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PERSONNEL QUESTIONS

Report submitted by the staff unions and associations of the  
United Nations Secretariat

Note by the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General transmits herewith for consideration by the Fifth Committee a document submitted by the staff unions and associations of the United Nations Secretariat. This document has been presented pursuant to the provisions of paragraph 2 (a) of General Assembly resolution 35/213 of 17 December 1980, whereby the General Assembly reiterated its readiness "To receive and consider fully the views of the staff as set out by a single recognized representative of the staff of the United Nations Secretariat in a document submitted through the Secretary-General under the agenda item entitled 'Personnel questions'".

REPORT OF THE STAFF UNIONS AND ASSOCIATIONS OF THE SECRETARIAT

Introduction

1. This third report of the staff unions and associations of the Secretariat is submitted in conformity with General Assembly resolution 34/220. It should be recalled that at the thirty-sixth session the Fifth Committee decided, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 35/213, to invite a single recognized representative of the staff of the Secretariat to introduce the report. We trust that a similar invitation will be extended this year. Thus, this report, in conjunction with the oral presentation, should provide an indication of the concerns of the staff, though we stress that an exhaustive commentary on all issues is not possible.

2. We, the elected staff representatives, cannot over-emphasize the importance that all staff members, whether at headquarters' duty stations or in the field, attach to the decision to grant access to their legislative body, the Fifth Committee, and its subsequent impact on the morale, performance, and overall efficiency of the Secretariat.

Equality of treatment

3. Despite the principle of universal equality enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the treatment of staff members in the Secretariat is systematically inequitable. This inequity begins at the moment of recruitment when the staff are segregated into various categories. If that were merely a matter of administrative convenience in the recruitment of local versus international personnel, it would be one thing, but, in fact, the distinctions pursue the staff members throughout their careers, like a virtual caste mark.

4. The inequities manifest themselves in compensation, allowances and benefits, career opportunities and general conditions of employment, not to mention in the attitude of one group of staff to the other. They are even visited upon the children of staff in one category who, for lack of an education grant, may be obliged to attend inferior educational institutions.

5. How odd that at the heart of a system dedicated to justice such inequities should not only be tolerated but legislated. It seems clear that originally the Charter certainly ensured a system that would afford uniform treatment of all international civil servants. Ironically, our forebears seem to have been more progressive in the area of personnel management than their successors.

6. Many changes will be required to restore equal treatment to all international civil servants to accord with the standards set forth in the Charter.

7. The present built-in rigidity of a two-tier personnel structure is a major obstacle to career development of the General Service staff, and its adverse effects on career development and morale cannot be over-estimated. The resulting inequities in terms of eligibility for and determination of various benefits and allowances, which must be addressed, are only the quantifiable evidence of a broader discrimination.

8. The long-range proposal for a unified personnel structure would therefore affect not only compensation but recruitment practices, promotion and career development. Notwithstanding the complexity of the problem, we seek the support of the Fifth Committee in referring the matter for comprehensive study by the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC), which might consider it under an item already on its programme of work, namely, human resource planning. In that connection, the staff request that the following issues should be addressed by ICSC:

(a) Methodology for the equalization of conditions of employment, allowances and benefits among all categories of staff;

(b) Re-evaluation and extension of the education grant to include all categories of staff;

(c) Effecting periodic salary adjustments simultaneously for all categories of staff.

9. In the meantime, the following interim measures should be taken:

(a) National examinations for appointment to the junior Professional level should be open to qualified candidates within the General Service category. In the case of nationals of unrepresented or under-represented countries, this would allow for recognition of service to the Organization and the corresponding practical experience gained, at the same time as furthering the goal of broader geographical distribution.

(b) Greater recognition should be given to the practical experience and expertise of staff in the General Service category through incentive and merit awards, training and job counselling.

(c) There should be more lateral transfer opportunities and job rotation to broaden experience.

(d) Where competitive examinations have been established for promotion of staff from the General Service to the Professional category, the ceiling on the number of posts allocated for such promotion should be raised.

(e) The number of P-1 and P-2 posts should be established and maintained at a fixed ratio to posts at the higher levels throughout the common system in order to avert the danger posed by the diminishing use of the lower levels and the negative impact of grade creep on the career prospects of the General Service.

#### Security and independence of the international civil service

##### (a) Arrested, detained and missing staff members

10. Since the beginning of the thirty-sixth session of the General Assembly, the number of staff members arrested and detained has increased to 21. Although there is no systematic reporting of these cases to the staff unions and associations, the following information is based on information received from various sources.

<u>Country</u>	<u>Name of staff member</u>	<u>Date of arrest, detention or disappearance, if known</u>
Afghanistan	Mir Afghan Mohammed Osman Bismillah Kamkai Abdul Rashid Tawakal	4 October 1981 31 May 1982 May 1979 31 May 1982 30 June 1981
Argentina	Viviana Micucci	11 November 1976
Chile	Fernando Olivares-Mori Carmelo Soria	4 November 1973 15 July 1976
Ethiopia	Azeb Abay Belay Melake Haregwein Desta Tamrat Seium Maeza G. Solomon Tesfamariam Zeggai	28 August 1979 15 October 1978 2 August 1979 21 February 1982 7 April 1982 2 March 1982
German Democratic Republic	Percy Stultz	10 March 1981
Mozambique	Gregorio Homero Altamirano	10 September 1982
Poland	Alicja Wesolowska	10 August 1979
Somalia	Mohamed Elmi Hassan	22 August 1982
Syrian Arab Republic	Izzedine Hussein Abu Khreish Abdallah Daher Hayatli	11 September 1980 20 April 1980
West Bank	Sughi Mustafa Ahmad	5 March 1981
Uganda	John Musoke (husband of local staff member Margaret Musoke)	10 September 1982

11. Most action taken so far has failed to produce any tangible results in securing the release of our imprisoned colleagues listed above. Indeed, in most cases, a representative of the Secretary-General has not even been able to have access to these people as stipulated in the Convention on Privileges and Immunities. The staff can only be satisfied with the final outcome in one incident that took place this last summer in Africa. Owing to the prompt and firm action taken by the staff and the Secretary-General, in close co-ordination with the resident representative, the release was secured of a staff member arbitrarily detained and held by authorities for one week. This unique case shows that the Secretary-General's personal attention in such matters does make a difference.

12. Another encouraging development was the establishment in 1982 of the Secretary-General's Task Force on the Security, Safety and Independence of the International Civil Service, a joint staff/management body which recently concluded its work. We very much hope that its findings and proposals, now before the Secretary-General, will be endorsed and implemented without delay.

13. For the first time, there is a glimmer of hope about the fate of our colleagues, whose incarceration, without respect for their rights and privileges as international civil servants, remains a grim indictment of the entire United Nations common system. We urge all Member States to give full support and assistance to the Secretary-General in his endeavour to defend and protect his own staff. We appeal most strongly to all Member States to undertake to prevent such incidents in the future, to respect all the relevant international/bilateral instruments or agreements in this regard, to lend their support in securing the release of all of our colleagues whose basic legal and human rights have not been duly observed.

(b) Physical safety of staff serving in dangerous duty stations and global security measures for United Nations personnel

14. The experience of this past summer in Lebanon has served as a lesson for all of us. During these increasingly tumultuous times, this Organization must have a well-conceived and workable contingency security plan to cope with such emergencies that affect the safety of its personnel around the globe. It was indeed a miracle that no serious United Nations casualty occurred under those most tragic circumstances. We cannot afford to wait, do nothing and hope for another miracle during the next crisis, sometime, somewhere.

15. The existing Office of Co-ordination for Security Measures at Headquarters should operate in close co-operation with the Emergency Co-ordination Unit of UNDP and a representative of the Secretary-General (if he elects to name one, as the Task Force recommends).

16. The staff of the Secretariat must state emphatically that in emergency situations all categories of staff must be treated as equals. In cases of life or death, for humanitarian reasons, no staff member should be excluded from evacuation to a safe haven.

(c) The effects of political influence on the independence of the international civil service

17. In recent years, the recruitment and personnel policies of the Secretariat have been gravely compromised by narrow political considerations. This has resulted in irreparable damage to the morale of the staff but, even worse, to the credibility of the independent nature of the international civil service. This trend towards politicizing the Secretariat is particularly blatant in respect of recruitment and promotion. The dangerous and devastating recommendation made in the report of the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) (JIU/REP/82/9) gradually to replace the career staff in the Secretariat with a rotating team of cadres is totally unacceptable to anyone desiring the continuation of a United Nations as envisioned in the Charter. Nothing would do more to destroy the impartiality, integrity,

independence, competence and ability to function of the international civil service. We most categorically reject such a plan, and we urge the Fifth Committee to do likewise in unequivocal terms.

18. The continuing practice of adjusting the salaries of staff members by the use of supplementary payments or attachment remain a serious concern, because it violates the Staff Regulations and erodes the principle of impartiality enshrined in Article 100 of the Charter.

#### Career development

19. The issue of career development has long been the subject of numerous documents, reports and resolutions but, to date, very little has actually been accomplished. In the view of the staff, careers and career development cannot exist in isolation but are the end product of a soundly integrated personnel management system which responds equally well to the staffing requirements of organizations and to the developmental potential of staff members. It follows that career development, if it is to fulfil its objective, cannot be a subordinate or a marginal element of the integrated system; it must incorporate all the aspects of personnel management (recruitment policy, job classification, promotion policy and training).

20. This requires appropriate machinery to ensure adequate planning of the process over a reasonable period of time as well as to monitor its implementation. This, in turn, implies the provision of adequate resources, human and financial, so that the process can be reviewed and monitored on a continuing basis. To that end, the establishment of a Secretariat-wide career development unit with well-defined functions and powers is essential.

21. For all practical purposes the CDPU has been non-functional, relying solely on 3 x 5 handwritten index cards and, last year, having the pathetic record of 50 transfers - 2 of them from that very office!

22. In resolution 35/210, the General Assembly requested the establishment of a computerized roster of employees and their skills. Unfortunately, it has never been implemented. Nevertheless, we see a tremendous potential for such a data base not only in the United Nations but, indeed, throughout the common system. This might well be co-ordinated through ICSC, which already renders a service to both organizations and staff alike by the publication of the vacancy announcement bulletin, which facilitates the policy of interorganizational exchange, by acting as the focal point for cross-compilation and efficient utilization of the personnel data in the common system.

#### Recruitment

23. The quality of an organization is largely determined by the quality and nature of its recruitment process. Failure to recruit staff of sufficient calibre will inevitably lead to unproductive use of financial resources and will have repercussions on efficiency and on programme delivery.

24. As an integral part of human resource planning, the United Nations must therefore develop a judicious and far-sighted recruitment policy which will ensure objective methods of selection based on the highest standards of efficiency, competence and integrity, and proper forward planning.
25. Much has been said and written about what constitutes an objective method of recruitment. Obviously, it must be free from government interference or pressure. In this respect, we welcome the statements made earlier this year by the Chairman of ACC. In their second report on the career concept (JIU/REP/82/3) Inspectors Bertrand and Ould Khalifa of JIU have recommended the introduction of written and oral examinations for recruitment at all levels of the Professional category, with the interesting exception of the top level. They have also inferred the use of similar methods for recruitment to the General Service category.
26. The use of competitive examinations as the sole screening instrument for recruitment, even at the junior Professional level, would, at best, be premature before there has been a thorough evaluation of the results achieved so far by the United Nations in its use of such methods in selected countries and for movement from the General Service to the Professional category. We would caution against the somewhat premature and over-optimistic assessment of the G to P examination by JIU.
27. An over-emphasis on formal academic education would not only fail to test for such qualities as adaptability to an intercultural environment, motivation and managerial skills, but it could also put candidates from certain parts of the world, especially developing countries, at a disadvantage. In such cases, it might well turn out to be a competition among an élite which has access to government circles or to the publications in which announcements of the examination, if any, are made, rather than an objective search for the best-qualified candidates available.
28. The matter certainly requires a great deal more study, especially at a time when many educators world wide are questioning the value of formal written examinations as a selection tool.
29. Nevertheless, where there are already plans to hold competitive examinations for external recruitment at the junior Professional level, it is recommended that such examinations should be open to serving staff members in other categories who have the requisite academic qualifications and are nationals of the unrepresented or under-represented countries concerned. For this purpose, those examinations should be widely advertised throughout the system.
30. The goal of equitable geographical distribution is by no means incompatible with the use of objective methods of selection as long as it is taken into account in forward planning of human resource requirements. It must not, as is too often the case, be used on an ad hoc basis. If it proves essential to earmark posts for certain groups, such as nationals of unrepresented or under-represented countries, or for women, then it must be done openly and in accordance with precise, previously established criteria, drawn up with staff participation. The same applies to posts which may be set aside for recruitment by external competitive examination. In other words, a post must not be earmarked merely to accommodate a readily available

candidate, such as a diplomat who is about to complete his or her tour of duty. Moreover, to ensure the highest standards of efficiency, competence and integrity, all applicants, including candidates proposed by Governments, should be screened in accordance with the same rigorous standards.

31. This will require properly organized, well-advertised recruitment campaigns and objective screening by trained interviewers, not just by any official who happens to be on a visit to a particular country, for instance. The training of interviewers should take into account the specific requirements of the United Nations system, particularly the multicultural composition of its staff. Much more care also needs to be taken at the interview stage to inform potential staff members about career possibilities within the organizations. Often staff members become bitter and disillusioned when they find out, after joining an organization, that their career prospects are dim because of barriers to movement from one category to another or from a non-geographical into a geographical post. It goes without saying that more resources will have to be made available for this purpose, but that would be sound investment in the future efficiency of the staff.

#### Promotion

32. The filling of vacant posts, however, is not only a question of external recruitment. Staff regulation 4.4 unambiguously states that "the fullest regard shall be had, in filling vacancies, to the requisite qualifications and experience of persons already in the service of the United Nations. This consideration shall also apply on a reciprocal basis to the specialized agencies".

33. There is no doubt that it is in the interest of the organizations to give preference to staff who have already acquired expertise and proved their commitment to the international civil service, as well as in the interest of the career development of the staff members themselves. Too often serving staff are unaware of vacancies, even in their own organization, let alone in other organizations of the common system; many vacancies are simply never announced. In particular, staff in the field should be offered the same advantages as headquarters staff through the timely dissemination of various vacancy bulletins. They, too, must have equal opportunity for promotion and must not lose their seniority because of field assignment.

34. Logically, the filling of vacancies by experienced internal candidates should mean that external recruitment will be largely confined to the junior Professional level. The all-too-common practice of bringing in external candidates at the P-4 level and above deals a serious blow to the career prospects and morale of serving staff; it must be curtailed.

#### Competitive examination for movement to the Professional service category of staff in other categories

35. The 1981 competitive examination presented many of the same problems as the first examination in 1979 - none was held in 1980 - namely, delays in marking the papers, resistance from departments in accepting successful candidates and the fact that some posts earmarked for the competitive examination were already encumbered by General Service staff receiving special post allowances (SPAs).



36. In the 1979 examination, the concept of "minimum professional standards" was introduced after the fact; similarly, in the 1981 examination, the Central Examination Board decided, after the candidates had been ranked, that despite their ranking they could not take up certain posts unless they had passed the United Nations language proficiency examination in Spanish. In both cases, successful candidates were unable to take up posts owing to the introduction of these ex post facto requirements. That was clearly unfair and did nothing to enhance the credibility of the examination system.

37. Despite numerous requests from the staff, the Office of Personnel Services has refused to publish a list showing the ranking of successful candidates for the 1981 examination, and no list of any kind has ever been published with the results of the 1979 examination.

38. Training both to prepare candidates for the examination and to prepare successful candidates to take up their new posts continues to be a problem. Since the Training and Examinations Service adamantly refuses to help candidates prepare for the examination, the task has devolved on the staff. In preparation for the 1982 examination, the New York Headquarters Staff Committee organized a series of workshops which took place twice a week, after working hours, over a two-month period. Through the Assistant Secretary-General for Personnel Services and the Under-Secretary-General of the Department of Public Information, arrangements were made to tape the workshops, and the tapes were distributed by the Staff Committee to duty stations away from Headquarters.

39. Some efforts were made by the Office of Personnel Services to assist the successful candidates in taking up their new assignments, but the situation was far from satisfactory, especially in cases where supervisors were reluctant to accept the results of the examination.

40. With regard to the holding of the third competitive examination, it was generally recognized by all concerned that a thorough review of the format of the examination was necessary. Detailed discussions therefore took place in staff/management bodies, and recommendations were made to the Secretary-General.

41. Despite strong resistance to change on the part of the Training and Examinations Service, it was agreed to simplify the format of the examination by eliminating the core paper, reducing the duration of the examination to 4 1/2 hours and giving much greater weight to specialized knowledge in the occupational groups concerned. Unfortunately, other proposals made by the staff to allow candidates a choice of questions and to eliminate separate tests of analytical and drafting ability, which the staff believed could be tested within the context of questions in the specialized field, were not incorporated by the Training and Examinations Service, despite the fact that agreement had been reached on them in the staff/management bodies.

42. In addition to attempts to streamline the examination - and, incidentally, to cut the cost - discussion has also taken place on possible alternatives. Though many staff favour the examination as a fairer method of promotion to the Professional category, many others do not feel it takes due account of such factors

as experience, performance and seniority. The matter is obviously a complex one, and it has therefore not been possible to make any detailed recommendations at this session; but after assessing the results of the third examination it should be possible to make some proposals to the General Assembly at its thirty-eighth session.

43. In the meantime, we believe that the competitive examination should continue on an annual basis. However, we feel that the 30 per cent quota imposed by General Assembly resolution 33/143 is far too restrictive, especially in view of the diminishing number of posts at the P-1/P-2 level. The staff have already proposed that nationals from unrepresented and under-represented countries who possess the requisite educational qualifications and are already employed by the Organization should be allowed to sit for the external examinations for junior Professional posts held in their respective countries, thus falling outside the quota. We strongly believe that that quota should be raised to 50 per cent to improve the bleak career prospects of many loyal and capable staff in the General Service and related categories whose experience is undoubtedly an asset to the Organization, as the results of the first two examinations have amply proved. We do not believe that the raising of the quota would in any way be detrimental to the interests of Member States.

44. In parallel with the examination, there is an increasing tendency to place General Service staff against Professional posts at the P-1/P-2 and, occasionally, P-3 levels, for which they receive a special post allowance in rightful recognition of their performance at the higher level. Such a practice can understandably cause resentment when the post has to be surrendered to a successful candidate from the internal or external competitive examinations. Unfortunately, it could also mark a return to favouritism and even to attempts by supervisors to circumvent the competitive examination; moreover, only a very limited number of staff can benefit.

#### Types of appointment

45. The central issue of career development from the staff's point of view is the concept of an independent career international civil service - one which is committed to the service of the United Nations and which, in turn, is recognized by the Organization as its core. Contractual status is of fundamental importance to such a concept in terms of security of tenure and independence. We have therefore been increasingly alarmed by the growing trend towards the use of fixed-term appointments over long periods of time in a growing number of organizations and the possibilities of abuse of this policy at the expense of the staff members affected. Yet we are gratified that both ICSC and JIU have recognized the need to re-examine this trend and to define a clear policy and uniform application on the use of permanent, fixed-term and short-term contracts.

46. Upon completion of five years of service, every employee should be given the opportunity of a career appointment. The use of successive fixed-term or short-term contracts should be discouraged, and greater use of probationary

contracts in lieu of fixed-term appointments should be recommended. Such policies would serve not only to prevent the adverse psychological effects on staff morale of a lack of security but to provide the incentive for long-term planning by the Organization.

47. Moreover, when staff have served satisfactorily for two years or more on fixed-term appointments, any conversion should be directly to a permanent appointment without the need to serve a further 24 months on probation.

48. In addition, guidelines should be established for a ratio of permanent to fixed-term staff, with no more than 25 per cent of staffing needs being met through the use of secondment, fixed-term or short-term appointments, unless there is clear justification based upon long-term operational needs. It is obvious that the original intention of the fixed-term appointment as a temporary measure is not borne out by the facts. Ideally, its use should be confined to those staff serving on secondment or employed to work on time-limited programmes and to a maximum of 25 per cent of posts.

#### Job classification

49. Job classification as it is currently being developed by ICSC is an essential tool to career development. The definition of occupational groups, the criteria established for entry into such groups, for transfer from one group to another, for average rates of advancement within the groups and the resulting grade structure are all important elements if there is to be a coherent career development system.

50. Nevertheless, corrective measures must immediately be introduced to guard against a pattern of rigidity which has begun to creep into the implementation of the policies so far established by ICSC and outlined in the reports of JIU.

51. This rigidity is seen in the application of the point rating system which results in manipulation of information in order to upgrade some posts or downgrade others with the individual who is to assume the functions foremost in mind. This has subsequently resulted in the introduction of "grade creep". Unfortunately, job classification was introduced in a vacuum - void of the overall framework of human resource planning. Therefore, related policies of personnel management - training, mobility, interorganizational exchange - have not been simultaneously developed and implemented. The objective application of job classification has further been hampered by the absence of financial planning which has produced a fragmented picture to the governing bodies which have, in turn, more often than not, rejected warranted upgradings.

52. When examining the system of job classification within the overall framework of career development, the staff recognizes the JIU distinction between two separate groups of staff in each category - specialized staff and polyvalent staff - and also that flexible career development policies and options should be developed separately for both.

53. One of the obstacles that has been encountered in the process, however, is the system of "linked grades". The JIU proposal set forth in documents JIU/REP/80/9, JIU/REP/81/11 and JIU/REP/82/3 is not entirely acceptable, for it would, no doubt, result in decreased employee morale and increased organizational costs and reduced efficiency if applied to both groups of staff simultaneously.

54. The flexible use of "linked grades" is acceptable when applied to "specialists" whose skills are: (a) not easily transferable and/or (b) difficult to replace. In this context, we might well refer back to the concept of "apprentice", "journeyman" and "master". There must be, however, in all cases, a clear evolution of the functions being performed and not merely one job description for all.

55. The application of "linked grades" to the occupations that are less specialized and therefore do not fall within the context of the preceding paragraph is clearly inappropriate, as the opportunities for horizontal mobility should, if flexibly applied, meet the requirements for staff development and promotions.

56. Yet another concern relates to the complication that "linked grades" interjects into the comparator concept for compensation purposes (either with "the best prevailing local conditions" or the "Noblemaire principle"). Thus, while seeming to offer staff a chance for promotion, "linked grades", in fact, would make it virtually impossible, even with modified job descriptions, to find precise bench-mark jobs on the basis of which to conduct salary surveys and/or salary comparability studies.

#### Training and professional development

57. Training is an indispensable part of career development. Yet, it has been one of the lowest priorities of the Organization, which devotes a smaller part of its staff costs to training than the national civil services, aid programmes and public enterprises of some Member States.

58. The importance of training as a tool of career development cannot be over-emphasized. It is essential to ensure access to appropriate training, including external study programmes, to staff in all categories, wherever they may serve. To do this, much greater financial and human resources will be required, particularly since the scope of the courses offered needs to be broadened to encompass at least as many opportunities for instruction in substantive areas as in the language area. Quality training programmes will, of course, demand quality instructors; the Organization will therefore have to strive to find staff of the highest calibre to undertake the task.

59. However, since funds are not unlimited in an era of financial restraint, priorities must be established, so that they can be allocated first and foremost to those areas where the need is greatest.

60. While staff at Headquarters duty stations may have a variety of training options available to them, it is the staff in the field who suffer most from the lack of resources and facilities. Priority must therefore be given to providing training for staff serving in the field through a programme that is accessible to all duty stations through rotational training teams or video-taped specialized

training courses. In addition, special consideration must be given and resources allocated to enable staff in the field to attend seminars, refresher courses and specialized training courses at headquarters duty stations, or to take study leave there, as part of a regular programme.

61. For staff at headquarters duty stations, one of the main concerns is the lack of incentives for further study and training. Given the trends towards both specialized and integrated occupational definition, there is a pressing need for more flexibility in the area of professional development. In contrast to career development, professional development concerns the recognition and support of staff as representatives of a profession or area of expertise, encompassing aspects such as access to information, participation in professional associations, more opportunities for contacts with others in their profession both inside and outside the United Nations framework.

62. This requires a lifting of some of the restrictions imposed on outside activities, such as authorship, additional training, refresher courses or teaching.

63. Given the lack of permanent training facilities in most organizational structures, it is imperative that the organizations and the individual staff members jointly support the use of outside facilities. Besides the question of funding, there should be greater flexibility in allowing staff members to pursue their professional development during the working hours by providing salary advances for study, granting study leave or sabbaticals and providing some form of recognition for the successful completion of courses or professional activities which enhance the staff member's skills for the ultimate benefit of the Organization.

64. Equally important, when staff members have successfully completed in-house training courses and/or passed in-house examinations, they should be given priority in placement.

#### Staff serving in the field

65. Our international civil servants in the field are the most visible manifestation of the United Nations' role in technical co-operation and development, humanitarian assistance and peace-keeping. Their security and safety should be a matter of the highest priority.

#### Security in the field

66. Current ad hoc security arrangements are inadequate and lacking in advanced planning. More specialized experts in security planning are needed with the necessary expertise to make a prior evaluation of the needs of individual duty stations.

67. In addition, prior to departure, staff members being sent to the field must have adequate briefings especially in respect of possible dangers, local conditions and general background for their work.

68. Recently the conditions of staff serving in the field have been the subject of discussion in ICSC, which has made specific recommendations. In addition, the following points should be addressed by the Fifth Committee and then referred to ICSC for further study:

- (a) Review of the maximum compensation for losses and procedures to ensure prompt processing of claims;
- (b) Extension of health and life insurance coverage to include local staff;
- (c) Increased benefits at difficult duty stations;
- (d) Re-examination of the entire system of allowances to provide for improvements in:
  - (i) Assignment allowance;
  - (ii) Installation grant;
- (e) Incentives for mobility.

69. In other sections of this report we have addressed the issues of career development, safety and equality as they relate to staff serving in the field.

#### Employment of women

70. It is of the gravest concern to the staff that the situation of women in the United Nations Secretariat has not improved substantially, because of a failure to take far-reaching affirmative action.

71. The 1982 target of 25 per cent women in posts subject to geographical distribution has not been met by the Secretariat, and until the necessary measures to implement policy directives concerning the recruitment, appointment, promotion, career development, placement and training of women and to appoint a senior high-level adviser with sufficient resources to monitor progress, as recommended by the General Assembly in resolution 35/210, are taken little improvement will be made.

72. The employment of women is reviewed in the reports of the Secretary-General (A/37/143 and A/C.5/37/5), and in more depth in the JIU report (A/37/469), but we believe the following may help give a clearer picture of the situation. All statistics are based on those supplied in the aforementioned documents or in those of previous years.

#### (a) Twenty-five per cent target

73. There are now 22.2 per cent women in Secretariat posts subject to geographical distribution, a mere 0.6 per cent increase over last year's figure. This is less than the annual average rate of 1.1 per cent increase achieved since the target was established in 1978. At the 1982 rate, it will take another five years for the Secretariat to reach the 25 per cent target.

74. Given these dismal results, it is imperative that further targets be established to ensure that real progress is made: 30 per cent by 1985 (the end of the United Nations Decade for Women) and 40 per cent by 1990. More should be done to establish and/or meet targets within individual departments or organizational units to ensure an even distribution of women. Only 20 out of 46 departments/organizational units have reached or exceeded the 25 per cent target; 21 have not yet reached 20 per cent.

(b) Women at senior levels

75. Although this year marked the first appointment of a women Under-Secretary-General, the proportion of senior women is still extremely small, with only 8 women (130 men) above the D-1 level, only 2 more than in 1981. There is only 1 more woman at the D-1 level and 7 fewer women at the P-5 level. Only 2 women (and 27 men) were recruited to senior levels (D-1 and above) in the last year, and only 3 women (30 men) recommended for promotion to D-1. Clearly, more vigorous steps need to be taken.

(c) Appointments

76. Five fewer women were recruited than in 1981; indeed, the percentage of women recruits (20.5 per cent) is the lowest in three years. This raises serious doubts about whether the recruitment of women is really a priority. While OPS has failed to reach its own target that 2 out of 5 recruits (or 40 per cent) should be women, it is of interest to note that the target of 40 per cent of nationals from under-represented or unrepresented countries has not only been met but exceeded (43.2 per cent).

77. Of the 45 recruits from over-represented countries, only 9 were women. If recruitment continues from over-represented countries, then it should be limited to women, as was recommended by JIU.

78. The proportion of women recruits from Africa and the Middle East declined substantially, only 3 more women than last year were recruited from Asia and the Pacific and from Latin America, and the particularly low proportion of women from Eastern Europe (4.5 per cent) has declined in the last year. More must be done by Member States to put forward women candidates and to share the responsibility for achieving the targets which they themselves have established.

(d) Promotion

79. It continues to be of great concern that 71 per cent of women in posts subject to geographical distribution are at P-3 level and below compared with 33.5 per cent of men. As ACABQ reported last year, in 1982-1983 the largest number of Professional posts will be at the P-4 level; yet only 16 per cent of P-4 posts subject to geographical distribution are at present held by women.

80. If the proportion of women at the senior levels is to increase significantly in the foreseeable future, much more must be done now to move women up from the P-3 level. While it is gratifying to note that the percentage of women on the P-4 promotion registers increased this year, in actual numbers there were 25 fewer

women on the register than in 1981, although only 4 women (65 men) had been recruited to P-4 posts subject to geographical distribution in that year.

(e) Career development

81. As mentioned elsewhere in this report, there is no integrated career development policy. The need for overall policy co-ordination and clear directives cannot be over-emphasized, if the employment situation of women is to be improved.

(f) Information

82. It is impossible to monitor progress made in improving the situation of women without accurate and current information. The secrecy surrounding key areas, such as recruitment and promotion practices, fosters suspicion and distrust and can lead to false allegations of discrimination. The need for up-to-date statistics and for the publicizing of personnel policy objectives is therefore self-evident. Departments or organizational units should be required to provide annual profiles and projections, showing what steps have been taken or are to be taken to improve the situation of women. Statistics should be provided annually in the Secretary-General's report on personnel questions, showing the number, levels, years in previous grade and sex of staff who have received promotions on a regular, accelerated or ad hoc basis during the previous year.

83. Guidelines on recruitment and promotion should be made public, so that allegations of discriminatory treatment can be readily verified and corrected. In an attitude survey of staff in the Secretariat conducted in March 1982 by the Ad Hoc Group on Equal Rights for Women in the United Nations, 55.8 per cent of staff responding said that women in their department suffered from discrimination. Of these, 69.3 per cent said that women were discriminated against by being hired at a lower level than men, and 66.8 per cent said that women were not recommended for promotion as often as men. Such allegations would not be so widespread if guidelines governing promotion and recruitment practices were made public and applied consistently.

(g) General Service

84. Discrimination against women is particularly acute in the General Service, where 57.9 per cent of staff are women. In terms of promotion, the lack of G-5 posts has long been a stumbling-block in the Secretariat, and it can only be hoped that the proposed G-6 and G-7 grades will be speedily implemented with appropriate salary increases as, at least, a temporary solution.

Part-time employment

85. General Assembly resolution 35/210 provides the basis for the introduction of part-time employment. It took practically two years to prepare the administrative guidelines for part-time work, and then it is limited to locally recruited General Service staff. This introduces further discrimination between staff members. The administration continues to resist the speedy introduction of part-time employment for other categories, although the additional technical points to be settled are minor. The social need for part-time employment having been recognized by the



General Assembly, the efficient working of the Secretariat is severely hampered by a discriminatory practice which results in staff members, perhaps sharing the same office, having totally different contractual options. This is a cause of considerable unrest.

#### Child-care facilities

86. Unfortunately, the staff of the Secretariat must, once again, address the need for child-care facilities. It is our hope that the members of the Fifth Committee will recognize that the provision of child-care facilities to United Nations employees is a matter of social policy and that the Organization should provide such facilities as may be required to meet the needs of staff at various duty stations.

87. It is an embarrassment to have, once again, to cite the United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, the ILO Convention on Equal Treatment and Opportunities for Men and Women Workers, the many resolutions of the General Assembly on the reports of JIU which advocate effective measures to promote the employment of women in the United Nations system, the previous opinions of ICSC and ACABQ that the question of child care is basically a matter of social policy, and still have to admit that there still is no provision for these facilities for staff in the Secretariat. We urge that action be taken to remedy this situation.

#### Health insurance

88. The cost of health care in all duty stations is mounting rapidly. Indeed, it is rising faster than the cost of living. This trend is reflected in the increased health insurance premiums which are essential if staff members, former staff members and their families are to obtain and pay for the necessary health care.

89. The staff members' contributions to these high premium rates have risen correspondingly. In February 1982, for example, the premiums of staff in New York rose by 50 per cent.

90. The United States Federal Government now pays 75 per cent of the cost of its health insurance plans for federal civil servants. It used to pay only 50 per cent. A number of diplomatic services provide 100 per cent - or almost 100 per cent - reimbursement of practically all health care costs incurred by their staff and by their spouses and children, at least while overseas. A number defray the entire cost of health insurance coverage.

91. Indeed, it is the best prevailing practice among Member States to defray virtually the full cost of medical care or of health insurance under national schemes financed largely from national taxation (the United Nations counterpart is the staff assessment, the proceeds from which are used to reduce the gross contributions of Member States to the United Nations budget).

92. For the reasons cited, above, it is clear that urgent and decisive action to improve the health insurance subsidy system for the United Nations health insurance

plans so as to bring the Organization's practice into line with the best prevailing outside practice is long overdue.

Age of retirement

(a) Change in the mandatory age of retirement

93. The staff firmly reject any proposal to change the age of retirement as a means of reducing the actuarial deficit of the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund. Provision for remedying what in any case is probably a temporary deficit is made in article 27 of the Regulations of that Fund. A fair retirement policy must be consistent with staff welfare and career development as well as with the interests of the Organization; it cannot be determined on actuarial grounds.

94. In any consideration of a change in the mandatory age of retirement, it is crucial to take account of the career development of staff, of the acquired rights of those already in service to retire on full pension at age 60 or to take early retirement at age 55, as well as of the need to improve geographical distribution and to lower the average age of the Secretariat in pursuance of General Assembly resolutions.

95. Practice in various parts of the world differs. While there is a trend against any mandatory retirement age in the United States, the opposite trend towards earlier retirement without loss of pension rights is gaining ground elsewhere. No single country can be considered as a dominant model, as ICSC has rightly pointed out.

96. As far as internationally recruited staff are concerned, the expatriation factor cannot be overlooked. In many civil services, foreign service staff have the possibility of retiring earlier than those serving in their home country, for instance, after 25 years' service.

(b) Exceptions

97. Furthermore, it remains our position that the mandatory age of retirement should be applied uniformly, subject to the specific exception for some locally recruited staff in the General Service and related categories for whom provision is made in General Assembly resolution 35/210.

98. To ensure equal treatment and to prevent abuse in making such exceptions, staff participation is essential in the review of all requests for extensions. Moreover, if extensions are to be granted to staff in posts not subject to geographical distribution on grounds that the Organization cannot easily replace their technical skills, those skills must be precisely defined and the criteria uniformly applied.

(c) Retirement policy

99. The need to protect the interests of all concerned when contemplating any change in the retirement age or the introduction of a degree of flexibility, particularly for locally recruited staff in countries where local practice shows

serious divergencies with United Nations practice, makes it imperative to study the matter thoroughly from all angles. A hasty decision to adjust the age of retirement without developing an overall retirement policy, including provisions for the counselling of staff during the period immediately preceding retirement, and, perhaps, the restructuring of their work, could create more problems than it solves, unless the interests of the Organization and the career development of the staff as a whole are adequately protected.

100. We therefore call upon the Committee to support the ICSC proposal to collect more information, so that it will be in a better position to study the question in depth in its report to the General Assembly at its thirty-eighth session.

#### Grievance machinery

101. It currently takes up to five years for a case to be heard and decided by the United Nations Administrative Tribunal. Even the Joint Appeals Board often takes up to two years to come to a decision, which is often not implemented.

102. The first reform needed in the appeals process is to give decisions of both the Panel on Discrimination and the Joint Appeals Board the weight they deserve rather than considering them as merely advisory. This can be achieved only if their recommendations are given full force and effect by the Office of Personnel and the departments concerned at the various duty stations.

103. The backlog in the review of appeals should be eliminated. One way would be to accelerate and streamline the review of lesser cases, such as failure to grant a travel entitlement, by having a sort of small claims board which could hear cases regularly and fast. Another way would be by grouping appellants with similar claims or by the use of an ombudsman.

104. In addition, greater resources should be devoted to the Joint Appeals Board secretariat, in order to alleviate the burden of administrative delays.

105. Finally, the Panel of Counsel can and does help in "pre-appeal counselling" which may lead to a settlement.

106. The machinery, as currently used, provides for adversary proceedings with an office which acts as a prosecutor. This is not entirely unavoidable, since due process must be done and be seen to be done; but the situation could be improved with more resort to conciliation such as outlined above.

#### Panel to Investigate Allegations of Discriminatory Treatment in the United Nations Secretariat

107. The Panel was established by the Secretary-General by administrative instruction ST/AI/246 to investigate allegations of discriminatory treatment in the Secretariat, as requested in General Assembly resolution 31/26. The Assembly, in the past, has requested the Secretary-General to include in his report on personnel matters an account of the work of the Panel, including the number of cases dealt with and the main problems encountered during the Panel's term. Although the Secretary-General has accordingly submitted to the General Assembly some

information on this item in the past, we consider it necessary to draw particular attention to it in view of the importance attached by staff members to the work of the Panel.

108. During the period 15 November 1981 to 13 October 1982, the Panel, whose membership had been increased in 1980 to seven members in order to enable it to cope with the increasing work-load, dealt with 73 cases. Of these, 42 complaints (58 per cent) were brought by female staff members and 31 (42 per cent) by male staff members. Twenty-two (30 per cent) came from duty stations away from Headquarters, where either no local Panel exists or where the staff members concerned chose to refer their complaints to the Headquarters Panel.

109. The complaints related to discrimination on various grounds, such as race, nationality, religion and, more generally, to allegations of unfair treatment in both personal relations and administrative decisions. They were related, inter alia, to promotion, non-renewal of contracts, denial of SPA, separation from service and performance evaluation reports. The Panel completed investigation of 58 cases, and 15 are still pending.

110. In general, the staff have attached very high importance to the Panel, as can be seen from the growing number of cases and inquiries referred to it. In a multicultural organization such as the United Nations, whose Charter seeks, among other things, to eliminate discrimination, the need for independent machinery to investigate allegations of discriminatory treatment is evident. Moreover, since the grievance machinery is time-consuming and cumbersome, staff members have placed more confidence in the much more informal and expeditious resources of the Panel. Unfortunately, the Panel has been hampered by a number of obstacles to the extent that its effectiveness is seriously in question.

111. First, in spite of successive resolutions that the Panel should be provided with the necessary support for its activities, it has so far not happened. For example, it requires an administrative assistant on a full-time basis who can organize the work of the Panel, prepare reports and conduct research, and although there have been repeated requests from the Panel to the Office of Personnel Services, it has failed to secure such a post. It should be borne in mind that Panel members serve a one-year term and are eligible to serve for only one additional year; the need for continuity therefore exists. It also requires telecommunication facilities to make it easier to contact staff members in the field.

112. The area of greatest frustration to both staff members and the Panel itself has been that, frequently, its findings, when favourable to the staff member, have been rejected by the departments concerned and by OPS. Even recommendations not rejected by the administration have not been implemented. It is of interest to note that in a survey conducted by the Ad Hoc Group on Equal Rights for Women, 70.4 per cent of the respondents said that the Panel should be given more effective power.

### Decentralization

113. To enhance the decision-making process in matters of direct concern to staff at the headquarters' duty stations away from New York (Geneva, Vienna), some greater degree of decentralization is required. This would mean not only that matters of local concern would not always have to be referred to New York for a decision but that staff at those two duty stations would be able to participate fully in the relevant consultations or negotiations.

114. A prime area for such decentralization is that of the annual promotion review. Provision must be made for appropriate staff representation through local appointment and promotion bodies. Many other issues of primarily local concern, such as the reclassification of specific posts, might also best be handled on a decentralized basis. To this end, the Secretary-General will need to delegate greater authority to his senior officials at these duty stations, while ensuring, of course, that such officials are of the requisite high calibre.

### Conclusion

#### Contribution of staff representative bodies to the efficient operation of the Secretariat

115. The staff unions and associations can make a valuable contribution to the efficient functioning of the Secretariat in partnership with the Secretary-General, as Chief Administrative Officer, and Member States, provided that they are afforded adequate facilities and freedom of action without interference from the Organization or from Governments.

116. The right of the staff representative bodies to negotiate with the Secretary-General on their conditions of employment in staff/management bodies and to make their views known by means of access to and regular dialogue with the General Assembly must be recognized.

117. For this purpose, it is imperative that the Staff Rules and Staff Regulations, which now date back more than 30 years, should be updated to bring them in line with modern labour practices and with international standards governing staff/management relations, especially those developed by the International Labour Organisation.

118. We, the staff unions and associations of the Secretariat, must enjoy full recognition as equal partners with management if we are to live up to our obligations to the Organization and to play our rightful role in determining equitable conditions of employment, in a truly independent international civil service, for the staff we are elected to serve.

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