



SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 23rd MEETING

Chairman: Mr. ABRASZEWSKI (Poland)

Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and
Budgetary Questions

CONTENTS

AGENDA ITEM 111: PERSONNEL QUESTIONS:

- (a) COMPOSITION OF THE SECRETARIAT: REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL
- (b) RESPECT FOR THE PRIVILEGES AND IMMUNITIES OF OFFICIALS OF THE UNITED NATIONS AND THE SPECIALIZED AGENCIES AND RELATED ORGANIZATIONS: REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL
- (c) OTHER PERSONNEL QUESTIONS

ORGANIZATION OF WORK

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The meeting was called to order at 11.40 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 111: PERSONNEL QUESTIONS (A/37/143, A/C.5/37/5, A/C.5/37/6 and Corr.1):

- (a) COMPOSITION OF THE SECRETARIAT: REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL
- (b) RESPECT FOR THE PRIVILEGES AND IMMUNITIES OF OFFICIALS OF THE UNITED NATIONS AND THE SPECIALIZED AGENCIES AND RELATED ORGANIZATIONS: REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL
- (c) OTHER PERSONNEL QUESTIONS

1. The CHAIRMAN said that under agenda item 111 the Committee had before it the reports of the Secretary-General on the implementation of personnel policy reforms (A/C.5/37/5) and on amendments to the Staff Rules (A/C.5/37/6 and Corr.1). In addition, data on the composition of the Secretariat had been published in document A/37/143. The members of the Committee would also find useful a number of studies of personnel questions by the Joint Inspection Unit: the report on the status of women in the Professional category and above; second progress report (A/37/469) and the comments of the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination (A/37/469/Add.1); the report on the application of the principle of equitable geographical distribution of the staff of the United Nations Secretariat (A/37/378) and the comments of the Secretary-General (A/37/378/Add.1); the report on the same subject to the thirty-sixth session of the Assembly (A/36/407) with the comments of the Secretary-General (A/36/407/Add.1); the second report on the career concept (A/37/528) and the comments of the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination (A/37/528/Add.1); the report on personnel policy options submitted to the thirty-sixth session (A/36/432) and the comments of the Secretary-General (A/36/432/Add.2).

2. With reference to subitem (b) more specifically, the Committee would be receiving for consideration the report of the Secretary-General on respect for the privileges and immunities of officials of the United Nations and the specialized agencies. The report had first to be approved by the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination.

3. Lastly, the Committee would receive a note from the Secretary-General transmitting the observations of representatives of the United Nations staff.

4. Miss DOSS (Assistant Secretary-General for Personnel Services) said that the Secretary-General, in his reports on the composition of the Secretariat (A/37/143) and on the implementation of personnel policy reforms (A/C.5/37/5), gave an account of the efforts of the Secretariat to implement resolutions 33/143 and 35/210 of the General Assembly, to improve the geographical distribution of Secretariat posts, promote the employment of women and to ensure the representation of developing countries in senior posts.

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(Miss Doss)

5. Steady progress had been made towards those objectives. The proportion of Member States the number of whose nationals employed in the Secretariat was within the desirable range had grown from 33 per cent in 1978 to 57 per cent in 1982. The change was, of course, partly due to the revision of the system of desirable ranges itself, but the positive role played by a vigorous and sustained recruitment policy could not be denied. In 1982, the Secretariat had exceeded the target of 40 per cent set in resolution 35/210 for the recruitment of candidates from unrepresented and under-represented Member States.

6. More generally, the Office of Personnel Services was now completing a medium-term recruitment plan for the next three years which would provide the framework within which each annual work plan would be carried out, as requested by the General Assembly. The annual work plan described the recruitment actions to be taken and specific methods used for each of the unrepresented or under-represented Member States.

7. The medium-term recruitment plan was also designed to promote the employment of women in the Secretariat. The General Assembly had set 25 per cent as the target for the representation of women in posts subject to geographical distribution by the end of 1982. That target had not been reached: the current proportion was 22.2 per cent - 31 per cent at Headquarters and 17 per cent away from Headquarters. The medium-term plan contained a certain number of specific measures designed to increase the recruitment of women so that the target could be reached at an early date. In the meantime, the Secretariat was actively seeking out women candidates.

8. One of the difficulties in the way of reaching the recruitment goals was the number of posts that would be available for recruitment in the next three years. The Secretary-General had already indicated that the plan's success depended on the concerted efforts not only of all the Secretariat departments and offices but on the co-operation and support of all Member States.

9. An important feature of the medium-term recruitment plan was the systematic use of the competitive method of selection for posts at the entry level of P-1/P-2. Competitive examinations carried out in six Member States in 1982 had made it possible to select 30 new officials at the entry level. In respect of 1983, preliminary consultations had been held with 24 Member States, including 17 unrepresented and under-represented countries and seven that were only fairly well represented. Ten of those countries had already responded favourably. The competitive method of recruitment would be extended to posts at other than the Professional entry level.

10. The Committee would also have to consider the major topic of careers in the international civil service (career concept, types of appointment, career development and related questions). The General Assembly had requested the Joint Inspection Unit to undertake various studies of the matter and the Chairman had indicated the documents in which the Unit's conclusions and the related comments of the Secretary-General were to be found. The Committee would also have before it

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(Miss Doss)

the relevant chapters of the report of the International Civil Service Commission (A/37/30, para. 10 and annex I).

11. The views of ICSC and of JIU seemed to converge on the following essential points: (1) a permanent core of career staff was needed to ensure continuity and stability; (2) the traditional concept of career service must be tempered by increased use of fixed-term appointments; (3) the proportion between permanent and fixed-term staff should be determined by the particular needs of each organization; (4) consideration should be given to the idea of career appointments for fixed-term staff who had served satisfactorily and continuously for a period of five years or more; (5) career planning was necessary not only for the career staff but also for fixed-term staff, who would thus have an opportunity to develop their potential fully and their usefulness to the Organization; and (6) career development was an integral part of human resources planning and occupational groups provided an appropriate framework for that purpose. On the basis of those common positions the Secretariat would be able to formulate another three-year recruitment plan.

12. Regarding the report of the Joint Inspection Unit on the application of the principle of equitable geographical distribution of the staff of the United Nations Secretariat (A/36/407), its addendum (A/37/378) and the comments of the Secretary-General (A/36/407/Add.1 and A/37/378/Add.1), she stressed that the Secretary-General believed that the flexibility that he required in the exercise of his responsibilities would be unduly restricted if the principle of equitable geographical distribution were to be rigidly applied to each and every entity of the Secretariat. He would, however, monitor closely the distribution of the staff in each of the main departments and offices of the Secretariat by geographical region and stage of development of the various countries, sex and age. He continued to believe that in filling vacancies, preference should normally be given, as provided for in the Staff Regulations, to staff already in service.

13. The reports of ICSC and JIU were mainly concerned with the career development of staff in the Professional category and above, but their comments were generally applicable to the General Service. For the latter, the approval by ICSC of a seven level grading structure for General Service staff at Headquarters, based on its job classification standards, was a positive step. The new grading structure would enable the Secretariat to introduce a career development plan for General Service staff.

14. The Secretary-General's report on respect for the privileges and immunities of international officials was currently being studied by the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination and would be issued shortly. The Secretary-General viewed the safety and protection of staff as essential.

15. With regard to the employment of women, ample documentation, referred to by the Chairman, was before the Committee. The question of child-care facilities, the existence of which would, according to JIU, help to attract and retain more women, was to be the subject of a separate note by the Secretary-General. In that connexion, she drew the attention of the Committee to paragraph 12 of the ACC

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report, in which it was stated that "the organizations agree that the provision of child-care facilities is a matter of social policy and that the organizations should provide assistance and, where feasible, financial support in the establishment and maintenance of such facilities in duty stations where the need for them is demonstrated".

16. The Committee was also due to consider the annual report of the Secretary-General on amendments to the Staff Rules (A/C.5/37/6) and a note proposing amendments to article VIII of the Staff Regulations (Staff relations) in order to reflect the present realities of staff-management relations, particularly away from Headquarters, and to improve them.

17. The Committee would also have before it a note by the Secretary-General relating to the repatriation grant (A/C.5/37/26), the purpose of which was to inform the General Assembly of the administrative action which the Secretary-General proposed to take following the confirmation by the United Nations Administrative Tribunal of its Judgement No. 273 (Mortished v. the Secretary-General of the United Nations), which had been the subject of an advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice (copies of the Judgement and the advisory opinion would be made available to interested members of the Committee).

18. In his report on the work of the Organization, the Secretary-General had indicated as one of his first priorities the attainment of enhanced efficiency in the Secretariat, which had to be worthy of the full confidence of Member States. It was of prime importance to initiate a patient and sustained dialogue between the legislative bodies and the departments and offices, so that the Secretariat might meet the targets set by Member States, and to work closely and harmoniously with the staff of the Secretariat, who, through their dedication, made the Organization effective and credible. It was not always easy to be an international civil servant, to retain one's roots while becoming a "displaced person" and to work in a multicultural environment, with unfamiliar practices and political and economic constraints while often meeting seemingly conflicting demands. To the difficulties were added family problems (language, housing, schooling, loss of a second income, loneliness) and the burden of various responsibilities in the home country. Nor should one underestimate the upheaval of relocation at the end of a career. The Office of Personnel Services was examining ways of consolidating and widening the range of social services offered to the staff to include training and counselling.

19. Service with the United Nations was not just a job, it was a vocation. On taking his oath of office in December 1981, the Secretary-General had stated his intention to head a Secretariat which must "preserve its basic sense as an authentic international civil service". Stressing his determination to ensure that appointments, assignments and promotions were made solely on the basis of merit, he had repeatedly stressed that only an independent Secretariat, known for its competence, efficiency and integrity, could commend the confidence of all Member States. That would require such qualities as resourcefulness, impartiality, firmness, compassion and consistency on the part of all concerned. The Office of

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(Miss Doss)

Personnel Services, as the focal point for developing and implementing a coherent personnel policy, was pledged to make a reality of the wishes expressed by the Secretary-General.

20. The CHAIRMAN said that he had received a communication from the President of the Staff Committee requesting, on behalf of the unions and associations representing the staff of the Secretariat, that a recognized representative of the staff should be permitted to introduce orally in the Fifth Committee the document transmitted by the Secretary-General under the agenda item entitled "Personnel questions", in accordance with paragraph 3 (a) of General Assembly resolution 35/213.

21. Mr. KUDRYAVSTEV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that it was for the Secretary-General, the chief administrative officer of the Organization under Article 97 of the Charter, to present all documents relating to personnel questions. If the representative of the staff had questions to put, they could be addressed to the Secretary-General who was fully qualified to reply. His delegation therefore had the most serious reservations over that request and saw no particular reason to accede to it.

22. Mr. AMNEUS (Sweden) said that his delegation had been one of the sponsors of resolution 35/213. By making an oral presentation to introduce the document in question, the staff representative could make a useful contribution to the Committee's work. Accordingly, his delegation formally proposed that the Committee should invite a staff representative to make a statement as soon as possible.

23. Mr. PEDERSEN (Canada) agreed with the representative of the Soviet Union that it was for the Secretary-General to rule on staff questions. Nevertheless, since he believed that the Committee would in no way compromise its independence if it acceded to a request to which the staff attached very great importance, he supported the proposal of the Swedish delegation.

24. The CHAIRMAN said that if he heard no objection, he would take it that the Committee wished to invite a single recognized representative of the staff of the Secretariat of the United Nations to make an oral presentation to the Committee to introduce the document submitted through the Secretary-General under the item entitled "Personnel questions".

25. It was so decided.

ORGANIZATION OF WORK

26. Mr. MAJOLI (Italy) expressed his surprise that the report of the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Board, due at the end of October 1982 according to document A/C.5/37/L.1, had still not been issued. The report of ICSC (A/37/30), chapter III of which dealt with the question of pensions, and the comments of the

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Secretary-General on the question of investments (A/C.5/37/16) had been ready for some time. Since the item on pensions was very important, it would of interest to know the reasons for the delay.

27. Mr. DUQUE (Secretary of the Committee) replied that the delay was due to technical difficulties. The document in question should be issued on 8 November 1982.

The meeting rose at 12.40 p.m.