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Chair: Mr. Tommo Monthe (Cameroon)
*Chair of the Advisory Committee on Administrative
and Budgetary Questions:* Mr. Ruiz Massieu

Contents

Agenda item 141: Human resources management

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda item 141: Human resources management
([A/72/123](#), [A/72/129/Rev.1](#), [A/72/209](#), [A/72/325](#),
[A/72/325/Add.1](#) and [A/72/558](#))

1. **Ms. Lopez** (Assistant Secretary-General for Human Resources Management), introducing the Secretary-General's report on the composition of the Secretariat: staff demographics ([A/72/123](#)), said that the report contained a demographic analysis of the composition of the staff of the Secretariat from 1 July 2016 to 31 December 2016. In response to the Secretary-General's recommendation at the seventy-first session that the reporting period should be changed to run from January to December instead of July to June, the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions had recommended in its previous report on the matter ([A/71/557](#)), endorsed by the General Assembly in its resolution [71/263](#), that the Assembly should request the Secretary-General to reflect data for the transitional period, from July to December 2016, in a report to be submitted to the Assembly at its seventy-second session.

2. The number of staff in the Secretariat had decreased by 1.2 per cent during the transitional period, from 40,131 to 39,651, reflecting a decrease of 331 staff at the United Nations Mission in Liberia and of 809 staff at 45 other entities, and an increase of 660 staff at the remaining 52 entities. Between June 2013 and December 2016, the staff of the Secretariat had decreased by 4 per cent. The ratio of staff on permanent or continuing appointments had increased from 18 to 25 per cent while the ratio on fixed-term appointments had decreased from 78 to 67 per cent, as a result of two continuing appointment exercises. The ratio of female staff had increased from 33.9 to 35.1 per cent, the average staff age had increased from 43.4 to 44.8 years and the number of Member States represented in posts subject to geographical distribution by a number of nationals between or including the lower and upper limits of the desirable range had decreased from 125 to 102. While, with the exception of the current report, which covered the transition period, staff demographic information was presented annually and on an aggregate basis in the Secretary-General's composition reports, it was available monthly at the staff member level through the online reporting tool HR Insight.

3. Introducing the Secretary-General's report on amendments to the Staff Regulations and Rules ([A/72/129/Rev.1](#)), she said that the General Assembly had decided in its resolution [70/244](#) to change the compensation package of staff in the Professional and higher categories and the mandatory age of separation

for staff members. The report presented the amendments required for United Nations common system organizations to implement a mandatory age of separation of 65 for staff appointed before 1 January 2014, and the revised education grant scheme. Other amendments were proposed to provide clarity or revise provisions on the basis of best practices and jurisprudence. The Secretary-General proposed to amend staff regulation 9.2, which set the mandatory age of retirement, and to add a new rule 13.13 to reflect staff members' acquired right to separate at their normal retirement age of 60 or 62, as defined under the Regulations of the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund. In accordance with General Assembly resolution [70/244](#), the proposed change would be implemented as of 1 January 2018.

4. Admissible expenses under the revised education grant scheme would be reimbursed on the basis of a seven-bracket sliding scale rather than the current single rate of 75 per cent. The same maximum amount in United States dollars would be applicable to all countries, as opposed to the current scheme based on 15 currency/country zones. Admissible expenses would include tuition, tuition in the mother tongue and enrolment-related fees. Capital assessment fees should be covered outside the education grant scheme. The grant would be payable up to the end of the school year in which the child completed four years of post-secondary studies or attained a first post-secondary degree, subject to the upper age limit of 25 years. Boarding assistance would be provided in the form of a \$5,000 lump sum, independently of the global sliding scale, to staff members whose children boarded at a primary or secondary school outside the duty station, which must have a hardship classification of "A" to "E" or, in exceptional cases, "H". Education grant travel would be payable only to staff members in receipt of boarding assistance. The entitlement to additional boarding assistance and education grant travel reimbursement for staff members serving in designated duty stations would be discontinued. The changes were reflected in the proposed amendments to the Staff Regulations and Rules and would be implemented as of the school year in progress on 1 January 2018.

5. The other proposed amendments included clarification of the Organization's policy that staff rules 4.14 and 4.16 applied only to recruitment examinations for posts in the Professional category. Under the proposed amendment to rule 10.4, the point at which a staff member could be placed on administrative leave would be clarified, and allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse would be included as an instance in which a staff member could be placed on

administrative leave without pay. In rule 11.5, the deadline for filing an appeal would be aligned with the deadline indicated in the statute of the United Nations Appeals Tribunal. In article 2.3 of Appendix D, coverage would be extended to staff members who performed official duties at an authorized location off United Nations premises, a practice known as telecommuting or teleworking.

6. Introducing the Secretary-General's report on practice in disciplinary matters and cases of possible criminal behaviour, covering the period from 1 July 2016 to 30 June 2017 (A/72/209), she said that the report provided an overview of the administrative machinery with respect to disciplinary matters; a summary of cases in which disciplinary measures had been imposed; and statistics on cases received by the Office of Human Resources Management, cases completed and the disposition of completed cases. The report also included information regarding the outcome of appeals against disciplinary measures since the establishment in 2009 of the United Nations Dispute Tribunal and the United Nations Appeals Tribunal, and information on cases of proven misconduct and criminal behaviour of which the Organization had informed Member States. Continuing the practice established in the Secretary-General's tenth report on the matter, the current report provided explanations of the considerations taken into account by the Secretary-General when deciding what measures to impose. That was a delicate task, as the information provided must not breach staff members' right to confidentiality. While equality of treatment and consistency were essential, the decision regarding which measure to impose was informed by the facts and circumstances of each case.

7. **Mr. Ruiz Massieu** (Chair of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions), introducing the related report of the Advisory Committee (A/72/558), said that, with regard to the composition of the Secretariat, the Advisory Committee recalled its previous recommendations regarding the analytical quality of the report and the need to understand the reasons for the trends with a view to developing corrective measures and policy enhancements. The Advisory Committee reiterated its recommendations regarding the need for greater efforts to address the increase in the number of Member States in the unrepresented and underrepresented categories since 2013. No progress had been made in addressing the General Assembly's concerns regarding the growth in senior appointments and the top-heaviness of the Secretariat, and the Advisory Committee was concerned at the upward shift in the grade structure and the resulting fragmentation of leadership responsibilities.

8. The administrative instruction on investigations and disciplinary matters, which was still under internal review, must be promulgated as a matter of priority. With regard to amendments to the Staff Regulations and Rules, greater clarity was needed in the proposed amendments to staff rule 10.4 (a), relating to administrative leave.

9. **The Chair** drew the Committee's attention to the note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the Joint Inspection Unit on knowledge management in the United Nations system (A/72/325); his comments and those of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination thereon (A/72/325/Add.1); and written statements, circulated to the Committee, by the Joint Inspection Unit and the Chief Executives Board.

10. In accordance with General Assembly resolution 35/213, he invited a representative of the staff of the United Nations Secretariat to make a statement.

11. **Mr. Richards** (Designated representative of the staff unions of the United Nations), speaking on behalf of the staff of the Secretariat and of the funds and programmes, said that the staff unions supported the proposed alignment of the Staff Regulations and Rules with the General Assembly's decision to enable staff in post on 1 January 2018 to work until the age of 65. With regard to the decision to review the mobility policy, the previous managed mobility exercise, held in July 2016, had resulted in the reassignment of only 22 of the 241 interested staff, despite the large number of staff assigned to conduct the exercise.

12. The staff unions were concerned about the proposed global service delivery model. The Secretariat had several administrative centres that offered varying levels of price and quality, and services to suit different clients' needs. The roll-out of Umoja a year previously had improved transparency in pricing, reduced costs and increased the efficiency of administrative service provision. The proposed model, however, would eliminate competition among centres and replace it with a monopoly provider that had no incentive to lower costs, raise standards or innovate. It would increase the distance between clients and service providers, make it harder for clients to obtain services in their local language, and decrease speed, quality and client satisfaction.

13. The staff unions had long called for a diverse workplace, free of sexual harassment, in which women were not at a disadvantage. The Secretary-General had stated in his system-wide strategy on gender parity that the higher rate of departure of women in mid-career could be addressed only through better funding for

childcare; shared, extended parental leave; and outreach and leadership training. The sexual harassment prevention policy must be updated and the administrative instruction on investigations and disciplinary matters, for which consultations had been completed the previous year, must be issued. The targets and timelines for achieving gender parity should be realistic and should take into account current demographic situation, the shrinking pool of posts, the forecast annual retirement rate of 0.5 per cent, the fact that more women than men left the Organization in mid-career, the average age of 41 years on entry on duty and the need to ensure geographical diversity and promotion opportunities.

14. In analysing budget submissions for the 2018–2019 biennium with a view to promoting rejuvenation and controlling costs, the Committee should take into account the staff unions' concerns about the long-term trend of reducing the number of junior posts while increasing the number of senior ones.

15. The General Assembly, in its resolution [65/247](#), had urged the Secretary-General to consider granting five-year fixed-term contracts to staff members who had completed five years of continuing service with good performance ratings but who fell outside the post envelope, in order to encourage longer-term workforce planning. Some entities, however, including the Office of Internal Oversight Services, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia and the Department of Management had failed to do so. The result was a two-track system, additional administrative workload and medium-term uncertainty for high-performing staff. The Secretary-General should be urged to grant five-year contracts consistently under the conditions stipulated.

16. **Ms. Pereira Sotomayor** (Ecuador), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the United Nations was engaged in coordinating global efforts to address a range of challenges, and, as the Organization was people-centred, the contribution of its staff, who often risked their lives to advance its objectives, was essential to realizing the aspirations of the Charter. United Nations staff must have a diverse, flexible and dynamic environment in which to work and must be motivated and given adequate compensation to serve the rest of the world. The Group acknowledged the dedication and sacrifice of those staff, and attached great importance to human resources management.

17. Given that 18 Member States were unrepresented in the Secretariat and 44 were underrepresented, the

Group was concerned that individuals from overrepresented States had been appointed to 31 posts subject to geographical distribution, more than from any other category. That reflected a trend that had been ongoing since 2013, while the number of unrepresented and underrepresented States had increased. In accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, staff should be recruited on as wide a geographical basis as possible, and the system of desirable ranges had been established in 1960 to measure progress towards that objective. The proportion of female staff had increased to 35.1 per cent, but the proportion of women in senior positions was less than 50 per cent. The Group would be interested to know how many women in senior positions were from developing countries.

18. A dynamic staffing structure was linked to the rejuvenation of the Organization, but the average age of Secretariat staff had increased to 44.8 years. A younger workforce should be recruited to ensure that institutional knowledge was transferred and capacity built following the separation of other staff. The Secretary-General should report to the General Assembly on his efforts to address the top-heaviness of the Secretariat, the upward shift in the grade structure and the Organization's apparent reluctance to recruit or retain young professionals.

19. The Secretary-General stated in his report on disciplinary matters ([A/72/209](#)) that the responsiveness of investigating entities and the quality of investigative reports had improved. Rather than provide an overview of all cases relating to allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse, however, he mentioned only the cases involving civilian personnel disciplined during the reporting period. He should provide references to other United Nations reports relating to such exploitation and abuse, to explain the number of cases presented. The Group would seek to establish accountability for the delay in finalizing the administrative instruction on investigative and disciplinary matters.

20. The Group would seek further information regarding whether the previous recommendations on the time required to fill a post, which had increased beyond the 120-day benchmark to 163 days in 2015 and 202 days in 2016, had been followed, and the reasons for which the benchmark had been exceeded.

21. The Staff Rules must reflect the scope and consequences of General Assembly decisions, and the relevant details must be reflected in proposed amendments to the Regulations submitted for the Assembly's consideration. The Secretary-General had endeavoured to provide detailed statistics in his reports, but had included limited analysis of the trends observed,

the policy implications and the corrective measures to be taken. If mistrust between the Secretariat and the Member States was to be eliminated, systemic issues in human resources management must be addressed.

22. **Mr. Wang** (Singapore), speaking on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), said that human resources were the Organization's greatest asset. The development of human talent was essential to the success of any country or institution, and the Secretary-General should give human resources development the importance it deserved. The United Nations operated in a complex, fluid global environment, and a dynamic, motivated workforce was critical to ensuring that it could meet the challenges facing it. The Group noted the Secretary-General's efforts to reform the management and human resources system.

23. While the highest standards of efficiency, competence and integrity were essential in the recruitment and performance of international civil servants, the staff composition must reflect the Organization's diverse, international character through more balanced gender and geographical representation. Despite the efforts of the Office of Human Resources Management, gender and geographical representation in the Secretariat was inequitable, especially at the senior levels. The Secretary-General's commitment to gender parity was admirable, but such parity should not come at the cost of geographical representation. The Secretary-General stated in his report on the composition of the Secretariat (A/72/123) that the proportion of staff from Asia-Pacific States had increased from 19.1 per cent in 2015 to 19.6 per cent in 2016, but those 55 States were underrepresented in the Secretariat, since they constituted 28.5 per cent of the United Nations membership. Previous General Assembly resolutions on human resources management had called on the Secretary-General to ensure as wide a geographical distribution of staff as possible throughout the Secretariat. Accordingly, the Secretary-General should ensure that nationals of underrepresented countries, especially developing countries, were given fair consideration for every job opening at the United Nations, in line with Assembly resolution 71/263.

24. The Secretary-General should implement a more refined performance management system throughout the Organization, particularly at managerial and senior levels. The changes should be continuously assessed to evaluate their impact and ensure that systems remained transparent, credible and fair. The Group welcomed the Secretary-General's intention, stated in his reform proposals, to begin his 360-degree reviews at the Under-Secretary-General and Assistant Secretary-General

levels. The report of the Joint Inspection Unit on knowledge management in the United Nations system (A/72/325) called for such management to be a strategic priority in all United Nations organizations. Only if knowledge was recognized as a core asset could the United Nations become a learning organization, capable of adaptation and change. The Secretary-General should work with United Nations system organizations to develop knowledge management policies aligned with the organizations' mandates and objectives, which would contribute to the common goal of a more coordinated, integrated system.

25. In his report on practice in disciplinary matters and cases of possible criminal behaviour (A/72/209), The Secretary-General, mentioned 123 cases of staff misconduct including abuse of authority, sexual exploitation and abuse, and theft and misappropriation. The Secretary-General should address such cases in a timely manner, take appropriate action in relation to those proven guilty, and promote high standards of integrity and personal accountability to establish a culture of ethics.

26. **Mr. Burity** (Angola), speaking on behalf of the Group of African States, noted that the Secretary-General's report on the composition of the Secretariat (A/72/123) covered the six-month transitional period from 1 July to 31 December 2016. The Group looked forward to receiving the Secretary-General's report covering the period from 1 January to 31 December 2017, which should provide the General Assembly with more extensive analysis of and reasons for trends, at the seventy-third session, as endorsed by the General in its resolution 71/263.

27. The Group gave high priority to equitable geographical representation in the Secretariat, and was concerned that the number of Member States whose representation was in the desirable range had decreased by 18 per cent, from 125 to 102, and that more staff from overrepresented countries than from any other category had been appointed to posts subject to geographical distribution. The Group would seek to learn the reasons that had resulted in that situation despite the General Assembly's appeals for the Secretariat to recruit staff on as wide a geographical basis as possible, and would seek information regarding progress in the implementation of the General Assembly decision regarding the desirable ranges system to improve geographical representation. It would be useful to receive an initial analysis on the inclusion in the report of two new tables — giving a breakdown of all Secretariat staff by regional group and geographic region.

28. The Group was concerned regarding the increasing number of high-level posts, which ran counter to the Organization's objective of being more agile and field-oriented. It requested clarification regarding the reasons for the delay in the implementation of the 120-day benchmark mandated by the General Assembly for filling posts, and the lack of effort to rejuvenate the Organization.

29. In his report on his practice in disciplinary matters and cases of possible criminal behaviour (A/72/209), the Secretary-General had provided an overview of the action taken in such cases. He should do more, however, to address allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse, as called for by the Advisory Committee. The Group would seek further information regarding the progress made in ensuring that speed and quality were the criteria for disposing of cases.

30. The Group would seek further information regarding the proposed amendments to the Staff Regulations and Rules (A/72/129/Rev.1), which must reflect decisions of the General Assembly and of the Administrative Tribunals. The Group would carefully examine the proposals related to the retirement age and allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse.

31. **Mr. De Preter** (Observer for the European Union), speaking also on behalf of the candidate countries Albania, Montenegro, Serbia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey; the stabilization and association process country Bosnia and Herzegovina; and, in addition, Armenia, Georgia, Liechtenstein, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, said that, following the General Assembly's adoption of resolution 71/263 on human resources management, his delegation looked forward to discussion of the strategy on such management, to be presented by the Secretary-General at the seventy-third session. United Nations staff were essential to the fulfilment of mandates, and the Organization must be able to attract staff who met the highest standards of efficiency, competence and integrity, in accordance with the Charter. The actions of staff must reflect the Organization's values, and the organizational culture must enable staff to realize their full potential. His delegation welcomed the proposal in the Secretary-General's report entitled "Shifting the management paradigm in the United Nations: ensuring a better future for all" (A/72/492) to the effect that human resources management should be improved and be focused on the field. It welcomed the proposals for simplified human resources policies and procedures, improved workforce planning with more flexible deployment, faster recruitment procedures, mobility of personnel, and enhanced performance management. High priority should be given to rightsizing the

Secretariat. Although the Secretary-General had made a commitment to achieving gender parity in his senior appointments, urgent system-wide action was needed to redress the gender imbalance, particularly at the senior level and in field operations. His delegation looked forward to receiving all the Secretary-General's proposals, but the Committee should focus on time-bound issues and urgent business, and should therefore complete its consideration of the agenda item as soon as possible to allow the Secretary-General to develop his proposals.

32. **Mr. Alyahya** (Kuwait) said that his delegation supported the Secretary-General's reform initiatives in relation to development, peace and security, and management. Kuwait had signed the political declaration for United Nations reform in September 2017 and would cooperate with the Secretariat in the implementation of the reform to ensure transparency. Kuwait attached great importance to investment in human resources, which were an essential driver of progress and should be used to develop the Organization's work, particularly in the context of the Secretary-General's reforms.

33. The Sustainable Development Goals must be implemented. Some of the Goals focused on education, innovation and growth and should serve as goals for the development of the Organization itself. In order for States to implement the Goals, the skills of United Nations staff should be strengthened, particularly at offices away from Headquarters.

34. The Secretary-General's report on the composition of the Secretariat: staff demographics (A/72/123) showed that no young Kuwaitis had been recruited to the United Nations through examinations up to the end of 2016. The matter was of great interest to Kuwait, and he looked forward to the country being represented in the Organization in the future. Young Kuwaitis should be supported and prepared for work at the United Nations with a view to appointment after their competence was confirmed during a period of employment in the young professionals programme. Since his country had entered the programme in 2012, 30 young Kuwaitis, men and women, had participated. Kuwait commended the Organization's achievements in promoting gender equality in the Secretariat, particularly in senior posts. His delegation wished the Secretary-General every success in his reform initiatives and looked forward to equitable geographical representation of Member States at all levels and in all United Nations entities.

35. **Ms. Norman Chalet** (United States of America) said that the United Nations was essential in forging the path to a more just and peaceful world and had no

greater asset than the dedicated women and men who served it. Well-managed human resources were essential, and over the years the Member States had endorsed many initiatives to improve performance and to recruit, develop and retain high-performing individuals in accordance with the Charter. Pending the introduction of the Secretary-General's report on management reform at the current session and of the updated human resources management framework at the seventy-third session, the Committee should focus on ensuring that the United Nations was as effective, efficient and nimble as possible.

36. The Organization should expedite recruitment so that it remained a viable employment option for talented candidates. Strong, empowered leadership was essential in rewarding outstanding performance and addressing underperformance. The number of women staff members should be increased and the underrepresentation of certain countries, including the United States, should be addressed. The United Nations leadership should continually review its resources to ensure that they were optimally configured for the fulfilment of mandates, in order to keep the Organization relevant.

37. **Mr. Fukuda** (Japan) said that diversity was a defining feature of the United Nations, and the diversity of staff was an asset to the Organization. His delegation welcomed the Secretary-General's system-wide strategy on gender parity, intended to transform the institutional culture so that staff could realize their full potential. The Secretary-General should achieve such parity as a matter of urgent priority. His delegation was concerned about the increase in the average age of staff since 2013 and the focus on junior levels in post reductions. Since the new mandatory age of separation would be implemented by January 2018, the Secretary-General should facilitate an influx of young, diverse staff and enable them to develop in order to rejuvenate the Secretariat. Human resources management was essential to the Secretary-General's reforms, and his commitment was essential to the establishment of a modern organization and a global workforce. The challenges in such management must be addressed in compliance with the Charter of the United Nations. His delegation looked forward to the presentation of an updated human resources management framework, including steps to recruit more staff from underrepresented Member States, at the General Assembly's seventy-third session.

38. **Mr. Gohar** (Pakistan) said that human resources were the backbone of any organization, and Pakistan gave the highest priority to a dynamic United Nations workforce. Comprehensive workforce planning was essential to human resources management, and the

highest standards of performance, integrity and accountability were essential for an independent international civil service. Human resources management reforms would enhance accountability, efficiency and effectiveness at the Organization. His delegation welcomed the efforts of the Secretary-General and the Office of Human Resources Management to ensure continuity in the reforms, whose impact must be evaluated so that they could be refined.

39. The Secretary-General had provided detailed statistics in his report on the composition of the Secretariat (A/72/123), but limited analysis regarding trends and their causes. Diversity was essential to multilateralism, but since 2013 more staff from overrepresented countries than from any other category had been appointed to posts subject to geographical distribution. More staff from unrepresented and underrepresented Member States, particularly developing countries, should be recruited. The principle of equitable geographical representation was enshrined in the Charter, and the system of desirable ranges had been established to ensure that all countries were adequately represented. Initially, only one factor, Member States' contribution to the regular budget, had been used to determine the desirable ranges, until the fact of membership and population had been added in 1962. Much had changed since then, but disparities in the Secretariat remained. The Committee should make efforts to reduce such disparities. Peacekeeping contributions should be taken into consideration in any review of the desirable ranges system.

The meeting rose at 11.30 a.m.