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OTHER PERSONNEL QUESTIONS

Report of the Joint Inspection Unit on personnel problems in the
United Nations and major recommendations of the Administrative
Management Service

Report of the Secretary-General

1. The personnel policies and practices of the United Nations, as well as the structure of the Office of Personnel Services, have been under scrutiny over the past four years. A first review was made by the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) in the years 1969 to 1971 and resulted in Inspector Bertrand's report on personnel problems in the United Nations (A/8454). In his preliminary comments on that report (A/8545), the Secretary-General indicated that, inasmuch as it raised questions that were likely to be of interest to the Special Committee for the Review of the United Nations Salary System and the Administrative Management Service (AMS) had not yet undertaken its review of the Office of Personnel Services, he intended to defer to the twenty-seventh session of the General Assembly his comments on the substance of the report.
2. In 1972, the Special Committee issued its report (A/8728), and the General Assembly decided to transmit it to an International Civil Service Commission, to be constituted in 1974, for its consideration. In October of the same year, AMS submitted to the Secretary-General its report on management and manpower utilization in the Office of Personnel Services. The AMS report also included an assessment of personnel policies and practices throughout the Secretariat.
3. The Secretary-General, having carefully considered the reports of JIU and AMS, is now in a position to report to the General Assembly the conclusions he has reached on these, as well as the implementing action he either proposes to the General Assembly or intends to take within his authority.

The basic structure of the Secretariat

4. Since 1951, staff in the Secretariat have been grouped basically in three categories, Professional, 1/ Field Service and General Service. The Professional category and the Field Service category are recruited internationally, and the General Service category is largely recruited locally.
5. The staff of the present Professional category in the Secretariat, as seen by JIU, can perhaps best be summarized as a large, unstructured group, recruited through somewhat haphazard procedures, for which there is no classification policy and no career planning and development machinery and which is thus subject to a random promotion process. The findings of AMS were similar to a number of these observations.
6. Both JIU and AMS propose, as an essential prerequisite of reform, a structural concept of "vocational groups" (JIU) or "occupational groups" (AMS), each with specified qualification requirements, classification standards and a planned career progression. For each group, there would be defined plans for training and career development under central standards laid down by the Office of Personnel Services. The AMS recommendations envisage that these concepts would apply to both the Professional and non-Professional categories. 2/
7. The Secretary-General is in agreement with the premise that the occupational group structure should serve as the basis for managing the staff in the Secretariat. He notes, in this connexion, that the Secretariat is de facto constituted in a manner that corresponds very closely to Mr. Bertrand's observations. Thus, an information specialist will normally work in the information field throughout his career, and an administrator can be expected to remain in the administrative area. What is needed, therefore, is a clearer recognition of this fact and the development of the necessary personnel policies and institutions to apply it in practice. To that extent, the Secretary-General agrees entirely with the thrust of Mr. Bertrand's recommendations 1 and 16 to the effect that occupational groups should be defined and, within each of them, a clear relationship should be established between level of qualification and grade.
8. As regards classification standards, AMS has concluded that a job classification system covering all posts in the Secretariat must be instituted in order to ensure that (a) there is a consistent relationship between the duties of a post and the grade attached to it; (b) staff members performing the same duties and responsibilities are graded in the same way, irrespective of when and under what conditions they were initially recruited; and (c) the levels and titles of posts are of a clearly defined meaning for budgetary and personnel purposes. Accordingly, it

1/ For the purpose of this report, the term "Professional" also covers levels D-1 and D-2, which are normally referred to as "Principal Officer and Director category".

2/ The non-Professional categories are the General Service category, including manual workers and security staff, and the Field Service category.

has recommended that the Office of Personnel Services should be assigned the task of developing and administering a job classification system. The Secretary-General is in complete agreement with, and attaches priority to, this recommendation.

Staff management

9. Using as a starting point the concept of occupational groups, the JIU report recommends a career development system involving the establishment of training and career planning committees to take over the present functions of the Appointment and Promotion Committee, advance planning for assignments and for training, a revised performance reporting system and the establishment of a personnel inspectorate (recommendations 7 to 10 and 12). For its part, AMS recommends that, under the leadership of the Office of Personnel Services, career planning committees should formulate career development programmes along occupational lines and should develop "career ladders" for each of them. AMS considers that the present central promotion machinery should be taken over by the career planning committees, that the periodic report system should be improved and that management, supervisory and professional training should be intensified.

10. The Secretary-General is in broad agreement with most of these proposals, and sees merit in an arrangement whereby the Appointment and Promotion Board would monitor the operation of the career planning committees and ensure that central standards are maintained. He believes, however, in the need to test the proposed system in respect of selected occupational groups and will base his future policy on the results obtained. As a first step, therefore, he will, in the course of 1974, set up on an experimental basis career planning committees with staff participation for one or more occupational groups, generally along the lines recommended by JIU and AMS.

11. For the time being, however, the Secretary-General does not consider it necessary to set up a formal personnel inspectorate as yet another element in the machinery of personnel management. He is of the opinion that the functions that JIU proposes, in its recommendation 7, to assign to the personnel inspectorate could largely be carried out by the proposed career planning committees. In the meantime, pursuant to the recommendations of JIU and AMS, a task force with staff representation has been established to review the present periodic report system.

12. Another major change proposed in the JIU report that would affect the management of the staff is the reorganization of the General Service category at Headquarters (recommendation 14); the restructuring of this category has also been proposed by AMS. At present, there are five levels in the General Service category in New York, but only three of these levels are actually used to provide a career for those who carry out tasks of a clerical or secretarial nature. The present structure of the General Service category has caused nearly 25 per cent of the staff at the G-4 level and 35 per cent of the staff at the G-5 level to be concentrated at the top step of their level (step 9 at the G-4 level and step 10 at the G-5 level). As a result, pressures have unavoidably arisen to widen the career span of such staff members by promoting them into the Professional category. Both the JIU and AMS reports suggest that the adoption of a system of competitive entry

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to the Professional category and recruitment on the basis of a verified level of qualification will ensure that General Service staff will be promoted to the Professional category only if they meet that level. The Secretary-General, accordingly, has decided to review the structure of the General Service category at Headquarters with a view to introducing a clearer distinction in pay between the various jobs now grouped at the same level, to broadening the span of a career for the staff in that category and to determining the feasibility of competitive procedures such as those proposed by JIU and AMS (see paragraphs 17-18 below). The Secretary-General expects to report to the General Assembly, at its twenty-ninth session, on the results of this review.

13. Progress has been made on the recommendation of JIU (recommendation 11) for the improvement of administrative methods through the adoption of an integrated computer-based personnel information system. This system has now been developed to include current information on all categories of staff of the Organization except staff in short-term appointment at certain duty stations. Care has been taken to ensure the compatibility of the personnel information system with other computer-based systems in the Organization.

14. Recommendation 10 of the JIU report calls for a comprehensive programme of in-service training. AMS has recommended that current programmes in management, supervisory and professional training be intensified, and that a training programme be developed and administered by the Training Service for all junior Professional staff members. The Secretary-General fully recognizes the need for a comprehensive training programme. The improvements in the training programmes in New York, Geneva and Vienna have been overshadowed by the emphasis laid by the General Assembly on language training. It will be necessary, however, to provide for an increasing range of non-language training activities and to link this training with both career planning and organizational development. In addition to strengthening the provisions for staff training within the Secretariat itself, the Secretary-General welcomes the announced intention of the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) to provide staff training facilities in areas of common interest to the family of United Nations agencies - notably administration and management and economic development.

Recruitment

15. One of the principal means that the JIU report recommends (recommendation 2) for modernizing recruitment methods is a long-term recruitment plan. The first long-term recruitment plan, covering the period 1 July 1972 to 30 June 1977, was presented in a report of the Secretary-General (A/8836) to the General Assembly at its twenty-seventh session. The Assembly took note of that report and of a request by the Fifth Committee that the Secretary-General include in his annual reports on the composition of the Secretariat information on progress in the implementation of the long-term recruitment plan (A/8980, para. 63). This year's report by the Secretary-General on the composition of the Secretariat (A/9120 and Corr.1 and 2) notes that the plan rests on a number of assumptions reflecting previous trends and on the existing numerical guides for achieving an equitable distribution of staff by nationality. The plan, which has been revised on the basis of these assumptions, will have to be modified as a result of the changes approved at the

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current session in the scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the Organization. The recruitment plan has proved an effective means of determining how the recruitment efforts of the Secretariat can best be directed.

16. The long-term recruitment plan also outlined how the JIU report's related recommendation (recommendation 4) on the compilation of a reserve recruitment roster would be developed by the establishment of a candidates roster. This roster has since been established as a distinct part of the computer-assisted personnel information system. It includes candidates for recruitment, both as staff members of the Secretariat and as expert personnel for technical co-operation projects. A related reporting system is being developed. With the aid of the computer, it is possible to analyse at any time the contents of the roster and to be very selective of the information required. Output from the roster has already been put at the disposal of other offices away from Headquarters on a continuing basis, and interest in the output on certain specializations has been expressed by other member organizations of the United Nations family. The elimination of the names of candidates whose applications are no longer active has now become a very simple matter and will facilitate the maintenance of the roster at an appropriate size for the needs of the Organization.

17. The third recommendation regarding recruitment, which has already been the subject of reports to the Assembly, concerns the institution of junior competitive examinations. The JIU report (recommendation 3) envisages such examinations primarily for candidates to posts of administrative generalists and economists; AMS, for its part, has recommended further efforts to develop a competitive selection system. Staff regulation 4.3 lays down that, "so far as practicable, selection shall be made on a competitive basis". At present, only candidates for interpreter, translator and other posts requiring special language ability are recruited on the basis of competitive examinations. But in 1970, the General Assembly, in its resolution 2736 A (XXV), authorized the following guideline for the recruitment of staff for the Secretariat:

"In the interest of long-term recruitment planning policies, special efforts should be made to recruit qualified young men and women for service with the United Nations through the development of more objective selection methods such as, wherever appropriate, open competitive examinations, special allowance being made for candidates whose mother tongue is not one of the working languages of the Secretariat."

18. Agreement on a pilot project has now been reached with the Italian Government to hold a competitive examination in January 1974. Interest in such examinations has recently been expressed by Japan and the Federal Republic of Germany. The possibility of linking such competitive examinations to existing competitive examinations for entry to national civil services is also being considered. However, while encouraging further experimental projects in the hope that the experience gained may help to improve recruitment, the Secretary-General feels bound to point out that the number of staff to be recruited in any given year in any given professional field is relatively limited; furthermore, the areas for recruitment are geographically so extensive and the techniques of written examination so diverse

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that further experimentation will be required before decisions can be taken regarding a widespread use of the written examination as a valid approach to the approved objective of competitive selection.

19. The JIU report contains two other recommendations with respect to Professional recruitment. The first of these (recommendation 6) relates to the establishment of a pre-recruitment training scheme in favour of nationals of those countries, particularly the developing countries, that are still at a disadvantage as regards the provision of specialists to international organizations. As the JIU report states: "The first symptom of underdevelopment is a shortage of technicians, and this is true in the administrative and economic sectors as in all the rest". The report suggests that this need might be met through a large-scale project of international co-operation financed by UNDP. The Secretary-General will continue to explore this and other special measures for assisting potential candidates from developing countries, particularly the least developed among them, through a programme of specialized training.

20. The second of the JIU recommendations relating to Professional recruitment (recommendation 5) proposes the establishment of rules that would ensure, as far as possible, a candidate's professional or technical calibre when being recruited to the highest posts. At the level of Under-Secretary-General and Assistant Secretary-General, as the JIU report notes, the need for the Secretary-General to take account of political and geographical considerations in appointing candidates to the top administrative posts means that the appointments of staff members above the Director (D-2) level should continue to be decided by the Secretary-General without formal procedures. At the Director (D-2) level, the Secretary-General relies on the advice of a senior review group consisting of his senior colleagues at the Under-Secretary-General level. It has consistently been the policy of successive Secretaries-General to ensure that, in accordance with the requirement of staff regulation 4.4, preference is given in filling posts at the Director level to staff already in the service of the Organization, most of whom hold career appointments. More than half of the Director posts have thus been filled from within the Secretariat. The percentage of career staff at the Principal Officer (D-1) level (69 per cent) coincides with the proportion (70 per cent) proposed by the JIU report.

21. AMS has made certain recommendations concerning other aspects of the recruitment process. The major ones are:

- (a) Reduction of the scope of the Junior Professional Trainee Programme;
- (b) Extension of the sources of recruitment for staff in the General Service category at Headquarters;
- (c) Simplification of the procedures for appointment of candidates.

22. The Junior Professional Trainee Programme was originally conceived as a means of enabling the United Nations to recruit staff from States under-represented in the Secretariat; the second purpose of the programme was to enable young university graduates of States with a shortage of qualified civil servants to acquire first-hand knowledge of the United Nations before returning to their own national services.

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23. The programme has, to a considerable extent, met both objectives. It has been possible to accommodate an average of 17 trainees at any one time. Close to two thirds of the trainees have been absorbed into vacant posts and thereby joined the ranks of the regular staff. Because nationality is one of the criteria applied in the initial selection of trainees for the programme, their subsequent appointment has helped to improve the geographical distribution of the staff.

24. In more recent years, however, the programme has run into difficulties. Both the Office of Personnel Services and the departments and offices to which the trainees were assigned find that they lack the time and facilities to ensure proper training. This has appreciably diminished the effectiveness of the programme. Additionally, some junior Professional staff have been recruited directly for specific posts, rather than through the Junior Professional Trainee Programme. In the light of these developments, AMS has concluded that a systematic training scheme designed for all young Professional staff recruited for the Secretariat should be introduced and that the Junior Professional Trainee Programme should be limited to its second purpose, that of enabling young nationals of certain Member States to acquire first-hand knowledge of the United Nations before returning to their own national services. The Secretary-General concurs in this conclusion and, accordingly, proposes to confine the scope of the programme to this last-mentioned purpose with effect from 1975. He also intends to establish, as a parallel activity, a systematic training scheme for all young Professional staff along the lines recommended by AMS.

25. As regards the recruitment of General Service staff at Headquarters, the United Nations is experiencing serious difficulties in finding sufficiently qualified candidates. AMS has therefore recommended that recruitment for such staff, which is presently conducted only within the metropolitan New York area, be extended to cover the country of the duty station, as is the practice in other duty stations. The Secretary-General has approved this recommendation and draws the attention of the General Assembly to the fact that this will result in some increase in the budget for costs of travel and installation for those staff members who will be recruited from outside metropolitan New York.

26. Regarding the review of candidates for appointment, AMS has concluded that, because the procedures that the Appointment and Promotion Board now applies are time-consuming and expensive, the Board could, with advantage, be relieved of the necessity of dealing with those cases that have, in effect, already been decided under alternative procedures. For example, in the selection of Professional staff for language posts, which has always been made on the basis of competitive examination, the Board has little reason to concern itself with the suitability of a candidate for such a post, inasmuch as his qualifications have already been objectively determined. The same consideration could also apply to other candidates for appointment at the junior Professional levels, provided a system for competitive selection is developed (see paragraphs 17-18 above), and provided classification standards are instituted (see paragraph 8 above). The implementation of this recommendation will depend, therefore, on the progress made towards developing competitive selection and classification systems.

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Types of appointment and emoluments

27. There are four JIU recommendations that effect the United Nations common system and thus require interagency consideration, with the assistance of the International Civil Service Commission when that body is established. They include recommendation 13, on alternating secondments, which would permit staff with permanent appointments to serve alternately with the Organization and with national administrations; recommendation 15, on non-renewable fixed-term appointments for specialists with exceptionally high qualifications; recommendation 16, on the establishment within the Professional and higher categories of four levels of qualifications, each with two grades (the basic university level (P-1 and P-2), the level of first stage of professional experience (P-3 and P-4), the level of great professional experience (P-5 and P-6) and the management level (D-1 and D-2)); and recommendation 17, on the reorganization of the system of allowances. A further recommendation concerning the modernization of the Staff Rules to give legal embodiment to the proposed reforms (recommendation 18) will have to be considered when the substantive recommendations have been acted upon.

Organization of the Office of Personnel Services

28. In recommendation 19, Inspector Bertrand proposes a number of structural changes in the Office of Personnel Services designed to make it possible to carry out the reforms suggested elsewhere, to provide for policy formulation and to improve the division of responsibility. In the course of its review, AMS has considered in depth the organization and functions of the Office of Personnel Services. The main conclusions reached by AMS are:

(a) Subject to some realignment of functions and transfer of a few units, the over-all structure of the Office is generally satisfactory;

(b) It is necessary, however, to strengthen the capability of the Office for Planning and programme development and for the initiation of the new personnel management functions recommended;

(c) Greater delegation of authority and responsibility from the Office of Personnel Services to Headquarters departments and other established offices is required in selected aspects of personnel management.

29. In line with those conclusions, AMS has made recommendations for the detailed organization and staffing of the Office of Personnel Services. The major recommendations are:

(a) Strengthening the Office for Policy Co-ordination by establishing in it:

(i) A Classification and Salary Service, which would develop and administer a job classification system and, in addition, take over the pay research and administration functions now performed in the Office of Financial Services;

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- (ii) A Planning and Information Section, which would be the central point for reviewing objectives, setting out proposed policy, appraising methods and securing the necessary information inputs;
- (iii) A Rules and Personnel Manual Section, by transfer of a section and some functions now included in the Division to Personnel Administration.

(b) Discontinuing the outposting of personnel officers to departments and offices at Headquarters in consequence of the greater delegation of authority to executive and administrative officers and redirecting the work of Staff Services in the Division of Personnel Administration along functional lines to cover such matters as review of appointments, promotions and transfers; administration of a career development programme; review of administrative decisions, appeals and disciplinary cases; and the monitoring of personnel actions carried out by Headquarters departments and other established offices under delegation of authority.

30. With one exception, the Secretary-General generally agrees with these recommendations. This exception refers to the transfer of the pay research and administration function from the Office of Financial Services to the Office of Personnel Services. Salaries and allowances account for over 75 per cent of the total United Nations regular budget, and the financial implications of the determination of salary levels are considerable. The Office of Financial Services, in the discharge of its responsibility for maintaining control over the budget as a whole must therefore at least for the present and the foreseeable future continue to deal with pay matters to the extent that these will not be entrusted to the International Civil Service Commission. However the Secretary-General agrees with the view expressed by the AMS (Recommendation) that this function should be carried out in close consultation between the Office of Financial Services and the Office of Personnel Services.

31. Subject to this modification, the Secretary-General will proceed in the course of 1974 to reorganize the Office of Personnel Services along the lines recommended by the Administrative Management Service. To assist him in this exercise, he intends to set up an implementation task force with joint participation by the Office of Personnel Services and AMS, and to report thereon to the General Assembly at its twenty-ninth session.

32. It is not expected that the reorganization will entail additional resources in the Division of Personnel Administration, as the present outposted personnel officers will be redeployed along functional lines. The situation in the Office for Policy Co-ordination is different, and the Secretary-General cannot give any assurance that existing resources can be redeployed to establish a Classification Section and a Planning and Information Section. However, with one exception, the Secretary-General is not now seeking appropriations additional to those requested

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in the programme budget for 1974-1975 to carry out the reorganization of the Office of Personnel Services. Should he feel - after the task force review mentioned in paragraph 31 above has been completed - that additional resources are required, he would seek the necessary authority from the General Assembly at its twenty-ninth session. At this time, the Secretary-General proposes only an increase by \$100,000 in the funds proposed for temporary assistance for the biennium 1974-1975 in order to provide for two classification experts (one P-5 and one P-4) to plan and develop a job classification system, to which, as indicated in paragraph 8 above, he attaches priority, and to train existing Professional staff in this work.
