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Fifth Committee**Summary record of the 46th meeting**

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Friday, 8 March 2002, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. Effah-Apenteng (Ghana)
*Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative
and Budgetary Questions:* Mr. Mselle

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The meeting was called to order at 10.25 a.m.

Agenda item 121: Review of the efficiency of the administrative and financial functioning of the United Nations *(continued)*

Report of the Joint Inspection Unit on the United Nations system common services at Geneva (continued) (A/C.5/56/L.41)

Draft resolution A/C.5/56/L.41

1. **Mr. Kelapile** (Botswana), introducing draft resolution A/C.5/56/L.41 on behalf of the Chairman, drew the Committee's attention to a minor editorial change and expressed the hope that the draft resolution would be adopted without a vote.

2. *Draft resolution A/C.5/56/L.41, as orally revised, was adopted.*

Agenda item 125: Scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations *(continued)*

Draft resolution A/C.5/56/L.42

3. **The Chairman** introduced draft resolution A/C.5/56/L.42.

4. *Draft resolution A/C.5/56/L.42 was adopted.*

Agenda item 123: Proposed programme budget for the biennium 2002-2003 *(continued)*

Conditions of service and compensation for officials other than Secretariat officials (continued) (A/56/7/Add.2 and A/C.5/56/14)

5. **Mr. Nakkari** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that his delegation would reserve its comments on the item for the informal consultations.

Agenda item 121: Review of the efficiency of the administrative and financial functioning of the United Nations *(continued)*

Agenda item 126: Human resources management *(continued)*

Gratis personnel provided by Governments and other entities (continued) (A/56/839)

6. **Mr. Stoffer** (United States of America), noting that progress had been made over a long period of time on the issue of gratis personnel, proposed that the Secretariat should report to the Committee on the issue biennially instead of annually, particularly as the Committee had many other matters to address.

7. **Mr. Chandra** (India) said that, although the situation with regard to gratis personnel had improved, his delegation was reluctant to reduce the frequency of reports. The Committee had decided only the previous year to deal with the issue annually rather than quarterly and should now wait to see how the situation evolved over the next few years before deciding to make a further change.

8. **Mr. Nakkari** (Syrian Arab Republic), endorsing the comments made by the representative of India, said that reports from the Secretariat were an effective means of informing Member States of what was happening in the Secretariat and provided an important stimulus for dialogue among Member States. Even though the overall number of type I gratis personnel had decreased, it was still high, and it would be interesting to know why the number of technical cooperation experts in that category had increased. The General Assembly had stated in a number of resolutions that gratis personnel were to be used only in exceptional circumstances and he would like to know whether or not the personnel mentioned in the report fell into that category. He also wondered whether any gratis personnel had been used for less than one year, particularly those who had been obtained on non-reimbursable loans, and, if so, whether all of them had been mentioned in the report. His delegation hoped that the issue would be discussed further in informal consultations.

9. **Ms. Silot Bravo** (Cuba), speaking as coordinator of the Group of 77 and China for Fifth Committee matters, endorsed the comments made by the previous speakers and said that it was important for the General Assembly to be systematically provided with information on certain matters. With regard to the use of gratis personnel, the current practice of annual reporting should be continued.

10. **Mr. Stoffer** (United States of America) said that he had made the proposal because it was his understanding that the General Assembly discussed human resources management, which covered the issue

of gratis personnel, every two years. He asked the Secretariat to confirm that that was correct.

11. **Mr. Beissel** (Director of the Operational Services Division, Office of Human Resources Management) said that, although it was the practice of the General Assembly to deal with almost all human resources issues in depth every two years, certain issues had traditionally been the subject of annual reports. It was the Assembly's prerogative to decide how to treat each issue. The Secretariat had no position on the matter.

Agenda item 126: Human resources management

(continued) (A/56/227, A/56/512, A/56/701, A/56/816, A/56/834 and A/56/846; A/C.5/56/3; A/C.5/56/L.7; A/C.5/56/CRP.1 and Add.1)

12. **Mr. Niiya** (Japan) expressed appreciation for the efforts made by the Office of Human Resources Management to improve geographical representation in the Secretariat. The report of the Secretary-General on the composition of the Secretariat (A/56/512) showed, however, that the overall situation had worsened. In particular, the number of Japanese nationals occupying posts subject to the principle of equitable geographical distribution had fallen and was under half the lower limit of the desirable range. His delegation hoped that the Secretary-General would prepare an effective programme with specific targets to reduce the level of underrepresentation of Member States for the consideration of the General Assembly at its fifty-seventh session, in accordance with the request of the General Assembly in resolution 55/258.

13. His delegation shared the concern expressed by the representative of the Republic of Korea with regard to changing the mandatory age of separation. The report of the Secretary-General (A/56/701) did not analyse in sufficient depth the potential impact of any change on factors such as career development, gender balance and equitable geographical distribution. Moreover, it covered the Secretariat, but not other United Nations entities which would be directly affected by any change. The General Assembly could not therefore discuss the mandatory age of separation on the basis of that report.

14. Changing the mandatory age of separation would contravene General Assembly resolution 55/258 and the recommendations contained in the report of the Secretary-General on human resources management reform (A/55/253), both of which mentioned the need

to rejuvenate the Secretariat. In addition, the report of the Secretary-General on the mandatory age of separation did not pay adequate attention to the views of younger staff members or the impact on them of any change. Lastly, staff regulation 9.5 provided that the Secretary-General could, in exceptional cases, extend the age limit of 60 years, and in fact he had often done so. That provision was effective in allowing the Organization to retain capable staff beyond the mandatory age of separation in order to meet its needs.

15. His delegation supported the recommendations contained in the report of the Secretary-General on amendments to the Staff Rules (A/56/227), particularly with regard to mandatory reassignment, as well as the proposal contained in the report on placement of staff members serving in the Executive Office of the Secretary-General (A/56/816).

16. **Ms. Silot Bravo** (Cuba), speaking as coordinator of the Group of 77 and China for Fifth Committee matters, expressed regret at the late submission or non-issuance of some reports by the Secretariat, in contravention of a number of rules and resolutions. For example, the reports on gratis personnel (A/56/839) and consultants and individual contractors (A/56/834) had been submitted late and, furthermore, had not complied with the requirement that the reasons for the delay should be included in a footnote. Certain reports requested in resolution 55/258, such as those on a monitoring capacity in the Office of Human Resources Management and on possible discrimination in recruitment, promotion and placement, had not been issued at all. The Secretariat should provide an explanation. Moreover, some of the reports submitted under agenda item 126, such as the report on the mandatory age of separation (A/56/701), lacked clear and sound information and it was therefore difficult to make proper decisions on them. She proposed that further consideration of the item should be deferred, pending a response from the Secretariat to the Group's concerns.

17. **Mr. Nakkari** (Syrian Arab Republic), endorsing the statement made by the representative of Cuba on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that he had not received responses to his questions about gratis personnel under the previous agenda item. He would have liked to hear them during a formal meeting of the Committee, but was prepared to pursue the matter in informal consultations.

18. **Mr. Li Taizhang** (China), endorsing the statement made by the representative of Cuba on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that his delegation attached great importance to human resources management issues, particularly the issue of the mandatory age of separation. The Committee needed to receive the relevant documents in advance in order to make a proper judgement on those issues. He therefore hoped that the Secretariat would make every effort to produce its reports in a timely fashion.

19. **Mr. Chandra** (India) said that, in the context of General Assembly resolution 55/258, on human resources management, his delegation had asked the Secretariat for details on the implications of including a higher population factor in computing desirable ranges. It did not seem appropriate that a country with a population of 1 billion people should have a desirable range of 27 to 36 staff members. Outdated formulas should be revised.

20. He drew attention to a disturbing trend in which administrative and financial matters were being taken up in forums other than the Fifth Committee. For example, the issue of recruitment had recently been taken up in the plenary Assembly. It was time for the Committee to reassert its responsibility for human resources management issues.

Agenda item 123: Proposed programme budget for the biennium 2002-2003 (*continued*)

Budget constraints and support service reductions
(ST/IC/2002/13)

21. **Ms. Silot Bravo** (Cuba), speaking as coordinator of the Group of 77 and China for Fifth Committee matters, recalled her earlier request for clarification from the Secretariat with respect to General Assembly resolution 56/242 on the pattern of conferences, which it would like to receive in writing. She had also made a statement regarding the announced cuts in services, and as yet had received no formal answer to her queries.

22. **Mr. Soto** (Spain), speaking on behalf of the European Union, said that resolutions 56/253 and 56/254, by which the General Assembly had approved the programme budget for the biennium 2002-2003, had been the result of consensus, and the European Union stood by those resolutions. It was clear that the budgetary savings identified in those resolutions required action from the Secretary-General, in his

capacity as chief administrative officer, so as not to overspend the resources that had been allocated. In addition, the European Union trusted that the Secretariat would adhere to the stipulations and guidelines set out in those resolutions and in resolution 56/242, on the pattern of conferences. It would follow closely the implementation of the budget in the coming year.

23. **Mr. Nakkari** (Syrian Arab Republic) drew attention to the apparent selectivity in granting access to Conference Room 2. Guards other than United Nations security officers had denied him access, reportedly because of security concerns. He requested an explanation for the presence of outside security officers and of how invitations to the event held in Conference Room 2 had been issued.

The meeting rose at 11.35 a.m.