

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 32nd MEETING

Chairman: Mr. PIRSON (Belgium)

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

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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 104: PERSONNEL QUESTIONS (continued)

(a) COMPOSITION OF THE SECRETARIAT: REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (continued)
(A/34/408; A/C.5/34/CRP.2)

(b) OTHER PERSONNEL QUESTIONS: REPORTS OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (continued)
(A/C.5/34/7)

1. Mr. DAMDINDORJ (Mongolia) said, with regard to the policy of recruitment of staff members to the Secretariat, that his delegation had always advocated the Charter principle, namely the principle of equitable geographical distribution. That principle had been followed since the inception of the United Nations, but much remained to be done to implement it fully at all levels and in all categories throughout the United Nations system.

2. During the last three and a half decades tremendous changes had taken place both in international life and in the United Nations, and the Organization's role in a quickly changing world was increasing. The Secretariat, as the principal executive organ of the United Nations, therefore faced a challenge in coping with the pressing requirements of contemporary international life.

3. With those considerations in mind, the General Assembly had adopted resolution 33/143, the implementation of which would bring about the necessary reforms in United Nations personnel policy, particularly with regard to conditions of employment, recruitment, promotion and training.

4. The Secretary-General's report on the composition of the Secretariat (A/34/408) showed that a large number of Member States were over-represented, and that a group of countries was under-represented. It was thus clear that the principle of equitable geographical distribution was not being strictly followed. That principle should be applied proportionally to all posts, and particularly those at senior levels. His delegation was unable to ascertain from the report how many of the 10,000 or so posts financed from the regular budget were filled by staff members with fixed-term contracts and how many by holders of permanent contracts.

5. Fixed-term contracts had a number of advantages over permanent contracts; in fact the latter were one of the fundamental causes of the problem of age balance in the Secretariat which the United Nations was currently facing. The Secretary-General had been requested in resolution 33/143 to reduce the average age of staff at the P-1 and P-2 levels to thirty-five by taking necessary measures for the recruitment of young professional persons. A gradual elimination of permanent contracts would enable the Secretary-General to make regular infusions of fresh blood into the United Nations body, and to keep the staff within the desirable age range. One of the guiding principles in Secretariat employment policy should be a reasonable combination of experience and enthusiasm.

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(Mr. Damdindorj, Mongolia)

6. Permanent contracts were also conducive to bureaucratic and conservative methods of work, which reduced the effectiveness of the Organization. Therefore, candidates for all posts falling vacant in all occupational groups subject to geographical distribution during the period 1979-1980 should be recruited on the basis of fixed-term contracts.

7. His delegation supported the policy of increasing the proportion of women in the Secretariat. The recruitment of men and women on equal terms was consistent with the Charter principle of the elimination of any form of discrimination based on sex. He also supported the efforts being made by the Secretary-General and the executive heads of other United Nations bodies to implement paragraph 3 (c) of section III of General Assembly resolution 33/143.

8. Mrs. SANDIFER (Portugal) observed that, as only one year had elapsed since the adoption of resolution 33/143 on personnel questions, the Secretary-General had not had sufficient time to carry out all the important reforms demanded of him. Her delegation therefore considered the Secretary-General's report in document A/34/408 to be of an interim nature.

9. She noted with satisfaction that greater progress had been made than in previous years in appointing nationals of unrepresented and under-represented States. Her country was reaching the upper limit of its unweighted desirable range and was at the midpoint of its weighted range. It was one of four countries in Western Europe with no nationals at senior policy-making levels.

10. There seemed to be steady, albeit slow, progress in the appointment of women to the Secretariat, especially to higher-level posts. She recognized that, in its continuing efforts to recruit women to the Organization, the Secretariat was faced with two obstacles: the effect of long-entrenched discrimination in the organizational structure and the continuing inability of Governments to propose qualified women candidates. Greater efforts should be made by the Secretariat and Member States to increase the number of competent women whose names were placed on the roster of candidates. While the number of women candidates on the roster had increased by 20 per cent, her delegation would welcome some indication from the Secretary-General as to the number of women actually recruited from the roster. It was satisfied that the Secretary-General was attending with reasonable dispatch to the questions referred to in section III, paragraph 3 (c) of resolution 33/143, namely, the assignment of married couples to the same duty station, extension of maternity leave, arrangements for part-time employment and the adoption of flexible working hours.

11. Despite the many pertinent resolutions adopted by the Assembly, the age distribution of staff, on the whole, remained unchanged. There were still relatively few staff members under 35 years of age in lower-level Professional posts and it was to be hoped that the age distribution of the Secretariat would be improved in 1980.

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(Mrs. Sandifer, Portugal)

12. The matter of extensions beyond the age of retirement was a delicate one. On the one hand, a certain mobility based on age was necessary, otherwise youth would not have an opportunity to become experienced. On the other hand, many people resented being forced into retirement when they were still capable of making considerable professional contributions. In resolution 33/143, the Assembly had requested the Secretary-General to observe the statutory age of retirement and not grant extensions beyond six months. Her delegation was aware, however, that the Secretary-General had encountered some difficulties in complying with those provisions, particularly in so far as staff with special language requirements and General Service staff were concerned. It was altogether reasonable that the Secretary-General should be allowed to exercise flexibility in applying retirement policy to those two groups of staff, bearing constantly in mind the need to protect the career prospects of other staff.

13. The Assembly was currently faced with the repercussions of its decision at the preceding session to limit the movement of staff from the General Service to the Professional category. The Secretary-General had seen fit to establish a system of competitive examinations for the promotion of General Service staff to the P-1 and P-2 levels. Her delegation had no quarrel with the structure of the examination; if there were problems relating to its administration, as there seemed to be, they must be resolved as quickly and as carefully as possible so as not to thwart the aspirations of people seeking promotion or those currently occupying Professional posts. The Secretariat might have been too hasty in arranging the examination, and morale had perhaps suffered as a result. It was to be hoped that the problems would be resolved without impairing the efficient functioning of the Secretariat.

14. Mr. DAHER (Jordan) said that one of the prime aims of the United Nations was to attain full representation of developing countries in the Secretariat. That aim, which was based on the principles of the Charter, must be pursued with vigour because it was in the interests of all Member States, bearing in mind the political and economic nature of the world and the Organization.

15. He noted with appreciation that there had been an increase in the number of Secretariat staff from developing countries and also an increase in their representation in the higher echelons of D-1 and above. That was an encouraging development and he looked forward to a continuation and acceleration of that trend. However, there was reason for dissatisfaction with the existing system, which allocated the number of posts, or the desirable range, by means of a weighting in proportion to a State's contribution to the budget of the United Nations. The United Nations should not determine the geographical distribution of its Secretariat on the basis of Member States' contributions to the budget; the United Nations was not, after all, a profit-making institution.

16. He would therefore welcome suggestions for a reappraisal of the existing system. It should be borne in mind that many staff members from developing countries who occupied posts subject to geographical distribution were in fact staff members of regional bodies such as the economic commissions which, by their nature, tended to obtain a large proportion of their staff from their immediate

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(Mr. Daher, Jordan)

geographical area. However, staff members in such regional bodies had less participation in the United Nations system as a whole than those in New York or Geneva. That point must be borne in mind in determining the desirable range of staff for Member States in the Secretariat.

17. He had learnt that there was discontent among the staff at the General Assembly's decision at its thirty-third session concerning movement from the General Service to the Professional category. It had been stated that staff members' acquired rights had been abridged, and there were said to be difficulties in staff management and staff relations in consequence. He would not be adverse to reviewing the matter if the question were brought up again in the Fifth Committee.

18. He recalled that the possibility of staff representatives appearing in the Fifth Committee had been considered at the thirty-third session. Staff representatives might wish again to speak to the Committee on staff matters relating to conditions of service and staff welfare in general. He thought that it would be in the interests of the Organization for the Assembly to hear the views of the staff, and he would support the appearance of their representatives in the Fifth Committee.

19. He understood that there were difficulties in achieving a better balance between the sexes both in recruitment and in promotion, and particularly in increasing the representation of women in the higher echelons. He noted with satisfaction that two women Assistant Secretaries-General had recently been appointed and urged that more effort be made to increase the proportion of women, and that Member States should take the initiative by proposing more women candidates for posts in the Secretariat. He was confident that the Secretary-General was dedicated to that objective and would wish to pursue it with vigour and determination. There was considerable merit in having a younger Secretariat, and he therefore supported the policy of recruiting younger candidates in order to achieve a better age distribution.

20. Mr. OYONO (United Republic of Cameroon) said that in accordance with Article 101 of the Charter, the staff was appointed by the Secretary-General under regulations established by the General Assembly. At its thirty-third session, the Assembly, concerned that the reforms of personnel policy as well as the implementation of the various resolutions on the composition of the Secretariat were proceeding too slowly, had adopted resolution 33/143. The major goal of that resolution, which had been broadly inspired by the developing countries though rather watered down in debate, was to give fresh impetus and a new direction to the reforms of personnel policy hitherto adopted, and to achieve a constant improvement of the Secretariat, not only with regard to equitable geographical distribution, but also from the qualitative standpoint of the competence, output and efficiency of staff members. To that end, the various sections of the resolution dealt with such matters as vacancy notices, the rostering of candidates, staff mobility, promotion from General Service to Professional category, competitive examinations, the improvement of the position of unrepresented and under-represented States, the representation of developing countries at the senior level, retirement age,

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discriminatory practices, the employment of women and young persons, and the classification of posts at Headquarters and elsewhere. The Secretary-General's report on personnel questions (A/34/408) informed the Assembly of the measures taken to implement the resolution; it was clear and concrete and gave a good over-all view of the situation. He recognized that it was an interim report, coming in the middle of the two-year period which had been set for the implementation of General Assembly resolution 33/143, and that it also coincided with a period of change in the structure of the personnel services, which had inevitably led to some delays in the implementation of the resolution.

21. He noted with satisfaction that there had been a slight but definite reduction in the number of unrepresented and under-represented States. The publication of the first vacancy notice and the implementation of measures concerning retirement age were also matters for satisfaction. If those efforts continued as they had begun, they should achieve good results by the end of the biennium initially fixed for implementation of the resolution.

22. Nevertheless, his delegation had some reservations regarding the form and substance of the Secretary-General's report. It contained many statistics and percentages which aimed at great precision. The subject-matter probably required such an approach, but it certainly did not contribute to a clear understanding of the reality of the position. What was expressed seemed satisfactory at first sight, but gave rise to doubts on closer scrutiny, particularly from the viewpoint of subregions and individual States. The difficulty with desirable ranges was that the numerical procedure gave the global impression that a particular region was in a favourable situation, though in fact, only some of the countries in that region might have achieved a satisfactory level of representation in the Secretariat. That was particularly true of the African regions. For example, table C in the Secretary-General's report showed that the 88 countries in Group A should have, according to the midpoint of their combined desirable ranges, 759 posts, and actually held 764 posts, so that they were in fact in a satisfactory position. Group B, on the other hand, consisted of 25 countries (less than one third of the number in Group A); it had a midpoint of 1,344 and actually held 1,405 posts, or nearly twice as many as Group A. Of the 88 countries in Group A, 50, or two thirds of the total, were African States holding 363 posts, or half of the total available posts. The number of senior posts for the Group as a whole was 107, and it could be seen from table 7 that Africa held only 44 of those posts. The distribution of those posts among the African subregions could be seen from table 9: West Africa (16 Member States, 13 posts); Central Africa (11 States, 5 posts); East Africa (11 States, 8 posts); southern Africa, excluding South Africa (6 States, 0 posts); North Africa (5 States, 15 posts). All three D-1 posts in the southern African subregion were in fact held by staff members from the racist régime of South Africa.

23. If the 44 posts to which he had referred were analysed by grade, with the application of the weighting currently used, the fundamental imbalances between the various regions became even more apparent. He was not seeking absolute perfection in the statistical percentages, and realized that questions of administrative management of the Secretariat were involved, and that the Secretary-General's task was complicated by the increasing political and cultural

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diversity of the Secretariat. The Secretary-General as chief administrative officer of the Secretariat should be allowed some latitude in discharging the tasks imposed on him under the Charter. Nevertheless, there were some complex and sensitive problems of the representation of regions and States that a purely statistical approach was unable to solve satisfactorily. A greater effort was needed to look beyond the strict balance of percentages towards a true system of equitable geographical distribution based on current political reality.

24. On the matter of inheritance of posts, General Assembly resolution 33/143 reaffirmed that no post should be considered the exclusive preserve of any Member State, or group of States; paragraph 10 of the Secretary-General's report detailed the measures taken to apply that provision of the resolution. He looked forward to reading in the next similar report more factual data which would permit the Committee to assess the progress made in the implementation of the resolution.

25. Section I, paragraph 1 (e), of the same resolution provided that information on the over-all results of the staff performance review should be made available to the General Assembly. He would like the Secretary-General, in whom he had great confidence, to ensure that the staff under his authority possessed the high qualities of competence and integrity required by the Charter. Loyalty to the Organization also implied intellectual honesty and a duty of confidentiality vis-à-vis all Member States. He hoped that the principle of equal treatment of Member States would be constantly strengthened, that relations between Secretariat services and Member States would not be affected by the political and economic weight of any particular State, and that the principle of the sovereign equality of States would always be maintained. The evaluation measures described in paragraph 22 of the Secretary-General's report and the relevant table should be amplified and presented in greater detail, so as to be more informative.

26. In paragraph 28 of his report the Secretary-General suggested that a certain amount of flexibility could be used in applying the policy on retirement age to the groups of staff referred to in paragraphs 26 and 27 of his report. The Secretary-General should certainly be given leeway to determine the manner in which the rules established by the General Assembly should be applied. His delegation was convinced by the technical and economic arguments which the Secretary-General had put forward; however, he would like to know how many posts would be affected by the measures to be applied.

27. He supported the principle of competitive recruitment because it was an objective method of selection; but the recruitment process must observe the percentages for recruitment already decided on, though those percentages could always be revised if necessary. In general, the recruitment process must help and not hinder the recruitment into the Secretariat of candidates from unrepresented and under-represented States.

28. There had been much discussion of under-representation and over-representation of States in relation to their desirable ranges of posts. In their present form, however, having regard to equity and the sovereign equality of States, those ranges were neither desirable nor desired. In establishing the range, considerable

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weight was given to the factor of a State's contribution to the budget, as compared with the factor of membership. Thus, two thirds of Member States were removed from the mainstream of action, and the principle of equitable geographical distribution was distorted. Moreover, the criterion of level of contributions was incorrectly applied because the figures used were absolute totals and took no account at all of relative capacity to pay. As the Swedish representative had said at the 27th meeting, while the contributions of some States in absolute terms were generous, many other countries were still more generous in terms of their capacity to pay. It was therefore becoming urgent to give to the factor of membership of the United Nations its due weight according to the Charter; that principle should be reflected in a new formulation of the desirable ranges.

29. The number of posts subject to geographical distribution should be reviewed. A study of table A together with table 2 in the annex to the report showed that exemption from the requirements of geographical distribution was not always justified, and the growing number of such posts contributed more and more to an imbalance at the expense of posts subject to geographical distribution.

30. Mr. JASABE (Sierra Leone) recalled that General Assembly resolution 33/143 on personnel questions had been prompted by the Assembly's dissatisfaction with the slow pace of progress in implementing previous General Assembly resolutions with regard to the recruitment of staff and other related matters. As indicated in the report of the Secretary-General (A/34/408), in the year ending 30 June 1979 there had been an increase in the number of staff from under-represented countries and a decrease in the number from over-represented countries. His delegation was also delighted that steps had been taken to ensure the representation of some countries which had been unrepresented.

31. In reiterating his commitment to the guidelines for recruitment, the Assistant Secretary-General for Personnel Services had reminded the Committee that guidelines should be regarded as yardsticks and that the Secretary-General should, when appointing staff in exercise of his responsibility under Article 101, paragraph 1, of the Charter, be seen to have the discretionary power invested in him by Article 97 of the Charter. Although the General Assembly could provide guidelines, they should not be regarded as rigid, and the Secretary-General should be allowed a degree of discretion and flexibility, as long as his action was prompted by the necessity of securing the highest standards of efficiency, competence and integrity, and due regard was paid to the importance of recruiting staff on as wide a geographical basis as possible.

32. According to information provided in the Secretary-General's report, of 56 countries already over-represented, 8 were developed countries. As to the representation of Africa, 42 States were represented by a total of 362 staff members. While there had been an increase in the number of African States which were Members of the Organization, the number of staff representing that region had increased very little. It was apparent that the pattern for Africa had been carefully determined, and was controlled with a view to ensuring very little variation. Asia and Africa taken as a group, comprising 38 Member States, was also in an inferior position in comparison with other groups, particularly the countries

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with developed market economies (Group B). While recognizing that a country's desirable range was determined, in part, by its rate of assessment, he was disappointed that little account was taken of the fact that, although in absolute terms the majority of countries in Africa contributed little to the budget, in terms of percentages of their gross national products, they were contributing as much as some developed countries. It was in that spirit that his delegation looked forward to a further improvement in the recruitment of nationals of developing countries and to a review of the criteria for the establishment of desirable ranges.

33. His delegation appreciated the difficulties which the Secretariat had encountered in fully implementing the provisions of General Assembly resolutions calling for a reduction in the average age of staff at the P-1 and P-2 levels and greater efforts to appoint to senior posts, both through recruitment and promotion, younger people of outstanding ability and demonstrable potential. It wished, however, to emphasize that experience depended, not only on age, but also on circumstances and to support the establishment of an age ceiling for certain levels of Professional posts. He noted the Secretary-General's assertion that in exceptional cases age ceilings were not applied, and hoped that the practice of making exceptions would not be used for the benefit of any particular group or individual.

34. In keeping with his country's own administrative practice, his delegation had always supported the compulsory retirement age. Exceptions in the case of staff in posts with special language requirements and General Service staff in localities where the retirement age was higher than 60 were reasonable as they related to specific appointments for which, as indicated in the report of the Secretary-General, demand was always higher than supply. He looked forward, however, to more positive steps to ensure that as many candidates as possible were sought for posts with special language requirements so as to eliminate the special situation to which the Secretary-General had drawn attention.

35. Turning to the question of movement of staff from the General Service to the Professional category, he noted the arrangements that had been made for the holding of a competitive examination in 1979, as well as the apprehensions of the staff with regard to the examination. Examinations had a place in any scientific selection procedure, but the test used must be designed on the basis of a sound job analysis programme, since it was only by means of a thorough job analysis that the level and kind of intelligence required for adequate job performance could be determined. In connexion with the proposed competitive methods of selection, his delegation wished to stress three points: firstly, that the examination should be only part of the selection procedure; secondly, that the administration of the examination should be controlled and standardized in order to ensure that results were comparable; and, thirdly, that the appropriateness of the test questions to the task at hand should be apparent to the candidates. Most tests had been shown to be discriminatory against one group or another, and the scheduled examination might well be discriminatory against staff from developing countries. If inadvertent discrimination was to be eliminated, the examination

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could be used only on an experimental basis, and final endorsement of it would depend on the over-all results obtained. The test results, especially the performance of specific groups, should be monitored closely.

36. He noted the very significant progress made by the Secretary-General in implementing the provisions of resolution 33/143 relating to the employment of women in the Secretariat, the elimination of discrimination based on sex, and the representation of women in various personnel, advisory and administrative bodies of the organizations of the system. His delegation welcomed, in particular, the issuing of information circular ST/IC/79/17 containing guidelines for promoting equal treatment of men and women in the Secretariat. One of the most significant improvements had been the increased participation and representation of women in the various personnel, advisory and administrative bodies of the Secretariat. He noted the efforts made to assign an accompanying spouse to an appropriate post in a duty station to which the other spouse had been transferred. The liberalization of maternity-leave benefits was a particularly important means of facilitating the employment of women. His delegation also favoured granting women the option of part-time employment so that they could assume family responsibilities without abandoning their careers. Table C in document A/34/408 showed that there had been an increase in the percentage of women in the Secretariat from Group A countries. It also showed that, while the percentage of women in the Secretariat from Group B countries had decreased, the percentage of women from countries in that group occupying senior posts had increased. His country was firmly convinced of the important role women had to play in the development process, and was therefore dissatisfied at the fact that only 30 posts subject to geographical distribution were occupied by African women. Further steps should be taken to increase the number of women in the Secretariat, particularly from Africa.

37. With regard to staff management relations, he said that, inasmuch as the General Assembly expected a certain level of performance from staff members and had devised methods for evaluating their performance, it should ensure that their morale was not damaged by its decisions. A positive work environment was an important factor in job performance, and in order to get the best out of staff, appropriate incentives must be provided, and their demands, if they were reasonable, should be accommodated.

38. Miss MOHAMED (Guyana) said that her delegation regarded the current report of the Secretary-General (A/34/408) as an interim one; the new Assistant Secretary-General for Personnel Services must be given time to implement fully the provisions of General Assembly resolution 33/143. It hoped that the report on personnel questions submitted at the thirty-fifth session would provide further information on such topics as unrepresented and under-represented States, the representation of developing countries at senior levels of the Secretariat, the inheritance of posts, and the recruitment of women.

39. While the Secretary-General must place emphasis on recruiting staff members from under-represented countries, that emphasis should not be to the exclusion of recruitment from over-represented countries, especially over-represented developing countries. As the representative of Trinidad and Tobago had pointed out, the

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desirable ranges indicated in the Secretary-General's report gave great weight to those countries which made a large contribution to the United Nations budget, and termed over-represented those countries which had exceeded quotas based on their more modest contributions. Her delegation therefore endorsed the call for a review of the criteria used in establishing desirable ranges.

40. She was gratified to note that the concern among staff members at the impending competitive examinations for transfer from the General Service to the Professional category concerned rather the content of the examination than the principle involved; and she was encouraged by the Assistant Secretary-General's understanding of staff members' concerns and his willingness to take steps to allay them. She inquired as to the fate of those General Service employees who were currently doing the work of Professionals but who did not pass the competitive examination.

41. Her delegation welcomed the competitive examination as a means of putting an end to previous unsatisfactory staff movements, and the introduction of an objective method for determining staff movement between the two categories. It trusted that successful candidates could entertain the same hope of rising to the higher echelons of the Organization as those Professionals recruited from outside. Since some of the concern among staff members was apparently due to the high number of applicants for each available post, it agreed that the General Service should be so restructured as to accommodate staff members' desire for professional advancement.

42. Mr. KUDRYAVTSEV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that the level of efficiency with which the various sections of the United Nations worked, the standard of implementation of resolutions and other directives from the General Assembly and its subsidiary bodies depended to a great extent on the selection of staff and their deployment in the Secretariat. That explained the political, rather than administrative and technical, nature of the discussion of personnel matters, and his delegation therefore attached great importance to the consideration of the Secretary-General's report (A/34/408) on agenda item 104 (a).

43. The two criteria established in Article 101, paragraph 3, of the Charter to govern the employment of United Nations staff could not be opposed one to the other, as was sometimes attempted by those who wished to rob the United Nations and its Secretariat of a most important and fundamental quality: their international representativeness. None would quarrel with the need to secure the highest standards of efficiency, competence and integrity. But a factor which should be taken into account in approaching the question of competence should be that prescribed in General Assembly resolution 33/143, section I, paragraph 1 (i), requiring that methods of selection should take into account the cultural and linguistic diversity of the membership of the United Nations. If that consideration were consigned to oblivion it would be possible, for misguided "purely functional consideration" not to mention definite political bias, to appoint a significant proportion of the staff of the United Nations from those countries whose native language was at the same time a working language of the Secretariat. For that reason, the second criterion established in Article 101, paragraph 3, of the Charter was of cardinal importance. An organization which by its nature and function was

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completely international in character must have an effective, competent, and upright secretariat which was as international as possible in its composition.

44. The current geographical distribution of posts within the Secretariat, as indicated in table 3 of the report of the Secretary-General, suffered from many significant short-comings not attributable to the lack of appropriate guidelines. It was clear that the criteria established in the Charter were not always fully taken into account and were, indeed, frequently ignored, particularly the principle of equitable geographical distribution of posts. In 1979, for example, 19 Member States had been entirely unrepresented in the Secretariat, and another 22 under-represented, most of them developing countries. Efforts must be made to appoint persons from those countries to suitable posts in the Secretariat within the limits of the countries' desirable ranges, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 33/143, section II, paragraph 1.

45. That same paragraph also provided that the representation of countries which were within desirable ranges should not decrease. Yet, over the preceding 12 months, the representation of the Soviet Union in the Secretariat had fallen to within one post of the bottom of its desirable range. The decline was still continuing, partly because in practice the procedure indicated in paragraph 10 of the report of the Secretary-General (A/34/408) - which stated that when a staff member who was a national of an under-represented or marginally represented Member State separated from service, another national of the same State might be appointed to a post in the same area of the Secretariat but not necessarily in the same post or at the same level - was not followed. His delegation was seriously concerned because the procedure was often not followed in the case of Soviet specialists, and hoped that those responsible would take the necessary steps to halt the diminishing representation of the Soviet Union in the Secretariat.

46. The decrease in Soviet staff members was taking place while several dozen States supplied significantly more staff members than provided for in their desirable ranges. Any change, moreover, in the criteria used to establish those ranges could only lead to a deterioration in the current unsatisfactory position regarding equitable geographical distribution. In spite of the statement, in paragraph 7 of the Secretary-General's report, that "recruitment of nationals of over-represented Member States is being limited to those cases in which no qualified candidate from a Member State which is unrepresented, under-represented or within its desirable range has been found through the normal recruitment process and the post must be filled without further delay in the best interest of the Organization", almost one third of the staff appointed to the Secretariat between 30 June 1978 and 30 June 1979 had been from over-represented States. He found it hard to believe that for one post in three subject to geographical distribution it was impossible to find a suitable candidate from the States making up two thirds of the membership of the Organization. His delegation urgently desired the management of the Secretariat, and in particular the Office of Personnel Services, to take steps to ensure the speedy attainment of a truly equitable geographical distribution of posts.

47. The allocation of senior posts in the Secretariat was also a cause for concern. His delegation could not accept a situation in which the number of

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nationals of developed States with market economies employed at the Assistant Secretary-General level and above exceeded by more than five times the number of nationals of socialist countries in such positions. Staff members from developed States with market economies occupied the overwhelming majority of Professional posts in a number of the departments and divisions of the Secretariat. In that connexion he drew attention to the practice of filling many important and influential posts by means of internal transfers or promotions. For some reason, applications were not invited for such posts, and news of the vacancies reached neither Member States nor even staff members working in other departments. While his delegation did not deny staff members' right to promotion, it considered that the requirements of the Charter concerning the selection of highly qualified specialists without prejudice to or violation of the principle of equitable geographical distribution should be rigidly observed in all cases.

48. The spreading practice of promoting staff members from the General Service to the Professional category skewed still further the distribution of posts in favour of already over-represented States. In particular, it was impossible not to note the discriminatory character of the "competitive examinations". Holding them in English and French would unquestionably give an advantage to staff members for whom those languages were native.

49. The Secretariat, and the Office of Personnel Services in particular, should base its staffing policy on the provisions of the Charter and the resolutions of the General Assembly concerning equitable geographical distribution. As a first step, the recruitment of staff from over-represented countries should be completely halted, beginning in 1980.

50. On the question whether Professional staff members should hold permanent or fixed-term contracts, he believed that the Fifth Committee should be guided by the higher interests of the United Nations and the tasks entrusted to the Organization under the Charter, as well as the criteria stipulated in Article 101, paragraph 3, of the Charter. From that point of view the more effective system was that of fixed-term contracts, which permitted a regular influx of fresh blood: high-calibre specialists, familiar with the political, social, economic, cultural and scientific problems in their own countries and with the modern methods of administration and management used in state bodies. The length of contracts should depend on the quality of the work performed by staff members and their attitudes to their work. After a period staff would return to their own countries enriched by the experience they had gained by serving in the United Nations. The system would allow the long-term planning of personnel recruitment, taking staff members' qualifications and the principle of equitable geographical distribution fully into account. The current situation, where two thirds of all Professional posts and almost three quarters of those subject to geographical distribution were occupied by staff members on permanent contracts, heightened the problem of equitable geographical distribution. Posts occupied by staff members on permanent contracts became the exclusive preserve of the States whose nationals those staff members were.

51. Experience showed that permanent contracts did not help to increase staff members' working qualifications. Furthermore, staff regulation 9.1 stipulated that

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(Mr. Kudryavtsev, USSR)

the Secretary-General could not dismiss a staff member holding a permanent contract if that member's work was merely satisfactory, which was clearly in contravention of the requirements of staff rule 104.13 (a). In addition, the system of permanent contracts led to the gradual creation of a cosmopolitan clique of international civil servants cut off from their peoples and the real problems which their peoples were facing. In some, it fostered a self-interested attitude towards work in international organizations, which they looked upon not as an honoured task but as a form of sinecure far removed from the noble ideals of the United Nations.

52. Experience in several other international organizations had shown that the fixed-term contract system worked well. His delegation therefore favoured the abandonment of the practice of granting further permanent contracts as of 1980 and its gradual replacement by a system of fixed-term contracts.

53. Since a large number of staff members on permanent contracts were reaching pensionable age, his delegation considered it vital to implement strictly all decisions concerning the retirement of persons reaching pensionable age, in order to use the vacancies thus created to appoint specialists on fixed-term contracts from States which were unrepresented, under-represented or represented within their desirable ranges.

AGENDA ITEM 98: PROPOSED PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 1980-1981
(continued) (A/34/6 and Add.1, A/34/7, A/34/38)

54. Mr. OKEYO (Chairman of the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination) introduced the report of the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination (CPC) on the work of its nineteenth session (A/34/38). He pointed out that the Fifth Committee had already acted on one CPC recommendation by adopting draft resolution A/C.5/34/L.10, the implementation of which, together with that of the resolutions of the Economic and Social Council on the same subject, would lead to a great improvement in the timely provision of documents to intergovernmental bodies.

55. CPC had continued to improve its working methods in carrying out the functions entrusted to it in connexion with the medium-term plan, the review of substantive aspects of the proposed programme budget, programme evaluation, and co-ordination. From mere compilations of contributions by individual organizations, its interagency reviews had become true programme analyses that might well be the forerunners of the joint planning exercises envisaged by General Assembly resolution 32/197 as one of the key results of the restructuring process. It had insisted, of course, that co-ordination should not be forgotten, and each programme evaluation report was therefore accompanied by a paper from the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination (ACC) setting out related work throughout the system.

56. At its nineteenth session CPC had considered five main topics. First, it had carried out its study of the process of programme planning in the United Nations on the basis, mainly, of two reports, one prepared by the Secretary-General (E/AC.51/97 and Add.1 and 2) and the other by Inspector Bertrand of the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) (A/34/84), whose untiring efforts and valuable and constructive contributions to the work of CPC were deeply appreciated. The discussion of

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programme planning had focused on the choice between a fixed-horizon or rolling basis, the duration of the planning period, the nature and depth of involvement of the sectoral and functional intergovernmental bodies in formulating the planning process, possible alterations in the structure of the current medium-term plan, the use of time-limited objectives, the suitability of different types of activities to medium-term planning, the setting of priorities, and the nature of the introduction to the medium-term plan. The Director-General for Development and International Economic Co-operation had been present at the discussions and had made a very thoughtful statement, which was contained in document E/AC.51/101. Paragraphs 29 to 70 of chapter II of the CPC report (A/34/38) contained a recapitulation of its discussion of those topics, and the 13 principles it had formulated to govern the programme planning process in the United Nations were set out in paragraph 71 of that chapter. With a view to the implementation of those principles it had made a number of recommendations to the Economic and Social Council and to the General Assembly, all of which were listed in paragraph 72. In addition, CPC had requested the Secretary-General to provide it with model plans for two programmes established on the basis of the 13 principles. The two programme areas to be dealt with the following year would be the commodities programme of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the transnational corporations programme, the latter having been chosen partly as a follow-up to the evaluation exercise.

57. Secondly, CPC had discussed the evaluation of the transnational corporations programme. It had generally found the evaluation report submitted by the Secretary-General (E/AC.51/98 and Add.1) to be of high quality and to contain a much more substantial and critical review of the programme than had been the case with previous evaluation reports. That might have been due, in part at least, to the institution of new procedures, notably the creation of a high-level steering committee, chaired by the Director-General for Development and International Economic Co-operation, the membership of which was given in the foot-note to paragraph 6 of chapter III of the CPC report, and the establishment of a special evaluation unit in the Secretariat. As a result of such supervision, the evaluation had shown a degree of objectivity that had lifted it above previous evaluations, which had in fact been supervised self-evaluations.

58. CPC had found the work of the Centre on Transnational Corporations in support of international negotiations on a code of conduct and other agreements, and on advisory services to Governments, to be well conducted. The evaluation had focused, first, on the division of responsibility between the Centre and the joint units set up in the regional commissions and, secondly, on the comprehensive information system on transnational corporations, particularly its computerized aspect. With respect to the former, the evaluation report had recommended the widening of the mandate of the joint units, while discussion on the latter had centred on the compatibility of the system with other information systems and on the fact that that part of the system dealing with corporate profiles was receiving a much larger share of available resources than the parts dealing with laws, regulations, contracts and agreements, although the latter were considered by CPC to be of higher priority to Member States. There had also been some discussion of the policy analysis subprogramme and the process of programme formulation and review. The CPC

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recommendations on each of those areas were set out in paragraphs 32 to 47 of chapter III of its report. In the case of the programme formulation and review process, it had recommended that compatible formats and cross-referencing should be established between the programme of work presented to the Commission on Transnational Corporations and the proposed medium-term plan and programme budget, and that relevant parts of the plan and programme aspects of the budget should be placed on the agenda of the Commission. On the policy analysis subprogramme it had recommended a shift in emphasis from academic studies towards research in support of work on international agreements, such as the code of conduct, or advisory services to Governments. In respect of the comprehensive information system, it had formulated recommendations to bring the priorities of Governments and the allocation of resources within the subprogramme into closer alignment and, with regard to the joint units, it had recommended ratification of agreements on the role of those units by the appropriate intergovernmental bodies, a ratification which should include a clear delineation of the respective roles of the Centre and the joint units. As would be seen from paragraph 47 of chapter III of the CPC report, it had been recommended to the General Assembly that the real growth in resources for the programme on transnational corporations as a whole resulting from the implementation of the recommendations concerning the mandate of the joint units should not exceed the percentage of real growth decided upon by the General Assembly for the budget as a whole for the duration of the medium-term plan for the period 1980-1983.

59. CPC had decided that the next evaluation, to be conducted at its twentieth session, would be of the manufactures programme. While focusing on UNCTAD, it would include some work on the system of continuing consultations on the equitable distribution of world industry in the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO).

60. Thirdly, CPC had considered cross-organizational programme analyses. He regretted that, for reasons beyond its control, CPC had had to postpone consideration of the cross-organizational analyses of the energy programme until the following year. In considering information systems, it had had before it reports on the subject by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) (A/33/304), by JIU (A/34/153) and by ACC (E/AC.51/102). It had concentrated its discussion on: the role and mandate of the Inter-Organization Board for Information Systems (IOB), including the identification of information needs; the co-ordination and harmonization and the costing of information systems; and the Common Register of Development Activities (CORE). There had been active participation by representatives of various sectors of the United Nations system and, at the invitation of CPC, the Executive Secretary of JIU had also participated. The conclusions and recommendations of CPC were set out in paragraphs 35 to 44 of chapter IV of its report. Great concern had been expressed at the fact that the various administrative and substantive information systems within the United Nations and the specialized agencies were generally unco-ordinated and frequently incompatible. ACC had been urged to co-ordinate the development of information systems through IOB, with a view to achieving greater compatibility, avoiding duplication and making data of common interest readily accessible. CPC had made a number of other policy recommendations concerning IOB, in addition to technical

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recommendations on terminology, cost analysis, compatibility of hardware and software, and the future of CORE/1 and CORE/2.

61. All the work he had described had been conducted at what had been a very productive first part of the nineteenth session, held in May. Unfortunately, the same could not be said about the work done at the resumed session on the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1980-1981, to which chapter VI of the CPC report referred. The Committee had deplored in the strongest terms the failure of the Secretariat to provide the necessary documentation on time, thereby forcing CPC to schedule a resumed session, which eventually had not taken place until the General Assembly was already in session. Such a serious delay in the submission of the proposed programme budget was unacceptable and had prevented CPC from effectively carrying out one of its most important functions. Furthermore, it had forced CPC to meet at a time when ACABQ had already concluded its work on the proposed programme budget without the benefit of the views of CPC. He hoped that that totally unacceptable situation would be remedied in future.

62. The delay was not the fault of a single department or office but rather the compounding of delays by substantive offices or departments in their submission of drafts to the Budget Division. He suggested that the Fifth Committee might wish to consider ways and means to ensure that submissions by substantive offices were made on time. An account of delays should be provided to the relevant intergovernmental bodies so that they would know exactly where the short-comings lay and be able to take measures to correct them.

63. As members of the Committee would note from chapter VI of the CPC report, concerning the proposed programme budget, it had only been possible to review section 6 (Department of International Economic and Social Affairs) and the transport and water programmes of the regional commissions, which were in sections 10 to 14. Only a brief discussion had been held on section 7 (Department of Technical Co-operation for Development) in view of the fact that the Secretary-General was to submit a revised programme budget under that section. CPC had pinpointed a number of cases of duplication and of elements with no apparent legislative mandate or of questionable usefulness. In the context of its examination of the process of programme planning in the United Nations, CPC would also examine in 1980 the procedures for the preparation and review of the proposed programme budget, which left much room for improvement. Indeed, some delegations had strongly criticized the existing procedures, in particular with respect to the central review of the programme aspects of submissions for the proposed programme budget. The few general recommendations that CPC had been able to make were contained in paragraph 110 of chapter VI of its report.

64. Finally, turning to the future work of CPC, he said that, as members would note from the provisional agenda for the twentieth session, set out in paragraph 110 of chapter VI of the report, CPC would have another demanding programme of work before it at its twentieth session. In addition to considering model plans for the UNCTAD programme of commodities and the transnational corporations programme, it would have before it an evaluation report on the manufactures programme, cross-organizational analyses of the energy and rural development programmes of the

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United Nations system, and a report on CORE. It would also conduct a comprehensive policy review of operational activities on the basis of a report by the Director-General for Development and International Economic Co-operation and, in the area of programme planning, it would have before it an updated version of the current medium-term plan, the first performance report on the programme aspects of the budget for the biennium 1978-1979, and reports on technical aspects of programme planning, such as the identification of outputs. One of the most challenging aspects of its work programme would be the review to be carried out pursuant to paragraph 6 of resolution 1979/64 of the Economic and Social Council on the review of policy and programme issues relating to the distribution of tasks and responsibilities between the regional commissions and other United Nations units, programmes and organs concerned.

65. Joint meetings of CPC and ACC had been held in Geneva on the process of programme planning and on information systems. It was hoped that such joint meetings would prove to be a useful vehicle for future consultations and solutions to problems faced by the United Nations system as a whole.

66. During the current session, the Fifth Committee might wish to consider how it should handle future reports of CPC, particularly during budget years. The nature of the report meant that it was sometimes difficult to decide under which agenda item it could most appropriately be considered.

67. The CHAIRMAN said that, had the report of CPC been available at the beginning of the session, the Chairman of that Committee could have introduced it at the same time as the Secretary-General and the Chairman of ACABQ had made their introductory statements on the proposed programme budget. Unfortunately, for reasons entirely beyond the control of CPC, that had been impossible, but it was hoped to remedy the situation in future. In off-budget years the Chairman of CPC would be requested to introduce the report when the medium-term plan was introduced.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.