



Secretariat

ST/IC/87/63

24 December 1987

INFORMATION CIRCULAR

To: Members of the staff

From: The Under-Secretary-General for Administration and Management

Subject: Implementation of General Assembly resolution 41/213 - Recommendation 15 of the Group of High-level Intergovernmental Experts to Review the Efficiency of the Administrative and Financial Functioning of the United Nations

1. The purpose of this circular is to share with the staff at large information concerning the implementation of recommendation 15 of the Group of High-level Intergovernmental Experts to Review the Efficiency of the Administrative and Financial Functioning of the United Nations which affects staff at all levels and to indicate the proposed timetable for such implementation.
2. As you recall, recommendation 15 which requested, *inter alia*, that the overall number of regular budget posts be reduced by 15 per cent within a period of three years was endorsed by the General Assembly in its resolution 41/213 with some clarifications which are set out in operative paragraph 1 (b) of section I of that resolution (see the annex to the present document for section I of resolution 41/213 and the full text of recommendation 15).
3. At the beginning of this year, the Programme Planning and Budgeting Board (PPBB) proposed to the Secretary-General a methodology for reducing the number of regular budget posts in order to implement this resolution. The Secretary-General approved the proposal and a Post Review Group composed of senior officials from various areas of the Secretariat with the participation of staff representatives was established.
4. Departments and offices were requested to submit proposals for reductions in their staffing tables from the programmatic point of view. These proposals are being reviewed by the Post Review Group which is expected to complete its review early in February 1988 and submit its report to the Under-Secretary-General for Administration and Management.

5. The recommendations of the Group will be reviewed by the PPBB. The PPBB will forward its recommendations to the Secretary-General. The Secretary-General will then approve interim staffing tables for the entire Secretariat which will serve as a basis for administrative decisions concerning staff such as appointments, promotions, reassignments and be presented to the various legislative bodies in the spring of 1988 as part of his proposals for the 1990-1991 biennium budget.

6. In this connection, the Assistant-Secretary-General for Human Resources Management has asked a working group to examine the situation of staff members who will be occupying posts earmarked for abolition, outline various administrative options and procedures to deal with staff reductions and determine the criteria under which these procedures will come into play so that, at the beginning of 1990, the number of staff on board does not exceed the number of posts to be authorized by the General Assembly in accordance with resolution 41/213.

7. The working group has now completed its work. The report of the working group will be presented for discussion to staff/management bodies at all duty stations in December 1987. Staff representatives will have ample opportunity to discuss and review these proposals with administration representatives in order to ensure that the procedures for effecting these staff reductions are both fair and objective.

8. Based on the recommendations of these staff/management bodies at the local level and other comments received, a revised paper will be prepared for final submission to the Staff Management Co-ordination Committee in February 1988. As you are aware, that Committee is composed of staff representatives and administrators from various duty stations. The recommendations of that Committee on the retrenchment plan will be submitted to the Secretary-General for his consideration. Once approved by the Secretary-General, the procedures will be applied throughout the Secretariat during the retrenchment period. The staff will be informed through appropriate administrative issuances.

9. The Secretary-General has indicated on numerous occasions that staff reductions required to meet the targets to be established on the basis of General Assembly resolution 41/213 (on the recommendation of the Group of High-level Intergovernmental Experts) and as detailed by the Post Review Group will be effected through attrition, to the extent possible. The retrenchment plan will therefore be based essentially on staff mobility aiming at moving qualified staff from Secretariat units which are above their new authorized staffing levels to units which are below the authorized level. For a number of staff members in the Professional category and above, this will mean a change of duty station in accordance with Staff Regulation 1.2 and the Secretary-General's Bulletin (ST/SGB/165).

10. I intend to keep you informed on this important matter which is of paramount concern to all of us.

Annex

A. EXCERPTS FROM GENERAL ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION 41/213

I

Recommendations of the Group of High-level Intergovernmental
Experts to Review the Efficiency of the Administrative and
Financial Functioning of the United Nations

1. Decides that the recommendations as agreed upon and as contained in the report of the Group of High-level Intergovernmental Experts to Review the Efficiency of the Administrative and Financial Functioning of the United Nations 1/ should be implemented by the Secretary-General and the relevant organs and bodies of the United Nations in the light of the findings of the Fifth Committee 2/ and subject to the following:

(a) The implementation of recommendation 5 should not prejudice the implementation of projects and programmes already approved by the General Assembly;

(b) The percentages referred to in recommendation 15, which were arrived at in a pragmatic manner, should be regarded as targets in the formulation of the Secretary-General's plans to be submitted to the General Assembly for implementation of the recommendation; further, the Secretary-General is requested to implement this recommendation with flexibility in order to avoid, inter alia, negative impact on programmes and on the structure and composition of the Secretariat, bearing in mind the necessity of securing the highest standards of efficiency, competence and integrity of the staff, with due regard to equitable geographical distribution;

(c) The Secretary-General should transmit to the International Civil Service Commission those recommendations having direct impact on the United Nations common system (recommendations 53 and 61), with the request that it report to the General Assembly at its forty-second session, so as to enable the Assembly to make a final decision; the expertise of the Commission should be availed of in dealing with the other recommendations over which the Commission has a mandate to advise and make recommendations;

(d) The Secretary-General should take into consideration the relevant provisions of General Assembly resolution 35/210 of 17 December 1980, in implementing recommendations 55 and 57, to the extent they are agreed upon;

1/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-first Session, Supplement No. 49 (A/41/49).

2/ A/41/795.

(e) The Economic and Social Council, assisted as and when required by relevant organs and bodies, in particular the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination, should carry out the study called for in recommendation 8;

(f) The Committee for Programme and Co-ordination, assisted as required by the Joint Inspection Unit and other bodies, shall evaluate the implementation of the recommendations relating to the intergovernmental machinery and its functioning, as indicated in recommendation 70;

(g) In the implementation of recommendation 24, the provisions of General Assembly resolution 41/201 of 8 December 1986 should be duly taken into account;

2. Requests the Secretary-General and the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination to report to the General Assembly as indicated in recommendations 69, 70 and 71 of the Group;

B. EXCERPTS FROM THE REPORT OF THE GROUP OF HIGH-LEVEL INTERGOVERNMENTAL EXPERTS

Recommendation 15

- (1) A substantial reduction in the number of staff members at all levels, but particularly in the higher echelons, is desirable. It should be possible to undertake such a reduction in a relatively short period of time without causing any negative impact on the current level of programme activities of the United Nations, as determined by the General Assembly and other legislative organs.
- (2) To this end:
 - (a) The overall number of regular budget posts should be reduced by 15 per cent within a period of three years;
 - (b) The number of regular budget posts at the level of Under-Secretary-General and Assistant Secretary-General should be reduced by 25 per cent within a period of three years or less, with a comparable reduction in posts at those levels funded from extrabudgetary sources.
- (3) The Secretary-General should submit to the General Assembly his plans for implementing the recommendations in paragraphs (1) and (2) above. When drawing up such plans, the Secretary-General should, inter alia, be guided by:
 - (a) The necessity of securing the highest standards of efficiency, competence and integrity of the staff, with due regard to equitable geographical distribution;
 - (b) An analysis of work-loads in the various departments and offices, taking into account the efficiency that can be gained through the consolidation of functions and the elimination of duplication;

- (c) The need to avoid any negative effects on the implementation of programmes;
- (d) The continuing need to recruit new staff members, especially at the junior Professional levels, to ensure a vigorous Secretariat structure. The number of staff members recruited at the P-1, P-2 and P-3 levels should not fall below the average number of those recruited during the years 1982, 1983 and 1984. Such new recruitment should, however, be balanced with an equivalent reduction in staff, so that the aim of a net reduction of 15 per cent is achieved within a three-year period.
- (4) A further reduction in the overall number of posts could be undertaken as a result of restructuring of the intergovernmental machinery and the Secretariat.
