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PERSONNEL QUESTIONS

Report of the Fifth Committee (Part II)

Rapporteur: Mr. Babooram RAMBISSOON (Trinidad and Tobago)

1. The Committee considered part (b) of the agenda item entitled "Other personnel questions" at its 1480th to 1485th and 1489th meetings held between 13 and 20 December 1971. Part (b) consisted of the following subitems:

- (i) Report of the Joint Inspection Unit on personnel problems of the United Nations;
- (ii) Staff training;
- (iii) Amendments to the Staff Regulations of the United Nations;
- (iv) Implementation of General Assembly resolution 2480 B (XXIII);
- (v) Amendments to the Staff Rules of the United Nations.

I. Report of the Joint Inspection Unit on personnel problems of the United Nations

2. The Secretary-General, with the agreement of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, transmitted to the General Assembly a report of the Joint Inspection Unit on personnel problems of the United Nations (A/8454) prepared by Inspector Maurice Bertrand. The report contained a critical analysis of the methods currently used in the United Nations in the recruitment, training,

promotion and administration of its staff in the Professional category and above, as well as an assessment of the reasons for the difficulties encountered. It presented a series of recommendations that fell into five broad categories:

(a) revision of the basic concepts underlying the present personnel policy; (b) modernization of administrative practices; (c) reform of the recruitment methods; (d) introduction of a career development system; and (e) modification of the structure and the emoluments of the staff. A final recommendation dealt with the manner in which the work initiated by the report might be carried forward by the establishment of a task force.

3. In addition to the report of the Joint Inspection Unit, the Committee had before it a note by the Secretary-General setting forth his preliminary comments (A/8545) on the report and the related report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (A/8552). In his note, the Secretary-General indicated that since the report of the Joint Inspection Unit raised questions which were likely to be of interest to the Special Committee for the Review of the United Nations Salary System, and also to the Administrative Management Service, which had not yet carried out the survey of the Office of Personnel, he believed that comments on the substance of the report should be deferred until the twenty-seventh session of the General Assembly. In the meantime, he proposed to follow up on some of the recommendations contained in the report by undertaking supplementary studies. While every effort would be made to carry out the follow-up studies within the available staff resources, the Secretary-General considered that the Secretariat lacked the necessary expertise in engaging in one of the fields of inquiry, that is, a study of the feasibility of a global plan of competitive examinations for recruitment. He suggested that an additional amount to \$50,000 be appropriated for that purpose. In its report, the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions confined itself to the Secretary-General's proposals for follow-up action and recommended that should the General Assembly agree to consider the report of the Joint Inspection Unit at its twenty-seventh session, an additional appropriation of \$25,000 would suffice in 1972 for the follow-up studies proposed by the Secretary-General.

4. The representatives who spoke on the subject agreed that, in view of the importance and the highly complex and technical nature of the report, consideration of its substance should be deferred to the twenty-seventh session

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of the General Assembly. One representative suggested that the report should in the meantime be referred to the heads of the other organizations in the United Nations system, since, as indicated in the report itself, although it was mainly concerned with personnel problems in the United Nations, it was likely that the measures proposed in the report might also be of interest to the specialized agencies. When informed by the representative of the Secretary-General that the report had been informally communicated to the other organizations, some representatives questioned whether any further action, on a formal basis, would be called for, especially since the report had not yet been considered by the General Assembly. For the same reason, some representatives expressed reservations on the follow-up action proposed to be taken on a report which the Assembly had not yet decided to implement. Other representatives were in favour of the proposed follow-up studies which they considered to be necessary to enable the Secretary-General to make a further submission to the twenty-seventh session of the Assembly. They supported the appropriation of \$25,000 for that purpose, as recommended by the Advisory Committee. One representative pointed out that such an appropriation would serve as a token of the Assembly's interest in the development of objective methods of competitive examinations as a means of future recruitment. Some representatives stressed the necessity of keeping the morale of Secretariat personnel at the highest level possible so as to ensure the efficiency of the Secretariat at an equally high level.

5. At the 1481st meeting, on 13 December, the representative of Canada proposed the inclusion of the following paragraph in the report of the Committee:

"The Fifth Committee recommends that the General Assembly request the Secretary-General:

(a) To refer to the heads of the specialized agencies and the International Atomic Energy Agency the report of the Joint Inspection Unit on personnel problems in the United Nations (A/8454);

(b) To initiate early discussions in the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination with a view to determining areas where close co-operation in personnel questions arising from this Report would be of mutual benefit to member organizations within the United Nations system;

(c) To transmit the views of the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination in this regard to the Special Committee for the Review of the United Nations Salary System."

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6. At the same meeting, the representative of Canada accepted a suggestion by the Chairman that the proposed text be amended by the insertion of the words "if possible", at the beginning of subparagraph (c).
7. At the 1482nd meeting, on 14 December, the Committee decided, without objection, to adopt the Canadian proposal, as amended (see para. 34 (b) below).
8. At the same meeting, the Chairman proposed that the Committee should recommend to the General Assembly that the Secretary-General and the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions be requested to make a full submission on the report of the Joint Inspection Unit to the Assembly at its twenty-seventh session, taking into account the views and recommendations of the Special Committee for the Review of the United Nations Salary System, as well as the results of the administrative management survey of the Office of Personnel. The Committee decided, without objection, to adopt the Chairman's proposal (see para. 34(a) below).
9. At the 1483rd meeting, on 14 December, the Committee decided, by a vote of 50 to 1, with 16 abstentions, to approve the recommendation of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions that an additional appropriation of \$25,000 be included in section 3, chapter III (Temporary assistance other than for meetings), in the budget estimates for 1972 to meet the costs of the follow-up studies proposed by the Secretary-General.

II. Staff training

10. The Committee had before it a report of the Secretary-General on staff training (A/C.5/1404) and the related report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (A/8408/Add.21). In his report, the Secretary-General proposed a significant increase in 1972 in staff training programmes. The Secretary-General estimated that acceptance of his proposals would call for an additional appropriation of \$436,500. The major item in the new proposals was the provision from the United Nations regular budget of a subvention of \$200,000 as a contribution to the first year budget of a United Nations staff college, which had been proposed by the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) with the concurrence of the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination. In its report, the Advisory Committee stated that while recognizing the importance

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of staff training, it favoured a cautious approach in view of the fact that several studies bearing on staff training would be considered by next year. It recommended that the additional appropriation be reduced to \$88,350. The amount of \$200,000 requested for the proposed staff college was specifically excluded. The Advisory Committee recommended instead that the General Assembly defer consideration of the proposal to set up a staff college until its twenty-seventh session. In the Advisory Committee's view, that course would have the added advantage that the proposal could then be considered in conjunction with those parts of the report of the Joint Inspection Unit (A/8454) which related to staff training.

11. At the 1482nd meeting, the Committee heard a statement by the Executive Director of UNITAR in explanation of the proposed establishment of the United Nations staff college. The Executive Director stated that although the Institute had taken the initiative in the planning of the staff college, it remained essentially an interagency project. As it was not a venture of the Institute, the question of financing it through voluntary contributions did not arise. The plan had been carefully worked out in the past two years on the basis of a feasibility study and the recommendations of an interagency advisory panel. He had been assured of the full support for the proposal by the executive heads of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the specialized agencies. The Administrative Committee on Co-ordination had agreed that he should go ahead with plans to initiate the college. At the initial stage, the college would operate on an experimental basis and would be administered by an interagency management committee. The second stage would not be contemplated until the participating organizations had assessed the results achieved during the trial period. He pointed out that, because of their biennial budgetary arrangements, some of the agencies were not in a position to make cash commitments to the college budget at the initial stage. The agencies had offered, however, to provide \$200,000 in terms of staff assistance. He said that the college would definitely be of long-term interest to all the organizations, as it would eliminate much of the duplication of efforts in staff training undertaken individually by them. He urged that the United Nations should not withhold its support for the project in which all the agencies had concurred. As all the preparatory work at the executive level had been completed, he suggested that the plan to establish the staff college should be permitted to proceed as scheduled.

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12. A number of representatives expressed their support for an early establishment of the staff college. They considered it as a profitable investment in the sense that it would contribute towards greater efficiency and productivity of the staff. The proposal for the staff college seemed to be more carefully and better prepared than some other projects that had been approved. Much of the doubt and misgiving about the administrative and financial arrangements for the college had been dispelled by the explanations given by the Executive Director of UNITAR. These representatives were convinced that the Committee should take a positive decision that would enable the project to go ahead. They were therefore in favour of approving the Secretary-General's request for the appropriation of \$200,000 as the United Nations contribution to the budget of the staff college in 1972.

13. Several other representatives expressed the view that while they too supported the concept of staff training, they felt that it must be carefully planned. In their view, the proposal for the staff college, as it was presented in four short paragraphs in the Secretary-General's report (A/C.5/1404, paras. 15-18), did not provide sufficient information for the Committee to take a judicious decision. The administrative and financial implications of the establishment of the college did not appear to them to have been clearly defined. More precise information was required on such questions as the extent of the commitment of the specialized agencies to the project, the positions of the legislative bodies of those agencies, the statutory provisions of the college, the functions of the staff college in relation to other training programmes, the organization of courses and the type of participants envisaged in the initial stage, the expected duration of the first phase and the justification for admission of national officials for training, as proposed for the second stage. It was also pointed out that the Committee could not be expected to act on a budgetary appropriation without a detailed breakdown of the request. These representatives therefore supported the recommendation of the Advisory Committee to defer consideration of the proposal to set up a staff college for one year in order to provide time for UNITAR, in co-operation with the Administrative Committee on Co-Ordination, to refine the proposal and to consider unresolved financial and administrative questions.

14. At the 1484th meeting, on 15 December, the representative of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) informed the Committee

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that the Director-General of UNESCO, recognizing the need for an interagency staff training scheme, had taken part in the consultations concerning the establishment of a staff college. The Director-General expressed a readiness to pay tuition fees for those of UNESCO staff members who attended courses in the college and would be prepared to provide facilities for courses at its headquarters in Paris and to provide staff members as lecturers for courses within its competence. The Director-General would also be ready, if the project were approved for implementation, to request appropriate authorizations under the budgetary arrangements of UNESCO (see para. 34 (c) below).

15. At the same meeting, the representatives of Nigeria and France proposed that the Committee should approve the request of the Secretary-General for an appropriation of \$200,000 as the United Nations contribution to the staff college in 1972, as set out in paragraph 18 of the Secretary-General's report (A/C.5/1404). The proposal was rejected by a vote of 33 to 31, with 11 abstentions. At the 1489th meeting, on 20 December, the representative of Liberia proposed that the Committee reconsider that decision. The motion was rejected by a vote of 34 to 34, with 13 abstentions.

16. At the 1484th meeting, the representative of Brazil proposed that the Committee approve the recommendation of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions set forth in paragraph 19 of its report (A/8408/Add.21), with an amendment that would insert the words "approve in principle the idea of the establishment of a United Nations staff college and" after the words "General Assembly". By a vote of 52 to 2, with 20 abstentions, the Committee adopted the Brazilian proposal.

17. At the same meeting, the Committee approved, by a vote of 74 in favour to none against, with 1 abstention, the recommendations of the Advisory Committee set out in paragraph 20 of its report (A/8408/Add.21) for an additional appropriation of \$88,350 for staff training programmes.

18. In explanation of his vote, the representative of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics stated that his delegation was of the view that study leave should coincide with annual leave and should not be granted separately.

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III. Amendments to the Staff Regulations of
the United Nations

19. In a note submitted by the Secretary-General (A/C.5/1398/Add.1), it was proposed that annex I, paragraph 1, of the Staff Regulations of the United Nations be amended by the substitution of the figure "\$US56,000" for the existing figure "\$US47,000", representing the amount of annual salary for the Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme. The amendment would bring the gross base salary of the Administrator into line with that of the executive head of a major specialized agency. In its related report (A/8565), the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions concurred in the Secretary-General's proposal.

20. At the 1480th meeting, the Committee decided to recommend that the General Assembly approve the proposed amendment with effect from 1 January 1972 (see para. 33, para. 1 (a) of the draft resolution).

21. In another note (A/C.5/1398) submitted by the Secretary-General, it was proposed that annex I, paragraph 4, of the Staff Regulations concerning periodic salary increments for staff in the Professional and higher categories be amended so as to bring that paragraph in line with the provisions of paragraph 1 (b) (ii) of General Assembly resolution 2480 B (XXIII) which envisaged, with effect from 1 January 1972, the award of salary increments at shorter intervals to staff subject to geographical distribution who had an adequate and confirmed knowledge of a second language. The amendment was to add the following sentence to the existing text of annex I, paragraph 4, of the Staff Regulations:

"The Secretary-General is authorized to reduce the interval between salary increments to ten months and twenty months, respectively, in the case of staff subject to geographical distribution who have an adequate and confirmed knowledge of a second official language of the United Nations."

22. At the 1484th meeting, the Committee decided to recommend that the General Assembly approve the proposed amendment with effect from 1 January 1972 (see para. 33, para. 1 (b) of the draft resolution).

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IV. Implementation of General Assembly
resolution 2480 B (XXIII)

23. In his initial budget estimates for 1972,^{1/} the Secretary-General indicated that he would submit in due course revised estimates to cover the additional cost of implementing the provisions of paragraph 1 (b) (ii) of General Assembly resolution 2480 B (XXIII) (see paragraph 21 above). In the revised estimates submitted accordingly by the Secretary-General (A/C.5/1408), he requested an additional appropriation of \$133,600 for 1972 in implementation of the incentive scheme with respect to 612 staff members, who were already eligible, and up to 500 others, who were expected to become eligible during the year. That amount would be partially offset by additional income estimated at \$26,000 from staff assessment.

24. The Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions noted, in paragraph 3 of its report (A/8408/Add.20), that in applying paragraph 1 (b) (ii) of General Assembly resolution 2480 B (XXIII), the Secretary-General intended to take into account, in each case, the staff member's length of service prior to 1 January 1972 in the step of his grade. Thus a qualified staff member who, at 1 January 1972, had already served 10 months at a particular step, would move to the next step immediately, rather than on 1 March. Similarly, a qualified staff member with, say, six months' service at a particular step on 1 January, who would thus normally move to the next step on 1 July 1972, would move up on 1 May. The Advisory Committee suggested, in paragraph 4 of its report, that the resolution could be interpreted differently. Under that alternative interpretation, the accelerated increment envisaged in paragraph 1 (b) (ii) of Assembly resolution would become effective only after the date of increment normally due in 1972. Thus, in the example cited, a qualified staff member with 10 months' service at a particular step on 1 January would move to the next step on 1 March, that is, after the normal period; only then would the incentive scheme come into play. Accordingly, he would move to the next succeeding step on 1 January 1973 rather than on 1 March 1973. The Advisory Committee stated that were this second interpretation to be followed, the financial implications in 1972 would be minimal. From a strictly budgetary point of view, the Advisory Committee would favour the second alternative, but it was not sure that this would carry out the intentions of the General Assembly.

^{1/} Official Records of the General Assembly, Twenty-sixth Session,
Supplement No. 6 (A/8406 and Corr.1 Spanish and Corr.2), vol I, para. 3.10.

Irrespective of which interpretation was to be adopted, the Advisory Committee was of the view that the financial implications in 1972 could be absorbed within funds otherwise available, without requiring an additional appropriation.

25. At the 1483rd meeting, on 14 December, the representative of the Secretary-General stated that the application of General Assembly resolution 2480 B (XXIII) of 21 December 1968 had been delayed to enable staff members to acquire a second language. Referring to the alternative interpretation suggested by the Advisory Committee with regard to the timing in the application of the resolution, he pointed out that, under this interpretation, no staff member would benefit from an accelerated increment until November 1972 at the earliest, and many would not benefit until 1973 or later. Under the Secretary-General's interpretation, on the other hand, all qualified staff members would benefit in 1972, as provided in the resolution.

26. Several representatives spoke in favour of the Secretary-General's interpretation on the understanding that the additional costs would be absorbed within the initial budget estimates, as recommended by the Advisory Committee. They noted that the alternative interpretation suggested by the Advisory Committee appeared to be based only on the consideration of economy. They felt that, of the two interpretations, preference should be given to the one which would stimulate staff members, over the one which would discourage them. One representative expressed preference of the alternative interpretation, which he considered to be legally more correct.

27. At the 1485th meeting, on 15 December, the Committee approved, by a vote of 33 to 20, with 14 abstentions, the interpretation of the timing in the application of paragraph 1 (b) (ii) of General Assembly resolution 2480 B (XXIII), as given by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions in paragraph 4 of its report (A/8408/Add.20).

28. In its report, the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions also recommended that for the purpose of implementing the incentive measures set out in paragraph 1 (b) of General Assembly resolution 2480 B (XXIII) (promotion from one grade to another and more rapid passage through the steps of each grade), the language proficiency certificate should in all cases be required with respect to staff members whose mother tongue was an official language and who were required under the terms of their appointment to work in another official language which was also a working language. Views in favour of this recommendation were expressed by a

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few delegations. One representative said that the Advisory Committee's recommendation would be acceptable on the understanding that the confirmation would apply to the staff member's second language, as provided in paragraph 2 of General Assembly resolution 2480 B (XXIII).

29. At the 1485th meeting, the Committee decided, without objection, to take note of the recommendation of the Advisory Committee that, irrespective of the interpretation, the additional costs required for the implementation of that provision should be absorbed in the initial budget estimates.

V. Amendments to the Staff Rules of the United Nations

30. Pursuant to 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.5/1371) on the amendments made during the year ending 31 August 1971.

31. At the 1480th meeting, on 13 December, the Committee decided without objection, to recommend that the General Assembly take note of the Secretary-General's note on the subject (see para. 33 below, paragraph 2 of the draft resolution).

DECISION OF THE FIFTH COMMITTEE

32. The Committee decided to approve the interpretation of paragraph 1 (b) (ii) of General Assembly resolution 2480 B (XXIII) as set forth in paragraph 4 of the report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (A/8408/Add.20).

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE FIFTH COMMITTEE

33. The Fifth Committee recommends to the General Assembly the adoption of the following draft resolution:

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Amendments to the Staff Regulations of the United Nations

The General Assembly,

Having considered the note by the Secretary-General on amendments to the Staff Regulations of the United Nations^{2/} and the related report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions,^{3/}

1. Decides that the Staff Regulations of the United Nations shall be modified by the following amendments, with effect from 1 January 1972:

(a) Replace the present text of annex I, paragraph 1, by the following:

"The Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme, having a status equivalent to that of the executive head of a major specialized agency, shall receive a salary of \$US56,000 per year, an Under-Secretary-General shall receive a salary of \$US43,750 per year and an Assistant Secretary-General shall receive a salary of \$US39,150 per year, subject to the staff assessment plan provided in staff regulation 3.3 and to post adjustments wherever applied. If otherwise eligible, they shall receive the allowances which are available to staff members generally."

(b) Replace the present text of annex I, paragraph 4, by the following:

"Subject to satisfactory service, salary increments within the levels set forth in paragraph 3 of the present annex shall be awarded annually, except that any increment above step IV of the Principal Officer level shall be preceded by two years at the previous step. The Secretary-General is authorized to reduce the interval between salary increments to ten months and twenty months, respectively, in the case of staff subject to geographical distribution, who have an adequate and confirmed knowledge of a second official language of the United Nations."

2. Takes note of the changes made by the Secretary-General in the Staff Rules of the United Nations in the year ending 31 August 1971, as set forth in his report.^{4/}

^{2/} A/C.5/1398 and Add.1.

^{3/} A/8565.

^{4/} A/C.5/1371.

34. The Committee also recommends:

(a) That the Secretary-General and the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions should be requested by the General Assembly to make a full submission to the Assembly at its twenty-seventh session on the report of the Joint Inspection Unit on personnel problems of the United Nations (A/8454), taking into account the views and recommendations of the Special Committee for the Review of the United Nations Salary System, as well as the results of the administrative management survey of the Office of Personnel;

(b) That the Secretary-General should also be requested by the General Assembly:

- (i) To refer to the heads of the specialized agencies and the International Atomic Energy Agency the report of the Joint Inspection Unit on personnel problems in the United Nations (A/8454);
- (ii) To initiate early discussions in the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination with a view to determining areas where close co-operation in personnel questions arising from this report would be of mutual benefit to member organizations within the United Nations system;
- (iii) If possible, to transmit the views of the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination in this regard to the Special Committee for the Review of the United Nations Salary System;

(c) That the General Assembly should approve in principle the idea of the establishment of a United Nations staff college and defer consideration of the proposal to set up such a staff college (A/C.5/1404, paras. 15-18, and A/8408/Add.21, paras. 12-19) until its twenty-seventh session.
