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**FORTY-SECOND SESSION**

*Official Records\**



FIFTH COMMITTEE  
30th meeting  
held on  
Friday, 13 November 1987  
at 10 a.m.  
New York

**SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 30th MEETING**

Chairman: Mr. SINGH (Fiji)

later: Mr. AMNEUS (Sweden)

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

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 122: PERSONNEL QUESTIONS (continued) (A/41/640; A/42/636; A/C.5/41/14; A/C.5/42/3, 7, 14, 24, 28 and 37)

1. Mr. DASHKEVICH (Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic) said that the Secretariat of the United Nations should properly reflect the political, national, cultural and linguistic variety of the world. His country, as was well known, supported the efforts of the Secretary-General to restructure the Secretariat, increase its efficiency and effectiveness and eliminate duplication of its activities. At the same time, it believed that no State or group of States should be accorded advantages at the expense of others. Any staff reductions, including those at senior levels, or restructuring should be carried out in strict accordance with the fundamental principle of equitable geographical distribution. The prospects for his country's representation in posts subject to geographical distribution were, in the context of the current recruitment freeze, most disturbing, and his delegation could not help but agree with the Secretary-General that the recruitment freeze was a blunt instrument, which operated haphazardly and further distorted the geographical distribution of posts in the Secretariat.

2. Examination of document A/42/636 indicated that the suspension of recruitment was in danger of seriously impeding the implementation of programmes mandated by the General Assembly. The suspension also placed certain Member States, including his country, at a disadvantage in relation to other States, in that it did not allow for the normal replacement of staff members employed on fixed-term contracts, as a result of which his country had already lost five posts. The consequent distortion in the composition of the Secretariat ran counter to the spirit and letter of the Charter. It was the view of his delegation that the freeze should apply only to overrepresented States. Such a restriction would have the added advantage of making it possible to recruit qualified women from unrepresented and underrepresented States for Professional posts and thus to progress towards the General Assembly's target of 30 per cent for the representation of women in posts subject to geographical distribution by 1990. It was a source of regret that none of his own country's women candidates had yet been accepted for employment by the Secretariat, constituting as that did an instance of discrimination.

3. The paramount principle of equitable geographical distribution must also be applied with respect to the system of desirable ranges for the geographical distribution of staff in the Professional category and above, since it was through the application of that system that Member States exercised their right to equitable representation in the Secretariat. In view of the current restructuring process, it would be premature at the present stage to take a final decision on any alteration in the structure of and criteria for those ranges.

4. His country's political and financial commitment to the United Nations gave it the right to ensure that account was taken of its interests with respect to personnel questions. It looked forward to working in a constructive manner with the Secretariat to ensure its proper representation and would, as in the past,

(Mr. Dashkevich, Ukrainian SSR)

welcome United Nations personnel missions on a regular basis. At the same time, it remained opposed to the extension of the competitive examinations to recruitment for posts at the P-3 level.

5. Mr. KASTOFT (Denmark), speaking on behalf of the 12 States members of the European Community, said that it was the responsibility of all Member States to see that the process of reform initiated by General Assembly resolution 41/213 was carried out in an orderly manner. However, it was for the Secretary-General to implement reform in the field of personnel management, and the Twelve therefore welcomed assurances that the Secretariat was giving urgent consideration to implementation of the related recommendations. An efficient, competent and committed staff was essential if the United Nations was to carry out its work. If the difficult circumstances created by the current financial crisis persisted for too long, the United Nations would progressively lose its ability to attract and retain the highly qualified staff which it needed.

6. Committed as they were to a truly independent and highly competent international civil service, the Twelve wished to re-emphasize the importance they attached to the principles set forth in Articles 100 and 101 of the Charter. Provided that the paramount requirement for efficiency, competence and integrity was met, priority in recruitment should be given to candidates from unrepresented or underrepresented countries. At the same time, no post should be considered the exclusive preserve of any Member State, it being essential that recruitment to all posts should be open to nationals of all such States. Further competitive examinations, which tended to improve the quality of the Secretariat, should be held again in 1988, with a view to securing the broadest possible geographical representation.

7. With regard to the various alternative methods, presented in document A/C.5/42/7, for the calculation of desirable ranges for the geographical distribution of staff in the Professional category and above, the Twelve endorsed the Secretary-General's decision to base the new interim ranges for 1987 on a figure of 2,700 posts and supported his suggestion that the base figure should be reduced further in order to reflect the actual number of posts occupied. As for the appropriateness of incorporating a share of the population factor into the range of each Member State, the Twelve noted that such a change would make the system of ranges much more rigid and believed that the issue should be subject to careful consideration. They also drew attention to the increase in the weight given to the membership factor since the adoption of General Assembly resolution 34/219, as well as the decline in the weight given to the contribution factor, and reserved their positions with respect to further changes in the relative weight of those two factors.

8. The Twelve appreciated the endeavours of the Secretary-General to pursue the issue of arbitrary arrests and detentions of United Nations officials with the Governments concerned. In view of the lack of any apparent improvement in the situation and the continued violation of privileges and immunities by certain Member States, the Twelve again appealed to those Governments to put an end to such

(Mr. Kastoft, Denmark)

acts. The detention of Mr. Liviu Bota by the Romanian authorities, in violation of Article 105 of the Charter, was a cause of particular concern, as was the case of Mr. Alec Collett. Mention of them should, however, in no way be interpreted to detract from the importance of the other cases mentioned in document A/C.5/42/14.

9. The Twelve welcomed the Secretary-General's decision to accord high priority to the improvement of the status of women in the Secretariat and hoped to see further progress towards the General Assembly's target of 30 per cent for the representation of women in posts subject to geographical distribution by 1990, the achievement of which depended on the identification and nomination of qualified women candidates by Member States. The Twelve noted the Secretary-General's intention to extend the functions of the Co-ordinator for the Improvement of the Status of Women in the Secretariat for a period of six months, prior to a smooth transfer of the Co-ordinator's functions to the Office of Human Resources Management.

10. With regard to the contents of document A/C.5/42/28, the Twelve welcomed the suggestions and measures designed to reform the Secretariat's processes of internal justice and looked forward to the submission of further suggestions in the Secretary-General's report to the forty-third session of the General Assembly.

11. The Twelve also looked forward to hearing further details of the vacancy management plan developed to limit the impact of the recruitment freeze and the consequent uneven distribution of vacancies. The Secretary-General should at the same time be preparing a more coherent career development scheme, related to the promotion system, which, provided it was based on merit, should be an important management tool and also respond to the reasonable aspirations of the staff.

12. Mr. NYGARD (United States of America) said that his delegation supported the Organization's efforts to achieve a leaner and more efficient Secretariat. In order to ensure the provision of a qualified and independent international civil service, and thus the future viability of the United Nations, the recruitment of staff must take place in strict accordance with Articles 100 and 101 of the Charter. It was interesting to note that the number of unrepresented countries had been reduced by two and the representation of women improved during the current recruitment freeze. His delegation wished to emphasize the importance of maintaining a balance in the recruitment of Professional staff between permanent appointments, which allowed for continuity and the development of long-term expertise, and fixed-term appointments, which facilitated the infusion of new ideas and provided management with flexibility to meet changing job requirements. It was, at the same time, essential that equal recruitment opportunities be provided to nationals of all Member States and that no post should be considered the exclusive preserve of any State. In view of the great importance it attached to the principles expressed in Articles 100 and 101 of the Charter, his delegation proposed that the current session's personnel resolution should stress the need for a balance between fixed-term and permanent appointments, as well as the principle of open competition for all posts.

(Mr. Nygard, United States)

13. With respect to the base figure for the calculation of desirable ranges for the geographical distribution of staff in the Professional category and above, his delegation believed that the calculations based on figures of 2,700 and 2,550 posts provided a more accurate reflection of the actual number of posts, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 41/206 C. While unable to accept a movement towards parity between the membership and contribution factors, it did support the decision to incorporate a share of the population factor into the range of each Member State and particularly the second alternative mentioned in paragraph 12 of document A/C.5/42/7.

14. His delegation agreed with the general feeling expressed at the forty-first session that the same flexibility should be applied both upwards and downwards from the mid-point of the desirable ranges. The current procedure for adjusting the ranges of Member States between general reviews was, however, unsatisfactory in that it led to a creeping expansion of the membership factor. The expansion of the population factor to take into account increases in the number of posts subject to geographical distribution was also excessive, and his delegation believed that only seven out of every additional 100 posts should be added to the population factor with seven out of every 100 posts lost being deducted from that factor in similar fashion. All other new posts should be assigned in accordance with the membership and contribution factors in effect at the time.

15. The increased representation of women at Professional levels and above was encouraging, but more still needed to be accomplished. His delegation was confident that the 1988-1989 work programme outlined in document A/C.5/42/24 would further improve the status of women in the Secretariat. It also wished to reiterate its continued support for the compulsory use of competitive examinations at the P-1 and P-2 levels, as well as the use of internal examinations for promotion from the General Service to the Professional category, with a view to ensuring an objective recruitment process and, given the apparent success rate of women in such examinations, providing an effective instrument to increase their representation in the Secretariat.

16. His delegation continued to be concerned over the arrest, detention and abduction of United Nations officials, including Mr. Liviu Bota, and supported the Secretary-General's efforts to resolve such problems. International civil servants should not be subjected to such treatment, and all responsible authorities were urged to co-operate in working for the officials' release.

17. The Secretary-General's proposed reforms with respect to the administration of justice at the United Nations were welcome, as would be his report to the forty-third session of the General Assembly on further action in that regard. Careful monitoring was essential to ensure the efficiency of the appeals process.

18. Mr. SADAT (Afghanistan) said that his delegation attached great importance to the equitable distribution of Secretariat posts in accordance with the desirable ranges and fully supported measures to achieve that goal. According to the report on the system of desirable ranges (A/C.5/42/7) 43 per cent of Member States were

(Mr. Sadat, Afghanistan)

unrepresented, underrepresented or overrepresented in 1987. Furthermore, of the total number of new appointments in the last year, only 16 per cent were from unrepresented and underrepresented countries. Only by recruiting the staff of the United Nations on the widest possible geographical basis would the Organization properly reflect the world's social, economic, political and cultural variety. There should be a ban, therefore, on appointing large numbers of personnel from overrepresented countries. There should also be strict observance of the standards of efficiency, competence and integrity required by the Charter.

19. His delegation welcomed the improvement in the recruitment of women reflected in the report of the Secretary-General (A/C.5/42/24). That positive trend should continue and special attention should be paid to the recruitment of women from unrepresented and underrepresented Member States. The efforts of the Secretary-General to recruit more women for Professional and decision-making posts should continue, in conformity with the principles of equal opportunity and equitable geographical representation.

20. His delegation agreed with the Secretary-General that respect for the privileges and immunities of United Nations officials was also a question of respect for the Organization. It shared his concern and anxiety, therefore, about the security of staff members and violations of their privileges and immunities. Observance of the Convention on the Privileges and Immunities of the United Nations was not only a positive contribution to the improvement of friendly relations among States but also enhanced a nation's international prestige. The Democratic Republic of Afghanistan's respect for that Convention, and for the Charter and General Assembly resolutions, was unswerving and would continue. At the same time, it reaffirmed the necessity of absolute respect by the staff for the laws and customs of Member States, particularly of the countries in which they resided and worked. They should do nothing which might be regarded as a violation of the security and domestic laws of Member States. In that connection, his delegation endorsed the statement by the Secretary-General that the privileges and immunities of officials were granted in the interests of the organizations and not for the personal benefit of the individuals concerned. It hoped that United Nations staff in various parts of the world would observe that principle strictly and would not use their immunity for personal political ends or for any other action that might jeopardize the national security of Member States. In the case of the reference to Afghanistan in paragraph 13 of the report of the Secretary-General (A/C.5/42/14), the persons mentioned had been arrested for security-related offences. The Government had promptly informed the relevant United Nations offices of their arrest and had kept them informed of the court proceedings and the final position of the court on the offences. The detainees had been given full legal rights, including the right to defence. The Afghan authorities had provided facilities for various representatives of the United Nations to visit and converse with them. Those representatives had expressed satisfaction over the treatment of the detainees and the conduct of the legal and judicial authorities. Paragraph 12 of the report of the Secretary-General referred to a number of positive developments during the last year. The persons mentioned had been arrested for anti-State activities and sentenced to different terms of imprisonment. On the basis of the

(Mr. Sadat, Afghanistan)

amnesty declared after the announcement of the policy of national reconciliation, they had been released before the completion of their sentences. His Government would continue to make constructive efforts to preserve the privileges and immunities of United Nations staff members and to discharge its international responsibilities fully in order to make the United Nations more effective in fulfilling its peaceful purposes.

21. Mr. MENDEZ (Philippines) said that it was encouraging to note that the ratio of women in posts subject to geographical distribution had, for the first time, risen above 25 per cent and that the situation of unrepresented and underrepresented States had shown a slight improvement. At the same time, the recruitment freeze continued to limit the possibilities for improvement. Although his delegation understood why the freeze had been imposed, it would not favour extending the freeze or using it as the principal means of achieving the 15 per cent reduction in staff. He noted that the situation with regard to the representation of underrepresented or unrepresented States in senior-level posts remained largely unchanged and called on the Secretary-General to accelerate implementation of corrective measures not only in the Secretariat but also in the extrabudgetary programmes and he referred briefly to a number of tools which the Secretary-General could use for that purpose. In that connection, his delegation again applauded the Secretary-General's intention of taking up relevant recommendations of the Group of High-level Intergovernmental Experts to Review the Efficiency of the Administrative and Financial Functioning of the United Nations (Group of 18) with the relevant governing bodies.

22. Turning to the question of desirable ranges he said that since resolution 41/206 C expressed the desirability of relating the base figure to be used in calculating the ranges to the actual number of posts subject to geographical distribution his delegation favoured a base figure of 2,700. It would prefer to maintain flexibility both upward and downward from the mid-point of the ranges as was provided under the current system. His delegation agreed that more weight should be given to the population factor and that the Organization should move immediately to parity between the membership and contribution factors. In short, it was clear that the recruitment and promotion process needed to be further improved in order to satisfy the legitimate expectations of Member States.

23. Mr. ETUKET (Uganda) said that reform measures should not be directed only towards achieving savings through staff cutbacks but should provide an opportunity to evolve objective personnel policies geared to the establishment of an independent, efficient, competent and motivated staff. Every effort should be made to ensure that posts were filled with due regard to the principle of equitable geographical distribution.

24. He expressed the hope that the Assembly would be able to reach a decision on a new system of desirable ranges at the present session. The new system should be simple and equitable and should also reflect a practical movement towards parity between the membership and contribution factors. His delegation shared the concern expressed by others regarding the recruitment freeze, which was adversely affecting

(Mr. Etuket, Uganda)

the geographical distribution of staff. Whenever exceptions were made to the freeze, priority should be given to nationals of underrepresented States.

25. He also expressed concern at the continuing detention without charge of a number of staff members and supported the Secretary-General's efforts to secure the release of all staff members detained. At the same time, he pointed out that all international civil servants had a reciprocal duty to respect the legislation of the host States.

26. Finally, he welcomed the report of the Secretary-General on the improvement of the status of women in the Secretariat (A/C.5/42/24) and was encouraged by the efforts to increase the representation of women particularly at the higher levels.

27. Mr. MILLS-LUTTERODT (Ghana) agreed with the conclusion reached by the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination at a recent meeting to the effect that confidence must be restored in the institutions and procedures regulating the personnel and administrative structures of the United Nations and that there must be the political determination to utilize them in taking decisions on personnel questions in order for the Secretariat to be effective and productive. He noted with appreciation the efforts of the Secretary-General to secure the release of staff members who had been detained in violation of the privileges and immunities of officials of the United Nations.

28. Turning to the composition of the Secretariat, he said that in terms of regional distribution glaring disparities existed, since the quota for the entire African region was equal to or less than that for some individual countries. His delegation expected to see some positive changes in that area concerning desirable ranges he noted that, since the introduction of the concept of parity, in resolution 34/219, much progress had been made towards closing the gap between the weight accorded to the membership factor and that accorded to the contribution factor. That gradual approach should be continued. Thus further intermediate steps were needed before parity was achieved. With regard to the population factor, any change that introduced rigidity into the system for calculating ranges should be avoided. His delegation therefore favoured the methodology outlined in paragraphs 16 and 17 of document A/C.5/40/6.

29. His delegation supported the Secretary-General's efforts to increase the proportion of women in the Professional category and above. One way of achieving the 30 per cent target for women in the Secretariat would be to limit recruitment to women during a three-year period.

30. His delegation would support any scheme that strengthened the authority of the Secretary-General particularly when disciplinary action was called for. It looked forward with interest to the reforms which the Secretary-General planned to implement in a number of areas, including the administration of justice. However, he pointed out that the staff should be fully consulted and that their views should be taken into account in the administration of justice. That was particularly true in the case of the Ombudsman system, the success of which would hinge on its enjoying the confidence and support of management as well as the staff.



31. Mr. MURRAY (Trinidad and Tobago) noted with pleasure the progress that had been made towards increasing the percentage of women in posts subject to geographical distribution.

32. Referring to the issue of staff-management relations, he said that since it was not easy to identify "management" in the United Nations there was little real negotiation between the staff and the employers. When the Committee considered proposals from the Secretary-General or reports of the Pension Board and the International Civil Service Commission, it considered them from the perspective of what Member States could accept, and the staff were not part of the consultations. That inevitably contributed to low morale. Staff had a right to negotiate the package that made up their conditions of service. However, since they obviously could not be party to negotiations among Member States, some mechanism should be established whereby the staff and the employers could negotiate and compromise either before or after intergovernmental consultations took place.

33. In general, personnel management was an area that had traditionally received too little attention. The establishment of an Office of Ombudsman seemed almost inevitable. However, such a sensitive post could not be affected by short-term financial considerations. It must be a full-time post and the Ombudsman must be given explicit authority and accountability while also preserving the essential element of confidentiality.

34. At the previous meeting the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Resources Management had been unfairly forced, it seemed, into accepting unspecified case histories of alleged injustices. He would undoubtedly see to it that any injustices were corrected; however his delegation would appreciate an assurance from the Assistant Secretary-General that all cases of alleged injustices would be dealt with in the prescribed manner and that certain cases would not be given priority consideration simply because they had been highlighted in the Committee. All complaints should be handled expeditiously and justly, irrespective of the gender of the complainant. Moreover, when undertaking reforms, it was essential to look closely at personnel and personnel management policies, since there would be no point in ending up with a structure that was efficient in theory, if the staff were disgruntled. He would welcome clarification from the Co-ordinator for the Improvement of the Status of Women in the Secretariat and from DPI concerning the purpose of the brochure entitled "What about women?", for whom was it intended, what it had cost to produce, who had printed it, and what personnel resources had been used in its preparation? The brochure pointed out that the Secretary-General had proposed that priority should be given to the advancement of women. That proposal was unlikely to enhance the prestige of the United Nations given the many other problems facing the international community.

35. Finally, he suggested that the concern expressed by many delegations regarding the violation of the privileges and immunities of officials of the Organization could be expanded to include the plight of the family of staff members who were currently in detention. He hoped that delegations would seriously address the personnel and other problems with a view to finding concrete solutions.

36. Ms. KINGSMILL (Australia) said that her delegation attached high priority to the development and maintenance of an efficient and economical international civil service. At a time when the role of the United Nations was being questioned, it was important to demonstrate to the Member States which financed the Organization that personnel practices criticized in the past were being addressed and resolved. In that regard, her delegation welcomed the personnel-related recommendations of the Group of 18. Their implementation was a vital task of the Secretary-General and of the relevant bodies. Her delegation shared the conviction of the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Resources Development that the reform programme would result in a leaner and better-administered Secretariat.

37. The complex task of implementing those recommendations was made more difficult by the fact that many of the decisions on personnel matters might have to take account of the changes expected to flow from the deliberations of the Special Commission of the Economic and Social Council. The Secretary-General should be commended for the work already done and Member States should allow him to continue to manage staff reductions in a comprehensive way. It was most inappropriate for political pressures to be brought to bear in an attempt to have exceptions made to recommendation 15. Her delegation welcomed the use of a system of vacancy management and staff redeployment to handle staff reductions and felt that the establishment of procedures of that kind was long overdue.

38. The recruitment freeze was not, of course, a satisfactory long-term staffing policy since it led to an irrational distribution of resources. Her delegation expected that, in the longer term, more rational procedures would be applied to ensure that staff numbers reflected the more carefully defined responsibilities of different organizational units.

39. Her delegation welcomed the introduction of modern management techniques in the United Nations. In the past, the lack of adequate policies concerning personnel and career development and office automation had been glaring deficiencies and a cause of over-staffing. It supported the Secretary-General's statement that the current reforms were necessary not only to increase cost effectiveness and rationalize one utilization of resources but also to strengthen the United Nations, and would try to show the understanding that he sought. Nevertheless, it strongly supported the request of the Advisory Committee that the Secretary-General's revised estimates should be accompanied by information on staffing in tabular form to show the proposed outcome of the review being carried out in implementation of recommendation 15. It was vital for Member States to be kept fully informed of progress in that matter. There should be tables showing areas where staff had been released as a result of the elimination or consolidation of offices; which staff had been redeployed; and the total number of surplus posts resulting from the exercise. Member States would then be able to judge the progress made in achieving the 15 per cent reduction.

40. Her delegation was deeply concerned about the number of United Nations and specialized agency staff who were under arrest and detention or were missing. It fully supported the Secretary-General's efforts to secure the release of those detained, many of whom had not been charged. It urged all Member States to respect

(Ms. Kingsmill, Australia)

the privileges and immunities of officials in order to allow the organizations to carry out their duties without fear for the well-being of their officials.

41. On the system of desirable ranges for the geographical distribution of the staff, her delegation was inclined to support a base figure of 2,550 as being close to the target of the 15 per cent staff reduction approved at the preceding session of the General Assembly. It continued to oppose any move towards parity between the membership and contribution factors in calculating the ranges and believed that the contribution factor should remain predominant. The Chinese proposal to incorporate a share of the population factor into the range of each Member State might reduce the Secretary-General's flexibility at a time when he needed it most and could result in increased overrepresentation of some States.

42. The issue of equal opportunity for women in the United Nations was important to her delegation. In the past, it had been concerned at the low level of participation by women in the policy work of the Organization and its implications for programmes and activities of concern to women. It therefore commended the progress made in implementing the recommendations of the Steering Committee for the Improvement of the Status of Women. It welcomed the appointment of two women as Under-Secretaries-General and the promotion of three to the D-2 level, and was pleased to note that the percentage of women in posts subject to geographical distribution had risen to 25.7 per cent. It appreciated the problems caused by the recruitment freeze in implementing a number of recommendations and trusted that, when the freeze was lifted, the number of women recruits, particularly to middle-level and senior positions, would be increased so as to achieve an overall participation rate of 30 per cent by 1990.

43. In order to meet that objective, the post of Co-ordinator for the Improvement of the Status of Women should be retained for at least another year and then be reviewed. If the post was extended for only six months, much of the current process of reform and renewal would take place without special attention to the situation of women. That could well result not only in failure to meet the agreed objectives but in a return to the situation prior to 1985. The Co-ordinator should be allowed to complete her tasks so that the United Nations could become a model equal-opportunity employer and fulfil its own commitment to the principles endorsed by the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

44. Her delegation remained concerned about the way in which justice was administered and grievances redressed in the Organization. It regretted that the situation should have deteriorated to such an extent that it was reducing the Organization's efficiency and had therefore become a concern of the Fifth Committee. Her delegation welcomed the proposed administrative measures to speed up procedures and reduce backlogs without introducing new formal procedures. It looked forward to a report on the matter at the next session, and would like to see a document containing comparative statistics on the number of cases heard and resolved, and the number pending.

45. Mr. HAAS (Federal Republic of Germany) said that his delegation's general views on the item had already been presented by the representative of Denmark, speaking on behalf of the 12 States members of the European Community. He wished to comment specifically, however, on recruitment for Professional posts subject to geographical distribution. Since his country was still underrepresented, it followed very closely the performance of the Secretariat in correcting the existing imbalance in the geographical representation of Member States. Under the new system of calculating desirable ranges, his country had almost reached the lowest point of its range, but, in fact, six fewer of its nationals were currently working in the Secretariat than in 1986, and the improvement in its position was thus apparent rather than real. He shared the concern expressed regarding the considerable number of appointments of nationals from overrepresented countries and from countries at the upper level of their desirable range. He was glad that at least some of the successful candidates from the competitive examination held in the Federal Republic of Germany in 1985 had been appointed in 1987, and that the appointment of a few others was planned. It was an encouraging sign of growing recognition by the Secretariat that external competitive examinations for nationals from unrepresented and underrepresented countries were an effective method of improving geographical distribution, and that new blood was needed in order to avoid stagnation. His delegation, therefore, called upon the Secretary-General to recruit all the successful candidates from the competitive examinations held in 1985. His delegation hoped that competitive examinations would be held in 1988 for nationals of the Federal Republic of Germany.

46. It was not enough for a country to be within its desirable range; the principle of proper equitable geographical distribution required that it be adequately represented in senior and policy-formulating posts also. The number of nationals of his country in such posts continued to be unsatisfactory. That situation did not accord with his country's position as the fourth largest contributor to the regular budget and the third largest donor to the Organization's operational activities.

47. Mr. AKPALOU (Togo) welcomed the efforts made by the Secretary-General to implement the provisions of General Assembly resolution 41/206 C regarding the composition of the Secretariat. On the question of desirable ranges, his delegation considered that the base figure should be determined in the light of the current high vacancy rate within the Secretariat. It further considered that a better balance should be achieved between the contribution and membership factors, the latter being intended to reflect the principle of the sovereign equality of Member States on which the Organization was founded. Such a balance would enable all Member States to be more fairly represented. The recruitment freeze must not be allowed to impair programme execution or the equitable geographical distribution of posts among Member States. Since equitable distribution had not yet been achieved, when recruitment began again the Secretary-General should remedy the imbalance by recruiting nationals of unrepresented and underrepresented Member States. It was also important for policy-making posts to be included among those subject to geographical distribution, so that all Member States could be represented at all levels. His delegation hoped that, in future, the developing countries would be better represented at the higher levels.

(Mr. Akpalou, Togo)

48. Turning to the question of privileges and immunities, he stressed the important role played by the staff of the United Nations in implementing the Organization's decisions and achieving its objectives. The problem of respect for the privileges and immunities of officials of the United Nations and specialized agencies was one of great concern to his country. Some States, however, arrested and detained officials, imposed restrictions on official and private travel and taxed salaries, in violation of the co-operative relationship that should exist between United Nations staff and Member States. The report of the Secretary-General (A/C.5/42/14) showed that between 1 July 1986 and 30 June 1987, 123 staff members had been arrested or detained, in most cases without trial. His delegation welcomed the efforts made by the Secretary-General and the United Nations Security Co-ordinator to secure the release of the detainees and urged them to continue their activities. It noted with satisfaction that some States had released the staff members they had been holding, and urged those which had not yet done so to act similarly in the interest of the Organization as a whole.

49. Another violation of the privileges and immunities of officials of the Organization was the taxation by some States of United Nations salaries. Because the Organization was experiencing the most serious crisis of its existence, emergency measures had had to be taken which had demanded sacrifices of the staff and had resulted in a deterioration in their conditions of service. In the circumstances, his delegation urged compliance with the provisions of the Convention on the Privileges and Immunities of the United Nations providing for the exemption from taxation of salaries and emoluments paid by the Organization.

50. His country was also concerned by the restrictions imposed by some countries on official travel. Member States should co-operate with United Nations officials charged with implementing the Organization's decisions. Officials, in turn, must not use their privileges and immunities in order to engage in activities not related to their functions. Togo had always regarded the objectives of the Organization as its own and accordingly spared no effort to provide officials of the United Nations system serving in its territory or on mission there with the best possible conditions of work. It urged all Member States to bear in mind the Secretary-General's statement that the privileges and immunities of officials were granted in the interests of the organizations and not for the personal benefit of the individuals themselves and that respect for the privileges and immunities of officials was, therefore, a question of respect for the organizations.

51. Increasing the participation of women in the process of economic and social development was a matter of great concern to Togo. It was, therefore, particularly interested in the status of women in the Secretariat. It noted with satisfaction the considerable progress towards the target of 30 per cent for the representation of women in posts subject to geographical distribution. Despite the financial crisis, the percentage of women in such posts had increased. In the higher categories there had been a considerable improvement, and the proportion of women on promotion registers had also increased. However, the distribution of women in posts subject to geographical distribution by region of origin was uneven. The percentage of women as compared with the total number of posts for

(Mr. Akpalou, Togo)

Africa was declining, whereas in other regions it was increasing. His delegation hoped that the Secretary-General would take steps to correct that imbalance. It would have preferred table 3, showing Professional staff in posts subject to geographical distribution by region and gender (A/C.5/42/24), to have shown distribution by Member State. It hoped that in future a table could be given showing the number of women in posts subject to geographical distribution from each member State, with a view to greater transparency regarding the recruitment of women and respect for the principle of equitable geographical distribution. It also expressed the hope that, in future, the Secretary-General's recruitment plans would take into account the very low level of representation of the developing countries.

52. Mr. DRAKAKIS (Greece) said that his delegation shared the views expressed on the agenda item by the representative of Denmark on behalf of the 12 States members of the European Community. However, it wished to add some further comments on certain points concerning the composition of the Secretariat to which it attached particular importance. If the Secretariat was to be truly international and objective, the principle of equitable geographical distribution of posts in the Professional category must be respected. The system for determining a minimum and maximum level of participation for each member State should be strictly applied, while taking into account the need to recruit staff of the highest standards of efficiency, competence and integrity. Unfortunately, there were still countries, including Greece, which were unrepresented or underrepresented. The Secretary-General should make every effort to bring new blood into the Organization and to fill vacancies from those countries or from countries which had not yet reached the mid-point of their desirable ranges. His delegation accordingly reiterated its strong support for the holding of national competitive examinations and urged the Secretary-General to make wider use of that method, especially in unrepresented or underrepresented countries, until the proper level of representation was reached. The method was effective not only in improving the existing geographical imbalance but also in recruiting the most competent and efficient staff. His delegation therefore called upon the Secretary-General to recruit, as soon as possible, the successful candidates in the most recent competitive examinations to fill the vacancies for which those examinations had been held.

53. The principle of equitable geographical distribution should also be applied when staff were recruited for senior and policy-making posts. He stressed the inadequate representation of Greek nationals at the policy-making level and hoped that that situation would be duly taken into account in future recruitment. In conclusion, he expressed his delegation's pleasure at the improvement of the representation and status of women in the Secretariat. It would support the Secretary-General strongly in all his future efforts in that regard.

54. Mr. MOHIUDDIN (Bangladesh) said that his delegation hoped for rapid progress in the recruitment of Secretariat staff on the widest possible geographical basis. Bangladesh had always appealed for a more balanced method of calculating desirable ranges based on contribution, membership and population factors. Parity among

(Mr. Mohiuddin, Bangladesh)

those three factors must be established rapidly in accordance with General Assembly resolution 34/219. The membership factor reflected the sovereign right of Member States, and hence, there should not be so much discrepancy between the membership and contribution factors. It was true that more weight could be assigned to the population factor, but paragraphs 13 and 14 of the report should not hinder the implementation of General Assembly resolution 41/206 C. More Secretariat posts at senior and policy-making levels should be held by nationals from developing countries.

55. The continuing recruitment freeze had negative implications for the geographical balance in the Secretariat. The freeze - essentially an emergency measure - should not be used as a policy tool. Indeed, the freeze had resulted in an uneven and distorted vacancy pattern. Lifting the freeze would pump new blood into the Secretariat and improve both its geographical and "gender" balance. Bangladesh also supported the continuation of recruitment by competitive examination.

56. The increased number of women in posts subject to geographical distribution and the appointment of 14 women despite the recruitment freeze were encouraging. He hoped that that positive trend would continue and more nationals of developing countries would be appointed.

57. Mrs. ARCHINI de GIOVANNI (Italy) said that her delegation fully shared the views of Denmark, which had spoken on personal questions on behalf of the 12 States Members of the European Community. Italy continued to be underrepresented in the Secretariat despite its steadily increasing contributions to the Organization, both regular and voluntary. The Italian Parliament had been extremely critical of the low number of Italians in Professional posts subject to geographical distribution. As a result, it might be difficult for the Government to justify its policy of continued support for the United Nations. Italy was aware that the financial crisis had left the Secretary-General no choice in certain matters. However, if reform was to make the Secretariat more efficient and dynamic, the recruitment of qualified persons and equitable geographical distribution must be guaranteed. That was particularly true in the case of unrepresented or underrepresented countries. To that end, a national examination should be held in 1988 to recruit young Italian candidates for posts at the P-1 to P-3 levels. Italy, which had administered a national United Nations examination in 1984, was prepared to assist the Secretariat in arranging another one.

58. Mr. AMNEUS (Sweden) took the Chair.

59. Mr. PASCAL (France) said that his delegation agreed fully with the statement made by the representative of Denmark on behalf of the States Members of the European Community. Since the initiation of major changes and the restructuring process, personnel questions had become more vital than ever. While reform was necessary for greater administrative efficiency, the salary freeze, in effect for nearly three years, had surely had severe effects. Staff members in all departments and at all levels were justifiably concerned over the financial

(Mr. Pascal, France)

crisis. His delegation hoped that the reform process would bring about a rapid solution to that crisis.

60. In his statement, the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Resources Management had spoken of the human problems created by reform and raised fundamental questions about the role of the Organization and the ethics of personnel policy. Delegations would be expected to respond to those questions in the weeks and years to come.

61. A sound personnel policy could not be maintained without fresh recruitment. In that connection, the competitive examination was the most appropriate method for selecting candidates on the basis of competence, which should be the most important criterion for recruitment.

62. Continuing training was vital to career advancement, particularly in the technical skills that would enable the United Nations to keep abreast of the changing times. Internal promotions should reflect a linguistic balance, which, in turn, implied an equitable geographical distribution. Every unit of the Secretariat should strive to respect the principles of linguistic and geographical balance.

63. Ms. FRANGIPANI CAMPINO (President, United Nations Staff Union) said that the views of the staff on the status of women, the security and independence of staff members, conditions of service in the field and the situation of staff in the Professional and General Service categories were included in the annual report presenting the views of the staff representatives of the United Nations Secretariat (document A/C.5/42/37). The report focused special attention on the administration of justice and, in that context, the Staff Union welcomed the Administration's decision to accept the unanimous recommendations of the Joint Appeals Board. The decision constituted an important step towards improving the system of justice and guaranteeing due process in the Secretariat.

64. In 1986, the Staff Union had embraced the prospect of reforms which would ensure the integrity, prestige and delivery capacity of the Organization. However, the commitment of the staff was not enough. If reform was to succeed, the Organization must have the financial resources it needed in order to remain viable while the reform process was in progress. No amount of sacrifice on the part of staff would be sufficient if Governments were not equally open to examining their assumptions.

65. Staff members had responded to the crisis by willingly absorbing extra work, but morale was low. That was not because of their aversion to change, but rather because they had been the targets of cruel innuendo and unfounded criticism which had culminated in a deferral of promotions and the withholding of increases.

66. The financial constraints imposed by non-payment of contributions were making it necessary to take a rigid approach to reform. A prime example of that rigidity was the relentless pursuit of the 15-per-cent staff cut. That percentage had been



(Ms. Frangipani Campino)

determined not on the basis of any methodology, but rather by political negotiation. It had been adopted without any systematic analysis of programme priorities or needs.

67. A traditional union would have insisted on saving all jobs. However, the United Nations Staff Union had taken no such stance, and had not objected in principle to staff reductions. Even so, it was becoming increasingly apparent that it would be highly inappropriate to slash precisely 1,178 posts from the regular budget. Across-the-board cuts of that magnitude would, indeed, have an effect on programmes. Cuts were even planned in Secretariat departments that had already been restructured prior to the reform process. That inflexible, bureaucratic approach was a direct consequence of the financial stranglehold exercised by certain Member States which failed to meet their Charter obligations.

68. In the regional commissions, 15 per cent cuts in already small specialized units could well result in a 50-per-cent loss of productivity or the elimination of basic programmes. Nowhere was staffing more tailored to programme requirements than in the Department of Conference Services (DCS). Even though it quantified its work, guarded against overstaffing and had abolished posts as a result of the introduction of new technologies, DCS was not even close to achieving the 15-per-cent target. Further cuts would have an unavoidable impact on the number of meetings that could be serviced and the number of documents that could be produced in a given year.

69. Similarly, the Department of Public Information (DPI) must not be modernized at the expense of its staff. Respect must be maintained for principles that had been painstakingly developed in DPI over the years. Those principles included the consciousness of a mix of cultural perspectives from which a unique "United Nations awareness" had evolved. The Staff Union was concerned that the international balance of staff and programming should not be compromised in the interest of expediency. Scepticism over the granting of permanent contracts was another worrying development.

70. The increasing use of outside consultants and contractors by a number of departments might be convenient, but must be weighed against other more long-term considerations such as quality and consistency of performance and the loyalty of staff members. The increasing use of contractors, almost always drawn from the immediate area, would also mean a loss in the Organization's cultural diversity. Moreover, the use of outside contractors did not necessarily result in cost savings. The Organization had often paid hundreds of thousands of dollars to outsiders who had little familiarity with the United Nations and felt no loyalty towards it for work that could have been done by in-house staff.

71. Change must also be evaluated in terms of its long-term consequences. For example, staff cuts at the senior levels might be instinctively appealing, but they also limited opportunities for career advancement. As the average civil service career spanned more than 20 years and did not always follow a linear progression, provision must also be made for training. Two or three months of specific training at a career turning-point would be far less costly than losing productivity by

(Ms. Franqipani Campino)

having staff members learn on the job by trial and error, or than terminating one staff member and recruiting another. Training was a prerequisite for successful redeployment of staff to programme areas where they were most needed. Training programmes fostered the initiative which the Organization needed if it was to remain relevant and effective in a changing world.

72. Member States must not make the staff scapegoats for the United Nations complex political organizational and financial problems, but should consider them allies in the search for solutions to those problems. While Member States were responsible for establishing policy, they must give the staff the freedom to explore new approaches and to adapt to new needs.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.