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FIFTH COMMITTEE
26th meeting
held on
Wednesday, 24 October 1979
at 10.30 a.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 26th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. BUJ-FLORES (Mexico)

later: Mr. PIRSON (Belgium)

Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative
and Budgetary Questions: Mr. MSELLE

AGENDA ITEM 107: FINANCING OF THE UNITED NATIONS PEACE-KEEPING FORCES IN THE MIDDLE EAST (continued)

- (a) UNITED NATIONS EMERGENCY FORCE AND UNITED NATIONS DISENGAGEMENT OBSERVER FORCE: REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (continued)

AGENDA ITEM 104: PERSONNEL QUESTIONS (continued)

- (a) COMPOSITION OF THE SECRETARIAT: REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (continued)

AGENDA ITEM 98: PROPOSED PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIAL PERIOD 1980-1981 (continued)

First reading (continued)

Section 24. Regular programme of technical co-operation (continued)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.30 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 107: FINANCING OF THE UNITED NATIONS PEACE-KEEPING FORCES IN THE MIDDLE EAST (continued)

(a) UNITED NATIONS EMERGENCY FORCE AND UNITED NATIONS DISENGAGEMENT OBSERVER FORCE: REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (continued) (A/C.5/34/L.11)

1. Mr. ASRAT (Ethiopia) said that when draft resolution A/C.5/34/L.11 concerning the financing of the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force had been put to the vote at the preceding meeting, his delegation had voted against the draft resolution as a result of a mechanical error. He requested that his delegation be recorded as having voted in favour of the draft resolution.

AGENDA ITEM 104: PERSONNEL QUESTIONS (continued)

(a) COMPOSITION OF THE SECRETARIAT: REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (continued) (A/34/408)

2. Mr. NISHIDA (Japan) noted with regret that no significant progress had been made towards achieving an equitable geographical distribution of staff in the Secretariat. As could be seen from paragraph 6 of the Secretary-General's report on the composition of the Secretariat (A/34/408), only 21.4 per cent of staff members appointed during the year under review were nationals of Member States that were unrepresented or under-represented, despite the provisions of section II, paragraph 1, of General Assembly resolution 33/143 which had set a target of 40 per cent for the recruitment of nationals from such countries. According to table 9 of the annex to the Secretary-General's report, the number of staff members from Japan had actually decreased by 1. Moreover, more than 30 per cent of the staff members appointed during the year under review were nationals of over-represented countries. His delegation also had serious doubts whether appointments to the senior level were being made in accordance with the principle of geographical distribution. Table 11 in the Secretary-General's report showed that three new Assistant Secretaries-General were nationals of a country which was already heavily over-represented. He therefore requested the Secretary-General to inform the Committee of the number of appointments to posts at the P-5 level and above during the reporting year broken down by unrepresented countries, under-represented countries, adequately represented countries and over-represented countries.

3. With regard to competitive methods of selection, his delegation failed to understand why a competitive examination had been held for nationals of over-represented countries. More specifically with regard to the competitive examination for promotion to the Professional category of staff in other categories, it should be borne in mind that only 30 per cent of all vacancies at the P-1 and P-2 levels were to be filled by that method. It was regrettable that the competitive examination for Japanese students had been deferred, despite the assurances provided by the Secretariat.

4. Japan had to fill an additional 62 posts before it reached even the lower limit of its desirable range and an even greater number of posts if the new scale of

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(Mr. Nishio, Japan)

assessments adopted recently by the Committee was taken into account. As the most under-represented country, therefore, Japan was concerned not only with increasing the number of its nationals in the Secretariat, but also in improving its representation at the relatively senior levels. His delegation therefore requested the Secretary-General to make renewed efforts to rectify that situation.

5. In order to solve the problem of the persistent under-representation of certain States, it was imperative to strengthen the authority of the Office of Personnel Services in such a way as to make it impossible for other departments to refuse to accept the well-qualified candidates it recommended.

6. The statutory age of retirement should be applied strictly and extensions beyond that age should be confined to cases that were clearly exceptional. With regard to derogations from that rule for certain categories of staff, further information was required before a judgement on the matter could be formed.

7. The Secretary-General's report presented a brief summary of the findings of the staff performance reviews. Such reviews provided a useful means of avoiding the "risks of inflation, imbalance, dead wood and redundancy common to all bureaucracies" about which the Secretary-General had expressed concern in his 1978 report on the work of the Organization (A/33/1).

8. His delegation was in favour of the principle of staff mobility and the establishment of a link between mobility and promotion. In that connexion, it was not satisfied with the explanation provided in paragraph 23 of the Secretary-General's report, even though there was a reference to the establishment of a career development system.

9. It was to be hoped that the Secretary-General would vigorously apply the provisions of General Assembly resolution 33/143 with a view to ensuring equitable geographical distribution. His delegation reserved the right to speak again on those matters should the need arise.

10. Miss MUCK (Austria) observed that General Assembly resolution 33/143 on personnel questions had been adopted by an overwhelming majority of 132 Member States after protracted and, at times, difficult negotiations within the working group set up to discuss those questions.

11. The arrangements for the competitive examinations for promotion to the Professional category of staff members in other categories, outlined in the Secretary-General's bulletin ST/SGB/173 of 29 August 1979, administrative instruction ST/AI/268 and information circular ST/IC/79/54, represented a commendable effort to implement resolution 33/143. The difficulties which had arisen while those arrangements were being made had apparently been overcome owing to the firm determination of the Secretariat to carry out the resolution in question. The competitive examination was scheduled to take place in late November 1979 on a world-wide basis, and the Secretariat deserved commendation for having organized an undertaking of that magnitude in so short a time.

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(Miss Muck, Austria)

12. Her delegation also noted with satisfaction that efforts had been made to improve the geographical distribution of staff in the Secretariat. Guidelines had been issued requiring the recruitment of a definite proportion of women from among candidates for posts in the Secretariat, and circular ST/IC/79/17, dated 8 March 1979, set out guidelines guaranteeing the equal treatment of men and women in the Secretariat. Other steps had been taken to give increased publicity to vacancies, to improve the proportion of suitable candidates, particularly women in the candidates roster; in addition, the mobility factor had been introduced in the annual review leading to the 1979 promotion registers. Efforts had also been made to reduce the number of extensions beyond the statutory retirement age.
13. All those measures responded to some extent to General Assembly decisions. They had been adopted only recently and it would not be fair to expect immediate results in all cases. Time was obviously needed before any change in the percentages in the statistical tables would be noticeable. It was to be hoped that the determination to comply fully with the provisions of General Assembly resolution 33/143 would not weaken and that other measures would be taken to complement those already adopted.
14. Her delegation was anxious about a number of points and she would like the Assistant Secretary-General for Personnel Services to give some further information. In the first place, information circular ST/IC/79/54 of 4 September 1979 concerning the competitive examination for promotion to the Professional category listed 47 posts reserved for the competitive examination. It was to be hoped that that long list represented a percentage of the posts available for appointment at those levels which remained within the 30 per cent limit established by the General Assembly at its thirty-third session after a long and difficult debate. Secondly, it appeared from paragraphs 26 and 27 of administrative instruction ST/AI/268 of 29 August 1979 that some staff members who had already been assigned to a P-1/P-2 post in the staffing table prior to 1 April 1979 would be granted a 10 per cent increase in the score of the written part of the examination. That seemed somehow contrary to the simple principle of equal treatment, and some additional explanation of that transitional measure would be welcome.
15. Paragraph 16 of the Secretary-General's report (A/34/408) dealing with the candidates roster was very brief. It indicated that the number of candidates from unrepresented and under-represented Member States had increased by more than 35 per cent, and that the number of women candidates had increased during the past year by 20 per cent. It also stated that procedures had been introduced to ensure that the roster was always searched when vacancy announcements were being prepared. Her delegation would therefore like to know the exact number of women on the roster, by occupational groups, on 30 September 1978 and 30 September 1979; the number of candidates under 35 years of age listed in the roster by occupational groups at the same dates; and finally, the number of candidates by occupational groups, grade and sex who had actually been recruited from the roster lists in the previous year.
16. It was difficult to understand the relationship between the increase in the number of candidates listed in the roster and the measures taken to advertise vacant posts, or any recruitment missions which had been dispatched. The

(Miss Muck, Austria)

Secretariat might illustrate by some figures the efficiency of the various methods used to fill the roster. Her delegation was very anxious to be informed on that matter, since paragraph 11 of the report stated that the percentage of female staff in Professional posts had increased from 15.2 per cent in 1971 to 17.8 per cent in 1978 and 18.6 per cent in 1979, whereas it was stated a little further on that during the previous year only 47 women had been recruited, or just under 15.5 per cent of the total of 303 appointments to posts subject to geographical distribution. How was it possible that such a low percentage of recruitment, a percentage below the existing average, had resulted in an increase of the total percentage?

17. With regard to the age structure of the Secretariat, the tables showed that the number of staff under 29 years of age had steadily decreased and that the number over 55 years of age had steadily increased; that was in complete contradiction of the General Assembly's recommendations. On that point, the report merely referred to the fact that seven candidates below 27 years of age had been recruited in the previous year; her delegation would like to know why no serious attempt had been made to remedy that situation.

18. With reference to the definition of occupational groups, she referred to section I, paragraph 1 (f), of General Assembly resolution 33/143 in which the General Assembly gave the Secretary-General precise instructions in that regard. Paragraph 20 of the Secretary-General's report said that the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC) had done some work on the matter, and that standards for entry, promotion and rotation of staff were being prepared for staff working in the field of information, the first occupational group for which a Career Development Committee had been established, in May 1978. That seemed to indicate that nothing much more had been done to draw up a list of occupational groups for General Services and Professional categories as requested in resolution 33/143. The only measure indicated was the establishment of one Career Development Committee; but that Committee dated from 1978 and a report on it had already been made to the General Assembly at its thirty-third session. Was it correct to assume that no other step had been taken in that respect?

19. According to the statement by the Assistant Secretary-General for Personnel Services, a further report on the implementation of the post classification system would shortly be submitted to the Fifth Committee. Paragraph 21 of the Secretary-General's report was not too encouraging on that matter. The situation seemed not to have improved since the previous year, and one problem caused particular anxiety: section IV, paragraph 1, of General Assembly resolution 33/143 indicated the measures to be taken for the General Service category, but it seemed from paragraph 36 of the Secretary-General's report that those measures had not been taken. The time-limit of 30 April 1979 established by the General Assembly had come and gone and there was no finalization to be expected in the near future. There was not even any indication of a date by which the General Assembly resolution would finally be implemented.

20. Her delegation had put a number of precise questions to the Secretary-General's representative because it felt that, as the Secretary-General had said in his report

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(Miss Muck, Austria)

on the work of the Organization (A/34/1), a true international civil service was "at the heart of efforts to build an effective system of world order" and that the international civil service was "at present at a critical juncture". Only if the Secretariat and Member States combined their efforts would it be possible to achieve the "noble and essential experiment outlined in the Charter of building a truly international Secretariat working together with a common purpose for the United Nations".

21. Mr. MAJOLI (Italy) said that 1979 was a year in which the General Assembly must consider the proposed programme budget, so that it might perhaps be more appropriate to consider issues concerning the composition of the Secretariat and personnel policy at the next session. Besides, all those questions had been dealt with in the very comprehensive General Assembly resolution 33/143 adopted in December 1978 by 132 votes in favour, none against and 10 abstentions. The text of that resolution had been agreed upon after very thorough negotiations, and it covered so much ground that the new Assistant Secretary-General for Personnel Services should be given time to implement it fully, without adding new elements or introducing changes which might complicate the issue. Thus, it would be desirable for the Committee merely to take note of the report of the Secretary-General and of the views expressed by the Assistant Secretary-General and by delegations.

22. It could be seen from table 9 of the annex to the Secretary-General's report (A/34/408) that, at 30 June 1978, 58 staff members (including 10 women) of Italian nationality had been occupying posts in the Secretariat. Instead of increasing, that number had fallen by 30 June 1979 to 56 (including 12 women), which was very near the minimum of the desirable range assigned to Italy of 55 to 74 posts. However, the situation was much worse if one considered the weighted position shown in table 16. The weighted desirable range for Italy was between 1,674 and 2,265, whereas the actual position was well below the minimum, since Italy had only 1,594 points. Italy realized the many pressures on the Office of Personnel Services, but it had strong reasons for complaint if its situation was compared with that of some other States which were over-represented. His delegation trusted that the new Assistant Secretary-General would see to it that the Italian presence in the Secretariat was brought up to a position suitable for a country of 57 million inhabitants, which was going to be the seventh largest contributor to the budget, and was an enthusiastic supporter of the United Nations.

23. With regard to the appeal to Member States to present qualified candidates, his Government invited the Assistant Secretary-General to take into consideration a woman candidate of Italian nationality who had all the qualifications required.

24. His delegation attached great importance to the competitive recruitment of young people who wanted to make a career in the Secretariat in accordance with the recommendation of the Joint Inspection Unit. The first such competition had been held in his country in 1974 and had yielded excellent results. Fifteen candidates had been recruited and their services were proving entirely satisfactory. Five years had elapsed since that examination, and it was perhaps time to organize another.

25. Mr. PICO DE COAÑA (Spain) said that, among the many resolutions which the General Assembly had devoted to the problem of unrepresented or under-represented Member States, the most important was resolution 33/143. In section II, paragraph 1, of that resolution, the Assembly had requested the Secretary-General "to establish a target of 40 per cent of all vacancies arising in Professional posts subject to geographical distribution during the period 1979-1980 for the appointment of unrepresented and under-represented countries in order to ensure that all such countries achieve their desirable ranges during that biennium ...". The problem of non-representation and under-representation was a matter of constant concern both for delegations and for the Secretariat. Ultimately, it was as much in the interest of the Organization as of Member States that the greatest number of countries should be properly represented at all levels. It was once again necessary to point out that, as paragraph 6 of document A/34/408 showed, his country was among the 22 States which had been under-represented at 30 June 1979, in terms of both numbers and rank.

26. Table 9 indicated that the desirable range for his country was between 27 and 37 staff members. At 30 June 1979, 24 Spanish nationals had been employed, as against 23 in 1978 and 22 in 1977. In other words, the efforts made by the Secretariat to ensure that his country was no longer under-represented were restricted to the recruitment of one staff member per year. It would, however, be unjust to omit mention of the satisfaction his delegation derived from the appointment of Mr. Ruedas to the post of Assistant Secretary-General for Financial Services. As was shown by table E of document A/34/408, 65 Professional staff had reached retirement age as at 30 June 1979. His country therefore hoped that a certain number of posts at the appropriate level would be allocated to it, perhaps including a post at the Under-Secretary-General level.

27. Table 9 would have been more useful had it also indicated the amount of the contributions of Member States to the Organization's regular budget, which would make it possible to make more precise comparisons. That was not, unfortunately, the case, and it had to be noted that, as a result of the increase in his country's assessment, which had risen from 1.53 to 1.70 per cent, its desirable range should be between 30 and 40 posts. If the Secretariat did not improve the situation with regard to the recruitment of Spanish staff it would be difficult to apply the provisions of resolution 33/143, and it would scarcely be possible for his country to come within the limits of its desirable range by the end of the biennium 1979-1980.

28. Furthermore, geographical distribution by region was often deceptive, since a Member State might be under-represented even if the region as a whole attained the appropriate level of representation.

29. His country had always favoured adequate representation of the developing countries. It would, however, be unfair to apply the criterion of development alone to personnel questions. The proper criterion must be non-representation or under-representation of Member States, whether developed or developing, in terms of numbers or rank (for posts at the P-5 level and above). In that connexion, it was gratifying to note, as paragraph 7 of the Secretary-General's report showed,

(Mr. Pico de Coaña, Spain)

that at least two out of five of the candidates appointed to posts available in each department or office were to be nationals of Member States which were unrepresented or under-represented. The Assistant Secretary-General for Personnel Services had indicated that the proportion of the nationals of such Member States appointed between the time he took up his post in April 1979 and the end of September had risen by 25 per cent. In the same period, appointments of nationals of States which had already reached the upper limit of their range had fallen from 37 to 23 per cent. That was a positive development. Between 1 January 1978 and 16 October 1979 his country had put forward 51 candidates, of whom 25 per cent were women, which was in conformity with the provisions of section III, paragraph 1, of resolution 33/143. His delegation supported any measure designed to increase the employment of women and measures concerning, in particular, the recruitment of married couples as staff members and maternity leave. It had always advocated quality of opportunity, in accordance with Article 8 of the Charter of the United Nations.

30. The measures taken by the Secretary-General with regard to vacancy notices and publicity, the candidates roster, staff mobility, inheritance of posts and staff performance reviews seemed appropriate. His delegation saw no objection to the two exemptions from the age of retirement, provided the conditions set out in paragraphs 26 and 27 of the Secretary-General's report were observed.

31. In connexion with the examinations to be organized in November, it was important that the candidates' analytical capacity, drafting ability and knowledge of the Organization should be tested only on the basis of the real level of their knowledge, if they had previously given proof that they knew the required languages. If that were not done, the candidates whose mother tongue was neither English nor French would be at a disadvantage. In the effort to ensure the quality of opportunity it was important to keep in mind the acquired rights of staff members with many years of service to the Organization.

32. In another context, the Secretary-General indicated that gross salaries and common staff costs represented 75.8 per cent of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1980-1981. If it were borne in mind that a total of 12,087 posts were financed from extrabudgetary funds, as was shown by table A of document A/34/408, it was logical to pay attention, and not without concern, to the inclusion in the regular budget of posts hitherto financed from extrabudgetary resources.

33. Mr. AL-HOSSANI (United Arab Emirates) said that the statistical tables contained in the report of the Secretary-General (A/34/408) showed that certain countries were still over-represented while others remained under-represented. His delegation felt that United Nations recruitment policy should reconcile two essential criteria, personal competence and equitable geographical distribution. Despite the resolutions adopted in recent years, the representation of developing countries in senior United Nations posts had not improved and it was regrettable to note that the majority of the under-represented countries were developing countries. Too much weight was given to the "contribution" factor, which favoured the industrialized countries, and many nationals of countries which were already over-represented continued to be recruited. Furthermore, the number of fixed-term staff was increasing very slowly, while the number of permanent staff remained high and even continued to increase.

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(Mr. Al-Hossani, United Arab Emirates)

34. His delegation also felt that the measures should be taken to recruit young people and to strengthen the authority of the Office of Personnel Services in the area of recruitment. The recruitment of young candidates with a university education should be facilitated, especially since a large number of permanent staff would reach retirement age in the next three years. His delegation recognized that the criterion of competence was fair, but felt it should not be applied to the detriment of the criterion of equitable geographical representation. His delegation supported the measures envisaged by the Secretary-General in favour of women in the Secretariat, which should nevertheless be implemented within the ranges allocated to Member States.

35. Mr. HOUNGAVOU (Benin) said that his delegation shared certain views expressed earlier and recalled that the General Assembly had adopted one resolution in 1974 and another in 1978 (resolution 33/143) giving the Secretariat the necessary guidelines for defining and implementing a coherent personnel policy. Despite certain improvements, it should be noted that although that policy had been defined clearly, it had not been implemented in a satisfactory manner, and while recognizing the efforts made by the Secretary-General and his staff, his delegation felt compelled to observe that the criticisms of the Secretariat were sharper than ever.

36. His delegation drew attention to the problems caused especially by the application of the criteria currently regulating personnel recruitment and promotion. With regard to the distribution of Secretariat posts, the General Assembly had defined three criteria: the factors of "membership in the Organization", "contribution" and "population". However, there were certain abuses, which had been denounced by many Member States and were due either to the poor application of those criteria, or their inadaptability to the new conditions in the Organization. Certain Member States derived greater advantages from those criteria, to the detriment of other States which were in fact numerically in the majority. The "contribution" factor, for example, which currently favoured the States with the largest contributions, should be changed: his delegation favoured retaining that criterion, but it felt that it should not be overvalued and that the contributions of small developing countries should be appreciated according to their just value in relation to those of the developed countries which were not experiencing any financial difficulties.

37. The distribution of senior posts in particular caused serious dissatisfaction on the part of the developing countries, and the efforts the Secretary-General was making in that area, although genuine, were completely insufficient. Certain States, in particular the Western Powers, monopolized certain high-level posts and refused to conform to the rules established unanimously by Member States. Those States brought pressures to bear on the Secretariat to promote their interests, and did not hesitate to resort to blackmail if necessary. Those were unacceptable practices and procedures which impaired the efficiency of the Secretariat by preventing the Office of Personnel Services from providing the Organization with honourable and competent staff, and resulted in some posts remaining the exclusive preserve of certain Member States, sometimes despite the justified complaints of the Secretary-General.

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(Mr. Houngavou, Benin)

38. Recalling the provisions of section II, paragraph 2, of General Assembly resolution 33/143, he observed that if, in the light of those provisions, the Secretary-General were requested to draw up a detailed report on the situation concerning the posts thus monopolized by certain States, it would be very difficult for the Secretary-General to justify certain irregularities. Some powerful States had established their own rules which were beyond the control of the General Assembly or the Secretary-General and enabled them to consistently maintain their nationals in certain posts, the candidatures submitted by other States receiving not the slightest consideration. Those were unacceptable anomalies which violated the principle of the absolute equality of all States within the Organization.

39. With regard to the provisions of section I of General Assembly resolution 33/143 concerning the movement of staff from the General Service category to the Professional category, his delegation had at the time welcomed the measures recommended in that resolution. It had nevertheless observed that there was a certain amount of discontent among General Service staff which even took the form of questioning the very principle of the competitive examination envisaged for the movement of staff from one category to the other. While continuing to believe that competitive examination was the best means of selection, his delegation also wished to have certain clarifications regarding the current situation. It felt that the sharp criticism of the arrangements made by the Secretariat for the examination might be justified, since no machinery had been established for consultation between the representatives of the staff and the Administration, and, it would therefore like to have more information on the way in which the examination was supposed to be organized.

40. With regard to the distribution of posts and the ranges allocated to Member States, the tables contained in the report (A/34/408) showed that many countries had in varying degrees gone beyond their ranges. He, therefore, wished to know whether the Secretary-General had in fact taken measures to end recruitment of staff in countries already over-represented and what arrangements were envisaged to solve current problems in that area. The ranges established in 1974 no longer corresponded to the situation in 1979 and it was necessary to establish new ones adapted to current conditions in the Organization. In the case of Benin, the range was set between two and seven posts and after an analysis of the tables in document A/34/408, it seemed that the posts most often allocated to developing countries were lower level posts. For that reason his delegation would like the Secretariat to take the necessary corrective measures.

41. His delegation realized that the task was immense and that the Office of Personnel Services must have full discretion to judge and decide on recruitment of staff for the Organization. It wished to assure the Assistant Secretary-General for Personnel Services of its trust and support.

42. Mr. GOSS (Australia) said that the Secretary-General had been asked to apply a great many criteria, some of them conflicting, in his personnel policy. His delegation believed that the most important was the requirement laid down in Article 101, paragraph 3, of the United Nations Charter, that the paramount

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(Mr. Goss, Australia)

consideration in the employment of staff should be the necessity to secure the highest standards of efficiency, competence and integrity. The various goals which the Secretary-General had been asked to aim at did not prevent him from building up an international career service possessing those qualities, but sometimes the various pressures pulled him different ways and progress towards all the goals was not as fast as might be desired.

43. In 1978, in the discussion which had led to the adoption of resolution 33/143, considerable dissatisfaction had been expressed at the lack of progress towards the aims laid down in resolutions adopted in previous years. He was very glad that the Secretary-General and the Assistant Secretary-General for Personnel Services had taken the injunction of the Fifth Committee to heart and had sought to achieve those aims. He noted from table B in document A/34/408 that the total of countries which were unrepresented had decreased by four and that there had been some increase in recruitment from under-represented countries. Those efforts should be pursued untiringly until all countries were represented and there were no under-represented countries. In addition, certain restrictions had been placed on recruitment of nationals from over-represented countries. Nevertheless, those restrictions were not as severe as had been indicated by the representatives of some of those countries. In that regard, his delegation shared the views expressed by the representative of Japan.

44. It was wrong to make a distinction between developed and developing countries in personnel questions. It would be seen that a number of countries in both categories were over-represented: 8 of the 56 countries that were over-represented in 1978 were developed countries (see table 16). It was therefore incorrect to say that the great majority of developed countries were over-represented. Since 1978, three countries had ceased to be over-represented, while three others had become over-represented. Of the 56 over-represented countries, 37 had experienced an increase in the number of their nationals employed in the Secretariat and only 17 had experienced a decrease. The fact that a relatively high number of countries were expressing discontent was an indication that the Secretariat should redouble its efforts to correct the situation.

45. His delegation noted with appreciation that the Secretariat was now using the description "Asia and the Pacific" for the region in which Australia was located and hoped that the expression "Asia and the Far East" would not be used any more.

46. The statistical information given in document A/34/408 revealed the steps which would need to be taken. The Asia and Pacific region remained considerably under the bottom of its desirable range. With one exception of marginal under-representation, other regions were all above the bottom of their desirable range and some were even well over the top. The under-representation of Asia and the Pacific was understandable in so far as that region had the largest population reserve. The sum total of the top of the desirable ranges of each country of Asia and the Pacific fell far below the bottom of the region's total desirable range when the population reserve was taken into account. He hoped that that factor would be taken into account by the Secretariat when it considered action to restrict recruitment of nationals from "over-represented" countries of the region.

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(Mr. Goss, Australia)

47. That point did not affect Australia, which remained within the new range which would derive from its new rate of assessment. Australia was the only one of the 10 largest contributors with no national at the Under-Secretary-General or Assistant Secretary-General level. It did not, however, demand a strict or mindless application of the desirable ranges, which were merely guidelines. The Secretary-General had a difficult task and should not be put in a strait-jacket.

48. Despite the discontent expressed by some countries with regard to personnel questions, his delegation believed that the Secretary-General should be given a chance to apply the guidelines the Committee had so laboriously worked out in 1978. Bearing in mind its programme of work, the Fifth Committee should refrain from adopting a substantive resolution on the question during the current session.

49. On the question of the access of staff representatives to meetings of the Fifth Committee devoted to personnel questions, he said that he awaited with interest the proposals to be made on the matter by the Assistant Secretary-General for Personnel Services. His delegation fully supported action to that end. It was not merely a matter of courtesy, but also the wise thing to do.

50. Mr. Pirson (Belgium) took the Chair.

AGENDA ITEM 98: PROPOSED PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 1980-1981
(A/34/6 and Add.1, A/34/7) (continued)

First reading (continued)

Section 24. Regular Programme of Technical Co-operation (continued)

51. Mr. BEGIN (Director, Budget Division), replying to a question by the Soviet delegation concerning the title of section 24, explained that that title had been chosen simply for its consistency with the terminology adopted by UNDP and other United Nations agencies concerned with the economic and social sectors.

52. With regard to reports on the implementation of technical co-operation activities included in the regular budget, about which the representative of Algeria had expressed concern, he said that those reports were sent to the Governing Council of UNDP pursuant to resolution 2029 (XX) (para. 4). Since the Second Committee was able to examine the reports on the implementation of the technical co-operation programme when it took up the report of the Governing Council of UNDP, the Secretariat did not report directly to the Fifth Committee on that matter. The delegations of Algeria and the United States had also raised a question concerning the implementation of technical assistance activities by the regional economic commissions; at its twenty-sixth session, the UNDP Governing Council had adopted decision 79/22, in which it had requested more detailed information on those activities, as a result of which future reports on the implementation of technical co-operation activities by the regional economic commissions would be more extensive and more detailed.

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53. In reply to a number of delegations which had raised questions regarding the distribution of advisory services among different programmes and the methods employed in evaluating requirements under that heading in the proposed programme budget for 1980-1981, he said that the Secretariat had been guided by the apportionment of expenditure up to May 1979 under the programme budget for 1978-1979, in other words, the proportional distribution of requests for advisory services submitted by Governments by that date. It was possible that the pattern had since changed somewhat. The definitive apportionment of expenditure on advisory services would appear in the performance report on the programme budget for 1978-1979. Table 24.5 of the proposed programme budget for 1980-1981 contained the estimates for 1980-1981 and was merely indicative.

54. In reply to a question raised by the representative of Algeria concerning the breakdown, as between different programmes, of amounts expected to be received in non-convertible currencies, as set out in table 24.4, he explained that, at the beginning of the biennium, contributions were consolidated under the heading of unprogrammed activities as it was not possible to foresee how such funds would be employed. Once the expenditure had been incurred in response to needs, it was charged against the corresponding programme. The breakdown of expenditure by programme would once again be made on the basis of experience and included in the performance report on the programme budget for 1978-1979.

55. The representative of Algeria had also asked why no amount for training activities had been included in table 24.4. The reason was that it had not originally been expected that substantial amounts would be available for such activities; rather it had been thought that expenditure would be incurred, in the main, for projects in the field. Since, in fact, the bulk of the resources in non-convertible currencies had been employed in training activities, as would be shown in the performance report, the actual pattern of expenditure in 1978-1979 indicated that an amount of \$1.5 million out of a total of \$2,343,400 should appear under the heading "Training" for the 1980-1981 biennium.

56. "Group training on an interregional basis" (para. 24.11), to which the representative of Belgium had referred, dealt with the organization of seminars on industrial development the expenses for which were assumed by UNIDO; nationals from a large number of countries participated.

57. The representative of Yugoslavia had raised several questions on table 24.4 and had inquired what links existed between the different programmes of activities mentioned therein and the organizational units of the Secretariat which were responsible for their implementation. In previous biennia the Department of Economic and Social Affairs had been directly or indirectly responsible in the main for advisory services. Following the restructuring of the economic and social sectors of the United Nations, a number of units had become responsible for programme implementation: the Department of Technical Co-operation for Development was responsible for all matters and policies relating to development, natural resources, public administration and finance and for part of the social development sector; the Department of International Economic and Social Affairs was responsible for parts of the social development and statistical sectors; the Division of Human

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Rights was clearly responsible for appropriations under the heading of human rights; the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements was responsible for matters concerning human settlements, and UNCTAD for the international trade sector.

58. Mr. SADDLER (United States of America) said that, in his view, the replies given by the Director of the Budget Division to the questions raised by his delegation were evasive and unsatisfactory, and he expressed the hope that considerable improvement would be made in the information furnished to justify the substantial amounts requested in the proposed budget. In any case, the United States delegation considered that technical assistance activities should not be included in the regular budget but should be financed from voluntary contributions and entrusted to the United Nations Development Programme.

59. Mr. GARRIDO (Philippines) reminded the Committee of his delegation's position on the regular programme of technical co-operation under section 24 of the programme budget. That section had always been controversial; a number of delegations considered that it should not form part of the regular budget, a point of view which seemed to have prevailed in the Advisory Committee, as it had not recommended any appropriation for the programme of technical co-operation. His delegation supported the inclusion in the regular budget of amounts for technical assistance, bearing in mind that the Secretary-General had requested no resource growth and had limited himself to increases required to cover inflation and the revaluation, at revised 1979 rates, of the 1978-1979 resource base. In that connexion he would welcome information as to why an inflation rate of 7 per cent had been assumed for 1980 and of 6 per cent only for 1981.

60. He emphasized that the new international economic order and the third international development decade would remain dead letters if delegations did not approve appropriations for the services of experts, fellowships, equipment and training, which were precisely the types of assistance available under section 24. It was in that spirit that the Fifth Committee should agree to retain the regular programme of technical co-operation in the regular budget.

61. Miss MUCK (Austria) said that her delegation attached great importance to technical assistance in general and, in particular, to the regular programme of technical co-operation financed under the United Nations regular budget. If she had any comments to make on the manner of presentation of section 24 and on the lack of information supplied, it was because she considered that the estimate of \$27 million for that section should be properly justified in the interests of the recipient developing countries. Paragraph 24.1 contained a statement to the effect that annual reports on the activities financed under that section of the budget were submitted to the Governing Council of UNDP. It was the responsibility of the Fifth Committee to examine the section of the budget covering the regular programme of technical co-operation. The Committee should therefore have available to it, as also should ACABQ, the supplementary information furnished to the Governing Council so that it would be in a position to evaluate the section properly, and section 24 should be presented in the same way as the other sections of the regular budget. The delegation of Austria would, of course, vote for section 24.

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62. Mr. GARRIDO (Philippines) suggested that, with a view to obtaining additional information on section 24, the Committee should invite a representative of UNDP to provide information on the regular programme of technical co-operation, since it was to UNDP that the Department of Technical Co-operation for Development reported.

63. The CHAIRMAN said that in fact it was the Secretary-General who was responsible for the estimate of \$27,248,100 for section 24 of the regular budget and that it was he who should therefore reply to the Committee's questions. It was unfortunate that so little information had been provided in that section, especially as reports on the implementation of the regular programme of technical co-operation were not submitted directly to a Main Committee of the General Assembly.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.