

Twenty-seventh session
FIFTH COMMITTEE
Agenda item 81

PERSONNEL QUESTIONS

Draft report of the Fifth Committee

Rapporteur: Mr. Oleg PASHKEVICH (Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic)

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. At its 2037th plenary meeting, on 23 September 1972, the General Assembly included the item entitled "Personnel questions: (a) Composition of the Secretariat: report of the Secretary-General; (b) Other personnel questions: report of the Secretary-General" in the agenda of its twenty-seventh session and allocated it to the Fifth Committee for consideration and report.
2. The Committee considered the item at its 1541st, 1542nd, 1544th to 1547th and 1549th meetings, held from 4 to 12 December 1972.

II. COMPOSITION OF THE SECRETARIAT

A. Documentation before the Committee

3. The Committee had before it the reports of the Secretary-General on the composition of the Secretariat (A/8831 and Corr.1 and Add.1) and on long-term recruitment planning (A/8836), the customary annual report listing all staff members by organizational unit, title, nationality and level (A/C.5/L.1079), and a draft resolution adopted by the Third Committee entitled "Employment of women in senior and other professional positions by the secretariats of organizations in the United Nations system" which the President of the General Assembly had transmitted to the Fifth Committee in a letter dated 15 November 1972 (A/C.5/1472) with a request that it be considered in connexion with the agenda item on the composition of the Secretariat.
4. The Committee also took up under the composition of the Secretariat a report of the Joint Inspection Unit on personnel problems in the United Nations (A/8454). It had before it, in addition, a brief summary of that report (A/8826) and a note by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (A/8897) which transmitted a note by the Secretary-General on the action he had taken since the twenty-sixth session of the General Assembly on several recommendations in the report of the Joint Inspection Unit.

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5. The report on the composition of the Secretariat differed in two respects from that of the previous year. The additions and changes made in response to the requests of the Fifth Committee approved by the General Assembly at its 2023rd plenary meeting, on 17 December 1971, were: (i) information was included on the implementation of General Assembly resolutions 2539 (XXIV) and 2736 (XXV), relating to the composition of the Secretariat, and on measures that had been taken in regard to Assembly resolution 2480 B (XXIII) concerning a better linguistic balance in the Secretariat; (ii) the date for the tables of statistics on the composition of the staff was advanced from 31 August to 30 June.^{1/} The composition of the Secretariat at 30 June 1972 was therefore compared with the situation as at 31 August 1971. For purposes of comparison with previous years, an addendum to the report provided statistics concerning the staff as at 31 August 1972.

6. There were fewer staff changes in the period covered by the report than had taken place in previous years because the Secretary-General, in the context of measures to improve the financial situation of the Organization, had suspended recruitment for posts in the Professional category and above financed under the regular budget in the six-month period of January to June 1972. Furthermore, the revised reporting date of 30 June had reduced the period over which changes had taken place from 12 to 10 months.

7. The report contained no recommendations for the consideration of the General Assembly. The Secretary-General indicated that he had in mind to put forward proposals for changes in existing recruitment guidelines in next year's report in the light of (a) the action the General Assembly will have taken on the report of the Special Committee for the Review of the United Nations Salary System; and (b) any adjustments in the scale of assessments that the Committee on Contributions may recommend at its 1973 session.

8. The report on long-term recruitment planning was submitted in response to General Assembly resolutions 2539 (XXIV) and 2736 (XXV) in which the Assembly expressed "its interest in a long-term plan of recruitment". During its twenty-sixth session the General Assembly approved the decision of the Fifth Committee^{2/} to request the Secretary-General to present a long-term plan of recruitment to the Assembly at its twenty-seventh session.

^{1/} Official Records of the General Assembly, Twenty-sixth Session, Annexes, agenda item 84, document A/8604, paras. 34-37.

^{2/} Ibid., para. 34.

9. The report described the first long-term plan of recruitment, covering the period 1 July 1972 to 30 June 1977. The objectives of the plan are to improve quality and efficiency in the recruitment operation as well as the geographical balance of the Secretariat. The plan is to be updated and improved in subsequent years.

10. The draft resolution on the employment of women in senior and other professional positions by the secretariats of organizations in the United Nations system had been unanimously adopted by the Third Committee at its 1947th meeting, on 10 November 1972. The draft resolution was a revision of resolution 1676 (LII) which had been recommended by the Economic and Social Council to the General Assembly. In a letter dated 14 November 1972 addressed to the Chairman of the Fifth Committee and transmitted by the President of the General Assembly (see A/C.5/1472), the Chairman of the Third Committee requested that the draft resolution be brought "to the attention of the Fifth Committee in connexion with its consideration of agenda item 81 (a) on the composition of the Secretariat before the draft is submitted to the plenary". In his letter transmitting the resolution (Ibid.), the President of the General Assembly requested the Fifth Committee to "consider at its earliest convenience this aspect of agenda item 81 so that the draft resolution recommended by the Third Committee may be examined by the plenary without undue delay".

11. In his note (A/8897) on the report of the Joint Inspection Unit on personnel problems in the United Nations (A/8454) which was transmitted by the Advisory Committee without comment, the Secretary-General indicated that he had referred the report to the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination at its session in April 1972. The executive heads had noted that, on some of the recommendations, they had already stated their views to the Special Committee for the Review of the United Nations Salary System, while on others the United Nations was preparing studies or envisaging action. They had decided to reserve comment on the latter until such time as the organizations could consult on the implications for the common system of any steps that might be taken by the United Nations.

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12. In regard to some of the recommendations in the report of the Joint Inspection Unit the following action had been taken: (a) the first long-term plan of recruitment had been prepared and submitted to the General Assembly (A/8836); (b) a preliminary study had been undertaken on the feasibility of a plan of competitive examinations for recruitment; (c) after concluding from this preliminary study that the best way of proceeding with a scheme of competitive examinations would be to try it out in a particular country, exploratory discussions had been held with representatives of Italy at the United Nations and in Rome on the conditions and procedures under which a competitive examination could be arranged in that country; (d) work had begun on compiling an integrated roster of candidates to be used as a source of recruitment whenever a vacancy arises; and (e) considerable progress had been made in the use of the computer as a means of accelerating the production of information for both internal analysis and published reports.

13. Although the Secretary-General found that the difficulties in the way of instituting a scheme of competitive examinations were not insignificant, he believed these difficulties could be surmounted. He intended to pursue the effort of initially applying the competitive recruitment method in one or two countries before reporting to the General Assembly on the possibility of extending its application. In addition, the Secretary-General planned to explore the feasibility of recruiting staff for the Secretariat from among successful participants in competitive examinations where these were held for candidates wishing to be appointed to the national public service.

14. The Secretary-General decided to defer submission of his comments on those recommendations in the report of the Joint Inspection Unit report which related to the basic concepts underlying the personnel policy in the United Nations, the structure of categories, the interchange of national and international officials through alternating secondments, the system of allowances, the programmes of training and the procedures of performance evaluation and promotion. He would examine those recommendations in a report to the General Assembly at its next session in the light of whatever action the General Assembly had taken on the report of the Special Committee for the Review of the United Nations Salary System and the decisions he might take on the report of the Administrative Management Service on the Office of Personnel Services.

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B. Discussion

15. The discussion covered (a) the measures taken by the Secretariat in the course of the past year to improve the geographical distribution of staff at all levels; (b) the first long-term recruitment plan; (c) the proportion of women in the secretariats of organizations in the United Nations system, particularly in high-level posts; (d) the findings in the Joint Inspection Unit report on the distribution of Secretariat staff by age and level of university education; (e) the feasibility of competitive examinations as a means of recruitment; (f) the desirable proportion of fixed-term staff to career staff; and (g) the steps taken by the Secretary-General to implement General Assembly resolution 2480 B (XXIII) concerning the linguistic balance of the Secretariat.

Geographical distribution

16. Several representatives noted that while some progress had been made during the past year to improve the geographical balance of the staff, a number of countries and regions continued to be under-represented. Nationals of over-represented countries continued to be appointed to vacant posts in apparent disregard of the provision of Article 101 of the United Nations Charter which required that staff be recruited on a wide geographical basis and of the guideline laid down by the General Assembly in resolution 2736 (XXV) that in the recruitment of staff for posts subject to geographical distribution, preference should be given to qualified candidates of under-represented countries. It was pointed out that between 1 September 1971 and 30 June 1972, nationals of over-represented countries accounted for 78 of the 177 new appointments covering all levels and for 19 of the 35 appointments to posts at levels P-5 and above (A/8831, table 12). Over the past 10 years, the number of over-represented countries had increased from 17 to 32 and the number of under-represented countries had increased from 39 to 54. For these reasons, some representatives indicated that they could not agree with the observation made in the report on the composition of the Secretariat that "appreciable progress" had been made towards achieving the goal of equitable geographical distribution of the staff. Several representatives stressed the importance of achieving a more equitable geographical balance without sacrificing the requirements of efficiency, competence and integrity which were also set out in Article 101 of the Charter. They pointed out that significant progress had been

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made towards greater universality in the Secretariat and towards correcting geographical imbalances without being detrimental to the principle of professional competence.

17. A number of representatives noted that the geographical imbalance was particularly marked at the higher levels of the Secretariat. A large majority of senior posts were filled by nationals of a few countries while the nationals of many countries were largely confined to lower posts. Several representatives urged that greater consideration be given to candidates from Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Middle East in making future appointments to higher-echelon posts. One representative suggested that the 266 senior posts which were presently occupied by nationals of 58 countries, could be judiciously rotated.

18. Several representatives urged that greater efforts be made to achieve for each of the regional economic commissions the desirable proportion of 75 per cent of the staff from the region to 25 per cent from outside the region. Some representatives noted that, under the General Assembly guidelines, if qualified candidates from under-represented countries within a region could not be found, preference should be given to qualified candidates from other countries in the region, even though those countries might be over-represented. In the case of the Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East, however, one representative urged that the imbalance in the distribution of staff among the countries of the region be corrected.

19. Several representatives drew attention to the fact that Eastern Europe remained under-represented in the Secretariat even though that region had no difficulty in supplying highly skilled personnel. One representative drew attention to the imbalance in the geographical composition of the staff in certain departments and offices of the Secretariat. In this connexion, reference was made to the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the Office of Public Information and the Department of Political Affairs, Trusteeship and Decolonization in which the overwhelming majority of posts were occupied by nationals of Western countries. It was suggested that certain senior officials made conscious efforts to avoid appointing candidates from under-represented countries, especially from socialist countries.

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20. One representative stressed that denying contract extensions to highly qualified staff from over-represented countries merely to provide posts for nationals of under-represented countries was not in the best interest of the Organization. He suggested that such staff might be given some refresher courses and then provided with jobs under the technical assistance programmes.

21. One representative observed that the measure taken by the Secretary-General to suspend recruitment for 1972 as a means of improving the financial situation of the Organization had not had any negative impact on the work and general efficiency of the Secretariat. In fact, it had made it possible to release and mobilize certain reserves for productive ends. At the same time, it was important that such measures not impair the equitable geographical distribution of staff. Another representative was of the view that the freeze had retarded the efforts to achieve a geographical balance in the Secretariat. The adverse effects would be felt in 1973 or in subsequent years.

Long-term recruitment plan

22. A number of representatives referred to the need for speedy and stricter adherence to the guidelines on recruitment policies laid down by the General Assembly, particularly those contained in resolution 2736 (XXV). They welcomed the first long-term recruitment plan as a positive step in this direction in that its aim was to improve the geographical balance of the Secretariat and to improve the quality and efficiency in the recruitment operation.

23. Several representatives noted with satisfaction the considerable emphasis in the plan on improving geographical distribution and that future staff planning would be closely co-ordinated on the technical level with the preparation of programmes and budgets. The lack of a systematic methodology for estimating recruitment needs by occupation was presently a weak point in recruitment.

24. A number of representatives noted that if the plan were put into effect, it should be possible for the great majority of States and all geographical regions to be represented in the Secretariat by 1977 at the latest. For this reason, the plan, which was a step forward from words to action, should be approved by the General Assembly so that it would be respected by the Office of Personnel Services and by every department in the Secretariat as the basic document on recruitment.

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25. Several representatives suggested that in future reports on long-term recruitment planning, detailed information should be given, not only for the 10 Member States which were the largest staff contributors, but also for other individual Member States. One representative stressed that it would be important to include in the long-term recruitment plan, in addition to the number and type of vacant posts, an indication as to which Member States should submit candidates for these posts.

26. One representative felt that in implementing the plan efforts should be made to ensure that a Member State did not suddenly find itself under-represented on a given date as a result of the combination of steps taken to bring it into the desirable range and the retirement of two or three of its nationals. For example, if two or three nationals of a country were due to retire in 1977, measures should be taken to recruit candidates from the country prior to 1977.

27. Several representatives cautioned that a too rigid approach to the problem of geographical imbalance in the Secretariat could impair the over-all quality of the staff and, hence, the efficiency of the Secretariat. It was noted that the Secretary-General had pointed out that the recruitment plan was tentative and, furthermore, what was required in the long run was not just a recruitment plan but a comprehensive personnel management plan which would meet the future needs of the Organization as accurately as possible and with a minimum of delay.

28. Some representatives felt that too much importance may have been given in the recruitment plan to certain purely quantitative aspects of the recruitment question. It had to be borne in mind that the quantitative recruitment targets in respect of nationals of individual countries were rather elusive since they varied according to the number of Member States and changes in the scale of assessments. In addition, the "desirable ranges" were to be regarded as guides and not as precise numbers that had to be strictly enforced. Excessive preoccupation with recruitment directives of a quantitative nature might obscure the far more important qualitative aspects of recruitment.

29. A number of questions and doubts were raised in regard to some of the assumptions that were made in the report on the long-term recruitment plan. One representative indicated that the "desirable range" given for his country would have to be revised in accordance with more recent statistics. Several

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representatives found it difficult to envisage the success of a plan which had not been preceded by an objective evaluation of the implications of the reorganization of the Secretariat, the availability of existing posts in the Secretariat as well as posts recently created or to be created. One representative felt the report had not explained clearly the following points: (a) why the classification of 18 Member States had been changed by the use of the index range, rather than by the conventional desirable ranges; (b) the basis on which the desirable ranges were calculated, in particular, the weight attached to the membership factor, the contribution factor and the population factor; (c) whether, and, if so, how the population reserve for each region was distributed among Member States in each region; and (d) why, given the growing universality of the Organization, the general reserve for recruitment for non-member States showed an increase from 58 to 183 in the recruitment plan.

30. In reply to a specific question, the representative of the Secretary-General stated that the Secretariat was making every effort with the assistance of Member States of the region to achieve for the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) the desirable proportion of 75 per cent of the staff from the region, bearing in mind not only the need to attain an equitable geographical distribution of staff among the regions but also the fundamental principle that in recruitment preference should always be given to qualified candidates from under-represented countries in general. It was evident that changes in the composition of the secretariat of a commission had to be made gradually to avoid serious repercussions on the programme of work of the commission. As an indication of the progress made in ECA, the following figures were cited: in 1967, 51.04 per cent of the staff in ECA were from the region, 56.19 per cent in 1968, 62.72 per cent in 1969, 69.69 per cent in 1970. In 1971 and 1972 the percentages fell to 68.90 and 67.70 per cent respectively, although the actual numbers of staff from the region increased from 76 in 1970 to 82 in 1971 to 84 in 1972. The decline in percentage terms was traceable to the over-all increase in staff in ECA over the same period from 110 to 124.

31. In response to other questions of a more general nature related to geographical distribution, the representative of the Secretary-General stated that:

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(a) The Administrative Management Service was charged with carrying out studies of the utilization and deployment of staff in relation to the programmes of work approved by the organs of the General Assembly. The factor of geographical distribution did not come into consideration in these studies since according to Article 101, paragraph 3, of the Charter, the principle of geographical distribution applied only to the recruitment of staff;

(b) In reviewing candidates for placement on the recruitment rosters of the Secretariat, procedures followed in evaluating candidates proposed by their Governments and those who applied on their own initiative were, in effect, the same. The information provided by the Governments was clearly of particular interest;

(c) The long-term recruitment plan was based on the assumption that the General Service category would be restructured and would thus permit the promotion of staff in that category beyond the present G-5 level. If this restructuring did not take place, the opportunities for the advancement of General Service staff to the Professional category would remain unchanged;

(d) The long-term recruitment plan was a very tentative one and should be seen as a transitional guide for recruitment rather than as a global personnel plan. The assumptions made were based in large measure on past practices and did not embody any new personnel policies. No attempt had been made, however, to hide the fact that the plan did contain imperfections. A revised plan would be prepared during the first months of 1973 based on up-dated and improved statistical information, and taking into account the various observations made by delegations. Any changes in the scale of assessments would be reflected in the new plan.

Employment of women

32. Several representatives noted the observations made in paragraph 72 of the recruitment plan (A/8836) that it would not be realistic to expect very quick and spectacular results in the efforts being made to increase the proportion of women in the Secretariat. Notwithstanding the fact that Article 101 of the Charter could not be interpreted to favour any specific group, it was evident that the problem of the under-representation of women could and should be given greater consideration. There were a sufficient number of qualified women to fill required

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posts. That the problem was serious was reflected in the statistics which showed that despite a number of recent declarations and resolutions of the General Assembly and other organs of the United Nations on this question there remained only a token representation of women at the senior levels and the percentage of women at all professional levels had actually declined during the past year.

33. A number of delegations expressed support for the draft resolution adopted by the Third Committee on the employment of women in the secretariats of organizations in the United Nations system which had been transmitted to the Fifth Committee. It was noted that the draft resolution called for greater efforts by both the Secretariat and the Member States themselves to rectify the problem. Operative paragraph 3 of the resolution urged more extensive publicizing of the right of individuals to apply for vacant posts as a means of ensuring equal opportunities for qualified women, while operative paragraph 4 called upon Member States to give full consideration to submitting the candidatures of qualified women for all positions when proposing nationals for appointment to the Secretariat. The need to bring women in at senior and policy-making levels was also emphasized. In this regard, a number of representatives commended the Secretary-General on the appointment of a woman to the post of Assistant Secretary-General for Social and Humanitarian Matters.

34. One representative expressed uneasiness over the form, but not the substance or conclusions, of the draft resolution of the Third Committee, in that it seemed to imply that the Secretary-General and the executive heads of the specialized agencies were discriminating in their recruitment of staff. That accusation did not appear to be substantiated by the facts and figures cited in the last three preambular paragraphs of the resolution. The presence of women in the secretariats was related to the status of women in Member States. When qualified women did apply for positions in the United Nations or the specialized agencies, they were given equal treatment with male candidates and were judged solely on the strength of their professional qualifications. Some representatives stressed that the three preambular paragraphs of the draft resolution were intended merely to recall past declarations and instruments adopted by the United Nations on the equality of women and men and that they did not carry the implication that the

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Secretary-General and other executive heads were violating these declarations and instruments. Several representatives observed that the publicizing of the right of individuals personally to apply for vacant positions in the Secretariat would favour those countries located nearest to one or more of the organizations. The way to increase the number of women was to depend on governments to respond to the call that they put forward more candidatures of qualified women for appointment to the Secretariat.

35. One representative stressed that whatever efforts were made to recruit women they would not meet with significant success unless the conditions of work offered women reasonable opportunities for reconciling their professional activities with any family responsibilities they might have as well as equality with their male colleagues in all areas. It seemed that the Staff Rules contained provisions which discriminated against women and were contrary to the norms established in the relevant United Nations resolutions. In particular, reference was made to the discriminatory provisions in regard to home leave entitlement which had recently been the subject of a judgement of the United Nations Administrative Tribunal. It was suggested that the General Assembly should review the Staff Rules and Regulations with a view to deleting anything that might lead to discrimination between staff members on the basis of sex.

36. The representative of the Secretary-General noted that the draft resolution adopted by the Third Committee impinged both on the general promotion of the principle of equality in the status of men and women and on the specific issue of implementing that principle in the recruitment policy of the United Nations. Since the latter subject fell within the competence of the Fifth Committee he assumed that the Fifth Committee would wish to draw to the attention of the General Assembly points of substance arising out of the draft resolution. Referring to the provisions of the draft resolution, the representative of the Secretary-General pointed out that the percentages given in the fifth preambular paragraph covered staff in posts subject to geographical distribution rather than the total staff. The percentage of women in all professional posts

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of the regular Secretariat, namely, posts subject to geographical distribution and those with special language requirements which were not subject to that principle, were 7.3 per cent at the P-5 level and 39.8 per cent at the P-1 level. In regard to the last preambular paragraph, the draft resolution might be amended to read "in all the other organizations of the United Nations common system" rather than "... the United Nations system", the reason being that the grading of posts in the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development and its two affiliated agencies, the International Development Association and the International Finance Corporation, and in the International Monetary Fund differed from that of the United Nations and the other organizations which made up the United Nations common system. Finally, operative paragraph 2 of the draft resolution requested the Secretary-General to include in his annual report on the composition of the Secretariat "more comprehensive data on the employment of women in the secretariats of the United Nations system of organizations, so as to show the nature of posts and types of duties performed by women at the professional and policy-making levels". In view of the differing practices in the organizations in regard to geographical distribution of their staffs it would not be possible to compile figures for all organizations in the same manner as had been done in Table 8 of this year's report on the composition of the Secretariat, nor would it seem appropriate to include in the report on the composition of the Secretariat details on the nature of posts other than grade or the type of duties performed. Information on individual staff members, their grade, function, field of work and nationality, was given in the annual list of staff which was made available to delegations.

37. In response to a specific question on the number of women candidates proposed by Governments the representative of the Secretary-General informed the Committee that during the past 10 months 93 per cent of the candidates proposed by Governments had been men and only 7 per cent had been women. The latter percentage represented 38 women candidates coming from 20 countries. Of the 38, the 12 that had been appointed came from eight countries of which one was over-represented, three under-represented and four adequately represented; one had been recruited at the D-1 level, two at P-3, five at P-2 and four at P-1.

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Age and education

38. Several representatives commented on the findings in the Joint Inspection Unit report on personnel problems in the United Nations in regard to the age and educational background of the staff of the Secretariat. They shared the concern expressed in that report over the aging of the Secretariat as revealed in the statistics on the age distribution of its staff. More than 70 per cent of the staff were over 40 years of age and those under 30 represented only 4 per cent of the total. It was urged that necessary remedial action be taken to correct the situation. Some representatives suggested that consideration should be given to lowering the retirement age and ending the practice of retaining officials beyond the normal age of retirement, particularly at senior levels, as a means of providing greater promotion opportunities to young, talented staff members, which would, in turn, improve the possibilities of recruiting young people.

39. Several representatives stressed the seriousness of the findings in regard to the level of university education of the staff in the Professional category and above since this related directly to the fundamental questions of the quality of the staff. The figures contained in the inspection report indicated that over 25 per cent of the staff had never attended an institution of higher education and over 35 per cent had less than three years of higher education. In regard to both age and level of education the situation was even worse for the so-called administrative generalists in the Secretariat. Seventy-three per cent of these staff were over 40 years of age, 4 per cent under 30 years of age, more than one third had no university education and 44 per cent had not received a first degree. Some delegations urged that these facts be taken into account in implementing the long-term recruitment plan.

Competitive examinations

40. A number of representatives expressed the view that the twofold objective of lowering the average age and improving the quality of the staff could best be achieved through recruitment by competitive examinations. One representative suggested that examinations would be more effective if they were based on satisfactory tertiary qualifications. Several representatives stressed that since a wide diversity of educations and administrative practices existed throughout the world, it was essential to move cautiously in applying competitive examinations to ensure that the principle of general applicability was reconciled with the need to respond to local conditions.

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41. The representative of the Secretary-General informed the Committee that the Secretary-General was considering the possibility of extending the use of competitive examinations on a trial basis to various countries and regions and that he would be in contact with officials of the countries concerned. The Secretary-General believed that competitive examinations had the advantage of reconciling the provisions of Article 101 of the Charter concerning the highest standards of efficiency, competence and integrity of the staff with the principle of the widest-possible geographical distribution. He also noted that this procedure would be in conformity with Staff Regulation 4.3 which stated: "In accordance with the principles of the Charter, selection of staff members should be made without distinction as to race, sex or religion. So far as practicable selection will be made on a competitive basis". Competitive examinations would help not only to ensure the admission of candidates who had received the best possible training in their own countries but should also contribute towards the objectives of attracting more young men and women to the United Nations. In response to a question seeking clarifications to paragraph 11 of the Secretary-General's note (A/8897) on the Joint Inspection Unit report, the representative of the Secretary-General said that it was intended to enter into discussions with countries which held competitive examinations for entry into their national public services with a view to exploring the feasibility of recruiting successful candidates in those examinations for work in the Secretariat.

Type of Appointment

42. On the question of the proportion of fixed-term staff to permanent staff, several representatives favoured recruitment being carried out mainly on the basis of fixed-term contracts. Such a policy would facilitate efforts to improve the geographical distribution of staff; it would make it easier for many countries to reconcile their own needs for qualified personnel with those of the Organization in that officials could rotate between service with the United Nations and with their own national administrations; it would halt the process of bureaucratization and excessive routine in the United Nations; it would improve the quality of work and efficiency of the Secretariat through constant infusions of new and fresh

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talent and by making it easier to dismiss unsatisfactory staff in contrast to the lengthy and costly procedures involved in the cases of permanent staff. Other representatives attached great importance to the presence of a large body of career staff. In that connexion, they welcomed the indication that the recent trend towards the increasing use of fixed-term contracts might have been arrested. Paragraph 7 of the report on the composition of the Secretariat showed that the percentage of fixed-term staff had dropped from 34.8 to 34.5 per cent during the past year. It was noted, however, that a few years ago, career staff represented 75 per cent of the total; today they represented slightly less than two thirds. It was hoped that there would be a partial restoration in the near future. There was little value in investing heavily in staff in terms of training and time if they were to leave the Organization just when their expertise was most needed. One representative believed that the ideal ratio between career and fixed-term appointments would be 80 to 20.

Linguistic balance

43. With regard to linguistic balance in the Secretariat, one representative expressed the view that all the working languages should be placed on an equal footing. In recruitment, preference should not be given to English-speaking candidates and a staff member's chances for promotion should not depend on his knowledge of English, just because this was the language most commonly used by his superior. Such practices would be unfair to candidates from the young nations, in particular the young French-speaking countries. Another representative noted with satisfaction that the Secretary-General had followed the directive of the twenty-sixth session of the General Assembly that, in the implementation of resolution 2480 B (XXIII) concerning the second language requirement for the promotion of Professional staff, protection should be extended to those staff whose mother tongue was not one of the official languages of the United Nations. Seventy staff members had been exempted on that basis.

C. Proposals and voting

44. At the 1545th meeting, the representative of Upper Volta introduced a draft resolution sponsored by Niger, the Upper Volta and Zaire (A/C.5/L.1098). The text of the draft resolution read as follows:

"The General Assembly,

"Having considered the composition of the Secretariat and the long-term recruitment plan,

"Being concerned, in accordance with Article 8 of the Charter, to ensure that no restrictions are placed on the eligibility of men and women to participate in any capacity and under conditions of equality in the work of the Secretariat,

"Being concerned also to avoid any discrimination between staff members on grounds of sex,

"Requests the Secretary-General to submit to the General Assembly at its twenty-eighth session a study on Secretariat practices that might be construed as promoting discrimination against women."

45. At the 1546th meeting, the three sponsors introduced a revised text of the draft resolution (A/C.5/L.1098/Rev.1) which involved amending the operative paragraph of the original to read:

"Requests the Secretary-General to submit to the General Assembly at its twenty-eighth session a study on those provisions of the Staff Rules and Regulations whose application might, in certain cases, give rise to discrimination between staff members on grounds of sex."

46. At the 1547th meeting, the representative of Indonesia proposed the following oral amendments to the revised text submitted by Niger, Upper Volta and Zaire:

(a) In the second preambular paragraph, delete the words "being concerned" and the following comma, and insert the words "desirous of ensuring that", and after the word "charter" delete the comma and the words "to ensure";

(b) In the third preambular paragraph delete the words "being concerned also" and insert the words "desirous further";

(c) In the operative paragraph after the words "in certain cases", delete the word "give" and insert "be interpreted as giving".

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47. The first two amendments were accepted by the sponsors in so far as they related to the English text of the draft resolution. The representative of Indonesia withdrew his third amendment.

48. At the 1547th meeting, the draft resolution as amended was adopted unanimously (see para. 91 below, draft resolution I).

49. At the same meeting, the representative of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic proposed the inclusion of the following paragraph in the report of the Fifth Committee:

"The Fifth Committee requested the Secretary-General to include in his annual reports on the composition of the Secretariat information on progress in the implementation of the long-term recruitment plan (A/8836)."

50. At the same meeting, the representative of India suggested that the words "in the implementation" should be deleted since the long-term recruitment plan had not been adopted by the General Assembly and, therefore, the question of implementing it did not arise. During the discussion which ensued, it was clarified that implementation of the long-term recruitment plan would take into consideration paragraph 4 of the Secretary-General's report which indicated that the 1972 edition of the plan was serving from 1 July 1972 as a quantitative guide for the recruitment operation. Furthermore, the plan was to be revised and the Secretary-General would present a revised report to the next session of the General Assembly.

51. At the same meeting, the Committee decided, without objection, to include the paragraph as proposed by the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic in its report.

52. At the 1544th meeting, the representative of Costa Rica proposed the inclusion of the following paragraph in the report of the Fifth Committee:

"Greater attention should be given at the time of recruitment of new staff, especially for senior administrative posts, to candidates from developing countries, recruitment being based on equitable geographical distribution in the composition of the Secretariat."

53. At the 1547th meeting, the representative of Costa Rica revised the text of the paragraph to read:

"Greater attention should be given at the time of recruitment of new staff, and especially of senior administrative officials who participate directly in the implementation of the management policy of the United Nations, to candidates from developing countries and other under-represented countries, recruitment being based, ceteris paribus, on equitable geographical distribution in the composition of the Secretariat."

54. At the same meeting, the representative of Ghana proposed the following oral amendments:

(a) To replace the words "to candidates from developing countries and other under-represented countries" with "to candidates from under-represented developing and other under-represented countries";

(b) Delete the words "ceteris paribus";

(c) At the end of the text after the word "Secretariat", delete the quotation mark and insert the words "without sacrificing the Charter requirements of efficiency, competence and integrity".

55. After some discussions of the Costa Rican proposal and the amendments put forward by Ghana, the Committee agreed to defer a decision until the next meeting so that informal discussions might take place on the proposed paragraph.

56. At the 1549th meeting, the representative of Costa Rica introduced a further revision of the paragraph he proposed for inclusion in the report of the Fifth Committee. The new text read:

"Greater attention should be given at the time of recruitment of new staff, and especially of senior administrative officials who participate directly in the management policy of the United Nations, to candidates from countries which are at present under-represented, particularly the developing countries, recruitment being based on the principle of the highest standards of efficiency, competence, integrity, due regard being paid to equitable geographical distribution in the composition of the Secretariat."

57. At the same meeting, the Committee agreed, in the absence of a consensus, to put the Costa Rican proposal to a vote. The Committee decided, by a vote of 61 in favour to none against, with 14 abstentions, to include in its report the revised paragraph introduced by Costa Rica.

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58. At the 1545th meeting, the Committee accepted, in a modified form, two amendments of fact suggested by the representative of the Secretary-General in regard to the draft resolution adopted by the Third Committee entitled "Employment of women in senior and other professional posts by the secretariats of organizations in the United Nations system".

59. At the 1547th meeting, the Chairman proposed that the Committee deal with the proposed changes by including them in its report on the composition of the Secretariat. In this manner, the General Assembly would have before it, when it took up the report of the Third Committee on agenda item 12, the amendments recommended by the Fifth Committee. The Committee decided, without objection, to adopt the Chairman's proposal (the texts of the amendments are given in paragraph 92 below).

60. At the same meeting, the Chairman also proposed that he should, in the interest of an orderly procedure, inform the President of the General Assembly, in response to his letter of 15 November 1972, of the decision the Committee had taken. The Committee decided, without objection, to adopt the Chairman's proposal.

61. At the 1547th meeting, the Chairman proposed that the Committee recommend to the General Assembly that it take note of the reports of the Secretary-General on the composition of the Secretariat (A/8831 and Corr.1 and Add.1) and on long-term recruitment planning (A/8836). The Committee decided, without objection, to adopt the Chairman's proposal.

62. At the 1649th meeting, the Chairman proposed that the Committee recommend to the General Assembly that it take note of the Secretary-General's note (A/8897) on the report of the Joint Inspection Unit on personnel problems in the United Nations, pending a full submission by the Secretary-General on the substance of the report of the Joint Inspection Unit to the General Assembly at its twenty-eighth session. The Committee decided, without objection, to adopt the Chairman's proposal.

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D. Decisions of the Committee

63. The Fifth Committee decided to include in its report to the General Assembly the text of paragraph 92 below.
64. The Fifth Committee requests the Secretary-General to include in his annual reports on the composition of the Secretariat information on progress in the implementation of the long-term recruitment plan (A/8836).
65. Greater attention should be given at the time of recruitment of new staff, and especially of senior administrative officials who participate directly in the management policy of the United Nations, to candidates from countries which are at present under-represented, particularly the developing countries, recruitment being based on the principle of the highest standards of efficiency, competence and integrity, due regard being paid to equitable geographical distribution in the composition of the Secretariat.

III. OTHER PERSONNEL QUESTIONS

66. The Committee considered under subitem 81 (b) entitled "Other personnel questions" the following matters:
- (a) Revised proposal for the establishment of a United Nations Staff College;
 - (b) Amendment to the Staff Regulations of the United Nations;
 - (c) Amendment to the Staff Rules of the United Nations.

A. Revised proposal for the establishment of a United Nations staff college

67. The Committee had before it a report of the Secretary-General setting out a revised proposal for the establishment of a United Nations staff college (A/8829 and Corr.1 and 2 and Add.1) and the related report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (A/8935).
68. In his report, which was submitted in response to the General Assembly's request at its twenty-sixth session, the Secretary-General proposed that the United Nations should contribute \$150,000 as its share of the budget estimate for the staff college, which amounted to \$425,000. He stated that the Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme had indicated that he would propose

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to the Governing Council at its next session that the same allocation of \$150,000 be approved if the General Assembly rendered a favourable decision on the Secretary-General's proposal. The specialized agencies would contribute \$125,000.

69. In its report, the Advisory Committee stated that the revised UNITAR plan had assembled much of the basic data which the General Assembly required in order to take an informed decision on the establishment of the staff college, but noted that certain aspects of the revised proposal called for further clarification.

70. On the financing of the college, the Advisory Committee reported that it was not certain that UNDP would contribute \$150,000 as had been the understanding of the Secretary-General. The Advisory Committee understood that, while the Administrator of UNDP endorsed the general concept of a staff college, he had not yet been able to satisfy himself that the use of the college facilities by UNDP would warrant expenditure of the magnitude proposed. The Administrator believed that a definite financial commitment could not and should not be proposed to the UNDP Governing Council until he had subjected the proposed project to more careful analysis and scrutiny.

71. On the question of the costs, the Advisory Committee considered that a more realistic budget estimate for the first year would be \$350,000 rather than \$425,000. In its view, the additional appropriation required for 1973 could therefore be reduced from \$150,000, the figure proposed by the Secretary-General, to \$130,000.

72. Finally, the Advisory Committee expressed its belief that if the United Nations were to decide to appropriate \$130,000 for 1973, that appropriation should be placed in a separate account and not released until such time as the Governing Council of UNDP had agreed to participate and had decided on the level of the UNDP contribution. If a decision was made by the UNDP Governing Council to participate in the project on an equal financial footing with the United Nations but was not made until June 1973, then the Secretary-General should withhold from the United Nations appropriation an amount proportionate to the delay which would be incurred in establishing the college. If, on the other hand, the Governing Council decided against equal financial participation with the United Nations, then, in the opinion of the Advisory Committee, the project should be deferred pending consideration of an alternative financing plan by the General Assembly.

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73. A number of representatives reiterated their support in principle to the establishment of a staff college. However, concern was expressed that, although the revised proposal clarified many of the financial and administrative arrangements for the college, there remained aspects of the proposal which were either unclear or had uncertain implications. Most important of all was the uncertainty which had recently arisen over the financing of the project, in particular the apparent change in the position of the Administrator of UNDP.

74. Several representatives felt that both the immediate and long-term financial implications had to be reconsidered. At a time when the United Nations found itself in a very difficult financial situation, careful consideration had to be given to both the direct and indirect costs of the project. The location of the college in Geneva would require either extra travel costs in the case of attendance of staff located at the Headquarters of the United Nations and of the regional commissions or would necessitate additional expenditures to provide training courses in locations other than Geneva. Furthermore, considerable expense would result from the absence of staff from work in order to attend training courses. Such staff would have to be replaced by temporary assistance, since according to the proposal, staff members who attended courses offered by the college had to be temporarily released from their work.

75. One representative felt that the training of young candidates seeking a career with the United Nations through competitive examinations could be performed by the proposed international university. It also was not clear why the agencies would make only a token contribution of \$25,000 each. If the proposed college was to be run on an interagency basis then it would seem fair that more proportionate contributions should be made by the agencies. Another representative commented that the discussions at the twelfth session of the UNDP Governing Council revealed that considerable doubt existed in regard to the principle of distributing the costs of the project equally among the United Nations, UNDP and the specialized agencies. It was by no means certain that the Governing Council would agree to this equal cost-sharing formula. It was suggested that an alternative financing

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plan should be devised in such a way that the proposed college would interest not only the organizations of the United Nations system but also the Member States themselves. The college might provide opportunities for officials of national administrations to attend training courses.

76. One representative expressed surprise that the plan for financing the college as set out in the Secretary-General's report and according to which UNDP would contribute one third of the budget had been called into question. According to information obtained by the Advisory Committee, UNDP was not now ready to commit itself without first studying the project in more detail. The representative asked for the reasons for this change in the attitude of UNDP and why it had not been made known earlier instead of confronting the Committee with a fait accompli.

77. The representative of the Secretary-General commented on what appeared to be inconsistencies in the documents before the Committee in regard to the position of the Administrator of UNDP towards the staff college proposal. As a result of discussion which had taken place in October 1971 between the Administrator and the Deputy Administrator of UNDP and members of the United Nations staff, it had been informally agreed that UNDP and the United Nations would each contribute \$200,000 towards the initial estimates of the cost of operating the college, the remaining \$200,000 to be supplied by interested specialized agencies and other sources. On the basis of that agreement, a proposal had been put to the General Assembly at its twenty-sixth session, but the Assembly had decided to defer a decision until the present session. That action may have caused the Governing Council of UNDP to have second thoughts about the proposal. The Governing Council at its thirteenth session approved in principle UNDP participation in the project and deferred further consideration until its fifteenth session in January 1973. The Governing Council added at that time that the approval in principle was not to be taken as committing UNDP at that stage to any arrangements for sharing the costs of the project. In July 1972 the Assistant Administrator of UNDP stated that both the former Administrator of UNDP and the new Administrator supported the project and that if the General Assembly took a positive decision on the subject, UNDP would immediately assign a third of the budget earmarked for that project to initiate the new activity. The reference made by the

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Secretary-General in paragraph 5 of his report (A/8829) to the position of the Administrator of UNDP was not strictly accurate in the sense that it was based on a statement made by the Assistant Administrator to the Co-ordination Committee of the Economic and Social Council and not by the Administrator himself. In addition, that UNDP statement had not contained a specific mention of an allocation of \$150,000 from UNDP funds. The representative of the Secretary-General suggested, firstly, that it was not clear in paragraph 21 of the report of the Advisory Committee what action should be taken if the Governing Council decided on a UNDP contribution only slightly less than \$130,000 and, secondly, that one of the contributing bodies had to take a firm decision on the project if it was not to die.

78. Several representatives spoke in favour of approving the appropriation of \$130,000 as an endorsement of the project, together with the adoption of the procedures outlined in paragraph 21 of the report of the Advisory Committee. Other representatives favoured deferring a decision until the twenty-eighth session, by which time it was expected that the UNDP Governing Council would have taken a position on the question.

79. One representative stressed the importance of proceeding cautiously when dealing with interagency projects. It was important that there first be agreement among the administrators of the agencies concerned before the legislative bodies should be asked to act. It was suggested that perhaps UNDP was not the only organization having second thoughts about the project.

80. At its 1547th meeting, the Committee heard a statement by the Executive Director of UNITAR in which he stated that there could be little doubt that the need for adequate training in modern public administrative techniques was great in the United Nations system because of the diverse backgrounds of its officials. The loss of working time involved when an official was sent to a training course had to be balanced against the gain of increased efficiency on his return to work. Experience also showed that training for senior officials was more effective if it could be provided in a way which brought together men and women from different

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organizations to examine the effectiveness of new methods and approaches in the light of their differing experiences. The intention of the college would be to eliminate duplication of efforts by the various organizations. The Executive Director stated that it seemed only reasonable that the General Assembly, which was the governing body of the United Nations itself, should take the lead in supporting the project. From the blue-print of the programme for the college it could be seen that the whole emphasis of the work of the college during its first two years of operation would be on development. The Administrator of UNDP had repeated his support for the project. It was only the extent of UNDP's financial support that was at issue. The Executive Director hoped that when he met with the Administrator, who was presently away from New York, it would be possible to reach agreement on the latter question. As regards the possibility of offering courses at the college for citizens of developing countries employed in national public services, the Executive Director noted that the original proposal had envisioned such training as a second stage in the development of the college. The general feeling, however, in the Fifth Committee at that time appeared to be against any such commitment to a second stage. Consequently, it had been deleted from the revised proposal.

81. At the 1547th meeting, the representative of Brazil proposed the following paragraph for inclusion in the report of the Fifth Committee:

"While recalling that the General Assembly at its twenty-sixth session had approved in principle the idea of the establishment of a United Nations staff college, 3/ the Fifth Committee, taking into account the relevant report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (A/8935), decided to defer consideration of the revised proposal submitted by the Executive Director of the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (A/8829 and Corr.1 and 2 and Add.1) and to review the subject at the twenty-eighth session. To this end, the Fifth Committee requested the Secretary-General, in his capacity as Chairman of the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination and in collaboration with the Executive Director of UNITAR, to submit a further report on the staff college project, including its financial, administrative and budgetary implications, in the light of the comments and observations of the Advisory Committee (A/8935), of the views expressed in the Fifth Committee at its twenty-seventh session."

3/ Ibid., document A/8604/Add.1, para. 34 (c).

At the same meeting the representative of the United States of America proposed the addition of the words "and the views of the Governing Council of the UNDP" at the end of the paragraph. The amendment was accepted by the representative of Brazil.

82. One representative requested that the Committee vote first on the report of the Advisory Committee which pre-dated the Brazilian proposal. On the basis of a statement made by the Chairman of the Advisory Committee to the effect that the report did not give any positive recommendation but left the decision to the General Assembly, the Chairman of the Fifth Committee put the Brazilian proposal to the vote.

83. At its 1549th meeting, the Committee decided by a vote of 58 in favour, 4 against, and 12 abstentions, to include the paragraph proposed by Brazil, as amended by the United States of America, in the report of the Fifth Committee (see para. 90 below).

B. Amendment to the Staff Regulations of the United Nations

84. In a note submitted by the Secretary-General (A/C.5/1439), an amendment to regulation 1.10 of the Staff Regulations of the United Nations was proposed. The present regulation provides that the oath of office of Under-Secretaries-General and Assistant Secretaries-General should be made orally "at a public meeting of the General Assembly".

85. This provision had its origin in regulation 3 of the Provisional Staff Regulations adopted by the General Assembly in 1946 (resolution 13 (I), annex II) and was based on the nature of the role to be played by the four early Assistant Secretaries-General. On the occasion of each reorganization of the Secretariat and of its top echelon, amendments were adopted to the relevant Staff Regulations, including regulation 1.10, whose mandatory terms regarding the oath-taking of top-ranking officials before the General Assembly were retained, even though the justification for such terms seemed to have disappeared.

86. The Secretary-General considers that it would be more appropriate for Under-Secretaries-General and Assistant Secretaries-General to take the oath orally before him, rather than before the General Assembly, in the same manner as Directors and Professional officers do before the Assistant Secretary-General, Personnel Services. Accordingly, he proposed that regulation 1.10 be amended by the substitution of the following text:

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"The oath or declaration shall be made orally by the Secretary-General at a public meeting of the General Assembly. All other members of the Secretariat shall make the oath or declaration before the Secretary-General or his authorized representative."

87. At its 1549th meeting, the Committee decided by a vote of 65 in favour, none against, and 10 abstentions, to recommend that the General Assembly approve the proposed amendment (see para. 91 below, draft resolution II).

C. Amendment to the Staff Rules of the United Nations

88. In pursuance of regulation 12.2 of the Staff Regulations of the United Nations which provides that the Secretary-General shall report annually to the General Assembly on such staff rules and amendments thereto as he may make to implement the Staff Regulations, the Secretary-General submitted a note (A/C.5/1435) on the changes made to the Staff Rules during the year ending on 31 August 1972.

89. At the 1546th meeting, the Committee decided, without objection, to recommend that the General Assembly take note of those changes (see para. 91 below, draft resolution II).

D. Decisions of the Committee

90. The Fifth Committee decided to include the following paragraph in its report:

"While recalling that the General Assembly at its twenty-sixth session had approved in principle the idea of the establishment of a United Nations staff college, ^{4/} the Fifth Committee, taking into account the relevant report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (A/8935), decided to defer consideration of the revised proposal submitted by the Executive Director of the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (A/8829 and Corr.1 and 2 and Add.1) and to review the subject at the twenty-eighth session. To this end, the Fifth Committee requested the Secretary-General, in his capacity as Chairman of the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination and in collaboration with the Executive Director of UNITAR, to submit a further report on the staff college project, including its financial, administrative and budgetary implications, in the light of the comments and observations of the Advisory Committee (A/8935), of the views expressed in the Fifth Committee at its twenty-seventh session, and the views of the Governing Council of the United Nations Development Programme."

^{4/} Ibid.

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE FIFTH COMMITTEE

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

DRAFT RESOLUTION I

Composition of the Secretariat

The General Assembly,

Having considered the composition of the Secretariat and the long-term recruitment plan, 5/

Desirous of ensuring that, in accordance with Article 8 of the Charter of the United Nations, no restrictions are placed on the eligibility of men and women to participate in any capacity and under conditions of equality in the work of the Secretariat,

Desirous further to avoid any discrimination between staff members on grounds of sex,

Requests the Secretary-General to submit to the General Assembly at its twenty-eighth session a study on those provisions of the Staff Rules and Regulations of the United Nations whose application might, in certain cases, give rise to discrimination between staff members on grounds of sex.

DRAFT RESOLUTION II

Amendments to the Staff Regulations and Staff Rules of the United Nations

The General Assembly,

Having considered the note by the Secretary-General on a proposed amendment to the Staff Regulations of the United Nations, 6/

1. Decides that, with effect from 1 January 1973, regulation 1.10 of the Staff Regulations of the United Nations shall be amended as follows:

Replace the present text by the following:

"The oath or declaration shall be made orally by the Secretary-General at a public meeting of the General Assembly. All other members of the Secretariat shall make the oath or declaration before the Secretary-General or his authorized representative."

5/ A/8836.

6/ A/C.5/1439.

2. Takes note of the changes made by the Secretary-General in the Staff Rules of the United Nations in the year ending on 31 August 1972, as set forth in his note. 7/

92. The Fifth Committee also recommends to the General Assembly:

(a) That the following amendments should be made to the draft resolution entitled "Employment of women in senior and other professional positions by the secretariats of organizations in the United Nations system" recommended by the Third Committee in its report on agenda item 12 (A/8928, para. 29, draft resolution I):

- (i) In the fifth preambular paragraph, delete the word "total" and, at the end of the present text, add "in posts subject to geographical distribution, and from 7.3 per cent at the P-5 level to 39.8 per cent at the P-1 level for the Secretariat as a whole";
- (ii) In the sixth preambular paragraph, after the words "United Nations", insert the word "common";
- (b) That the General Assembly should take note of:
 - (i) The reports of the Secretary-General on the composition of the Secretariat (A/8831 and Corr.1 and Add.1) and on long-term recruitment planning (A/8836);
 - (ii) The note by the Secretary-General on the report of the Joint Inspection Unit on personnel problems in the United Nations (A/8897), pending a full submission by the Secretary-General on the substance of the report of the Joint Inspection Unit to the General Assembly at its twenty-eighth session.