at those levels.

49. The measures recommended by the Secretary-General to overcome the current constraints included the introduction of a vacancy management system, a review of the roster of external candidates in order to establish a short list of qualified women, and an inventory of the skills of all women in the Organization for integration into the data base of the Office of Personnel Services. Her delegation would like to know what progress had been made in putting those recommendations into effect. It would also welcome the Co-ordinator's comments on whether the current climate was propitious for putting into effect the changes envisaged by the Secretary-General, and, if so, what the most appropriate procedure for pursuing the implementation of the action programme would be, given the current uncertainty about the structure of the Organization and the freeze on recruitment. What concrete results could be achieved in the year ahead, and, more specifically, how and when did the Co-ordinator think that the specific undertaking in the report of the Secretary-General to appoint more women to the D-1 level and above could be put into effect? The impression had been given that there were not currently enough qualified women at the lower levels of the Secretariat to be promoted to such posts. If the impression was mistaken, she would be grateful if the Co-ordinator would correct it. The Secretary-General recognized, in paragraph 26 of his report, that there were at present virtually no resources to make available the training that could help to lower the "invisible barrier" that had kept so many women from assuming supervisory positions.

(Miss Cohen-Orantes, Guatemala)

50. In conclusion, she paid a tribute to the Under-Secretary-General for Administration and Management for his untiring efforts to enhance the administrative efficiency of the Organization.

51. Mr. BANDUM (Cameroon) said that, in discussing personnel questions, the Committee should bear in mind the closely related matters discussed under the report of the International Civil Service Commission and the report of the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Board.

52. In his introductory statement, the Assistant Secretary-General for Personnel Services had referred to the need to strengthen the staff of his Office and to restore its direct link with the Secretary-General in order to give it the necessary authority to put into effect the policies decided upon by the General Assembly. It would be useful to know what steps, if any, had been taken to that end. The current freeze on recruitment had been immediately prejudicial to candidates who had already passed the competitive examination for appointment. The discontinuation of the freeze should therefore benefit first those waiting to be accepted, thus strengthening the principle of recruitment through competitive examination.

53. In connection with the composition of the Secretariat, the report of the Secretary-General on the system of desirable ranges for the geographical distribution of staff in the Professional category and above (A/C.5/41/6) provided the Committee with valuable reference material. The explanation of the factors and criteria determining the desirable ranges was extremely useful. In the early years of the Organization, representation had been largely defined in relation to the scale of assessments. Granting such importance to the contribution factor, however, lost sight of the fact that the United Nations was a democratic institution and that the principle of the sovereign equality of States was enshrined in the Charter. The General Assembly had accordingly recommended, in resolution 35/210, that parity should be established between the membership factor and the contribution factor. The ratio had improved, so that the weight of the membership factor currently stood at 36.8 per cent and that of the contribution factor at 56.0 per cent, but the proportions still needed to be brought into better balance in order to ensure equitable geographical distribution. It should be remembered that the United Nations was a political organization and not a financial institution.

54. The report also referred to the establishment of the upper and lower limits of the desirable ranges for each Member State at 15 per cent above or below the mid-point of the range. His delegation would like to know whether due account was taken of those two limits in the distribution of posts or whether there was in fact a tendency to disregard the lower limit, which could distort the distribution. Equitable geographical distribution could not be measured solely in quantitative terms; it had to be viewed in real terms within each department of the Secretariat. The principle of equitable geographical distribution could not be reconciled with the grip which certain States or groups of States maintained over certain posts. It was time to apply the principle fully, which would presuppose

(Mr. Bandum, Cameroon)

the presence of developing countries in the senior and decision-making echelons of the Secretariat. The Secretary-General should put forward a definite plan for bringing that about.

55. The criteria for appointment to the Secretariat were those laid down in Article 101 of the Charter. Career prospects must accordingly, be such as to attract high-level experts. His delegation felt some concern, therefore, regarding the differences of opinion that had arisen between ICSC, the Joint Staff Pension Board and the staff in respect of the calculation of pensionable remuneration. The matter was one which could have a considerable impact on the quality of the Secretariat. The General Assembly had already urged ICSC and the Pension Board to co-operate in finding a speedy solution to the differences between them. His delegation shared the views of ACABQ on the question. A formula for calculating pensionable remuneration should be established at once, midway between the proposals of the two bodies. The pension question had an important bearing on conditions of service and his delegation reaffirmed the need to respect the Noblemaire principle.

56. In his statement to the Committee, the Secretary-General had stressed the need to ensure the independence and safety of Secretariat staff. At the same time, he had emphasized the importance of the moral integrity of the staff themselves and their respect for their obligations towards Member States. His delegation endorsed the views expressed by the Secretary-General and noted with appreciation the Legal Counsel's analysis of the situation.

57. In connection with the efforts to improve the status of women in the Secretariat, he paid a tribute to the dynamic approach of the Co-ordinator and said that his delegation was heartened by the small percentage improvement in the representation of women. It trusted that, in future efforts, due account would be taken of equitable geographical distribution so that women from all regions could make their proper contribution to the work of the United Nations.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.