

UNITED NATIONS
GENERAL
ASSEMBLY



Distr.
GENERAL

A/8098
16 December 1970

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

Twenty-fifth session
Agenda item 82

PERSONNEL QUESTIONS

Report of the Fifth Committee

Rapporteur: Mr. Mohamed EL PARADEI (United Arab Republic)

1. The Fifth Committee considered the item entitled:

"Personnel questions

(a) Composition of the Secretariat

(b) Other personnel questions"

at its 1402nd, 1404th to 1408th, 1410th, 1411th, 1413th and 1416th meetings, held between 1 and 10 December 1970.

2. The Committee had before it a report of the Secretary-General on the composition of the Secretariat (A/8156), prepared in response to General Assembly resolution 2539 (XXIV) of 11 December 1969, and a note on amendments to the Staff Rules (A/C.5/1330), submitted by the Secretary-General pursuant to regulation 12.2 of the Staff Regulations.

(a) Composition of the Secretariat

3. In his report, the Secretary-General reviewed the measures which had been taken in implementation of resolution 2539 (XXIV) as well as of those provisions of resolution 2480 B (XXIII) of 1968, which established linguistic standards for staff recruitment to be applied with effect from 1 January 1970. The report also contained the changes in the composition of the Secretariat which had taken place

during the past year and a recommendation for the Assembly's consideration of a number of guidelines to be followed by the Secretary-General in the recruitment of the staff.

4. These guidelines (A/8156, para. 43) read as follows:

"(a) In the recruitment of staff for posts subject to geographical distribution, preference should be given to qualified candidates of under-represented nationalities;

(b) If qualified candidates of under-represented nationalities cannot be found within a reasonable period, preference should be given to candidates of other nationalities of the same geographical region;

(c) In considering candidates for posts of complex duties and responsibilities, preference should be given to those who are willing to accept a career or a fixed-term appointment of not less than five years, provided that the latter appointment is subject to a period of probation to be prescribed in the Staff Rules;

(d) Special efforts should be made to recruit young men and women of the highest qualifications for service with the United Nations."

Discussion

5. In commenting on the changes which had taken place in the composition of the Secretariat during the past year, a number of delegations emphasized the persistent under-representation of individual countries and regions. Notwithstanding that under-representation, nationals of over-represented countries continued to be appointed to vacant posts, thus compounding the geographical imbalance in the Secretariat. Some delegations pointed out, however, that continuing progress was being made towards the achievement of the goal of equitable geographical distribution envisaged in the Assembly's resolutions, progress which was particularly marked when viewed over a period of several years. The Secretary-General should therefore be allowed the time he needed to correct whatever imbalances existed through the long-term recruitment plan, to which he referred in his report, bearing in mind Article 101 of the Charter.

6. While some delegations supported the Secretary-General's recommendation, in paragraph 43 (b) of his report, that preference in recruitment should be given to candidates from other nationalities of the same region when candidates of under-represented nationalities were not available, others voiced objection to the

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proposal, cautioning that it might lead to further over-representation of those nationalities which had already exceeded their desirable range.

7. Several delegations drew attention to the fact that certain departments and offices of the Secretariat were particularly uneven in their nationality composition at the senior levels. In this connexion, reference was made to the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the offices of the Under-Secretary-General for Administration and Management, the Controller and Personnel. It was also observed that, in application of the recruitment guidelines currently in effect insufficient use was being made of the population reserve under the system of desirable ranges to credit individual countries in a region. It was suggested that the process of improving the nationality composition of the staff might be facilitated by more frequent recruitment missions to under-represented countries.

8. As regards the composition of the staff by type of appointment, some representatives favoured the increase in the proportion of fixed-term staff. It was argued that the existence of a large number of career appointments contributed to aging and petrification within the Secretariat, and impeded progress towards a more equitable geographical distribution of the staff. National administrations were continually refining procedures for coping with complex problems. The store of valuable experience they had built up could be made available to the Organization through the employment of fixed-term staff. By recruiting such staff, new blood would be infused into the Secretariat and, at the same time, its geographical distribution would be improved. The use of fixed-term appointments was not inconsistent with the requirements of efficiency. Indeed, the issue was not the type of appointment held by a particular staff member, but the duration of his actual service. And since a fixed-term appointment ran for five years and could be extended thereafter, staff holding such appointments could reach the high level of efficiency required of them.

9. Other delegations, however, expressed concern with regard to the steady rise in the proportion of staff holding fixed-term appointments. An increase in the number of fixed-term staff was not without significance to the international character of the Secretariat, since some staff holding such appointments might not be able successfully to resist pressures from their home country. The growing use of fixed-term appointments to fill vacancies at senior levels had also a bearing on the promotion opportunities of those already in the service and rendered

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questionable the institution of any meaningful training programme for the enhancement of efficiency and professional development. In this context, these delegations suggested that the expedient of granting fixed-term appointments as a means of improving more rapidly the geographical distribution of the staff might be resorted to less often once the long-term recruitment plan had been put into effect.

10. Several representatives welcomed the Secretary-General's intention to recruit young men and women for service with the United Nations and stressed the importance of instituting a comprehensive training scheme for them as well as for the staff as a whole. One representative expressed the view that, in order to improve the quality and morale of the international civil service, progress should be made in the areas of recruitment, training, career development and promotion policies. Training for junior staff members, management courses for outstanding staff in the higher professional levels, and paid study leave to exceptionally gifted staff to enable them to extend or refresh their professional knowledge deserved special priority. The Secretary-General was requested to make a study of these matters.

PROPOSALS

11. At the 1408th meeting, on 4 December 1970, the representative of Pakistan introduced a draft resolution sponsored by Colombia, Indonesia, Iraq, Japan, Kenya, Pakistan, Panama, Peru and the Philippines. The text of the draft resolution read as follows:

"The General Assembly,

A

"Recalling its resolution 2539 (XXIV) of 11 December 1969,

"Taking note with appreciation of the Secretary-General's report on the composition of the Secretariat in particular the progress made towards attaining better distribution of posts by nationality and by region,

"Recognizing the need for an equitable geographical distribution of the staff of the Secretariat as between regions and within each region,

"Reiterating its interest in a long-term plan of recruitment to be prepared by the Secretary-General,

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"1. Requests the Secretary-General to continue his efforts to achieve a better geographical distribution of staff and representation of all nationalities bearing in mind the requirements of the Charter of the United Nations of efficiency, competence and integrity;

"2. Approves the following guidelines for the recruitment of staff for the Secretariat:

(a) In the recruitment of staff for posts subject to geographical distribution, preference should be given to qualified candidates of under-represented nationalities;

(b) If qualified candidates of under-represented nationalities cannot be found within a reasonable period, preference should be given to candidates of other nationalities of the same geographical region;

(c) In considering candidates for posts of complex duties and responsibilities, preference should be given to those who are willing to accept a career or a fixed-term appointment of not less than five years, provided that the latter appointment is subject to a period of probation to be prescribed in the Staff Rules;

(d) Officials assigned to a post should serve the minimum prescribed period after recruitment before they are eligible for transfer to another post;

(e) Special efforts should be made to recruit young men and women of the highest qualifications for service with the United Nations preferably through competitive examinations, providing incentive to professional and General Service staff for promotion."

B

"Noting with appreciation the Secretary-General's efforts to achieve a better linguistic balance within the Secretariat,

"Requests the Secretary-General to continue his efforts in this direction in line with the standards set in resolution 2480 B (XXIII) of 21 December 1968."

C

"Appreciating the information relating to geographical distribution of the staff of the United Nations Development Programme and the staff of the United Nations Children's Fund,

"1. Recommends that the agreed principles of equitable geographical distribution be applied to posts in the United Nations Development Programme and in the United Nations Children's Fund;

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"2. Requests the Secretary-General to include in his reports on a continuing basis information relating to geographical distribution of the staff of the UNDP and UNICEF reflecting the position at the regional as well as country level."

12. At the same meeting, the delegations of Israel and Italy proposed the inclusion of the following paragraph in the report of the Committee on the composition of the Secretariat:

"The Fifth Committee expressed its concern that women represented only 6 per cent of the senior Secretariat staff, and requested the Secretary-General:

(a) To seek the co-operation of all concerned, especially of Member Governments, in the appointment of qualified women for posts in the Secretariat especially at senior levels; and

(b) To adhere to the request of the Economic and Social Council in its resolution 1510 (XLVIII) of 28 May 1970 and include in his report to the General Assembly at its twenty-sixth session the data on women employed in the United Nations Secretariat."

13. At the 1410th meeting, on 7 December, a revision of the paragraph proposed for inclusion in the Committee's report was submitted by the sponsors. The revised text read as follows:

"The Fifth Committee expressed its concern about the under-representation of women on the staff of the Secretariat, particularly at the senior level where women comprise only 6 per cent of the staff, and requested the Secretary-General:

(a) To encourage Governments of Member States to make available qualified women to compete for positions of responsibility in the Secretariat, particularly at the senior level;

(b) To ensure that the selection, appointment and promotion of Secretariat staff at all levels is conducted without distinction as to sex;

(c) To adhere to the request of the Economic and Social Council in its resolution 1510 of 28 May 1970 and include in his report to the twenty-sixth session of the General Assembly the data on women employed in the United Nations Secretariat."

14. The representative of the United Republic of Tanzania proposed that the phrase "expressed its concern about", in the first line of the text be replaced by the word "noted".

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15. The representative of the USSR suggested that, since the issue was not one of principle, but rather concerned the practical application of a recognized principle, it did not call for the inclusion of a special paragraph in the Committee's report. Moreover, sub-paragraph (b) of the text seemed to imply that there was at present some discrimination against women in the selection, appointment and promotion of staff, a reproach which the Secretary-General did not deserve.

16. The representative of Norway associated his delegation with the observations of the representative of the USSR and proposed that the word "ensure" in sub-paragraph (b) of the text be replaced by the words "continue to ensure".

17. The sponsors accepted both amendments.

18. The Committee decided, without objection, to include in its report the proposed paragraph as amended (see paragraph 31 below).

19. At the same meeting, a revision of the draft resolution was submitted by the sponsors, who had been joined by Ghana and Mali. The revised text contained the following changes:

(a) In part A, paragraph 1, the words "at all levels, particularly at senior levels" were added after the words "a better geographical distribution of staff";

(b) In paragraph 2 (e), the word "academic" was inserted between the words "highest" and "qualifications", and the phrase "among candidates from the same geographical region" were added after the words "competitive examinations".

(c) In part C, paragraph 1 was revised to read as follows:

"1. Recommends that the Governing Council of the United Nations Development Programme and the Executive Committee of the United Nations Children's Fund be requested to consider applying the agreed principles of equitable geographical distribution to posts in the United Nations Development Programme and in the United Nations Children's Fund;"

20. At the 1411th meeting, on 8 December, the representative of Pakistan introduced a second revision, which modified the previous text as follows:

(a) In part A, the second preambular paragraph, the word "progress", was replaced by the word "efforts";

(b) In the third preambular paragraph, the word "more" was added before the word "equitable";

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(c) In paragraph 1 (a), the word "nationalities" was replaced by the word "countries", and the phrase "in general, and at higher level, in particular" was added at the end of the sentence;

(d) In paragraph 2 (b), the word "nationalities" at the beginning of the sentence was replaced by "countries" and the same word at the end of the sentence was replaced by the phrase "not fully represented countries";

(e) In paragraph 2 (c), the phrase "provided that the latter appointment is subject to a period of probation to be prescribed in the Staff Rules" was deleted;

(f) Paragraph 2 (e) was replaced by the following text:

"(e) In the interest of long-term recruitment policies special efforts should be made to recruit qualified young men and women for service with the United Nations, through the development of more objective selection methods, such as, wherever appropriate, open competitive examinations; special allowance being made to candidates whose mother tongue is not one of the official languages of the United Nations".

21. At the same meeting, the representative of India proposed that the phrase "bearing in mind the changes in nationality pattern as a result of retirement of permanent staff" be added at the end of the fourth preambular paragraph, and that the words "in all fields" be added after the phrase "particularly at higher levels" in paragraph 1.

22. A third revision of the draft resolution was submitted by the sponsors, at the 1413th meeting, on 9 December. The new text contained the following changes:

(a) In part A, the fourth preambular paragraph, and operative paragraph 1 were amended to incorporate the words proposed by India at the 1411th meeting. In addition, the word "also" was inserted before the word "representation" in paragraph 1;

(b) In paragraph 2 (b), the phrase beginning with the words "preference should be given" was changed to read: "preference should be given to qualified candidates of other countries of the same geographical region, particularly those not fully represented";

(c) In part C of the draft resolution, a second preambular paragraph was added to read as follows:

"Re-emphasizing the principle of equitable geographical distribution of posts".

(d) Paragraph 1 was deleted. The delegation of Sudan joined the co-sponsors.

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23. At the 1416th meeting, on 10 December, the representative of Pakistan introduced a fourth revision of the draft resolution, whose sponsors had now been joined by Burundi and Sierra Leone. In draft resolution A of the new text, the words "as well as the separation of fixed-term staff" were added at the end of the fourth preambular paragraph, and paragraph 2 (b) was changed to read as follows:

"(b) If qualified candidates of comparatively under-represented countries cannot be found within a reasonable period, preference should be given to qualified candidates of other not fully represented countries of the same geographical region, taking into full consideration the attainment of equitable geographical distribution of posts among regions;".

VOTING

24. At the 1416th meeting, on 10 December, before the Committee proceeded to the vote on the draft resolution before it, the sponsors accepted the following two oral amendments proposed respectively by the representatives of the USSR and of the Ukrainian SSR:

(a) In part A, paragraph 2 (e), the word "planning" would be inserted between the words "recruitment" and "policies";

(b) The words "working languages of the United Nations" would read "working languages of the Secretariat of the United Nations."

25. The sponsors also changed the text of part A by combining sub-paragraphs (a) and (b) of operative paragraph 2 into a single sub-paragraph.

26. The representative of the United Kingdom proposed to insert the words "when recruiting staff to the regional economic commissions" after the word "if" in the second sentence of the new operative paragraph 2 (a).

27. The Committee adopted the United Kingdom amendment by 24 votes to 19, with 27 abstentions.

28. At the request of the representative of Finland, the Committee voted separately on the second preambular paragraph of part C and adopted it by 45 votes to 11, with 14 abstentions.

29. The Committee adopted the revised draft resolution, as amended, by 56 votes to none, with 14 abstentions (see paragraph 33 below, draft resolution I).

(b) Other personnel questions

30. At its 1402nd meeting, on 1 December 1970, the Committee decided without objection to recommend that the General Assembly take note of the amendments to the Staff Rules (A/C.5/1330) which the Secretary-General had made in the year ending on 31 August 1970 (see paragraph 32 below, draft resolution II).

DECISION OF THE FIFTH COMMITTEE

31. The Fifth Committee decided to include the following paragraph in its report:

"The Fifth Committee noted the under-representation of women in the Secretariat, particularly at the senior level where women comprise only 6 per cent of the staff, and requested the Secretary-General:

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(a) To encourage Governments of Member States to make available qualified women to compete for positions of responsibility in the Secretariat, particularly at the senior level;

(b) To continue to ensure that the selection, appointment and promotion of Secretariat staff at all levels is conducted without distinction as to sex;

(c) To adhere to the request of the Economic and Social Council in its resolution 1510 (XLVIII) of 28 May 1970 and include in his report to the General Assembly at its twenty-sixth session the data on women employed in the United Nations Secretariat."

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE FIFTH COMMITTEE

32. The Fifth Committee recommends to the General Assembly the adoption of the following draft resolutions:

DRAFT RESOLUTION I

Composition of the Secretariat

A

The General Assembly,

Recalling its resolution 2539 (XXIV) of 11 December 1969,

Taking note with appreciation of the Secretary-General's report on the composition of the Secretariat^{1/}, in particular the efforts made towards attaining a better distribution of posts by nationality and by region,

Recognizing the need for a more equitable geographical distribution of the staff of the Secretariat among regions and within each region,

Reiterating its interest in a long-term plan of recruitment to be prepared by the Secretary-General, bearing in mind the changes in the nationality pattern as a result of the retirement of permanent staff, as well as the separation of fixed-term staff,

1. Requests the Secretary-General to continue his efforts to achieve a better geographical distribution of the staff at all levels, particularly at the senior level in all fields, and also the representation of all Member States bearing in mind the requirements laid down in the Charter of the United Nations for efficiency, competence and integrity;

^{1/} A/8156.

2. Approves the following guidelines for the recruitment of staff for the Secretariat:

(a) In the recruitment of staff for posts subject to geographical distribution, preference should be given to qualified candidates of under-represented countries in general, and at the higher level in particular; if, when recruiting staff to the regional economic commissions, qualified candidates of comparatively under-represented countries cannot be found within a reasonable period, preference should be given to qualified candidates of other countries of the same geographical region that are not fully represented, taking into full consideration the attainment of an equitable geographical distribution of posts among regions;

(b) In considering candidates for posts of complex duties and responsibilities, preference should be given to those who are willing to accept a career or a fixed-term appointment of not less than five years, inclusive of the probationary period;

(c) An official assigned to a post should serve for some minimum period after recruitment before he is eligible for transfer to another post;

(d) In the interest of long-term recruitment planning policies special efforts should be made to recruit qualified young men and women for service with the United Nations, through the development of more objective selection methods, such as, wherever appropriate, open competitive examinations, special allowance being made for candidates whose mother tongue is not one of the working languages of the Secretariat.

B

The General Assembly,

Noting with appreciation the Secretary-General's efforts to achieve a better linguistic balance within the Secretariat,

Requests the Secretary-General to continue his efforts in this direction in line with General Assembly resolution 2480 B (XXIII) of 21 December 1968.

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C

The General Assembly,

Appreciating the information contained in tables 9 and 10 of the Secretary-General's report on geographical distribution of the staff of the United Nations Development Programme and the staff of the United Nations Children's Fund,

Re-emphasizing the principle of equitable geographical distribution of posts,

Requests the Secretary-General to include in his reports on a continuing basis information relating to the geographical distribution of the staff of the United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations Children's Fund reflecting the position at the regional as well as the country level.

DRAFT RESOLUTION II

Amendments to the Staff Rules of the United Nations

The General Assembly

Takes note of the amendments to the Staff Rules made by the Secretary-General in the year ending on 31 August 1970, as set forth in his report.^{2/}

^{2/} A/C.5/1330.