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PERSONNEL QUESTIONS

OTHER PERSONNEL QUESTIONS

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

Report of the Secretary-General

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## I. INTRODUCTION

1. At its twenty-ninth session the General Assembly, on the recommendation of the Fifth Committee, having considered the reports of the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) on personnel problems in the United Nations (A/8454 and A/8826), the major recommendations of the Administrative Management Service (AMS) (A/C.5/1601/Add.1) and the related reports of the Secretary-General (A/C.5/1601 and A/C.5/1639) and the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (A/9608/Add.1 and A/9841), decided to authorize the Secretary-General to proceed with the implementation of the proposals contained in his report, subject to the observations of the Advisory Committee and to request him to report to the Assembly at its thirty-first session on the progress made in the implementation of these proposals. This report accordingly contains information on the action taken in these respects.

## II. THE BASIC STAFF STRUCTURE OF THE SECRETARIAT

### A. Job classification

2. As a result of the decision of the General Assembly based on recommendations of the JIU (Recommendation 1) and the AMS (Recommendation 4) which were agreed to by both the Secretary-General (A/C.5/1601, para. 10) and the Advisory Committee (A/9841, para. 15), a team of outside experts was recruited by the Secretary-General during 1975 and 1976 to plan and develop a properly conceived and elaborated job classification system covering all Professional posts in the Secretariat and to promote an understanding of the system through training courses. One member of the team entered on duty in September 1975, two members in January 1976 and the remaining one in June 1976. The team is undertaking first a study of the posts subject to geographical distribution or with special language requirements. The objective of the study is to develop a classification plan providing for equitable grading of posts by ensuring that there will be a consistent relationship between the complexity of duties of a post and the grade to which it is allocated.

3. After a preliminary general analysis of available information on the posts to be classified and their incumbents, the team chose a number of elements to be used tentatively as criteria in the evaluation of posts. These "job factors" include the education and experience required to perform the duties, the nature and diversity of the functions of the post and the significance of its functions for the work of the Organization. The team is currently engaged in the detailed analysis of replies to questionnaires sent out to about 90 staff members of different grades, seniority in grade, length of service and nationality in a sample of representative functions in New York and Geneva. A separate pilot study of the Professional staff in the Library, Department of Conference Services, is also being conducted. Following the detailed analysis of the material in the questionnaires, which it is hoped to complete by October 1976, bench-mark posts will be selected and classified according to the job factors, which will then be carefully defined, to provide a basis for the classification system. The remaining posts will be classified using the factors of the bench-mark posts to complete the system. The exercise should be completed with respect to geographic and language posts by the latter part of 1977.

B. Occupational groups

4. The Secretary-General agreed (A/C.5/1601, para. 8) with the thrust of the JIU Recommendations 1 and 16 that occupational groups existing in the Secretariat should be identified and defined and that the necessary personnel policies and institutions required to manage the staff on that basis should be developed with clear relationships being established between level of competence and grade. He also agreed with the AMS Recommendation 5 that this concept should apply to the General Service category as well as to the Professional category (A/C.5/1601, para. 7). The Advisory Committee concurred with the Secretary-General's approach (A/9841, para. 12). An occupational group structure is currently being used both in recruitment of candidates from outside and in the planning of assignments of staff members. The main occupational groups used for geographic and language posts are for Administrative, Economic, Social, Information, Legal, Library, Linguistic, Political and lastly Publishing, Printing and Reproduction work. In conjunction with the verification of the information on staff in the computer file at Headquarters, the functions of the staff in the Professional category and above are being reviewed to determine the appropriateness of the current occupational group structure. Standard education and experience qualifications for each grade in each group are being defined so as to be consistent with the appropriate job factor in the classification system. All vacancy notices now include standard descriptions of qualifications related to the grade of the post advertised and the field in which the candidate is to serve. (JIU Recommendation 1 and AMS Recommendation 13).

C. Restructuring of the General Service category

5. The Secretary-General in agreement with the JIU (Recommendation 14) and the AMS (Recommendation 27) concluded (A/C.5/1601, para. 15) that it was essential to restructure the General Service category at Headquarters. In fact, the Administration had initiated restructuring studies as long ago as 1962. However, none of the three systems proposed since then have been acceptable to the staff, even though each was developed jointly by working groups composed of both Administration and Staff representatives. Another working group with staff participation, established in 1974 within the joint administrative machinery under staff regulation 8.2, was unable to conclude its work because of the failure to reach agreement on a proposal for setting salaries based on data showing prevailing rates for similar posts in the New York labour market. The working group held a total of 58 meetings in attempts to resolve their differences. Finally, the Chairman of the group produced a report on its work in two parts. The first part published in November 1975 dealt solely with a proposed new seven-level structure and included specific recommendations, standards and guidelines for use in implementing and administering the new system. A large measure of agreement had been reached on the structure itself. The second part of the Chairman's report, published in February 1976, contained a number of ideas and technical considerations relating to the question of establishing a long-range salary policy for the General Service category, but did not contain any recommendation since agreement in this respect could not be reached within the group.

6. Both parts of the report have been under discussion in the Staff Council, established under article 8.1 of the Staff Regulations and entitled to make proposals to the Secretary-General for improvements in the situation of staff members. Once again, staff representatives have indicated their unwillingness to agree to the adoption of a restructured General Service category, primarily because of disagreements over the proposed salary policy designed to facilitate regular comparison of salary scales to "best prevailing conditions". In view of the history of attempts to secure agreement in this matter, and the fact that the International Civil Service Commission will be seized of the question of General Service salary policy, the Secretary-General proposes to transmit the reports of the Chairman of the last working group to the Commission for its consideration.

7. While this report is intended to deal with the implementation of proposals made by the Secretary-General and approved by the General Assembly, the Secretary-General feels that he cannot pass by in silence here the events in the past year with respect to the General Service staff in Geneva which have been the subject of a report of the JIU recently transmitted to the Assembly (A/31/137). These events underscore the necessity of restructuring the General Service category at Geneva as well as at Headquarters. The question is more complex in Geneva because of the interrelationship of the office at Geneva with the other organizations in Geneva with large staffs in the same category. The Secretary-General is making proposals in the context of the 1976-1977 Programme Budget to permit the immediate implementation of a job-classification study of the General Service category in Geneva starting early in 1977. The Secretary-General intends to broaden this study eventually to all duty stations at which there are substantial numbers of General Service staff. Arrangements will have to be made subsequently for the administration of the restructured General Service staff at Headquarters, Geneva and these other duty stations.

### III. RECRUITMENT

#### A. Long-term recruitment plan

8. A long-term recruitment plan has been prepared as recommended by JIU (Recommendation 2) and by AMS (Recommendation 7). The plan provides the Secretariat Recruitment Service with a tool to estimate the annual recruitment needs required to bring the number of nationals of each Member State in posts subject to geographical distribution within their desirable range over a five-year period. It takes into account the estimated number of separations of staff from service during the period and the likely increase in the number of posts subject to geographical distribution over the period. Its utility has been limited by both political and technical factors. Many Member States which are overrepresented continue to seek posts in the Secretariat for their nationals thus increasing the workload of the Secretariat. On the technical side, the circumstances which have to be taken into account have proven to be difficult to predict with any certainty. Experience has shown that the number of posts which will be required over the next five years cannot be forecast with accuracy for the following reasons: not only is the size of the approved budget impossible to determine in advance, equally uncertain is the effect of each

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major review of the scale of assessments to the budget and the number of States which may join the Organization during the period. In 1972, when the first plan was developed, there were 132 Member States. In the intervening four years, 12 Member States have joined the Organization. During the period there have been major redistributions of the assessment scale in consequence. Therefore, for a variety of reasons, until a more stable environment is achieved and the future becomes more predictable, the plan will continue to do little more than to highlight recruitment needs which are already obvious.

#### B. Candidates roster

9. Both the JIU (Recommendation 4) and the AMS (Recommendation 15) recommended the establishment of a central candidates roster. On 30 June 1976, the computerized candidates roster at Headquarters contained information on 5,397 candidates, including 5,062 male and 335 female candidates. It included candidates from 122 Member States, 60 of which are represented by one or more female candidates. Member States which are not represented in the roster include eight Member States within their desirable range, one which is underrepresented and 14 Member States which are not represented at all in the Secretariat. <sup>1/</sup> The candidates in the roster come from governmental recommendations (30 per cent), from individual applications (40 per cent), and from other sources (30 per cent), e.g., recommendations from UNDP resident representatives, information centre directors, specialized agencies or non-governmental sources, including universities and professional societies. New additions are made in response to letters to permanent missions, national recruitment services, appropriate professional institutions and to advertisements as well as in response to recruitment missions and invitations by members of the Secretariat who meet good candidates in the course of their work. The roster is brought up-to-date each month and entries are examined regularly to see if the candidatures are still active. This is an automatic feature based on a review date entered at the same time as the name is added to the roster or information on the candidate is changed. If no reply is received to letters to candidates sent out on the basis of the review date, the candidate's name and the related data are deleted from the roster and placed in an inactive file. The roster has an internal monitoring system which is adjusted as a result. This system highlights particular areas where candidates are in short supply, whether in terms of occupation, nationality or sex and brings these areas to the attention of the major recruitment sources to which the roster is distributed. A recent experiment has been undertaken which permits an immediate search of the computer file of information on candidates, based on selection criteria which can be entered by a terminal in the New York Computing Centre, which immediately displays the results of the search. It is planned to introduce this feature on a permanent basis with a terminal established in the offices of the Recruitment Division. The percentage of

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<sup>1/</sup> Albania, Bhutan, Cape Verde, Comoros, Democratic Yemen, Guinea-Bissau, Kuwait, Maldives, Mozambique, Papua New Guinea, Qatar, Sao Tomé and Príncipe, Surinam and United Arab Emirates.

recruitments in 1975 made on the basis of the roster was 19.17 per cent for regular staff and 16.21 per cent for project personnel. The figures for 1974 were 6.92 per cent and 10.43 per cent respectively. Substantive divisions, the office at Geneva, UNIDO, UNEP, the regional commissions, UNDP resident representatives, specialized agencies, national recruitment services and permanent missions receive appropriate extracts of the roster. At present it is circulated in the form of rather bulky reports printed by the computer. It is hoped that when microfiche readers are more generally available, the roster will be distributed on microfiche resulting in considerable savings in the cost of printing and postage.

#### C. Competitive examinations and competitive selections

10. The resources of the Secretariat Recruitment Service and the Training and Examination Service were concentrated on four competitive examinations held in 1974 and 1975 for candidates from the Federal Republic of Germany, Italy, Japan and the United Kingdom. By 30 June 1976, 26 staff members had been appointed after success in these examinations. In two further cases successful candidates had accepted offers of appointment but had not yet entered on duty. Offers made in seven other cases were declined. Six other cases are still under consideration for appointment. The first three examinations were especially arranged to take into account the need of the United Nations for candidates from particularly underrepresented Member States. The fourth was a part of a programme to replace at lower levels staff members from Member States large numbers of whose nationals at senior levels will retire in the next few years. A similar examination to recruit a small number of young candidates from France is being discussed. Consideration is also being given to the holding of an examination in collaboration with ECA for candidates from the region in accordance with the recommendation of the Advisory Committee that the Secretary-General explore the possibilities of competitive examinations in groups of smaller countries (A/9841, para. 35). Examinations may be spaced at longer intervals in the future to permit the easier assimilation into the Secretariat of a greater number of successful candidates from each examination.

#### D. Recruitment of General Service staff at Headquarters

11. In view of the changed labour market at Headquarters the Secretary-General has not found it necessary to recruit General Service staff for Headquarters from outside the general commuting area of the duty station as recommended by AMS (Recommendation 18). The Advisory Committee expressed the hope that this should only be used on an exceptional basis for staff needs which could not be met by recruitment from the locality (A/9841, para. 39).

#### E. Recruitment procedures

12. In his report (A/C.5/1601, para. 29) the Secretary-General indicated that he intended, after consultation with the staff, to relieve the Appointment and Promotion Board of the necessity of reviewing cases of appointment decided in effect under alternative procedures such as competitive examinations. Language staff have always

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been appointed this way without regard for their nationality and junior professional staff appointed after competitive examinations undergo in addition a thorough interview by both representatives of their own Government and of the United Nations. In view of the relatively small numbers of junior professional staff appointed after competitive examinations, the Secretary-General decided to delay, for the present, this change.

13. However, in pursuance of his interest in decentralization of authority, the Secretary-General proposes, in consultation with the staff, to establish Appointment and Promotion Committees at the office at Geneva, in UNIDO, in UNEP and in the regional commissions for the purpose of assisting the Appointment and Promotion Board at Headquarters in its function of advising the Secretary-General with respect to appointments at levels P-1 to P-4 of candidates for vacant posts in those offices. It is planned that these local committees should begin to function in January 1977.



IV. STAFF MANAGEMENT

A. Assignment planning, career development and promotion

14. The JIU (Recommendations 9 and 12) and the AMS (Recommendation 25) both emphasized the need to establish machinery for the planning and development of careers within the Secretariat. While indicating broad agreement with the concept of a career development system organized on occupational lines, the Secretary-General believed it was necessary to test the proposed system of career planning committees before deciding to institute such a system generally for the Secretariat to replace or supplement the present Appointment and Promotion Committee (A/C.5/1601, para. 32). The working group set up to advise him on the detailed procedures required for such an arrangement has determined that a number of prior steps which could not earlier be completed are prerequisites of the establishment of the experimental career planning committee for the one occupational group that had been envisaged. These steps are all linked to the division of the staff by occupational group and the establishment of appropriate classification standards. The career patterns appropriate to the different groups have to be studied and the best patterns chosen objectively to provide both a balanced career for the staff member and the best development of his or her capacities in order to ensure their efficient utilization in the interests of the Organization. It is expected that this phase will be completed during the course of 1977.

15. In their reports the JIU (Recommendation 14) and AMS (Recommendation 27) both criticized the practice of promoting staff members to the Professional category from other categories especially in the case of General Service staff who did not possess the required qualifications, but tended to receive their promotions to the Professional category towards the end of their career as a reward for long service. The Advisory Committee considered that opportunity for passage to the Professional category through competitive selection should be afforded to those with the necessary professional qualifications and exceptionally to other staff members, especially able younger staff, who may lack the required academic qualifications but who have clearly demonstrated their potential by their performance. 1/ The following table indicates the age and sex of all staff promoted to the Professional category in the years 1971-1975.

Year	<u>Number</u>		<u>Average age</u>		<u>Number under 30</u>	
	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
1971	20	22	44.70	39.77	-	-
1972	18	15	43.11	42.33	-	-
1973	15	18	45.46	42.44	-	3
1974	17	13	41.70	39.07	1	2
1975	19	24	42.42	42.33	2	2

1/ A/9841, para. 20.

A survey is currently being undertaken of the capabilities and experience of all staff in the General Service category who have pursued their studies in some form beyond the secondary level to determine their potential. The possibility of holding separate competitive examinations from time to time is being studied for other occupational groups like those held for many years for staff who wish to be considered for Professional posts in a linguistic occupation. The written part of such examinations will consist of a common core and additional specialized questions for the different occupational groups for which the examination is being held. The level of the examinations will be the same as for outside recruitment. The examination will be open to staff with a minimum length of service, a maximum age, language ability, satisfactory service and certain educational qualifications. Staff members who reach a set level in the written examination will then be interviewed by a board consisting of representatives of officers in the occupational group and of the Office of Personnel Services.

16. In the field of career planning a scheme has been instituted for the rotation of economists between Headquarters and the Regional Commissions for assignments of two years. General agreement has been reached for the arrangements, and nominations have been received both from the Commissions and from the Department of Economic and Social Affairs. The first such assignments are planned to begin during the latter part of 1976. A number of assignments have also been arranged on an ad hoc basis for senior General Service staff of the Commissions concerned with administrative functions to spend a year at Headquarters in training to undertake greater responsibilities on their return to their official duty stations.

#### B. Performance evaluation

17. Changes in the periodic reporting system which has been in force for some 20 years were recommended by both the JIU (Recommendation 8) and the AMS (Recommendation 31). A new performance evaluation reporting system has been developed in consultation with representatives of the staff which brings about several significant changes. The new system is predicated on, and intended to foster, a dialogue between staff members and their supervisors. The report form requires the staff member directly involved to participate in the reporting process rather than be the object of it. The evaluation scheme has been revised in respect of both the elements to be judged and the method of rating them in order to ensure a fair, consistent and objective assessment of a broad range of the staff member's performance and abilities and to elicit specific information that will contribute to the staff member's career development.

#### C. Training

18. The first recommendation of the JIU on training (Recommendation 6) was for the establishment of a scheme of prerecruitment training essentially for nationals of developing countries. The Secretary-General, while recognizing the importance of the need, expressed the view that the programme could best be undertaken as a part of the technical assistance programme if considered by the developing countries as carrying a sufficiently high priority (A/C.5/1601, para. 36) and the Advisory

Committee concurred (A/9841, para. 54). Discussions are taking place with UNITAR as to how best to establish whether there is such an interest on the part of the developing countries.

19. The second recommendation of the JIU on training (Recommendation 10) was for a comprehensive programme of in-service training. AMS (Recommendation 34) recommended an intensification of the existing programmes in management, supervisory and professional training. The Secretary-General, in line with his policy of seeking increased efficiency through such intensified training (ST/SGB/144) has continued to expand the staff development training programme. From 1 July 1974 to 30 June 1975, 433 staff members participated in this programme at Headquarters, 252 Professionals and 121 General Service staff from the Secretariat and 41 Professional and 19 General Service staff from the subsidiary organs UNDP, UNICEF, etc. From 1 July 1975 to 30 June 1976, 807 staff members participated in the programme, 292 Professional and 453 General Service staff from the Secretariat and 15 Professional and 47 General Service staff from the subsidiary organs. Similar staff development training programmes are available to staff in Geneva, Vienna, ECA and will later be established in UNEP and the other commissions. Formal training committees are now established in New York, Geneva and Addis Ababa in accordance with ST/SGB/144. In addition to the Training and Examinations Service at Headquarters, a Training and Examinations Section was established in Geneva in 1975. It has concentrated in its staff development programmes on training courses in management, supervision and computer utilization, in addition to its programmes on special skills in both clerical and secretarial areas. Progress has been made in the Training and Examinations Service at Headquarters in the preparation of video-taped courses for the benefit of staff in offices away from New York. Such courses are now available on operations research techniques, electronic data processing and effective speaking. Courses on management information systems and personnel policies and procedures are in preparation. All the Regional Commissions have the necessary equipment for this purpose.

20. Two recommendations were also made by AMS (Recommendations 35 and 36) with reference to the Junior Professional Trainee Programme and the development of a training programme for all junior Professional staff members. The Secretary-General concurred with the recommendation to develop a systematic training programme for young professional staff recruited to the Secretariat and initiated discussions with UNITAR on the possibility of UNITAR assuming responsibility for young graduates of certain Member States who enter the programme to acquire first-hand knowledge of the United Nations before returning to their national service. UNITAR has accepted responsibility for such a programme and the Executive Director has decided that the first course to be based on Geneva should be directed towards a French-speaking constituency. This first course is expected to start in October 1976.

D. Integrated computer-based personnel information system

21. The improvement and integration of the United Nations computer-based personnel information system was recommended by the JIU (Recommendation 11). The information is contained in a data base maintained by the New York Computing

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Centre (NYCC). This data base contains over 20 items of information on the more than 20,000 staff members employed at any time by the United Nations. This information is kept up-to-date for the staff of the United Nations, UNDP, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNITAR, ITC, ICSC and UNU. Information on the staff of the Registry of the ICJ and of UNRWA who are financed out of the regular budget is brought up-to-date once a year as is information on some local staff of UNDP and UNICEF in duty stations away from New York. This information permits statistical data for all United Nations officials to be prepared on the basis of the same criteria. A greater number of items of information is contained in the data base for staff reported annually to the General Assembly. For staff of the United Nations Secretariat in the Professional category and above the file is designed to carry information of each staff member's educational qualifications, previous employment and United Nations service. Each such staff member will be asked to check and verify this information periodically.

22. The data base is fed automatically each month with information on the more than 9,000 staff on the Headquarters payroll which is also maintained by NYCC. A link has also been established with ESCAP's computer-based personnel file and similar links are being prepared with the office at Geneva and with UNIDO. It is intended that all offices away from Headquarters which maintain computer-based information systems will be linked with Headquarters data base in this way. A similar link will also be established with the manning table file which is also being maintained by NYCC.

E. Delegation of authority and reorganization of the Office of Personnel Services

23. In January 1976, after completing a review of all existing delegations of authority, the Secretary-General issued a bulletin (ST/SGB/151) setting out the principles which govern the delegation of his authority in the administration of the Staff Regulations and Staff Rules. This delegation of authority, amplified by a detailed administrative instruction (ST/AI/234), was implemented with respect to the major departments and offices at Headquarters by 30 June 1976 and will be complete for all offices at Headquarters by 31 December 1976. The delegation of authority to offices away from Headquarters was implemented immediately. At Headquarters, however, the required redeployment of General Service staff resulting from the delegation involved a number of technical problems. AMS was therefore requested to provide a further report on the distribution of clerical functions related to the deployment of the staff resources involved. Following the implementation of their recommendations, the personnel officers who had been outposted to the various departments and offices they served were regrouped in June 1976 and the recommended reorganization of the Office of Personnel Services was completed.

24. To facilitate the exercise of the delegated authority the Staff Rules relating to regular staff have been brought up-to-date and a personnel manual is being prepared patterned on the articles of the Staff Regulations. Seven chapters of the manual have been completed in draft form. In line with the principle that as much authority as possible should be delegated to the officers most directly involved in

the administration of the staff, retaining centrally only those decisions which have broad policy implications, the Secretary-General proposes to examine the authority delegated to the Office of Personnel Services to determine on the basis of the experience gained during 1976 in what matters further authority can be delegated to Departments and Offices. This will be done giving particular attention to the need stressed by the Advisory Committee that such decentralization of authority recommended by the AMS (Recommendations 39 to 44) should not weaken over-all central control (A/9841, para. 61).

## V. CONCLUSION

25. The Secretary-General concludes that, while a large number of steps recommended by the JIU and the AMS have been taken with considerable benefit to the Organization, much further action is needed before the recommendations that he has accepted are fully implemented. The most important of these areas are the division of the staff into occupations and occupational groups, the completion of the job classification system, the development of career patterns, the organization of staff assignments, the restructuring of the General Service category and the completion of the review of the appointment and promotion procedures. With the decision of the General Assembly to authorize the Secretary-General to implement his proposals based on the recommendations of JIU and AMS, a significant beginning has been made to halt and to reverse the downward trend and drift in the field of personnel policy and administration which the JIU report described as a symptom of the "modernization crisis" within the Secretariat. 1/ Much needs to be done in the next few years to bring about the full range of improvements in personnel administration necessary to ensure that the Secretariat performs its functions at the level of efficiency, competence and integrity required of it by the Charter. The Secretary-General intends to continue his efforts to this end.

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1/ A/8454 (Part I), para. 6.