



SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 24th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. OKEYO (Kenya)

later: Mr. ARASTOU (Islamic Republic of Iran)

**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 ITEMS 49 AND 114: REVIEW OF THE EFFICIENCY OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE AND FINANCIAL FUNCTIONING OF THE UNITED NATIONS AND PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 1988-1989 (continued) (A/43/16 and Corr.1 (Part I) and Add.1 and A/43/16 (Part II) and Add.1, A/43/286 and Corr.1, A/43/651 and Add.1; A/C.5/43/1/Rev.1 and Rev.1/Add.1)

Revised estimates - chapter IV

1. Mr. KINCHEN (United Kingdom) said that, although he had no objection to the proposed staffing table for the United Nations Council for Namibia, he did object to the reclassification of the post of Secretary of the Council from the D-1 to the D-2 level. He noted that the Advisory Committee had not expressed support for that proposal.
2. With regard to recommendation 37, concerning public information activities, the Secretariat's initial proposals had been revised on the basis of the recommendations of the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination (CPC). However, his delegation had accepted those recommendations only in order to maintain consensus. Noting the position expressed in paragraph 48 of the CPC report (A/43/16 (Part I)), his delegation underlined the importance of evaluation in the case of the Department of Information. Before the reorganization, the Department had had a tendency to evaluate its accomplishments on the basis of the number of its products, whereas the essential criterion was their impact on the final user. Some progress had been made, but a great deal remained to be done. It should be noted in that regard that there was no measureable relationship between the degree of priority attached to an activity and the staff needed to carry it out. The Secretariat should furnish additional information on the process of self-evaluation in the Department, how it related to the process described by the Secretary-General in document A/43/179 and the resources allocated to it (including staff of the Programme Evaluation Unit).
3. With regard to the publications programme, he was pleased to note that, according to a marketing survey of North American acquisition librarians, there was a market for the Yearbook of the United Nations, a useful reference work for universities and researchers and for the media. Unfortunately, the institutions were complaining of long publication delays. The methods of printing and distributing the Yearbook should thus be reviewed, and it should be printed by private companies if that solution proved to be more economical. The Secretariat should provide more details on the problems which had arisen in publishing the Yearbook during the past 10 years and on measures that might remedy the situation. In that regard, the information centres should be more closely linked to the promotion of all the products of the Department. It was not a question of judging the effectiveness of the publications programme by sales alone. However, in addition to providing a considerable source of revenue, they gave some indication of the number of readers and thus of the quality of United Nations publications, and as such should be one of the main criteria in allocating resources.

(Mr. Kinchen, United Kingdom)

4. Since the reorganization of the Department of Information was under the direct competence of the Secretary-General, he would not propose specific measures in that area; he would, however, draw attention to the observations of ACABQ, especially with regard to the Bureau of Programme Operations.

5. Mr. ZHANG Wanhai (China) said that the reorganization of the Department of Public Information should be carried out in conformity with General Assembly resolutions and in consultation with as many Member States as possible. It should not produce a negative impact on already approved programmes; should fully reflect the priorities established by legislative bodies; and should respect the equitable geographical distribution of posts.

6. With regard to apartheid, Namibia and Palestine, which were considered priority issues by the General Assembly, the organizational adjustments made by the Secretary-General should be accompanied by practical actions on programme planning, staff arrangements and project implementation. His delegation supported the CPC recommendation that separate sections should be clearly identified in the Communications and Project Management Service to handle issues of economic development and of human rights and social development. With regard to the new organizational structure of the Department, his delegation had questions, as did ACABQ, about the Secretary-General's recommendation that the Bureau of Programme Operations should oversee and co-ordinate the work of the Communications and Project Management Service, the Information Products Division and the Dissemination Division.

7. Since CPC had recommended that the levels to be attached to directors of information centres should be appropriate and that a regional balance should be maintained, the Secretary-General had decided to reinstate the five D-1 posts which he had originally proposed for abolition. In view of the Secretariat's indication that the recommendation would not affect the overall target for post reductions under section 27 and would not require any additional appropriation under that section, his delegation wished to know if the reinstatement of the five posts in question would have any negative impact on the financial resources and delivery of programmes in other parts of section 27.

8. The reorganization of the Department of Public Information had not been carried out in the same way as it had in other departments in the Secretariat, causing concern in various quarters. His delegation, for its part, hoped that the Department would pay particular attention to the impact of reorganization on the morale of staff members and on the geographical distribution of posts.

9. Lastly, with regard to chapter IV, part B, concerning the implementation of recommendations 29 and 25 of the Group of 18, he felt that the question was linked to that of the in-depth study of the intergovernmental structure and functions in the economic and social fields. Accordingly, his delegation supported the Advisory Committee's position with regard to the location of the functions related to liaison with non-governmental organizations (A/43/7).

10. Mrs. EMERSON (Portugal) said that she was pleased that some programmes in Portuguese for the countries of southern Africa had been reinstated, but she was concerned that the annual series of six feature radio programmes entitled Namibia Up-date was not produced in Portuguese, although Portuguese was spoken in several front-line States. She wished to know whether the Department of Information was considering resuming broadcasts of those programmes in Portuguese.

11. Mr. MEDEIROS (Brazil) supported the comments of the representative of Portugal.

12. Mr. BAUDOT (Director, Programme Planning and Budget Division), replying to questions put by the delegation of China concerning the redeployment of five D-1 posts to information centres and units, said that that move would be offset by the abolition of one P-4 and two P-2 posts in information centres, one P-3 post in the Information Service at Vienna and one P-2 post in the Information Products Division. The reductions would not have any programme implications, since four of the posts involved came under the information centres and the fifth from a division which had a very large staff. With regard to the financial implications, the difference in cost would be absorbed within section 27 in accordance with the ACABQ recommendation that no additional resources should be approved under the section.

13. Turning to the question asked by the United Kingdom representative, he said that the Programme Evaluation Unit within the Department of Public Information, whose chief was a D-1, had four Professional and four General Service staff members. The senior ranking of the Chief of the Unit was indicative of the importance which DPI attached to evaluation. The staff assigned to the production of the Yearbook of the United Nations included seven Professional (including one P-5) and five General Service staff. The Secretariat would provide further details on that subject at a later stage.

14. DPI was fully aware of the problems affecting radio programming in Portuguese and hoped to be able to reinstate the programmes concerned within the existing appropriation. Additional information would be provided on that subject at a later stage.

AGENDA ITEM 122: UNITED NATIONS COMMON SYSTEM (A/43/30 and Corr.1; A/C.5/43/12 and 21)

AGENDA ITEM 123: UNITED NATIONS PENSION SYSTEM (A/43/9 and 712; A/C.5/43/3)

15. Mr. KAKODKAR (India) said that his delegation appreciated the efforts made by the ICSC secretariat to prepare a shorter report. The report could perhaps be further improved by making it even more concise, coherent and clear. The ICSC secretariat might, for example, provide explanations of the various technical terms relating to the post adjustment system at the end of the report and the Commission's recommendations might be accompanied by a brief outline of the background to the issue in question and a brief account of the observations of the advisory body concerned, the discussions in ICSC and the reasons for the Commission's conclusions.

(Mr. Kakodkar, India)

16. His delegation was concerned at the decision of the staff representative bodies (FICSA and CCISUA) to stop participating in the work of the Commission. He pointed out that the Commission had merely followed General Assembly resolution 42/221 when it had declined to agree to implementation of a new post adjustment class as from 1 February 1988. He therefore expressed the hope that the staff representatives would reconsider their decision and that the Commission would fully consider the views of a staff before taking its decisions.

17. ICSC proposed an increase of 50 per cent in the education grant on the ground that, since 1982, education expenses had increased by between 21 and 121 per cent in the seven headquarters duty stations. While agreeing in principle with the recommendation, his delegation would like more information on the reasons for granting an increase in duty stations where the increase in education expenses had been lower, and on the situation obtaining at field offices. It would also be interested in knowing the Commission's reasons for recommending an increase of 50 per cent in the dependency allowance; specifically, it would like to know what increase there had been in the cost-of-living index since that allowance had last been revised in January 1983.

18. Turning the comprehensive review of the conditions of service of the Professional and higher categories, his delegation favoured the continuation of the present system of comparison with the highest paid national civil service. However, whatever comparator was chosen, it should not be changed too often as that would undermine stability. Comparisons with the private sector or with a basket of national civil services would not be appropriate. His delegation favoured maintenance of the existing single world-wide salary scale and post adjustment system. The latter should be simple, accurate and responsive to variations in the cost of living at the different duty stations and fluctuations in take-home pay resulting from changes in exchange rates. Since mobility was a normal condition of the international civil service, his delegation did not favour any special benefits in respect of mobility, except in the case of extreme hardship conditions at a given duty station. ICSC should take the opportunity of the comprehensive review to give due attention to the conditions of service of the staff in the field.

19. Referring to the report of the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Board, he paid a tribute to the efforts made by the Board to improve the actuarial balance of the Fund. It was to be hoped that the Board would, as requested by the General Assembly in resolution 42/222, continue its comprehensive study of measures which could restore the actuarial balance of the Fund on a long-term basis. He noted that the actuarial imbalance had declined from 6.8 per cent of pensionable remuneration (before demographic changes) as at 31 December 1980 to 4.40 per cent as at 31 December 1986. He endorsed the observations of the Committee of Actuaries to the effect that the imbalance was due mainly to inflation and currency fluctuations, on the one hand, and demographic factors, on the other. His delegation supported the idea of extending membership in the Fund, on appropriate terms, to other employees who had so far been ineligible because of the nature or duration of their appointments. It was prepared to join other delegations in informal consultations to consider other measures for restoring the actuarial balance of the Fund.

20. Mr. LADJOUZI (Algeria) said that the commendable concern for simplification which had guided the drafting of the ICSC report was all the more needed where the system of remuneration was concerned. Perhaps because of the rather inconsistent attitudes of Member States, the system of remuneration was difficult for delegations to understand, difficult for the Secretariat to administer and not very satisfactory for the staff. The comprehensive review of conditions of service of the Professional and higher categories should provide the opportunity to bring about the simplification that was needed. His delegation was in agreement with the general framework for the review, which should examine all the options for rationalizing the system of remuneration. It was not opposed to allowing the Commission more time than was envisaged in resolution 42/221, if necessary, on the understanding that it was for the Fifth Committee to take a final decision on any recommendations made as a result of the review.

21. In the view of his delegation, a system of incentives to mobility ranked high among the matters to which priority should be given. Since financial incentives did not appear to be sufficient, consideration should perhaps be given to a system comparable to that used in national diplomatic services, in which mobility was part and parcel of the normal career pattern. Improving conditions of service in duty stations with difficult living conditions also had a bearing on mobility and would help to reduce the high vacancy rates at certain regional commissions, for example, the Economic Commission for Africa. On the subject of the basis for determining the level of remuneration, his delegation felt that comparisons with private sector employers in the United States were inappropriate, since they did not offer either the stability or the other advantages enjoyed in the public sector. Moreover, since 90 per cent of United Nations staff members were expatriates, expatriate benefits provided by the comparator civil service should be taken into account.

22. The increases in the education grant and dependency allowances recommended by ICSC were urgent and should enter into effect without awaiting completion of the comprehensive review. A system of regular adjustments of the allowances, as proposed by FICSA, could offer a lasting solution to the problem, which mainly affected children and the handicapped.

23. Turning to the question of the functioning of ICSC and relations between the Commission and the associations representing the staff, his delegation recalled that it had frequently called upon ICSC to confine itself to the technical aspects of conditions of service - the political aspects being within the purview of the Fifth Committee - and to improve its functioning by means of greater participation by staff representatives, in accordance with the consultation procedures established by the General Assembly. It seemed that the decision by FICSA and CCISUA to suspend participation for the time being in the Commission's activities had been motivated, *inter alia*, by the fact that the Fifth Committee had not been able, or willing, to examine the controversy between the staff organs and ICSC. His delegation understood the motivations of the two staff organs, but could not acquiesce in the questioning of institutions established by the General Assembly. Perhaps the dispute could be considered in depth by a working group made up of representatives of the parties concerned. The existing consultative machinery gave the staff the option of appealing to the Fifth Committee when ICSC did not take

(Mr. Ladjouzi, Algeria)

their legitimate concerns into consideration. In any event his delegation hoped that a solution that would enable the staff representatives to participate fully in the work of ICSC would be found before the end of the session.

24. Offering staff supplementary payments was a disloyal practice, particularly on the part of those Member States that considered the emoluments of United Nations staff members to be excessive. The ICSC report, however, contained little of substance on the matter. In that connection, his delegation wished to point out that annex II of document A/43/30 was incomplete; not only did Algeria make no supplementary payments, it did not make any deductions from the salaries of its nationals employed at the United Nations.

25. Referring to the report of the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Board (A/43/9), he said that a simplification of the pension system was called for, since the complexity of the scheme encouraged the myth that pensions under the common system were excessively generous. The study requested by the General Assembly in its resolution 42/222 could also serve as the basis for a simpler and more transparent pension scheme. With regard to measures to restore the actuarial balance of the Fund, instead of insisting on measures that the Assembly had already rejected (increase in the rate of contribution and of the mandatory age of separation), the Board should focus on new, less controversial measures, such as extending membership in the Fund.

26. Mr. RALLIS (Greece), speaking on behalf of the member States of the European Community, said that every effort should be made to help the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC) carry out its mandate, thus strengthening the common system. The Twelve noted with interest that, according to its Chairman, ICSC had improved its working methods, and would appreciate further information on those improvements.

27. The efficiency of the United Nations depended to a large extent on its staff. It was thus very important that the staff should enjoy fair working conditions. Nevertheless, the Twelve joined those delegations which had called upon the staff representatives to resume their participation in the work of ICSC. The Twelve could not accept any change in the existing consultation procedures, which were the fruit of long deliberations in the past and which reflected the Charter prerogatives of the General Assembly with regard to budgetary matters. The effective functioning of that machinery depended both on long-term stability and the goodwill of all concerned.

28. The Twelve attached the greatest importance to the comprehensive review of the conditions of service of the Professional and higher categories. While reserving their position on the outcome of the review, they could indicate at the current stage that they supported retention of the Noblemaire principle and of a single world-wide salary scale. The Twelve noted that the Noblemaire principle did not allow for comparison of United Nations salaries with those offered by other international or regional organizations, and saw no reason at the current stage to take more than one national civil service or the private sector as comparators.

(Mr. Rallis, Greece)

29. In paragraph 60 of its report, the Commission proposed the division of the remuneration package into distinct components or the separation of the housing component; those were interesting ideas worth considering further.

30. The introduction of productivity incentives was an attractive idea, but it was not certain that the current system of performance evaluation was advanced enough to serve as a basis for determining differential levels of remuneration. Nevertheless, performance should be seriously taken into account by administrations when examining promotions. Within the framework of the comprehensive review of conditions of service, ICSC should thoroughly examine the possibility of making mobility one element in career development. As several delegations had pointed out, one of the major flaws in the current system was the lack of distinction between mobile and non-mobile staff.

31. The Twelve were willing to participate constructively in consultations on the increases in the education grant and dependency allowances proposed by ICSC. Nevertheless, if the increases were approved by the General Assembly, they should not be considered as acquired rights, pending completion by ICSC of its comprehensive review, which should of course cover the benefits in question.

32. The Twelve trusted that, in carrying out its work on the conditions of service of Professional staff, ICSC would take into consideration the views of Member States. The cost of a simplified scheme would be acceptable to Member States only if it did not exceed the overall level of the existing scheme.

33. He noted that the Joint Staff Pension Board had decided, for reasons of economy, not to meet until 1989, so that the interim report requested by the General Assembly in its resolution 42/222 related in fact to a study carried out by the Standing Committee. The Twelve were well aware that the staff reductions envisaged would reduce contributions to the Fund, and that the combined effect of maintaining the mandatory age of separation at 60 and the increase in life expectancy had imposed additional costs on the scheme. Recalling the economy measures taken since 1982 to counter the worsening of the actuarial imbalance, he endorsed the Standing Committee's proposal to request ICSC to carry out, in co-operation with the Pension Board, a comprehensive review, similar to that for Professional staff, of the level of pensionable remuneration of the General Service and related categories. Both reviews should be conducted with due regard to conditions prevailing in the relevant comparators.

34. The Twelve were looking forward to the results of the actuarial valuation as at 31 December 1988. It should tell them whether the real rates of return referred to in paragraph 59 of the Pension Board's report were realistic; they should then be in a position to agree or disagree with the Board's conclusions on the subjects mentioned in paragraph 55 of its report. For instance, while the Twelve might share the opinion that, in the current period of retrenchment, retirements between the ages of 55 and 60 years should not be discouraged, they believed that all subjects concerning retirement were interconnected and required a more extensive examination in 1989. They agreed with the opinion expressed by the Advisory

(Mr. Rallis, Greece)

Committee in paragraph 9 of its report (A/43/712) that the Board should not necessarily limit itself to an examination of the subjects proposed by the Standing Committee. Lastly, decisions on questions relating to retirement could not be adopted with reference only to the implications for the Pension Fund.

35. The Board's schedule of administrative expenses for 1986 and 1987 showed that the highest increase had been in the cost of actuarial consulting services. He would appreciate an explanation as to why the cost of such services had risen from \$131,000 to \$253,000. Lastly, the Secretary-General's report (A/C.5/43/3) indicated that the rate of return achieved had been better than might have been expected given the difficult prevailing conditions. That underlined how important it was that the Fund should continue to seek the best available options for investments.

36. Mr. Arastou (Islamic Republic of Iran) took the Chair.

37. Mr. GARRIDO (Philippines) said that the financial implications of the Committee's decisions and recommendations amounted to a total of \$14,125,000. The Committee should give a breakdown of that figure, as it applied to the United Nations and the other organization applying the common system. Moreover, in its following annual report, ICSC could include a section on conditions of service at hardship duty stations.

38. Mr. ZADOR (Chairman, Standing Committee of the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund) said that, in accordance with the request made by the General Assembly, the Standing Committee had initiated a comprehensive review of all possible measures to restore the actuarial balance. In so doing, it had been mindful of the deliberations in the Fifth Committee in 1987 and had therefore examined the issue not only from the point of view of the inflow of monies to the Fund, i.e. contributions, but also from the point of view of the outflow, i.e., the costs of the system. Such costs, which were determined not only by the amounts of the benefits but also by the period of time over which they must be paid, had increased as a result of increased life expectancy, combined both with the strict application of the rule that 60 years should be the mandatory age of separation and with the greater use of early retirement. The Standing Committee had concluded that in 1989 the Board should further examine measures to reduce the actuarial imbalance other than an increase in the rate of contribution; the measures in question would be related to the mandatory age of separation, the normal retirement age, early retirement and the extension of participation in the Fund.

39. Three variables affected the determination of levels of pension benefits: pensionable remuneration, the benefit accumulation rates, and the years of contributory service. The benefit accumulation rates, which had been reduced in 1983, now corresponded to the rates applicable in the United States Federal Civil Service. Since the maximum number of years of contributory service was limited to 35 years in the United Nations system, as compared with 42 years in the United States Federal Civil Service, the maximum pension that could be accrued in the United Nations system was set at 66.25 per cent of pensionable pay, as compared

(Mr. Zador)

with 80 per cent in the United States Federal Civil Service. Lastly, the pensionable remuneration of the Professional and higher categories had been reduced twice in recent years. At the time of the 1986 review, ICSC, the Pension Board and the Fifth Committee had given extensive consideration to the issue of whether the margin applied in determining the level of United Nations net remuneration in relation to that in the United States Federal Civil Service should be reflected in the pensionable remuneration and therefore consequent pensions of staff in the Professional and higher categories. That issue would no doubt arise again on the occasion of the following review of pensionable remuneration in 1990. In resolution 41/208, the General Assembly had adopted a new scale based on "clearly defined" criteria for the determination of pensionable remuneration, one of which consisted in taking into account the income replacement ratios of net pension benefits to net remuneration for United Nations officials in New York at different grades and steps. He wished to stress, in that connection, that at best it would be premature and at worst illogical for the Board to reach conclusions in 1989 on the levels of benefits, before it knew the results of the studies of conditions of service - particularly pensionable remuneration - that the Assembly had requested ICSC to carry out. It was for that reason that the Standing Committee had suggested that in 1989 the Pension Board should focus on other features of the pension system that affected its costs. The Standing Committee and the Pension Fund strongly believed that a comprehensive study of levels of pension benefits and their long-range effects on the actuarial soundness of the Fund should be conducted, and they were willing to conduct such a study, but the timetable established by the General Assembly for the ICSC studies served as an unavoidable constraint on them.

40. The General Assembly had indicated on a number of occasions that a co-operative effort by member organizations, participants and beneficiaries was required because the actuarial imbalance must be reduced or eliminated, while at the same time securing an adequate level of benefits. Once they had been fully implemented, the economy measures and the increases in the rate of contribution would have reduced the imbalance by 6.30 per cent of pensionable remuneration. Of that total, 4.78 per cent had been borne by participants and 1.52 per cent by member organizations. While the increases in the rate of contribution had raised the costs borne by member organizations by some \$13 million a year, the reductions in pensionable remuneration had resulted in savings for the organizations amounting to some \$18 million a year.

41. In conclusion, he hoped that in the resolution to be recommended by the Fifth Committee to the General Assembly a clear distinction would be made between, on the one hand, those issues that were to be pursued by the Pension Board in 1989 as part of its study, taking into account the results of the actuarial valuation of the Fund as at 31 December 1988, and, on the other hand, those issues that were to be dealt with in the context of the studies to be completed by ICSC in 1990, in full collaboration with the Pension Fund.

42. In response to the points raised by the representative of Greece, he wished to explain that in real terms the level of resources set aside for financing the

(Mr. Zador)

Fund's administrative expenses for the biennium 1988-1989 was exactly the same as that for the previous biennium. An adjustment had merely been made to take account of inflation. The cost of actuarial consulting services was higher in odd years than in even years because of the cost of the actuarial valuation carried out every two years.

AGENDA ITEM 121: PERSONNEL QUESTIONS (continued) (A/43/659; A/C.5/43/6, 14 and 25)

43. Mr. SCHASTNY (Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic) recalled that Article 101, paragraph 3, of the Charter laid down two important criteria for the selection of staff, the first relating to the standards to be met by the staff and second relating to geographical distribution. The Byelorussian SSR attached special importance to the latter consideration. As experience showed, United Nations officials recruited in his country were carefully selected and thus the first criterion was faithfully applied. The same was not true of the second. While the Byelorussian SSR did not appear on the Secretary-General's list of underrepresented countries in document A/43/659, table 10, giving the weighted and unweighted distribution of posts subject to geographical distribution, showed that it was in fact underrepresented. Steps had been taken to remedy the situation and he hoped that those efforts would continue so that his country could regain the level of representation it had had before the recruitment freeze. While his country had consistently advocated enhancing the effectiveness of the Organization, it hoped that the reforms undertaken to that end would not result in reducing its representation in the Secretariat.

44. As far as the appointments of United Nations staff, the Byelorussian SSR recognized that it was sometimes unavoidable to offer permanent contracts. However, it preferred fixed-term contracts, which had many advantages. They offered the Organization greater flexibility to adjust its activities whenever that became necessary. They meant that it did not have to retain staff who were no longer satisfactory, and they were a strong incentive to the holders. Furthermore, when a fixed-term contract expired, the former staff member became a particularly effective standard bearer for the ideals of the United Nations. Lastly, staff holding permanent appointments often gradually lost sight of the importance of their work. In times of retrenchment, their status gave them an unfair advantage vis-à-vis the many people throughout the world who would gladly agree to work in difficult circumstances in order to have the honour of serving the international cause. The Byelorussian SSR, keenly interested like all other Member States in improving the Organization's effectiveness, believed that, in order to do so, both the continuity and the renewal of the staff should be secured by means of an appropriate mix of permanent and fixed-term appointments.

45. Mr. LANDJERGUE (Togo) welcomed the Secretary-General's efforts to implement General Assembly resolution 42/220 A on the composition of the Secretariat. He considered, however, that in the course of the reform process undertaken to rationalize the administrative and financial functioning of the Organization, the Secretariat should take the high rate of vacancies into account in determining the base figure for calculating desirable ranges for the geographical distribution of

(Mr. Landjergue, Togo)

posts. Moreover, the representation of Member States would be more equitable if there was a better balance between the "contribution" and "membership" factors. The resumption of recruitment should be the occasion for correcting the current imbalances. In addition, the principle of equitable geographical distribution should apply not just to administrative posts but to decision-making posts as well. In particular, it was to be hoped that the developing countries would increase their representation in the upper echelons.

46. His delegation noted that there had been a slight improvement in the status of women in the Secretariat: the percentage of women occupying posts subject to geographical distribution had risen from 28.6 per cent to 28.8 per cent. The representation of women in the higher levels of the Secretariat had also increased and his delegation congratulated the Secretary-General on his continuing efforts to attain the target of 30 per cent. However, the distribution of women by region of origin remained unequal. In the case of Africa, the percentage of women in relation to all staff members had declined. The Secretary-General should take steps to remedy that situation. For greater transparency, table E of annex I to document A/43/659 should indicate the number of women from each Member State occupying posts subject to geographical distribution.

47. The problem of respect for the privileges and immunities of United Nations staff members was one that merited special attention. It was deplorable that between 1 July 1986 and 30 June 1987 123 cases of the arrest, detention or disappearance of staff members had been reported. After listing those bodies that were the most seriously affected, he appealed to all Member States to ensure that in 1988, which was the fortieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, gestures of goodwill were made towards those staff members who had been deprived of their liberty. He paid a tribute to the Secretary-General and the Security Co-ordinator, who had actively sought to assist those staff members and, noting with satisfaction that some States had released the staff members they were holding in detention, called on those which had not yet done so to follow their example.

48. The taxing by some States of the salaries of staff members was another violation of their privileges and immunities. According to paragraph (b) of section 18 of the Convention on the Privileges and Immunities of the United Nations, staff members were exempt from taxation on the salaries and emoluments paid to them by the Organization. Despite that, some States taxed the salaries of staff members thus forcing the Organization to reimburse those concerned for the taxes they had had to pay. That practice should cease.

49. The privileges and immunities enjoyed by international civil servants did not relieve them of certain obligations, as was clearly stipulated in the Convention. Togo, which respected those privileges and immunities, believed it was essential that Member States should support the efforts of the Secretary-General. It would endorse any measure aimed at making the staff more productive and strengthening their dedication to the Organization.

50. Mr. GITSOV (Bulgaria) said that success of the United Nations activities demanded close co-operation between the Secretariat and Member States. The latter had one essential responsibility: to fulfil their financial obligations in order to allow the Secretariat to implement the Organization's programmes. However, when it was a question of the representation of Member States in the Secretariat, the Secretariat itself played a determining role. His delegation had always advocated the equitable geographical representation of Member States and regretted that that aim was far from having been attained.

51. One of the reasons for that situation was the absence of any procedure that would make it possible to restrict or accelerate recruitment in each country according to changes in its representation. He therefore supported the Japanese delegation's proposal to suspend the recruitment of candidates from overrepresented countries, and proposed in addition that the principle of equitable geographical representation should be one of the official criteria governing recruitment and internal promotion.

52. The external recruitment freeze had particularly affected the representation of Member States such as Bulgaria, most of whose nationals were employed on fixed-term contracts. He noted in that connection that several international civil servants of Bulgarian nationality would soon be leaving the Secretariat and that, if the recruitment freeze was maintained, in 1989 there would no longer be a single official of Bulgarian nationality at United Nations Headquarters. His delegation noted with satisfaction, however, that according to document A/43/659, external recruitment procedures had been introduced at the beginning of 1988, and it hoped that the Secretariat would take the necessary steps to prevent the representation of Bulgaria from declining again.

The meeting rose at 12.50 p.m.