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PERSONNEL QUESTIONS

Report of the Fifth Committee (Part I)

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. At its 2353rd plenary meeting, on 19 September 1975, the General Assembly decided to include the item entitled:

"Personnel questions:

- (a) Composition of the Secretariat: report of the Secretary-General;
- (b) Other personnel questions: report of the Secretary-General"

in the agenda of its thirtieth session and allocated it to the Fifth Committee for consideration and report.

II. COMPOSITION OF THE SECRETARIAT

A. Documentation before the Committee

2. The Committee considered agenda item 104 (a) at its 1742nd, 1745th, 1750th, 1751st, 1753rd, 1754th, 1755th and 1756th meetings, held from 18 November to 2 December 1975. The Committee had before it the report of the Secretary-General on the composition of the Secretariat (A/10184). The report dealt with the issues relating to the application of the basic principles of the United Nations recruitment policy. In so doing, account was taken of the previous year's General Assembly decision laying down additional consideration for the application of that policy and requesting the Secretary-General to study possible

changes in the numerical recruitment guides. ^{1/} The report also described the methods and procedures followed in recruiting the staff of the Secretariat.

3. Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 3352 (XXIX) of 18 December 1974, the Secretary-General's report also contained information on the steps taken to achieve an equitable balance between men and women staff members of the Secretariat, particularly in senior and policy-making positions. In the customary statistical tables annexed to the report, data were given on the sex distribution of the staff of all organizations in the United Nations system and on the sex distribution of the United Nations staff in the General Service category.

4. The report contained two recommendations for the consideration of the General Assembly. The first recommendation would have the Assembly take note of the report on the understanding that definitive proposals for changes in the numerical recruitment guides would be included in the next report on the composition of the Secretariat. The second recommendation was that the effective date of the information to be included in the annual reports on the composition of the Secretariat should in future be the end of the calendar year. The proposal aimed at a more rational use of the computerized personnel information system.

B. Discussion

5. The discussion under agenda item 10⁴ (a) covered: (a) methods and procedures of international recruitment; (b) application of the principle of equitable geographical distribution; and (c) employment of women.

Methods and procedures of international recruitment

6. Several delegations noted with satisfaction certain improvements in the procedures followed in the recruitment of the staff, such as the increased use of recruitment missions and of junior competitive examinations. Those initiatives were of particular interest to unrepresented and under-represented countries and should be resorted to more frequently. Many representatives were also pleased to learn from the Secretary-General's report that during the previous year five or more candidates had been considered in nearly 40 per cent of all recruitment actions for Professional posts. They believed that academic and scientific communities, state enterprises and private corporations could be used as new channels to reach potential candidates.

7. Some delegations, however, felt that the whole recruitment procedure was still much too slow. One representative expressed the view that individual departments of the Secretariat should handle applications more expeditiously and pursue a recruitment policy more in line with that of the Office of Personnel Services.

^{1/} Official Records of the General Assembly, Twenty-ninth Session, Annexes, agenda item 81, document A/9980, paras. 43-47.

8. A number of representatives, noting that in the previous year staff members had been recruited from countries which were already adequately or over-represented in the Secretariat, expressed the view that candidates from such countries should not be recruited until the targets set for other Member States had been reached. One delegation recommended that candidates from over-represented countries should be recruited only if equally qualified candidates from under-represented Member States were not available. Two delegations doubted that the long-term recruitment plan was proving to be as effective an instrument for redressing the geographical imbalance of the Secretariat as it was originally meant to be.

9. At the request of a delegation, the Secretariat provided the Committee with figures on the turnover of staff in the Professional and higher categories for the previous four years (A/C.5/XXX/CRP.13, para. 6).

Application of the principle of equitable geographical distribution

10. While recognizing that in the previous year a certain progress had been made toward a more equitable geographical distribution of the staff, several delegations considered that the over-all situation was still unsatisfactory. A number of countries and regions such as Eastern Europe, Asia and the Far East and some Western European countries were severely under-represented. It was stressed that it would be wrong to assume that unrepresented or under-represented Member States were not able to provide highly qualified candidates for recruitment in the Secretariat. Rather, what was needed was more determination in following the guidelines concerning equitable geographical distribution of the staff set forth in several General Assembly resolutions.

11. Among the factors which were considered as leading to a delay in improving the geographical representation in the Secretariat, it was suggested that often short-term appointments were transformed into long-term ones regardless of geographical requirements, and that many contracts were extended beyond retirement age. Several delegations also believed that too many staff members - most of them from over-represented countries - held permanent contracts. Such practices made it difficult to vacate posts for the recruitment of candidates from countries which were not, or were not adequately, represented. It was felt that a gradual replacement of permanent appointments by fixed-term appointments would greatly contribute towards the achievement of an equitable geographical distribution of the staff. Some representatives suggested that permanent contracts should be eliminated.

12. Other representatives believed that an extensive use of fixed-term contracts would jeopardize the survival of an independent career international civil service. Moreover, it was suggested that an extensive use of fixed-term appointments for filling posts at the senior levels was bound to affect the efficiency of the Secretariat as a whole.

13. Several representatives considered it premature to seek immediate change in the procedure for determining desirable ranges for each Member State and for each of the seven geographical regions into which they were divided. Some delegations

questioned the justification for reducing, in calculating the ranges, the weight of the factor of contributions to the advantage of the factor of membership. One delegation believed that the number of posts allocated under the third element entering into such calculation, i.e. the population factor, should be lowered from the existing 200 to 100. One representative, while abstaining from advocating radical changes in the present system, noted what it considered to be the lack of uniformity in the application of the three main criteria governing the allocation among Member States of posts subject to the principle of geographical distribution. He emphasized in particular that the population factor was not applied in the same manner as the two other factors.

14. Some representatives expressed serious concern over the envisaged shift of emphasis from national to regional balance for the purpose of achieving a more equitable geographical composition of the Secretariat. One delegation pointed out that there were geographical regions in the world which were not homogeneous enough culturally, linguistically and in their educational and social systems. Others thought that regional representation should be viewed with mistrust, since it would tend to favour privileged positions. One delegation considered that the existing formula for the establishment of desirable ranges was satisfactory and that, in any event, possible changes should be considered only after the next revision of the scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the Organization. Several delegations saw merit in the idea that the application of the principle of equitable geographical distribution might be extended to posts with special language requirements.

15. In response to the request of a delegation, the Assistant Secretary-General for Personnel Services provided the Committee with oral information concerning appointments and promotions to Principal Officer, Director, Assistant Secretary-General and Under-Secretary-General levels for the period from June 1974 to July 1975.

16. Differing views were expressed on the desirability of using data on the composition of the Secretariat as at the end of the calendar year, rather than the end of June.

Employment of women

17. Several delegations while expressing their appreciation of the efforts made in the previous year to achieve a greater participation of women in the work of the Secretariat, felt that there still was room for improvement. It was pointed out that, since 1971, the proportion of women in Professional posts subject to geographical distribution had actually declined from 16.9 to 16.0 per cent, and that the lack of women staff members was noticeable particularly at senior and decision-making levels. Some representatives indicated that Member States should assume the responsibility for such an unsatisfactory situation since many of them did not present an adequate number of women among their candidates for recruitment in the Secretariat. Others suggested that the United Nations should set an example with regard to employment of women and try to be a step ahead of individual Member States.

18. Several representatives supported a more flexible application of the principle of equitable geographical distribution in order to allow the Secretary-General

greater discretion in the recruitment of women. Some of them proposed that a regional approach be used, so that qualified women candidates could be hired from countries within each region up to a set limit, provided that priority was given to women from the unrepresented or under-represented countries of the region. One delegation pointed out that in giving this priority the Secretary-General should give a fair chance to women candidates from adequately represented countries. Several delegations argued that the time had come to set specific goals and to agree on special measures to favour the recruitment of women. To reach potential women candidates all over the world, the use of recruitment missions should be intensified and vacancy announcements should be given wider publicity.

19. Other delegations, while sharing the general concern over the inadequate participation of women, believed that attempts to have a more balanced Secretariat in terms of sex should be made within the existing guidelines on the application of the principle of equitable geographical distribution. One delegation felt that some of the views voiced in the Committee, if accepted, would bring about a compartmentalization which would be contrary to the ideal of a single, unified Secretariat. In fact, such proposals could ultimately lead to divisions and subdivisions of the staff into not only sexual groupings but also racial, religious and other groupings as well.

20. At the request of a delegation, the Secretariat provided the Committee with information on the distribution by region and nationality of the male and female candidates included in the roster of candidates for recruitment maintained by the Secretariat (A/C.5/XXX/CRP.13, paras. 1-5, and A/C.5/XXX/CRP.13/Add.1).

21. On the status of women in the Secretariat, two delegations referred to alleged discrimination in the promotion of women staff members. Allegations of this kind called for the creation of further hedges against possible sexual prejudice. It was therefore proposed to assign to a senior official the task of reviewing the over-all position of women in the Secretariat and of investigating complaints of discrimination. One representative believed that the General Service category constituted a large potential reservoir of well-qualified women who could fill Professional posts. All such staff should be made aware of vacancies in the junior Professional grades. There were, however, views that the transfer from the General Service to the Professional category should be effected with great caution, taking into account the recommendations of the Joint Inspection Unit and the Administrative Management Service on the subject. Some delegations felt that more should be done in the area of training, both to improve the attitudes towards women and women's problems in the Secretariat and to enhance women's career opportunities. Several representatives also believed that concrete initiatives should be taken to provide day care facilities for the children of women staff members.

22. The Assistant Secretary-General for Personnel Services informed the Committee that, pursuant to an undertaking made by the Secretary-General in response to a suggestion made by several delegations in the Fifth Committee during the previous session of the General Assembly, 2/ the Secretariat's Joint Advisory Committee had established in April 1975 a Standing Committee on the Employment of Women in the Secretariat. The Standing Committee had just submitted to the Joint Advisory Committee a set of recommendations aiming at the achievement of an equitable balance between men and women staff members by the end of the decade. On the basis of

2/ Ibid., paras. 72-74.

those recommendations, the Joint Advisory Committee had proposed to the Secretary-General the adoption of several concrete measures, such as: (a) the establishment of internal targets to guide the recruitment programme of the Secretariat; (b) wider circulation of post vacancy announcements and more frequent use of recruitment missions; (c) fuller information on the qualifications and experience of all staff members; (d) extension of the competitive examinations for junior Professional posts to cover also qualified non-Professional staff already in service; (e) institution of procedures for dealing with individual grievances; and (f) periodic review of the progress achieved in implementing the measures adopted. The Secretary-General intended to provide information on the actions taken to carry out the proposals of the Joint Advisory Committee in his next report on the composition of the Secretariat.

C. Proposals and voting

23. At the 1751st meeting, on 26 November, the representative of Iran introduced a revision (A/C.5/L.1257/Rev.1) of a draft resolution which had been circulated earlier and which was sponsored by Afghanistan, Australia, Bangladesh, Denmark, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Finland, Iceland, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Liberia, Madagascar, Malaysia, Mexico, Norway, the Philippines, Portugal, Singapore, Sweden, Thailand and Zambia.

24. At the 1754th meeting, on 1 December, the Chairman of the Committee announced that New Zealand had joined the sponsors of the revised draft resolution. The representative of Iran introduced a second revision of the draft resolution (A/C.5/L.1257/Rev.2), which incorporated two amendments proposed by the representatives of Colombia and France. A second French proposal was not accepted by the co-sponsors. After further oral amendment of the last preambular paragraph and operative paragraph 3 of the revised text, Iran announced that Colombia, Mozambique and Sri Lanka had joined in sponsoring it.

25. The representative of Venezuela proposed to delete operative paragraph 3 of the revised draft resolution and requested a separate vote on it if it were retained.

26. At the 1755th meeting, on 1 December, Germany (Federal Republic of) and Turkey proposed that in operative paragraph 1 of the revised draft resolution, the word "principle" be replaced by the word "consideration". The representative of Japan, who had previously made the same proposal, asked for a separate vote on operative paragraph 3.

27. At the same meeting, Iran informed the Committee that the sponsors of the revised draft resolution could not accept the amendments proposed by the representatives of Germany (Federal Republic of), Japan, Turkey and Venezuela.

28. The Director of the Budget Division, speaking of the financial implications of the initiatives envisaged in operative paragraph 4 of the revised draft resolution, said that they could entail expenditures of up to \$15,000. However, the Secretary-General would try to absorb such additional costs within available resources and would not request, for the time being, an additional appropriation.

29. At the same meeting, the Committee:

(a) Rejected, by 32 votes to 28, with 19 abstentions, the oral amendment by Germany (Federal Republic of), Japan and Turkey to operative paragraph 1 of the revised draft resolution (A/C.5/L.1257/Rev.2);

(b) Adopted, by 55 votes to 2, with 22 abstentions, operative paragraph 3 of the revised draft resolution (A/C.5/L.1257/Rev.2), as orally amended by the sponsors;

(c) Adopted, by 83 votes to none, with 2 abstentions, the revised draft resolution (A/C.5/L.1257/Rev.2) as a whole, as orally amended by the sponsors (see para. 37 below, 'draft resolution I).

30. At the same meeting, the representative of the United States of America introduced a draft decision (A/C.5/L.1272), sponsored by Australia, Austria, Canada, Jamaica, Norway, Singapore, Sweden and the United States of America, which read as follows:

"Employment of women in the Secretariat of the United Nations

"The Fifth Committee recommends to the General Assembly that it:

"1. Commend the initial work under the Joint Advisory Committee of the Standing Committee on the Employment of Women in the Secretariat;

"2. Urge the Secretary-General to continue to take all possible measures to further the work of the Joint Advisory Committee and its Standing Committee in their efforts to promote equality of treatment of women employees of the United Nations;

"3. Request the Secretary-General to accord priority attention to the recommendations of the Joint Advisory Committee based on the work and recommendations of its Standing Committee."

31. At the same meeting, the representative of Iran introduced a draft resolution (A/C.5/L.1274) sponsored by Colombia and Iran.

32. At the 1756th meeting, on 2 December, the representative of New Zealand proposed that in operative paragraph 1 of draft resolution A/C.5/L.1274, the words ", taking into consideration the provisions of Article 101, paragraph 3, of the Charter," be inserted between the words "appropriate" and "to increase".

33. The representative of Iran, on behalf of the sponsors of the draft resolution, stated that they could not accept the amendment proposed by New Zealand.

34. At the same meeting, the Committee:

(a) Rejected, by 36 votes to 29, with 22 abstentions, the oral amendment by New Zealand to operative paragraph 1 of draft resolution A/C.5/L.1274;

/...

(b) Adopted, by 61 votes to 14, with 15 abstentions, draft resolution A/C.5/L.1274 as a whole (see para. 37 below, draft resolution II A).

35. At the 1756th meeting, the representative of Japan introduced, and orally amended, a draft resolution (A/C.5/L.1271) sponsored by Chad, the Congo, Italy, Japan and Singapore. The Committee adopted without objection the draft resolution, as orally amended by the sponsors (see para. 37 below, draft resolution II B).

36. At the request of the sponsors, the Committee deferred consideration of the draft decision in document A/C.5/L.1272 (see para. 30 above).

III. RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE FIFTH COMMITTEE

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

DRAFT RESOLUTION I

Employment of women in the Secretariat of the United Nations

The General Assembly,

Bearing in mind Articles 8 and 101 of the Charter of the United Nations, and those declarations and instruments adopted by the United Nations acknowledging the equality of status of men and women, inter alia, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, 3/ and the Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, 4/

Recalling its resolution 3007 (XXVII) of 18 December 1972 expressing a desire to avoid any discrimination between staff members on the grounds of sex,

Further recalling its resolution 3009 (XXVII) of 18 December 1972, in paragraph 3 of which it urged the organizations of the United Nations system to take appropriate measures to ensure equal opportunities for the employment of qualified women at the senior and Professional levels and in policy-making positions,

Reaffirming the request made by the General Assembly in resolution 3352 (XXIX) of 18 December 1974 that the Secretary-General and the executive heads of all organizations within the United Nations system take all necessary measures in order to ensure that an equitable balance between men and women staff members at all levels in the United Nations system be achieved by the end of the Second United Nations Development Decade and that increased attention be given to the recruitment and promotion of women as well as to the assignments given to them,

3/ General Assembly resolution 2200 A (XXI).

4/ General Assembly resolution 2263 (XXII).

Further reaffirming resolution 8 of the World Conference of the International Women's, Year, 5/

Noting the limited progress made to date in the recruitment and promotion of women in the senior and policy-making positions and the declining percentage of Professional women staff members in the Secretariat, as noted in the reports of the Secretary-General on the composition of the Secretariat,

1. Reaffirms that equitable distribution of the positions between men and women in the Secretariat is a major principle governing the recruitment policy of the United Nations;
2. Urges Member States to intensify their efforts to seek and recommend qualified women candidates for Professional posts in the Secretariat;
3. Requests the Secretary-General to make every effort during each of the next two biennia, 1976-1977 and 1978-1979, to fill a number of posts subject to geographical distribution equivalent to 5 per cent of the mid-point of the desirable range of each region for the appointment of qualified women, with priority being given to candidates from countries which are not represented or under-represented in the Secretariat, while not adversely affecting opportunities for the recruitment of qualified men from the same unrepresented and under-represented countries;
4. Further requests the Secretary-General to intensify regular and publicized recruitment missions, in co-operation with United Nations information centres and resident representatives throughout the world, in order to increase the number of women candidates for Professional posts;
5. Recommends that the Secretary-General should pay special attention in the Staff Development Programme to training which would assist women, particularly from developing countries, to increase their career opportunities;
6. Further requests the Secretary-General to include in his reports on personnel questions to the General Assembly at its thirty-first session information on steps taken to improve the status and conditions of service of women in the Secretariat and on other action taken pursuant to the present resolution.

DRAFT RESOLUTION II

Composition of the Secretariat

A

The General Assembly,

Having considered the report of the Secretary-General on the composition of the Secretariat, 6/

5/ E/5725, sect. III.

6/ A/10184.

Noting that, according to the statistical information contained in the report, 64.5 per cent of the staff members who occupy senior posts in the Secretariat are nationals of developed countries,

Noting further that the developing countries constitute 73 per cent of the membership of the United Nations,

Believing that the principle of equitable geographical distribution of the staff requires the Secretariat to reflect adequately the diversity of cultures and attitudes of all the Member States,

Further believing that to achieve the objectives and goals of the United Nations, especially with respect to the developing countries, the latter should be appropriately represented at policy-making levels,

1. Requests the Secretary-General to take such steps as he considers appropriate to increase the number of staff members recruited from among nationals of developing countries for senior posts in the Secretariat;
2. Requests the Secretary-General to report to the General Assembly at its thirty-first session on the results of his efforts.

B

The General Assembly,

Taking note of the observations contained in paragraphs 7, 9, 10 and 11 of the report of the Secretary-General, 6/

Requests the Secretary-General to take all necessary measures to recruit the staff members subject to geographical distribution from the countries unrepresented and under-represented in the Secretariat, in particular from the developing countries, in accordance with Article 101, paragraph 3, of the Charter of the United Nations.
