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INFORMATION CIRCULAR N°. 4

Subject: Language Proficiency Examinations

1. Language proficiency examinations in Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish will be held on 22 and 23 May 2001.
2. Staff members wishing to take the examination must submit an application form to the Language Secretariat of the Training and Examinations Section (Villa Le Bocage, Room 3 - ext. 74409) by **16 February 2001**. **NO APPLICATION WILL BE ACCEPTED AFTER THIS DATE**. A separate application must be submitted for each examination requested. Application forms copies of sample examination questions and payment slips are available from the above office. In addition, sample examination questions can be found on the Training bulletin board in cc.Mail.
3. The Language Proficiency Examination consists of a written test and an oral interview. The written examination will be held on the following dates:

22 May 2001

English	09.00-12.30	Room to be announced later
Chinese	14.00-17.30	Villa Le Bocage, Office 3
Russian	14.00-17.30	Villa Le Bocage, Office 3

23 May 2001

French	09.00-12.30	Room to be announced later
Arabic	14.00-17.30	Villa Le Bocage, Office 3
Spanish	14.00-17.30	Room to be announced later

Candidates are advised to arrive 30 minutes before the beginning of the written examination to allow time for check-in procedures.

4. The oral examination will be conducted on an individual basis and will consist of a 15-minute interview. Candidates will be advised of the time and location of the oral examination by convocation.

5. Eligibility requirements are as follows:

(I) Type of Appointment:

PERMANENT AND PROBATIONARY APPOINTMENTS: All staff members of the organizations of the United Nations system who have a permanent or a probationary appointment are eligible to take the United Nations Language Proficiency Examination.

FIXED-TERM APPOINTMENTS: United Nations staff members and staff members of specialized agencies who have fixed-term appointments are eligible to take the United Nations Language Proficiency Examination, provided that their contract expiration date is after the date of the Language Proficiency Examination for which they are applying. United Nations staff members whose contract expires before this date must obtain authorization from their chief and staff members of other specialized agencies must obtain the authorization of their organization.

SHORT-TERM APPOINTMENTS: United Nations staff members who hold short-term appointments are not eligible to take the United Nations Language Proficiency Examination unless they obtain authorization from the Chief of Personnel Service. Short-term staff members of specialized agencies and other organizations may not take the United Nations Language Proficiency Examination unless they obtain authorization from their organization.

(II) Type of language study:

(a) All those who have completed the highest level of the United Nations language programme are eligible to take the language proficiency examination. This is the only situation in which the language proficiency examination is open to those who are not staff members of the United Nations Secretariat and other organizations of the United Nations system.

(b) Source of proficiency: Since each candidate taking the language proficiency examination represents an expense to the Organization, the examination is restricted to those whose background indicates that they possess a level of proficiency equivalent to the highest level of the United Nations language programme. Such indicators include completion of the highest level of the United Nations language programme (compulsory for non-staff members), language study outside the United Nations for at least two years and use of the language on a regular basis for school or work. Other indicators are permissible; they should be specified on the application.

(c) Completion of the highest level of the United Nations language programme is required for those who have begun study in the programme. Without such completion, the language proficiency examination may not be taken in the language studied.

6. Language incentive eligibility requirements for United Nations staff members:

(a) A staff member may take the language proficiency examination to obtain a certificate establishing proficiency in a second official language and, in certain cases:

- (i) to benefit from the relevant provisions of General Assembly resolution 2480 B (XXIII);
- (ii) to qualify for the first or second language allowance under staff rule 103.6.

(b) Resolution 2480 B (XXIII) applies to Professional and higher level staff members subject to geographical distribution who work in one of the working languages of the Secretariat and who have an adequate and confirmed knowledge of a second official language. The criteria for benefiting from the language incentives provided for under the resolution are set out in administrative instruction ST/AI/207 of 23 December 1971.

(c) Under staff rule 103.6 staff members in the General Service and Trades and Crafts categories or in the Field Service below level 6 are eligible for language allowances. Staff members must be proficient in two official languages and must pass the language proficiency examination in one of them to receive the allowance. To receive a second language allowance they must be proficient in three official languages and must pass the proficiency examination in two of them. Staff members whose mother tongue is an official language of the Organization must pass the examination in another official language, which may be the language in which they are required to be proficient by the terms of their appointment. The language proficiency examination in their mother tongue is waived. Staff members whose mother tongue is not one of the official languages must pass the examination in an official language other than that in which they are required to be proficient by the terms of their appointment. The proficiency examination in that language is waived.

7. Fees:

The Language Proficiency Examination is free of charge for United Nations staff members. Staff members of specialized agencies must have their applications authorized by their respective Personnel or Training Service; otherwise they must pay the enrolment fee themselves (64 SF). Members of permanent missions, service organizations in the Palais des Nations, NGOs, press corps, consultants and dependants of staff or of diplomatic mission staff who have completed the last level of the United Nations Language Training Programme must pay a fee of CHF 64.

8. Candidates will receive written notification of their examination results. No results will be available prior to official notice.

Maryan Baquerot
Director
Division of Administration