



Fifteenth session
Agenda item 60

PERSONNEL QUESTIONS

- (a) Geographical distribution of the staff of the Secretariat
- (b) Proportion of fixed-term staff
- (c) Other personnel questions

Report of the Fifth Committee

Rapporteur: Mr. T.W. CUTTS (Australia)

1. The Fifth Committee considered agenda item 60, "Personnel questions", at its 790th to 800th, and at its 806th meetings.

- (a) Geographical distribution of the staff of the Secretariat
- (b) Proportion of fixed-term staff

2. The Secretary-General's report (A/C.5/833) on the geographical distribution of the staff showed that the 105 appointments made in the year under review (1 September 1959-31 August 1960) comprised 39 different nationalities, and that 90 of the officials appointed, or 86 per cent of the total, came from countries which had either not contributed staff to the Secretariat or were below or within the desirable range of posts. The report also showed that the only four vacancies for Principal Officer (D-1) and higher levels had been filled from two regions inadequately represented at those levels.

3. It was generally recognized that much remained to be done. On 31 August 1960, 10 out of 82 Member States still had no nationals on the staff, and 5 States were below their "desirable range". While some progress had been recorded since that

date, the subsequent admission of 17 new Members had accentuated the problem. Other factors stood in the way of an early solution: for example, the rights of existing staff members, the specialized nature of most of the posts to be filled, and the difficulty encountered by many small countries in releasing qualified personnel. It was urged that the situation called for sustained efforts on the part of the Member Governments and the Secretary-General, and for frequent reviews of policy and methods.

4. Some delegations contended that little real progress had been achieved since the previous report as the vast majority of posts at all levels were held by nationals of the United States and allied countries. These delegations also argued that the Secretary-General was not maintaining an objective, impartial position, but instead was serving the interests of a single group. In their opinion, paragraph 3 of Article 101 of the Charter^{1/} had to be read as an integral whole; the two sentences of that paragraph were complementary, and neither should be subordinated to the other. The United Nations was approaching universality, and its growing obligations in different parts of the world could not be fulfilled unless the various regions, with distinctive political characteristics, were adequately represented in the Secretariat. These delegations argued that the Secretariat should represent equally the three groups of Member States, which they described as the "socialist" States, the "neutralist" States, and the United States and its allies, and that, as an interim measure to this end, all recruitment from North America and Western Europe should be discontinued immediately.

5. Some delegations spoke against the suggestion for classifying the Secretariat in three representative groups. They argued that the second sentence of

^{1/} This paragraph reads:

"The paramount consideration in the employment of the staff and in the determination of the conditions of service shall be the necessity of securing the highest standards of efficiency, competence, and integrity. Due regard shall be paid to the importance of recruiting the staff on as wide a geographical basis as possible."

paragraph 3 of Article 101 of the Charter related purely to "geographical" considerations which were in any case subordinate to the paramount consideration mentioned in the first sentence of "efficiency, competence and integrity". Moreover, Article 100^{2/} obliged staff members not to seek or receive instructions from any Government or from any other authority external to the Organization, while Member States undertook to respect the exclusively international character of the responsibilities of the Secretary-General and the staff. These delegations considered that insistence on "representation" of Member States in the Secretariat might defeat the essential purpose of geographical distribution, which was to enrich the Secretariat with personnel of the highest standard drawn from, and reflecting, a broad cross-section of differing experience and differing culture.

6. On 21 November 1960, the Secretary-General made a statement in the Committee in which, while recognizing the need for further improvement in the geographical distribution of the staff, he answered criticisms of his policies and outlined his views regarding the structure of the Secretariat (document A/C.5/843).

7. Opinion was divided in the Committee regarding the method of determining a "desirable range of posts"^{3/} for each Member State. On the one hand, the view was expressed that while the present method was undoubtedly imperfect, it had

2/ This Article reads:

"1. In the performance of their duties the Secretary-General and the staff shall not seek or receive instructions from any Government or from any other authority external to the Organization. They shall refrain from any action which might reflect on their position as international officials responsible only to the Organization.

"2. Each Member of the United Nations undertakes to respect the exclusively international character of the responsibilities of the Secretary-General and the staff and not to seek to influence them in the discharge of their responsibilities."

3/ The present method was laid down in Secretary-General's Bulletin No. 77 of 21 April 1948, as follows: "As a rough guide, it shall be assumed that the numerical representation of a country on the Secretariat is reasonable if its percentage of total staff does not deviate more than 25 per cent from its percentage of total contribution to the budget of the United Nations save that this deviation should not apply in an upward direction to countries whose contribution is more than 10 per cent and that no country shall be regarded as over-represented if the number of its nationals employed in the Secretariat is less than four."

served a practical purpose and produced useful results. Being pegged to the scale of assessments, the present system reflected differences in economic situation, progressive economic growth, and population, while the provisions for minimum and maximum figures and for a margin of 25 per cent above or below the "scale-of-assessment formula" injected an element of flexibility.

8. It was, on the other hand, argued that the system was at variance with the Charter, which accorded an equality to each Member State without reference to material resources. The current concept of a desirable range of posts tended to give a preponderant influence in the Secretariat to the larger countries. It was also faulty in treating all posts equally so that a post of Assistant Officer (P-1) ranked statistically with that of an Under-Secretary. The time had come to revise the system, and to that end the Committee of Experts on the Work and Organization of the Secretariat should be invited, jointly with the Secretary-General, to review the problem and submit proposals for a new set of criteria.

9. The representative of the Secretary-General pointed out that the desirable range was regarded by the Secretariat as no more than an approximate, though useful, index of policy. The Secretariat would undertake, in the light of the discussion in the Committee, a study of other means of determining the appropriate range of posts. A number of possibilities might be considered:

(a) To adopt some form of points system based on a proportionate weighting of senior posts;

(b) To raise the "floor" for the minimum number of posts (at present, one to three posts);

(c) To introduce the principle of a floor applied not to a single Member State but to a cultural or geographical region; and

(d) To give more weight to the criterion of population in determining the desirable range of posts.

10. It was generally agreed that these possibilities might be examined by the Committee of Experts on the Work and Organization of the Secretariat.

11. Many members of the Committee suggested that the table showing the distribution of posts by geographical region (A/C.5/833, para. 13) should be omitted from future progress reports. In particular, the column showing the

ratio of staff to the median of the desirable (regional) range appeared to them to be misleading: first, because it failed to reflect national inequalities in regions which, on an over-all basis, might be adequately represented, and secondly, because even on a regional basis, it showed results that were patently unrealistic, for example, that the continent of Africa, with only forty-three staff members in the Secretariat had exceeded the median by 59 per cent, while North America, with 294 staff members, still fell short of the median by 24 per cent.

12. A number of delegations opposed the innovation^{4/} of omitting from the tables of geographical distribution (A/C.5/833) staff at the principal level (G-5) of the General Service category at Headquarters. On the other hand, it was argued that this level, to which locally recruited staff had prospects of being promoted, had been established for clerical and routine administrative duties. It would be unfortunate if a decision that it should be subject to international recruitment should place it beyond the reach of local staff at present serving at lower levels. It was the sense of the Committee that this question might be studied by the Secretary-General and the Committee of Experts.

13. In an additional submission (A/C.5/833/Add.1), the Secretary-General presented a statistical table adjusted through the inclusion of staff at the G-5 level at Headquarters.

14. It was also agreed to remit to the Expert Committee and to the Secretary-General the question of including in the scope of geographical distribution the following categories of staff: (a) staff appointed by the General Assembly or the Security Council; (b) staff recruited for service with special missions; and (c) technical assistance experts. With regard to the last-named category, the point was made that, as appointments were subject to the concurrence of recipient Governments, the Secretary-General did not have complete freedom of action in the choice of nationality.

^{4/} In the corresponding 1959 report (A/C.5/784) the G-5 level (Headquarters) had been included in the main table of geographical distribution by nationality and level (annex I, table 1) but omitted from the table of distribution by major regions (annex II).

15. As regards the ratio of fixed-term to career appointments, the Committee took note of the progressive movement towards the target set by the General Assembly in 1957^{5/} of 20 per cent of fixed-term staff. This was regarded as encouraging. The proportion had risen from 12.8 per cent in 1957 to 17.3 per cent in 1960, and that fact in itself held out the promise of further improvement in geographical distribution.

16. At the 799th meeting, a draft resolution (A/C.5/L.628) was submitted jointly by Ethiopia, Ghana, India, Sudan, Tunisia, United Arab Republic and Venezuela to which were subsequently added as sponsors Ceylon (A/C.5/L.628/Add.1) and Pakistan.^{6/} The draft resolution read as follows:

"The General Assembly,

"Having considered the reports of the Secretary-General on the geographical distribution of the staff of the Secretariat of the United Nations (A/C.5/833 and Corr.1 and A/C.5/834),

"Recalling Article 101, paragraph 3, of the United Nations Charter,

"Reaffirming paragraph 3 of the preamble to resolution 153 (II), namely, 'Whereas, in view of its international character and in order to avoid undue predominance of national practices, the policies and administrative methods of the Secretariat should reflect, and profit to the highest degree from, assets of the various cultures and the technical competence of all Member nations',

"Recognizing that the present method of determining the 'desirable range of posts' for each Member State on the sole basis of contributions to the United Nations budget is unsatisfactory,

"Noting the steady increase in the proportion of the fixed-term staff of the United Nations Secretariat,

"1. Requests the Committee of Experts appointed by General Assembly resolution 1446 (XIV) of 5 December 1959 to study and report to the Assembly at its sixteenth session criteria for determining the range of posts for

^{5/} Paragraph 2 (c) of General Assembly resolution 1095 A (XI) of 27 February 1957; Official Records of the General Assembly, Eleventh Session, Annexes, Agenda item 51, para. 129.

^{6/} Pakistan was added as a sponsor at the 800th meeting of the Fifth Committee.

each Member State with a view to securing a proper geographical distribution of the staff of the Secretariat, taking into account inter alia the relative importance of various posts;

"2. Requests the Secretary-General to intensify his efforts to implement the General Assembly resolutions on the question of geographical distribution of the staff of the Secretariat;

"3. And requests the Secretary-General to report to the sixteenth session of the General Assembly on the implementation of the above-mentioned provisions."

17. At the 800th meeting, the sponsors of the draft resolution (A/C.5/L.628 and Add.1) introduced the following oral amendments based on suggestions made by delegations in the course of the discussion:

(a) To insert a new fourth preambular paragraph reading:

"Taking into account the various views expressed by delegations during the discussion of this item;"

(b) To amend the original fourth preambular paragraph to read:

"Recognizing that the present method of determining the desirable range of posts for each Member State on the basis of the scale of assessments to the United Nations budget needs review;"

(c) To amend operative paragraph 1 to read:

"Requests the Committee of Experts appointed by resolution 1446 (XIV) of 5 December 1959 to study and report to the sixteenth session regarding the categories of posts subject to geographical distribution and criteria for determining the range of posts for each Member State with a view to securing a wide geographical distribution of the staff of the Secretariat, taking into account inter alia the relative importance of various posts;"

18. The sponsors declined a further suggestion for the replacement of the words "to intensify his efforts" in operative paragraph 2 by the words "to continue his efforts" which had been put forward on the ground that the text as it stood might be read as an implicit criticism of the Secretary-General; he had, in fact, spared no effort to comply with the General Assembly's wishes.

19. At the 800th meeting, the joint draft resolution (A/C.5/L.628 and Add.1), as amended, was approved by 63 votes to none, with 1 abstention.

20. At the 806th meeting, the Committee took note of the report of the Secretary-General on the proportion of fixed-term staff (A/C.5/834). It also agreed to a suggestion that agenda sub-items (a) and (b) - Geographical distribution and Proportion of fixed-term staff - should be merged, and considered at future sessions as a single sub-item.

(c) Other personnel questions

21. At the 806th meeting, the Committee also considered two matters submitted by the Secretary-General in document A/C.5/832, on which the Advisory Committee had presented related reports (A/4591).

(i) Interpretation of staff regulation 3.2: Education grant:
(A/C.5/832, paras. 1-12; A/4591, paras. 1-9)

22. The Committee approved, without objection, the interpretation of staff regulation 3.2 proposed by the Secretary-General (A/C.5/832, para. 10), subject to the comments of the Advisory Committee (A/4591).

(ii) Proposed amendment of rule 104.5 and appendix B of the Staff Rules:
Status of G-5 staff at Headquarters (A/C.5/832, paras. 13-17;
A/4591, paras. 10-14)

23. In view of its previous decision (para. 12 above) to refer the question of the status of G-5 staff at Headquarters to the Committee of Experts on the Work and Organization of the Secretariat, the Committee decided, without objection, to maintain for the time being the present position in respect of such staff.

Recommendation of the Committee

24. The Fifth Committee recommends to the General Assembly the adoption of the following draft resolution:

GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION OF THE STAFF OF THE
SECRETARIAT OF THE UNITED NATIONS

The General Assembly,

Having considered the reports of the Secretary-General on the geographical distribution of the staff of the Secretariat of the United Nations,^{1/}

Recalling paragraph 3 of Article 101 of the Charter of the United Nations, Reaffirming the third paragraph of the preamble to General Assembly resolution 153 (II) of 15 November 1947, namely, "Whereas, in view of its international character and in order to avoid undue predominance of national practices, the policies and administrative methods of the Secretariat should reflect, and profit to the highest degree from, assets of the various cultures and the technical competence of all Member nations",

Taking into account the various views expressed by delegations during the discussion of this item,

Recognizing that the present method of determining the desirable range of posts for each Member State on the basis of the scale of assessments to the United Nations budget needs review,

Noting the steady increase in the proportion of the fixed-term staff of the Secretariat,

1. Requests the Committee of Experts appointed by General Assembly resolution 1446 (XIV) of 5 December 1959 to study and report to the Assembly at its sixteenth session regarding the categories of posts subject to geographical distribution and criteria for determining the range of posts for each Member State, with a view to securing a wide geographical distribution of the staff of the Secretariat, taking into account, inter alia, the relative importance of various posts;

2. Requests the Secretary-General to intensify his efforts to implement the General Assembly resolutions on the question of the geographical distribution of the staff of the Secretariat;

3. Further requests the Secretary-General to report to the General Assembly at its sixteenth session on the implementation of the above-mentioned provisions.

^{1/} A/C.5/833 and A/C.5/834.