



SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 14th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. SEKYEI (Ghana)

later: Miss MUCK (Austria)

CONTENTS

TRIBUTE TO THE MEMORY OF MR. CRISTO KOSSEV

AGENDA ITEM 110: PERSONNEL QUESTIONS (continued)

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

(b) OTHER PERSONNEL QUESTIONS: REPORTS OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (continued)

AGENDA ITEM 106: JOINT INSPECTION UNIT: REPORTS OF THE JOINT INSPECTION UNIT (continued)

Women in the Professional category and above in the United Nations system (continued)

* This record is subject to correction. Corrections should be incorporated in a copy of the record and should be sent *within one week of the date of publication* to the Chief, Official Records Editing Section, room A-3550.

Corrections will be issued shortly after the end of the session, in a separate fascicle for each Committee.

Distr. GENERAL
A/C.5/33/SR.14
16 October 1978

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

The meeting was called to order at 10.35 a.m.

TRIBUTE TO THE MEMORY OF MR. CRISTO KOSSEV

1. On the proposal of the Chairman, the members of the Committee observed a minute of silence in tribute to the memory of Mr. Cristo Kossev, representative of the Bulgarian People's Republic in the Fifth Committee.
2. Mr. KASSAI (Hungary), Mr. MINCHEV (Bulgaria) and Mr. PIRSON (Belgium) paid tribute to the memory of Mr. Cristo Kossev.

AGENDA ITEM 110: PERSONNEL QUESTIONS (continued)

- (a) COMPOSITION OF THE SECRETARIAT: REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (continued) (A/33/176, A/C.5/33/CRP.1 and 2)
- (b) OTHER PERSONNEL QUESTIONS: REPORTS OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (continued) (A/33/228; A/C.5/33/1 and 2)

AGENDA ITEM 106: JOINT INSPECTION UNIT: REPORTS OF THE JOINT INSPECTION UNIT (continued)

Women in the Professional category and above in the United Nations system (continued) (A/33/105)

3. Mr. SUNZU (Burundi) said that the matters dealt with by the Committee were no longer the exclusive concern of the great Powers; every Member of the Organization must strive to play its role in accordance with the Charter. His delegation wished to encourage the Secretariat to pay particular attention to the important matter of personnel policy, to implement Article 101 of the Charter and also to take account of the criteria laid down in General Assembly resolution 32/17 on the composition of the Secretariat. His delegation deplored the attitude of certain Member States whose statements had seemed to question the universality of the Organization; that universality must, in respect of recruitment policy, take the form of equitable geographical distribution. He expressed the hope that the representation of Africa in the staff of the Secretariat would be reviewed as soon as possible; the African countries should be widely represented both in the Secretariat and in the United Nations system as a whole.
4. Mr. PIRSON (Belgium) said that the report in document A/33/105, which he noted referred only to staff in the Professional category and above, showed that the organizations were striving to improve the employment prospects of women but that their efforts were being somewhat hindered by the insufficient number of women candidates and the implementation of the principle of equitable geographical distribution. Only by establishing realistic quantitative objectives and time-limits could progress be made. The adoption each year by the General Assembly of resolutions which were generous in inspiration but too vague or too ambitious could ultimately produce only bitterness and disappointment. However, there could be no question of lowering recruitment standards, since the candidates' qualifications were the principal criterion for recruitment. He thought also that it would be very unwise to exempt women from the implementation of the principle

/...

(Mr. Pirson, Belgium)

of equitable geographical distribution: harmony could not be achieved by the adoption of recruitment regulations that discriminated between the sexes.

5. He asked whether the Committee could, in fact, be sure that all possible measures were being taken by the United Nations bodies to find women candidates with the necessary qualifications and whether the persons responsible for recruitment of Professional staff, who were often men, were sufficiently anxious to give qualified women candidates opportunities equal to those offered to men. He suggested that the Committee should translate into a realistic, feasible and practical programme the recommendations made in the report on women in the Professional category and above in the United Nations system (A/33/105), with the exception of recommendation 8, which was unacceptable because it sought to replace equitable geographical distribution by over-all regional balances. He expressed his delegation's willingness to participate in a joint effort to draft a resolution on the question.

6. The CHAIRMAN drew the Committee's attention to the fact that chapter V of the report of the Secretary-General on the composition of the Secretariat (A/33/176) devoted only five paragraphs to the subject of the Panel to investigate allegations of discriminatory treatment. He said that the achievements of the Panel should have been described in the report and that, with regard to paragraph 21, the report should have stated in what manner the 59 cases had been resolved, what had been done in respect of the remaining cases and the activities in which the Panel had been engaged since 30 June.

7. Mr. BAUCHARD (France) said that the Secretariat should be congratulated on having taken the first steps towards implementation of the reforms proposed in 1974. His delegation was very much in favour of personnel policy reforms, partly in the interests of economy but also for the purpose of improving the quality and efficiency of the international civil service, which could only strengthen the Organization's authority.

8. Where the structure of the Secretariat was concerned, much remained to be done, particularly with regard to General Service posts in New York and Geneva. He hoped that the recommendations made in chapter I.4 of the second report on the implementation of the personnel policy reforms approved by the General Assembly in 1974 (A/33/228) would be examined in depth and that the Secretariat would make fully known its views on those recommendations. The Committee should at the present session be able to pronounce on a precise list of measures and a time-table for their implementation.

9. With regard to the requirements for an adequate recruitment policy, he said that a roster of candidates should be employed; such a roster should be kept up to date with full details of candidates' qualifications, should cover a wide geographical range to provide greater opportunities for candidates from under-represented countries and should be geared to the more frequent recruitment of women.

10. Recruitment should, of course, be based on merit. Present methods of selection and recruitment were not sufficiently rigorous; his delegation considered that competitive examinations constituted the most effective method of ensuring

/...

(Mr. Bauchard, France)

the selection of high-quality recruits. He congratulated the Secretariat on having organized competitive examinations in various Member States and suggested that the system should be extended to include other regions, in particular Africa. For the benefit of under-represented countries, more posts should be set aside or competitive examinations should be organized more frequently.

11. Candidates should be appointed to specific posts. The existence of vacant posts was therefore a prerequisite, and in that respect an annual review of possible vacancies resulting from transfers or retirements should be carried out.

12. Promotion policy should likewise be based on merit and on a better utilization of staff. Passage from the General Service to the Professional category should take place by means of a competitive examination, in accordance with the recommendations made by JIU in 1971 and adopted by the General Assembly. In that regard, he noted with concern that a few days previously the Secretariat had drawn up a register of 67 persons for promotion to the P-2 level. Although a certain degree of flexibility was required for internal promotion, the latter should nevertheless be subject to certain objective conditions, particularly in respect of university qualifications, and should not exceed a certain proportion, for example one out of every five posts during the following year at the levels of P-1 and P-2.

13. Mobility should be considered a normal requirement for staff in the Professional category and would contribute to a better understanding of the issues with which an international civil servant was concerned. The proposals made on that matter by Inspector Bertrand should be studied closely, although the conditions he suggested were perhaps too strict and certain exceptions would have to be made, particularly in the case of technical posts.

14. He hoped that measures would be taken to deal with outstanding problems and agreed with the proposal made by the representative of Belgium in that respect. If a working group was set up, it would be possible to draw up a list of measures, taking particular account of the JIU report, to lay down a time-table for the implementation of such measures and to establish in what manner the personnel policy reforms were to be followed up.

15. Mrs. SISON (Philippines) said that the comprehensive data in document A/33/176 showed that the Secretary-General was continuing his efforts to comply with the directives of General Assembly resolutions regarding guidelines for the recruitment of staff in accordance with Article 101 of the Charter. Her delegation agreed with the view that the primary concern was the compatibility of the paramount consideration in the employment of staff - the necessity of securing the highest standards of efficiency, competence and integrity - with the requirement of paying due regard to recruiting staff on as wide a geographical basis as possible. Of particular importance were the geographical distribution at the senior level and the representation of nationals of developing countries and women at that level.

(Mrs. Sison, Philippines)

16. The long-term recruitment plan endorsed by the General Assembly which was designed to improve the geographical balance of the Secretariat and to improve quality and efficiency in the recruitment operation seemed to be in difficulty, as explained by the Secretary-General in paragraph 12 of document A/C.5/33/2. However, her delegation trusted that the simplified procedures and the flexibility of the methods adopted, together with the sound judgement and discretion of the Secretary-General in meeting the recruitment requirements, would benefit the Secretariat in the long run. Her delegation had continually advocated the establishment of a strong career service that would make the international civil service respond to the demands for an efficient, smooth-running administrative machinery.

17. While her delegation did not object to the recruitment of qualified young personnel, it agreed with the Secretary-General that in making a choice between two candidates, the principle of merit should be taken into account. The Secretary-General should, however, be aware that if candidates were recruited at an early age, they might be compelled to retire early, since the maximum length of contributory service under pension regulations was 32 years.

18. Insufficient progress had been made in respect of the recruitment of qualified women in the Secretariat pursuant to General Assembly resolutions 3352 (XXIX) and 3416 (XXX). Many women had responded to the challenge of the international civil service and involved themselves in the issues confronting the United Nations. In the Philippines and elsewhere, women continued to play a constructive role in development, and it was hoped that the Secretary-General would continue to send missions in search of qualified women candidates, especially at the senior level, to serve the United Nations. Such missions should contact women's organizations and institutions, which in some countries had a roster of qualified candidates for national and international employment. National Governments should broaden their roles in the publicity aspect of the campaign.

19. Her delegation was pleased to note that by 31 December 1978 the reforms approved by the General Assembly in 1974 would be substantially in effect, with the exception of the restructuring of the General Service category at Headquarters and the institution of competitive examinations for movement from the General Service to the Professional category, the first of which would take place early in 1979. While endorsing the institution of such examinations, her delegation felt that certain standards should govern the qualifications of personnel taking them. Pending the restructuring of the General Service category, the practice of promoting General Service staff to Professional posts on account of long service should be suspended. Any vacancies at the P-1 or P-2 levels would be filled by successful candidates, and if there were not enough vacancies, the successful candidates should be placed on a roster and appointed to posts as vacancies occurred. The procedure of holding examinations in various parts of the world, particularly in under-represented regions, was commendable and should be continued.

/...

(Mrs. Sison, Philippines)

20. She would like further clarification from the Assistant Secretary-General for Personnel Services on the reasons why the use of occupational groups in the management of the Secretariat would not result in financial economies in the immediate future (cf. A/C.5/33/SR.8, para. 50), and would like to know whether the same view would still hold even after the International Civil Service Commission had finished the grouping of occupations to be used as a basis for the system.

21. Her delegation supported the rotation of Professional staff between duty stations under a systematic plan which would give personnel an opportunity to serve in places where their services would be well utilized. The Secretary-General should not allow personnel to remain permanently in one particular post of their choice. Service away from Headquarters brought staff into contact with peoples from different parts of the world in ways consistent with the international character of their work. The rotation of staff should form part of the career development programme of the Secretariat.

22. Her delegation endorsed the principal recommendations of JIU contained in document A/33/228, particularly recommendations 1, 2 and 4. The Secretary-General should be given the time and resources to implement those recommendations as appropriate, so that progress could be appraised at each session of the General Assembly until all the reforms had been instituted.

23. Her delegation shared the view of the Japanese delegation that the authority of the Office of Personnel Services to institute reforms in the Secretariat should be strengthened. It also agreed with the Australian delegation that the region referred to in the documents as "Asia and the Far East" should be referred to as "Asia and the Pacific".

24. Mr. HAXTHAUSEN (Denmark), speaking on behalf of the delegations of Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden and his own country, said that the Nordic countries were deeply committed to overcoming all discrimination against women and to achieving equal rights, opportunities and responsibilities for men and women in the political, social, economic and cultural fields. Only if there were equal opportunities at all levels would both men and women benefit fully from the over-all development effort.

25. It could be argued that the United Nations mirrored the policies pursued in member countries; certainly it was true that employment opportunities for women in responsible positions at the national level had been slow in coming. In the Nordic countries' view, however, the United Nations had a special responsibility not only to implement the relevant decisions of the General Assembly, but also to set an example to member countries in demonstrating that a greater proportion of the Professional posts in the Secretariat could be filled by women if a concerted effort was made. But the findings of JIU showed clearly that equality was far from being reached: not only was the percentage of women in the Organization low, but women were mostly employed at the lower levels.

26. The promotion of staff from the General Service to the Professional category was to be recommended, especially since it generated job satisfaction and constituted a challenge for those in the higher General Service grades. But such

(Mr. Haxthausen, Denmark)

a line of action necessitated special attention being given to the promotion of women. It was unsatisfactory that most of the personnel promoted in the past from the General Service category had been men, despite the high proportion of women among General Service staff.

27. Promotion for women from the General Service category did not remedy the problem of imbalance at the higher levels of the Professional category. Vigorous action was needed to recruit qualified women candidates with suitable training and experience, and instructions must be given to recruitment officers to see to it that an equitable balance between men and women was achieved in the Secretariat.

28. The Nordic delegations did not want to see special rules and regulations introduced for the employment of women in the United Nations system. All rules and regulations must apply equally to men and women, but they had also to be implemented equally.

29. Because of the risk of nepotism, the employment of husband and wife in the same organization was generally banned. That practice excluded a number of highly qualified women and men from making a contribution to the work of the United Nations. In the view of the Nordic delegations, the general rule should be that husband and wife could be employed in the same organization if both were qualified and neither worked for the other.

30. With regard to the targets established in resolution 3416 (XXX), he noted that the problem was not setting new targets, but implementing those already adopted. The Nordic delegations agreed that one way of achieving the over-all target would be for organizations and agencies to work out subtargets for different departments.

31. The rules regarding such matters as maternity leave, part-time work and flexible working hours had been improved, but further improvement was feasible and strongly needed. The possibilities for applying the rules equally for both men and women should be seriously considered by the United Nations, as it would increase the opportunities for both men and women to work and at the same time fulfil their family responsibilities.

32. Women should be equitably represented on all personnel advisory and administrative boards, and each organization should designate a person or panel responsible for the question of equality between men and women. Furthermore, it would be a step forward if all member countries, when submitting candidates for positions in the Secretariat, included a much higher proportion of women candidates than was currently the case. If there were no women candidates amongst those submitted, the Secretariat should draw attention to the need to submit women candidates. The Secretariat should also make efforts to achieve an equitable distribution of men and women at all levels of the Organization.

33. The Nordic delegations generally agreed with the recommendations made in document A/33/105, and believed that it was important for the subject-matter to be kept under constant review throughout the United Nations system. They particularly endorsed the recommendations concerning an annual review of the matter by the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination. The Secretary-General, in his

/...

(Mr. Haxthausen, Denmark)

capacity as Chairman of ACC, should make a comprehensive report on the progress achieved and the problems encountered at every session of the General Assembly.

34. Mr. SASSI (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) said that the reports before the Committee gave a far clearer picture of the distribution of Secretariat staff than previous reports had done. He regretted, however, that the number of nationals of his country serving in the Secretariat was still below the desirable range. His delegation appreciated the efforts made by the Office of Personnel Services to recruit staff from under-represented and unrepresented countries; unfortunately, the results of the recruitment missions had not been altogether successful.

35. The system by which the appointment of candidates found suitable by the Office of Personnel Services was subject to the approval of the departmental head concerned should be changed. The authority of the Office of Personnel Services must be strengthened. While departmental heads had the right to express their views on appointments to senior and middle-level posts, the Office should have the absolute right to make appointments to P-1 and P-2 posts, especially where the candidates were women or young people from unrepresented and under-represented countries. It should, at the same time ensure that only suitably qualified candidates were referred to departmental heads. The number of staff from the third world serving at senior levels must be increased.

36. His delegation approved of organizing competitive examinations to fill places made vacant by retirements over the coming few years, as mentioned in document A/C.5/33/2, paragraph 19, but it was not happy that such an examination was being organized in a country which was already vastly over-represented within the Secretariat. Examinations should rather be held to select new staff members from countries having too few nationals working at the United Nations.

37. His delegation had been surprised to realize that it was no longer informed of existing or forthcoming vacancies in the Secretariat at the D-2 level and above. Vacancies in all posts from the P-1 to the D-2 level should be officially announced, so that all countries, especially those of the third world, could submit the names of candidates. Senior posts in the Secretariat were currently reserved for a small number of countries, and entire regions were poorly represented. While that situation persisted there could hardly be a balance at the policy-making level of the Organization.

38. He requested that the special document concerning Secretariat appointments which was issued from time to time should indicate the name and nationality of the persons concerned, as well as their grade and post; and he supported the suggestion of establishing career development committees for occupational groups in the Professional category.

39. His delegation was in agreement with the views expressed by the Assistant Secretary-General for Personnel Services concerning advisory machinery regarding personnel policies, and it supported all measures taken to combat discrimination within the Secretariat.

/...

40. Mr. HASSAN (Democratic Yemen) agreed with those speakers who had expressed dissatisfaction with the slow pace at which the principle of equitable geographical distribution was being implemented. The reports before the Committee seemed to suggest that the main obstacle to the recruitment of personnel from under-represented and unrepresented countries was the lack of appropriately skilled candidates from those countries. But expertise was not confined to a few countries; suitable candidates could be found in the under-represented countries if the effort was made to find them. His delegation nevertheless appreciated the efforts made by the Office of Personnel Services, including the dispatch of a recruitment mission to his country.

41. The principle of equitable geographical distribution should be so implemented as to ensure that the developing countries were represented at the senior levels of the Secretariat. Young people and women should also be recruited, having due regard to that principle, and the recruitment of nationals of countries which were already over-represented in the Secretariat should cease.

42. Mr. STOLLERY (Canada) said that the composition of the Secretariat and recruitment practices were highly sensitive issues and that Member States were naturally inclined to emphasize the criteria which would favour recruitment of their own nationals. Progress had been made towards achieving a more equitable geographical distribution in the Secretariat, although some Members were still under-represented. His delegation sympathized with the desire of all Member States, particularly developing countries, for equitable representation. If the Secretariat was to remain sound and viable, however, the highest standards of efficiency, competence and integrity must continue to be the paramount consideration in the appointment of staff. In that connexion, serious consideration should be given to the Secretary-General's appeal to Member States to exercise restraint in applying pressure on behalf of their nationals, lest they undermine the building of an effective and balanced Secretariat. In the next few years, a large number of staff who had served in the Secretariat since its creation were due to retire, and that would provide an opportunity to improve distribution in terms of nationality, sex and age.

43. His delegation agreed on the whole with the recommendations made by JIU in its report on women in the Professional category and above in the United Nations system (A/33/105). The establishment of a reporting system was essential if progress in that area was to be properly monitored. Furthermore, recruitment missions should give proper focus to that issue and include female participants. His delegation could agree to recommendation 5 relating to targets, provided they were taken to be merely indicative and that normal recruitment standards were maintained. With regard to recommendation 8, it was important to maintain the principle of geographical distribution. While difficulties would doubtless still be encountered in bringing more women into the Secretariat at suitable levels, the implementation of the practical measures suggested in the report of JIU should help to correct the existing imbalances between men and women in the Secretariat.

(Mr. Stollery, Canada)

44. Turning to the Secretary-General's report on the implementation of personnel policy reforms (A/C.5/33/2), he noted that the restructuring of the General Service category in New York would not be possible before the classification of posts in that category was completed. He understood that a special report on classification had been prepared and asked when the Committee might expect to receive it. Obviously, if the classification exercise was to succeed, the General Assembly would have to provide the Secretary-General with clear guidance. The lack of progress on the post classification study was a matter for serious concern, especially in view of the situation at Geneva, where the overclassification of certain posts had created highly embarrassing and costly problems.

45. His delegation noted with satisfaction the progress made in developing a roster of candidates and trusted that better use of the roster would lead to improved recruitment. The key to improved recruitment, however, was to strengthen the authority of the Office of Personnel Services vis-à-vis other departments.

46. With regard to staff mobility, he agreed with the Assistant Secretary-General for Personnel Services that assignments to various activities or offices should be based primarily on the interests of the Organization at any given time and not on rules making mobility a requirement for promotion.

47. There was merit in the proposal to use competitive selection methods for the recruitment of young Professional staff to grades P-1 and P-2, particularly as a means for obtaining good candidates from under-represented and unrepresented countries. The use of such methods on a broader scale, however, should take into account increases in staffing requirements and the financial resources available. In addition, there were practical difficulties to which JIU had drawn attention that had to be solved before such methods could be further applied.

48. Mr. MONTHE (United Republic of Cameroon) said that the effectiveness and credibility of the United Nations depended not only on the will of its Member States to implement its decisions but also on the quality of its staff. The reforms advocated in recent years by the General Assembly, whether they related to the restructuring of the Secretariat or to new personnel policies, stemmed from a recognition of that fact. In that connexion, the head of his delegation, speaking in the general debate at the current session, had commended the Secretary-General for his quick response to the General Assembly's call for a reorganization of the Secretariat so as to enhance the effectiveness of its development activities and increase its impact in the field of economic co-operation.

49. His delegation agreed with recommendation No. 1 of the JIU report on the implementation of the personnel policy reforms approved by the General Assembly in 1974 (A/33/228). It endorsed recommendation No. 2 relating to the use of competitive examinations for the passage of General Service staff members to the Professional category but believed that the examinations should be administered in

(Mr. Monthe, Cameroon)

such a way as to ensure the highest standards of competence, appropriate balance with respect to age and sex, and equitable geographical distribution. His delegation also supported the measures put forth in recommendation No. 3 regarding the use of a roster of candidates, but felt that reconnaissance missions and publicity to increase the number of candidates in the roster should be aimed not only at under-represented countries, women and young people, as JIU was suggesting, but also at countries which were unrepresented or would soon become unrepresented or under-represented as a result of the separation from service of their nationals. Timely action should be taken not only to redress but also to forestall imbalances in the Secretariat.

50. While the establishment of a formal link between rotation between duty stations and promotion possibilities could serve to encourage staff members to broaden their professional experiences and gain a better understanding of the diverse problems with which they had to deal, the measures suggested in recommendation No. 4 must be applied with flexibility, particularly in the case of staff members whose assignment to other duty stations would, in the opinion of the Secretary-General, be detrimental to the interests of the Organization.

51. Some progress had been made in the advancement of both male and female staff members from developing countries to senior levels in the Secretariat, as could be seen from the tables presented in document A/33/176; yet the results so far were not entirely satisfactory. His delegation noted with interest the Secretary-General's intention to increase the number of nationals from developing countries and the number of women and to make geographical distribution more equitable when a large number of posts became vacant in the near future as a result of retirements.

52. At a time when young people were playing an increasing role in society, particularly in the developing countries, and the United Nations was tackling ever more complex and diverse problems, coupling the dynamism of qualified young people with the experience of their elders in the Secretariat could only increase the effectiveness of the Organization. His delegation therefore agreed in general with recommendation No. 5 of document A/33/228, regarding the use of competitive selection methods for young Professional staff. However, recruitment examinations should be arranged in co-operation with the Governments of unrepresented or under-represented countries and countries which would soon enter those categories as a result of the separation from service of their nationals. The co-operation of regional organizations might also be sought. Posts should be set aside in advance, as recommended by JIU, to ensure that candidates recruited would be appointed without delay. In making appointments, regard should be had to a proper balance between the sexes and equitable geographical distribution.

53. Ms. CAPPELLO BANDINI (Italy) said that her delegation had consistently advocated improving the lot of women in the United Nations and had been instrumental in securing the adoption of several General Assembly resolutions calling for a more equitable balance in the distribution of posts between men and women and the employment of women in posts of higher responsibility. Her delegation agreed with recommendation 1 made by JIU in its report on women in the

/...

(Ms. Cappello Bandini, Italy)

Professional category and above (A/33/105) that ACC should make an annual review of the status of women in Professional positions in the organizations of the system and that, when necessary, CCAQ should monitor the progress made and suggest measures for improvement. Recommendation 2 should be easy to implement, as all organizations kept up-to-date lists of their staff which included the statistical data called for by JIU. However, the organizations should also be asked to publish such lists and data on a yearly basis, as was already being done by the United Nations. Recommendation 3 followed from recommendation 1 in that the executive heads of the agencies participated as members of ACC in the annual review of the status of women and would no doubt issue follow-up instructions. The important point was that JIU had recommended that departmental heads and directors should be involved in the process.

54. Her delegation was in favour of the establishment of a panel or person to perform an ombudsman function provided that it did not entail great expenditure and a further enlargement of the bureaucratic structure (recommendation 4). The setting of targets for 1980 and 1985 might also be useful provided that they were not so rigid as to result in a relaxation of recruitment standards (recommendation 5).

55. While agreeing with the four measures described in recommendation 6, her delegation felt that additional funds were not necessary to implement them since the United Nations information centres were adequately equipped to disseminate information about vacancies in the Secretariat. It fully endorsed recommendation 7.

56. Recommendation 8 was totally unacceptable; in every region there were some countries with large numbers of career-oriented women and others in which women tended to give higher priority to family responsibilities; the proposal to introduce flexibility in relation to geographical distribution would favour the countries in the former category and discriminate against those in the latter category. The suggestion that the appointment of women should be considered without regard to geographical distribution so long as over-all regional balances were maintained would introduce discrimination against countries which were under-represented and favour others which were over-represented.

57. Her delegation was in favour of recommendation 9 and would, moreover, require that the grounds for rejecting a qualified woman candidate should be given even when the rejection took the form of an unexplained delay. With regard to recommendation 10, it agreed that the appointment and the advancement of women should be based on merit, and that standards should not be lowered merely to improve the statistics. It endorsed recommendations 11, 12, 13 and 14 and 15. As for recommendation 16, the elimination of discriminatory provisions from the existing staff rules seemed to be well under way and should, as JIU recommended, be pursued.

58. Mr. HERNANDEZ (Cuba) noted with satisfaction that the Secretary-General was concerned not only to ensure that the staff of the United Nations met high standards of efficiency, competence and integrity but also to secure equitable geographical distribution and the full participation of women in the Secretariat. The universal nature of the Organization must be reflected in the

(Mr. Hernandez, Cuba)

composition of its staff, who must be drawn from among the world's diverse cultures. The developing countries, which had suffered the adverse effects of the brain drain, knew full well that no country or group of countries had a monopoly on knowledge or competence. There was no country, no matter how small, which did not have a contribution to make towards improving the efficiency of the United Nations.

59. He drew attention to table H.2 in document A/33/176 which illustrated the inadequate representation of Asia and the Far East, and Eastern Europe in senior posts subject to geographical distribution. It could be seen from table E in that same document that the percentage of unrepresented or under-represented States in Africa was 34 per cent, in Eastern Europe 45 per cent and in the Middle East 41 per cent.

60. Despite the progress which had been made in eliminating discrimination against women bias still persisted and the composition of the Secretariat was far from reflecting the proportion of women to the total population.

61. His delegation endorsed most of the recommendations made by JIU in its report on the implementation of personnel policy reforms (A/33/228) of the JIU. Its recommendations should be incorporated in a plan of action to be implemented without delay. In particular, he stressed the value of the proper use of a roster of candidates, the use of competitive examinations for junior Professional posts, the recruitment of women from unrepresented countries for Professional posts, and the establishment of examinations for the passage of General Services staff to the Professional category. With regard to the latter measure, steps should be taken to ensure that the average age of the staff would not be increased or that existing imbalances or over-representation would not be further accentuated. The practice of making appointments to permanent posts, particularly in the case of nationals from over-represented countries, should be reduced or stopped.

62. Mr. BEDRANE (Algeria) said that the interest shown by delegations in the question of the composition of the Secretariat was a reflection of the complexity of the issues involved and the large share of the budget which was allocated to personnel costs.

63. His delegation concurred in the criticism levelled by JIU at personnel management throughout the United Nations system and in particular the situation that management had produced in the General Service category in the United Nations Office at Geneva. Despite numerous attempts to improve personnel management over the years, the Secretariat had failed to evolve a coherent personnel policy. On the other hand, his delegation was understanding of the difficult task of the Secretariat in shaping a personnel policy which would measure up to the ideals of the Charter. In that connexion, he urged the Secretariat to endeavour to implement more rapidly and effectively the guidelines laid down by the General Assembly, particularly with regard to equitable geographical distribution, the number of women in senior posts, improved age distribution in the Secretariat and greater access for nationals of developing countries to senior-level posts.

/...

(Mr. Bedrane, Algeria)

64. It was not always easy to strike a balance between the strict application of the principle of geographical distribution in the promotion of staff and the desire expressed by the Secretariat to improve the quality of its staff. On the other hand, it was inconceivable that it had not yet been possible to work out a definition of occupational groups or introduce a uniform structure. The time had come to rectify the situation and put an end to over-classification and excessively rapid promotions.

65. His delegation endorsed the comments of JIU on the structure of the Secretariat and recruitment policies. In allocating posts to Member States, the concept of the equality of all Member States, as laid down in the Charter, should take precedence over the complex system which based a country's desirable range on its assessed contribution. By taking into account a country's assessed contribution and, hence, its national income, the current system penalized developing countries while favouring the developed countries, many of which were responsible for the phenomenon of under-development.

66. Although it endorsed the principle that women should be more equitably represented at the senior level of the Secretariat, his delegation had some reservations regarding strict application of that principle. Women in positions of responsibility were in the minority in the developing countries, which might understandably prefer not to lose their services. His delegation feared that the principle of an equitable proportion of women in the Secretariat might give some over-represented countries a pretext to monopolize posts which should have gone to under-represented countries. The Secretariat should seek to ensure respect for an equally sacred principle, by giving priority to the recruitment of candidates from unrepresented or under-represented countries.

67. He agreed with the Chairman of JIU on the need for greater mobility of staff, which was an excellent way for them to acquire first-hand experience of world problems. Turning to document A/32/327, he said that the introduction of a common roster for General Service posts, in accordance with recommendation 5, was the only way to make recruitment procedures more effective and save time and money. With respect to recommendation 6, his delegation would support the creation of a common recruitment service. The flexible working-hour system referred to in recommendation 11 would be the best way to ensure effective control of working hours and should be introduced in the various United Nations organizations.

68. Mrs. NAVCHA (Mongolia) said that the principle of equitable geographical distribution and high competence lay at the heart of United Nations staffing policy, in accordance with the requirements of the Charter. Every year, the Committee was unanimous in calling for the recruitment of candidates from unrepresented and under-represented countries, a position which her delegation had always supported.

69. It had been correctly stated that some progress had been made in that regard

/...

(Mrs. Navcha, Mongolia)

in recent years. Some regions and States, however, including Mongolia, were still under-represented in the Secretariat. The recent practice of sending recruitment missions to member countries and drawing up plans for the recruitment of staff members from unrepresented and under-represented countries must play a significant role in eliminating that failing.

70. Her delegation fully shared the view that the continuing recruitment of staff members from over-represented countries did not help to secure equitable geographical distribution. It was impossible to justify the recruitment by the Secretariat over the reporting period of 96 nationals from over-represented countries, 119 from already adequately represented countries and only 39 from under-represented countries.

71. The predominance of permanent contracts and particularly the issue of such contracts to citizens of over-represented countries was irregular, and violated the principle of equitable distribution. It hindered the process of improving the quality of the staff and introducing young, dynamic staff members into the Secretariat, as well as the training of highly qualified staff members to take over from the older generation. Steps must be taken to increase the number of staff working on fixed-term contracts.

72. Her delegation shared the opinion expressed by other delegations concerning the extension of contracts for staff reaching pensionable age: the provisions of staff regulation 9.5 must be observed.

73. It was imperative to observe the principle of equitable geographical distribution at all levels of the Secretariat, particularly senior levels. The abnormal situation regarding the recruitment of women must also be corrected. It was particularly important for the Office of Personnel Services to make an effort to recruit women to senior posts in accordance with the principle of equitable geographical distribution and the established quotas. Her delegation expected that the necessary measures would be taken to encourage the recruitment of women and ensure their equality.

74. Mr. PICO DE COAÑA (Spain) said that he supported recommendation No. 1 of document A/33/228; regulations concerning occupations and occupational groups should be established and selection criteria defined for the various professions. The resulting list should not cover more than 15 to 20 groups and would provide a solid basis for the classification of posts.

75. His delegation was pleased to note that competitive examinations for movement from the General Service to the Professional category would be introduced in 1979 (A/33/228, chap. II.3), since it was important always to bear in mind staff regulation 4.4. Competitive examinations for junior Professional staff could help to increase the proportion of such staff, but should perhaps be held only for nationals of under-represented countries in the interests of equitable geographical distribution.

/...

(Mr. Pico de Coaña, Spain)

76. His delegation welcomed recommendation No. 3, on the use of the candidates' roster and, with regard to recommendation No. 4, felt that flexibility should be used in rotating staff between duty stations. It was also important not to lose sight of General Assembly resolution 32/197, especially section VIII of the annex.

77. The question of the composition of the Secretariat and the problem of unrepresented or under-represented countries continued to concern delegations. The Chairman of the Joint Inspection Unit had stated that almost all the staff promoted from the General Service to the Professional category were nationals of over-represented countries (A/C.5/33/SR.8, para. 67), and the Assistant Secretary-General for Personnel Services had mentioned the Secretary-General's concern about States which were still represented below the desirable range (A/C.5/33/SR.8, para. 40). Spain, one of the 20 Member States which were under-represented as at 30 June 1978, was under-represented at the senior level of the Secretariat.

78. His delegation wished to reiterate that table 9 (Staff in posts subject to geographical distribution by region, nationality and level) of document A/33/176 would be more useful if it also included the amounts contributed by Member States to the regular budget. The breakdown in table 9 should not be according to region, since a Member State might be under-represented while belonging to an over-represented region.

79. Between 30 June 1977 and 30 June 1978 the Secretariat had appointed nationals from 29 Member States which were above their desirable range. Four more Member States became over-represented and only two returned within the desirable range. Fifty-six States were over-represented. His delegation wished to know how, in that situation, the Secretariat could have appointed 96 nationals from over-represented countries, 119 from adequately represented countries and only 36 from under-represented countries. Between 1 January 1977 and 30 September 1978, his Government had submitted 52 job applications and 62 applications on behalf of technical assistance staff, with negative results.

80. His delegation supported the sending of recruitment missions to developing, under-represented and unrepresented countries. It also supported the work of the Panel to investigate allegations of discriminatory treatment and trusted that all the cases would be settled fairly.

81. The objectives set by the General Assembly in its resolutions on the employment of women in the Secretariat were still far from being attained. The 16 recommendations of JIU contained in document A/33/105 were very valuable and deserved in-depth consideration. The Secretariat should make every effort to recruit women from under-represented countries, without however disregarding the principle of equitable geographical distribution.

82. His delegation would like to know why in annex I "A" of document A/33/105 no figures were available for FAO for 1974 and why in annex III the IAEA figures represented only resignations.

83. Mr. ARIFF (Malaysia) said that the documents prepared in connexion with the item reflected the high standard of efficiency and integrity of the Secretariat. His delegation was generally satisfied with the performance of the Secretariat, but recognized there was always room for further improvement, which could be achieved through closer co-operation between the Secretariat and Member States.

84. He reiterated his Government's concern that the concurrence of Member States, and of Malaysia in particular, was not sought by the Secretariat when it was appointing staff to fill posts within national quotas. His Government therefore wished to reaffirm its request that the Secretariat should seek its agreement beforehand. In so doing, it was not its intention to place any kind of obstacles in the way of staff recruitment nor to lower standards. It sincerely felt that co-operation between Member States and the Secretariat was not only helpful, but also necessary in order to secure male and female candidates with the highest standards of efficiency, competence and integrity, as required by Article 101 of the Charter.

85. He agreed with the representative of Australia that the region still sometimes referred to in the documents as "Asia and the Far East" should be referred to as "Asia and the Pacific", which would be a more precise and objective designation.

86. Mr. EL AYADHI (Tunisia) said that since its independence, Tunisia had given priority to the education and advancement of women and to guaranteeing them full civil rights and equal protection under the law. The emergence of highly qualified women in an already tight job market had created a dilemma as to whether, in a developing country with a serious unemployment problem, it was appropriate to recruit women to posts which could be occupied by male bread-winners. Tunisian women continued to be found in growing numbers in all walks of life, but that dilemma reflected the crux of the problem for the Secretariat in a situation in which there was a universal prejudice against the idea of giving responsibility to women and in which the man was traditionally considered to be the bread-winner. His delegation therefore commended the Secretariat on its efforts to promote access by women to senior posts and felt that the situation would continue to improve. It also welcomed the JIU report (A/33/105), in particular paragraph 6 of the section entitled "Recommendations".

87. Delegations should view the situation with optimism and patience. It was important to decide whether an attempt was being made to eliminate discrimination towards women in respect of appointments to senior posts or to achieve an equitable distribution of such posts between the two sexes. Since no country had been able to achieve such a distribution at the national level, it would be unreasonable to ask the Secretary-General to do so in the Secretariat.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.