

United Nations

# GENERAL ASSEMBLY

THIRTY-THIRD SESSION

Official Records \*



FIFTH COMMITTEE  
16th meeting  
held on  
Monday, 16 October 1978  
at 3 p.m.  
New York

## SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 16th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. SEKYI (Ghana)

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

### CONTENTS

#### AGENDA ITEM 100: PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 1978-1979 (continued)

Revised estimates resulting from decisions of the Economic and Social Council at its first and second regular sessions, 1978 (continued)

Establishment of an information services unit in the Department of International Economic and Social Affairs (continued)

#### 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.16  
19 October 1978

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 100: PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 1978-1979 (continued)

Revised estimates resulting from decisions of the Economic and Social Council at its first and second regular sessions, 1978 (continued) (A/33/7/Add.3, A/C.5/33/9 and Corr.1)

1. Mr. DEBATIN (Assistant Secretary-General, Controller), replying to questions that had been raised by the representative of New Zealand (A/C.5/33/SR.13, paras. 48-53), gave assurances that the Secretary-General was very mindful of the importance of implementing resolution 1978/67 of the Economic and Social Council, and resolution 188 (XXXIV) of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP). However, there were several points which had to be taken into consideration, notably the difficult situation which arose when intergovernmental bodies responsible for programme matters adopted recommendations asking for more resources for programme implementation. Such a procedure all too easily weakened recognition of the Secretary-General's authority and obligation to decide on budgetary proposals to be submitted to the Fifth Committee and, through it, to the plenary Assembly for budgetary approval. The difficult task of striking a reasonable balance between programme development and budgetary constraint made it imperative that the Secretary-General's responsibility for judging budgetary requirements should remain unimpaired. In addition, under resolution 31/93 the General Assembly had been designated as the only body competent to determine whether new activities reflected a pressing need of an unforeseeable nature.
2. Nevertheless, in appreciation of the concern expressed by the representative of New Zealand, he wished to state that the Administrative Management Service (AMS) study requested by the Executive Secretary of ESCAP would be conducted the following month. Its terms of reference would be to survey the organizational structure of the ESCAP secretariat, giving due consideration to the decisions of the General Assembly at its thirty-second session concerning the restructuring of the economic and social sectors of the United Nations, and to ESCAP's specific requirements, and to assess its workload and related staffing requirements to ascertain whether they could be met from existing resources. In the light of the impending AMS review the Secretary-General had not wished to prejudge the outcome by requesting an additional post at the current stage.
3. Mr. THWAITES (Australia) expressed appreciation to the Controller for his explanations but said that his delegation shared the aims and concerns of its Pacific neighbours on the matter. It attached great importance to the proposal to appoint a liaison officer as a means of enhancing the impact of ESCAP's activities in the region. It was urgent to implement that proposal within the next 12 months; it should not be delayed for lack of funds. Furthermore, sufficient funds had to be provided to enable the liaison officer to fulfil the obligations of his position without inhibition. His delegation was a little concerned that the figure mentioned in the annex to the Secretary-General's report

/...

(Mr. Thwaites, Australia)

(A/C.5/33/9) took no account of funds for travel in a region where some neighbouring States were thousands of miles apart. The financial implications of establishing the post had been estimated at \$28,000 for travel, accommodation, equipment, furniture and supplies, but no mention of those implications had been made either in the Secretary-General's report (A/C.5/33/9) or in the comments of the Advisory Committee (A/33/7/Add.3). Adequate and realistic provision had to be made to meet those needs and to cover the cost of secretarial assistance and a driver, in addition to the sums relating to salaries and staff assessment mentioned in the Secretary-General's report.

4. His delegation maintained an open mind as to the method of financing the post and would be delighted if it could be funded out of savings. He requested further assurances from the Controller on that score. While he understood the Secretariat's wish to await the outcome of the forthcoming AMS study, that study would not necessarily be addressed to the organizational area relevant to the case. The need for the liaison officer was pressing and clear-cut and had been classified as both urgent and of an unforeseeable nature in the operative part of resolution 1978/67 of the Economic and Social Council. The Secretary-General should therefore determine immediately whether or not the post could be established from existing resources, and if not, then he should seek provision for a supplementary appropriation for the purpose. It was vitally necessary to establish the post in the forthcoming financial year and to provide adequate resources for the liaison officer to perform his primary task of providing a link between ESCAP headquarters in Bangkok and its members in the far-flung Pacific.

5. Mrs. MAUALA (Samoa) said that her delegation shared the disappointment of the representatives of New Zealand and Australia that no appropriation had been made for the appointment of the liaison officer and recorded its concern at that omission. She hoped that the explanations given by the Controller would mean a speedy solution to the problem.

6. Mr. GARRIDO (Philippines) said that, by and large, he associated himself with the remarks made by the representatives of New Zealand and Australia. According to the Controller, the AMS review would attempt to ascertain whether staffing requirements could be met from existing resources. The Executive Secretary of ESCAP had taken the view that that could not be done, but his delegation believed that some way should be found. Moreover, following the AMS study, his delegation hoped that the item could be included in the programme budget for the biennium 1980-1981. That would meet the concerns of those delegations who were keen to see the ESCAP recommendation implemented.

7. Mr. PALAMARCHUK (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that his delegation could not support the revised estimates (A/C.5/33/9). Substantial additional appropriations were being requested, although the Ad Hoc Committee of Experts to Examine the Finances of the United Nations and the Specialized Agencies (Committee of 14) had recommended that any new activities undertaken during the

/...

(Mr. Palamarchuk, USSR)

biennium should be financed through the reallocation of resources within the approved budget. It was highly regrettable that the Secretariat had not made proposals along those lines, and that the Advisory Committee had not drawn the attention of the Secretariat to the need to abide by the recommendations of the Committee of 14. His delegation's position was that all new activities undertaken during a budgetary period should be financed by means of savings and the reallocation of approved resources and also from resources made available as a result of the completion or review of other activities.

8. Mr. MABVIKO (Malawi) said that, while he appreciated that every effort was being made to absorb extra costs within existing budget appropriations, he would like assurances from the Secretary-General or the Controller that other activities would not suffer as a result. He would also like to know whether funds were available to meet the additional expenditure, in other words, what impact it would have on the programme budget for the biennium 1978-1979. Some of the additional funds had already been disbursed and he was therefore surprised to find that the figures given in the reports of the Secretary-General (A/C.5/33/9) and of the Advisory Committee (A/33/7/Add.3) were only estimates. He requested exact expenditure figures from the Controller.

9. He appealed to the Secretary-General to take immediate and positive steps to implement resolution 1978/46 of the Economic and Social Council on the mobilization of financial, technical and economic assistance to meet the short-term and long-term needs of Zambia. He requested information from the Secretary-General on what would happen to the P-3 post and two General Service posts when the programme of assistance to Zambia was concluded. Furthermore, he asked that the Professional post should be offered to a Zambian national, who would be in the best position to advise the Secretary-General on the type of assistance required.

10. Mr. STUART (United Kingdom) said that, as one of the 12 sponsors of resolution 1978/67 of the Economic and Social Council, his delegation was particularly concerned that its financial implications should be correctly assessed by the General Assembly. The question of the appropriate budgetary provision was one for the Fifth Committee to decide in the light of the proposals of the Secretary-General (A/C.5/33/9) and the comments of the Advisory Committee (A/33/7/Add.3). The budgetary role was reserved to the General Assembly under the Charter, and under the rules of procedure it was the Fifth Committee which was responsible for budgetary matters. His delegation believed that acceptance of that was implicit in the wording of resolution 1978/67 and would not have become a sponsor of that resolution if there had been any indication that it was intended to pre-empt the budgetary role of the Fifth Committee and the General Assembly. In the simplest possible terms, appropriate provision could be \$60,000 or less, or it could be nothing at all, depending on the judgement of the General Assembly.

(Mr. Stuart, United Kingdom)

11. He stressed that his delegation shared the view of the representative of New Zealand that the work to be carried out by the senior officer in the Pacific area was both urgent and important. The Committee was faced with the dilemma of either recommending that the General Assembly vote an additional appropriation to establish a new post at once, thereby risking that the forthcoming AMS study would find that by reorganization the post could be filled from within ESCAP's existing resources, or requiring the Executive Secretary of ESCAP to give top priority to what was a long-neglected task by redeployment of his existing resources, bearing in mind that, if it became apparent after close study that an additional post could not be dispensed with, it would be possible to provide relief in the next programme budget appropriations. In the view of his delegation the second of those alternatives was undoubtedly the right solution, and it was therefore firmly convinced that there should be no additional appropriation at the current session.

12. Mr. MAJOLI (Italy) said that, if the revised estimates were put to the vote, his delegation would support the additional appropriations recommended by the Advisory Committee. However, in the future, in the interests of orderly financial procedures, delegations should, whenever possible, and except in really urgent and unforeseen circumstances, refrain from making requests for financing at the mid-point of the biennium. The right course was that adopted by the Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Latin America, as referred to in paragraph 8 of document A/33/7/Add.3, namely, to seek appropriations in the context of the next programme budget. Otherwise, the door would be open for requests which some delegations considered more urgent than they actually were.

13. He reiterated the request made on previous occasions that the Secretary-General should make every effort to absorb the cost of such unforeseen items by achieving savings on others of lower priority or on programme elements which had become obsolete.

14. Mr. KUYAMA (Japan) said that his delegation could support paragraph 6 of the Advisory Committee's report (A/33/7/Add.3). However, as a country of the Asian and Pacific region which had supported ESCAP resolution 188 (XXXIV), Japan hoped that that resolution would eventually be implemented, and that the greatest possible efforts would be made to utilize available resources in the most efficient manner.

15. Mr. SERRANO AVILA (Cuba) said he was concerned to note in paragraphs 7 and 8 of the Advisory Committee's report (A/33/7/Add.3) that, although certain projects of the Caribbean Development and Co-operation Committee (CDCC) of the Economic Commission for Latin America were considered an urgent priority by both CDCC and the Economic and Social Council, the Secretary-General, in the light of the decision by the Executive Secretary of ECLA to review the proposal in the context of the 1980-1981 programme budget, had decided not to seek appropriations at the current time. His delegation considered that all cases of urgent priority should receive the same treatment.

/...

16. Mr. THOMAS (Trinidad and Tobago) said that his delegation was also concerned about that matter, and would appreciate an explanation from the Controller as to how the Executive Secretary of ECLA proposed to meet the priority requirements without additional funds.

17. Mr. KHAMIS (Algeria) asked why paragraph 21 of the annex to the report of the Secretary-General (A/C.5/33/9) indicated that the Working Group of the Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities would meet for only three days, although Economic and Social Council resolution 1978/22 stipulated that the Working Group would meet for not more than one week; he wondered where the additional funds would come from if the meeting lasted for more than three days. In relation to paragraphs 25 and 26 of the annex, he asked what conference servicing costs would be involved in inviting the Special Rapporteur of the Sub-Commission to present his report to the General Assembly at its current session.

18. Mr. DEBATIN (Assistant Secretary-General, Controller), replying to questions raised by delegations, explained that it was extremely difficult for the Secretary-General to allocate additional resources to any programme while remaining within the constraints of the budget. Any request for additional appropriations must therefore be scrutinized very thoroughly. That procedure had been followed in the case of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific. The Administrative Management Service had been asked to study ESCAP's organizational management and manpower needs and, in particular, the possibility of meeting additional staff requirements by redeployment; once the Secretary-General had received the results of the study, he could submit proposals in the programme budget for the 1980-1981 biennium. The Secretary-General might take action earlier, however, if the situation in ESCAP so warranted; for instance, he might decide to use a vacant post in order to appoint the urgently needed liaison officer. He stressed that endeavours were always made to absorb urgent requests for additional financing within the limits of existing resources. Where that was not possible, the overspending could be covered by an additional appropriation at the end of the biennium.

19. With regard to section 18 (Human rights), he had been asked why the Secretary-General had submitted revised estimates when his proposal had already been concurred in by the Advisory Committee. In fact, proposals approved by ACABQ had always to be finally approved by the Fifth Committee and the plenary Assembly.

20. As he understood it, the representative of Malawi had asked why the resources requested under section 1 should not simply be allocated to Zambia, as that country would know how best to use them. It should be made clear that the activity in question was not a technical co-operation programme but one in which the United Nations performed a co-ordinating function by recruiting the necessary staff. Once the United Nations had performed its mandate, other means of financing staff requirements would have to be found.

21. Turning to section 8 (Economic Commission for Latin America), he explained that additional requests for funds could be submitted. Such requests would be

considered sympathetically, but with due regard for the constraints of the budget as a whole. The Executive Secretary of ECLA had been informed that the requirements of the ECLA Port-of-Spain office must be reviewed in the context of the over-all ECLA requirements; he had, however, been assured that those requirements would be given thorough consideration when the budget for the 1980-1981 biennium was drawn up.

22. One delegation had asked how paragraphs 20 (c) and 21 (b) of document A/C.5/33/9 could be reconciled. Delegations had in fact been consulted on that issue and had decided that a three-day meeting of the Working Group in December 1978 would be adequate. Accordingly, a financial implications paper based on those requirements had been submitted.

23. With regard to paragraph 26 of the same document, the representative of Algeria had asked why, when only a Special Rapporteur had been requested, an estimate for full conference servicing had been given. In fact, the description "conference servicing costs ... on a full-cost basis" was rather too broad. What was actually referred to was the cost of printing the relevant human rights documents. The procedure with regard to conference servicing costs proper was outlined in paragraph 4 of document A/C.5/33/9.

24. Mr. GREEN (New Zealand) said that he was still not entirely satisfied with the Controller's explanations regarding ESCAP. It was still not clear how long the Administrative Management Service would take to make its study and when a decision would be taken on the appointment of a liaison officer, although it was now evident that a decision would be taken before the next biennium. Nor had the Controller given any assurance that ESCAP resolution 188 (XXXIV) would be implemented. His delegation believed that ESCAP had waited long enough, that funds for creating the new post should be found as soon as possible, either by redeployment or by the allocation of additional resources.

25. The CHAIRMAN explained that, once the results of the Administrative Management Service study were available, the Secretary-General could, if necessary, take those results into account in revised estimates for the current biennium or request an additional appropriation. If the study indicated that it would be more appropriate to submit proposals in the 1980-1981 budget, the Secretary-General would act accordingly.

26. Mr. WILLIAMS (Panama) said that the Controller had still not given the Committee clear guidelines as to what decision to take on the revised estimates for ESCAP and ECLA. He had merely indicated that the Secretary-General might submit further revised estimates for ESCAP to the Committee at the current session.

27. Mr. DEBATIN (Assistant Secretary-General, Controller) said that the mission of AMS would be to study the situation on the spot and to report back. Every effort would be made to ensure that the AMS report would be available to the Committee

/...

(Mr. Debatin)

during the current session but it was more likely that it would be submitted in 1979. The Secretary-General must then decide what recommendation he would make for the next biennium and also whether immediate action should be taken regarding ESCAP. Such action might involve the redeployment of resources, for example, by using vacant posts, of which ESCAP had several. Otherwise ACABQ might be asked to give its approval for an appropriation, perhaps under the heading of "unforeseen and extraordinary expenses". ESCAP would certainly be strengthened if the Secretary-General was satisfied that the need existed.

28. He had discussed the question of a post in the Port-of-Spain office with the Executive Secretary of ECLA and had stressed that the issue must be viewed within the framework of ECLA as a whole for inclusion in the budget submission for the 1980-1981 biennium. The decision taken had been in conformity with the views of the Executive Secretary of ECLA.

29. Mr. IYER (India) said that the Controller had implied that, while the Secretariat did not object to the implementation of the resolutions, it would not ask for additional appropriations. If the Secretariat would assure the Committee that the resolutions would be implemented, there would be no problem.

30. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) said that the device of "unforeseen and extraordinary expenses" could not be used for the purpose indicated.

31. Mr. DEBATIN (Assistant Secretary-General, Controller) said that resolutions had been adopted which required implementation but that the question had arisen as to where resources could be found for such implementation. The Secretary-General was not yet convinced that additional resources should be requested. If, however, the AMS report indicated that the question was one of overriding priority, resources for a liaison officer would certainly be made available.

32. The CHAIRMAN said it was his understanding that the Controller had said that there was no question as to whether a resolution of a United Nations organ would be implemented. It certainly would. The question was whether additional resources should be requested and, if so, how they would be obtained. That decision lay within the responsibility of the Secretary-General as chief administrative officer of the Organization. Once the AMS report had been received, it would be possible to decide whether additional resources were required or whether the necessary funding should be obtained by redeploying existing resources.

33. The CHAIRMAN invited the Committee to approve, in first reading, an additional appropriation of \$334,400, composed of \$85,400 under section 1, \$36,400 under section 4, and \$212,600 under section 18, and an additional appropriation of \$17,700 under section 25, offset by the same amount under income section 1, under the programme budget for the biennium 1978-1979.



34. An additional appropriation of \$334,400 under sections 1, 4 and 18 for the biennium 1978-1979 was approved in first reading without objection.

35. Mr. MABVIKO (Malawi) said he wished to clarify that what he had requested in his earlier statement had been that one of the three posts to be created under section 1 should be filled by a Zambian national and not, as the Controller had seemed to imply, that the resources for that post should be transferred to Zambia.

36. Mr. DEBATIN (Assistant Secretary-General, Controller) said that he wished to apologize to the representative of Malawi if he had misunderstood his earlier statement.

37. Mr. GARRIDO (Philippines), speaking in explanation of vote, said that, if the senior post in ESCAP could not be included in section 7, the necessary provision should be made in the budget for the next biennium.

38. Mr. VISLYK (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that if the additional appropriations had been put to the vote, his delegation would have voted against them.

39. The CHAIRMAN said that the Committee had concluded its consideration, in first reading, of the revised estimates resulting from decisions of the Economic and Social Council.

Establishment of an information services unit in the Department of International Economic and Social Affairs (continued) (A/33/7/Add.2; A/C.5/33/4)

40. Mr. SEIERSEN (International Labour Organisation) said that his agency had worked for many years past for the co-ordination of existing information systems within the United Nations family and was satisfied with current arrangements.

41. Mr. DIENE (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) said that his agency welcomed the proposed creation of an information services unit in the Department of International Economic and Social Affairs (IESA) in so far as it would provide Member States with effective means for the collection, management and utilization of information of all types. The proposed activities were compatible with those pursued within existing UNESCO informational programmes and, in particular, with the UNISIST programme, which had been designed to encourage co-operation in the field of scientific and technical information. The main purpose of UNISIST was to ensure that reliable information, available world-wide, reached those who needed it. The need for such a programme had become apparent with the realization by the scientific and technical community, during the 1960s, that the flow of such information to those who required it had been frustrated by a lack of co-ordination between informational institutions such as libraries and documentation centres. Since its creation in 1971, UNISIST's objectives had been to encourage the channelling of scientific and technical information in such a way as to benefit Member States and, in particular, the developing countries, as well as to ensure compatibility between international information systems, such as INIS in the field of nuclear energy, AGRIS in agriculture and SPINES in the field of

/...

(Mr. Diene, UNESCO)

scientific and technical policy. UNISIST did not furnish information directly to ultimate users but acted rather as a catalyst in four fields of activity, namely, the elaboration of policies and plans in the field of information; the establishment and application of standards; the development of an informational infrastructure; and the provision of training for both professionals and users in the informational field.

42. Two types of projects were available to national and international agencies within the UNISIST programme, namely, projects financed under UNESCO's regular budget and extrabudgetary programmes financed by agencies such as UNDP or directly by Member States. Liaison between countries and the UNISIST programme was effected through national committees as well as through about 100 national contact points.

43. Paragraphs 17, 18, 19, 33, 34, 40 and 48 of the Secretary-General's report (A/C.5/33/4) indicated that the proposed information services unit in IESA would be both complementary to, and compatible with, the UNISIST programme. UNESCO was prepared to co-operate fully in the establishment of the new system.

44. Mr. STUART (United Kingdom) said that his delegation was concerned that, if IESA was to have a computerized information system, it should be fully co-ordinated with other information systems in the economic and social field and integrated, to the extent possible, with related information systems within the United Nations itself. While his delegation's main doubts had been dispelled by the assurance that EDPIS was being fully involved in the problems of developing the proposed system, nevertheless certain questions remained.

45. The Controller had argued that information systems projects must be installed without perfect co-ordination, if desirable progress was not to be held up. His delegation would be grateful if the representative of EDPIS would comment on that view.

46. His delegation had noted with surprise that the Secretariat's directive on the indexing vocabulary for subsystems of UNBIS had laid down that each organizational unit wishing to be a subsystem would be responsible for developing the vocabulary for its own area. It seemed to his delegation, however, that, as there must be complementarity between the various sectors covered by UNBIS, to allow each sector its own vocabulary was a recipe for chaos and waste. He would appreciate the comments of the representative of EDPIS on the proposed arrangement and, in particular, on whether it would ensure that the proposed informational service in IESA would be fully co-ordinated with UNBIS.

47. The Secretary-General's report, in paragraph 39, had hinted that IESA should have its own mini-computer on grounds of economy, thus implying that the use of a mini-computer in the Department would be more economical than the use of spare capacity on the recently upgraded central processing unit of the New York Computing Centre. Prima facie his delegation considered that to be very unlikely at the current stage of development of the computer services of the United Nations. His delegation therefore supported ACABQ's recommendation that the Secretary-General

/...

(Mr. Stuart, United Kingdom)

should submit to the General Assembly, at its thirty-fourth session, a detailed breakdown of the estimated start-up and operating costs of the proposed information service in the Department of IESA. The costing should indicate the assumption made about hardware and should compare the cost of using spare capacity in the New York Computing Centre with the use of a decentralized mini-computer.

48. The Controller had argued that advantage should be taken of the availability of voluntary funds in the coming year to authorize a pilot scheme, the results of which would be available to the General Assembly at its thirty-fourth session. In the light of the further evidence and assurances provided by the Assistant Secretary-General for Programme Planning and Co-ordination, his delegation believed that the balance of advantage currently lay with the undertaking of the pilot scheme in order to discover the views of the users of the information about its utility. His delegation considered, however, that the General Assembly's authority to launch the pilot scheme should be accompanied by requests to the Secretary-General for reports to the thirty-fourth session on comparative costs and on the precise solutions proposed to the problems of complementarity and compatibility with all the information systems relevant to IESA. Those answers were required before a decision was taken to finance the proposed service from the regular budget.

AGENDA ITEM 110: PERSONNEL QUESTIONS (continued)

- (a) COMPOSITION OF THE SECRETARIAT: REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (continued)  
(A/33/176, A/C.5/33/CPR.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)

49. Mr. ARTAN (Somalia) said that reflected changes in many aspects of personnel questions were still far from satisfactory to the great majority of Member States. His Government was particularly concerned about the question of the equitable geographical distribution of posts. It believed that competence and adequate qualifications must continue to be the basic criteria in the recruitment of staff, and was ready to co-operate fully by offering its most highly qualified candidates, but felt that the significance attached to financial contribution in the distribution of posts should be progressively phased out.

50. The under-representation of developing countries in the Secretariat was another cause for concern. A great deal of the work of the United Nations was directed towards closing the gap between developed and developing countries, as that goal involved the largest group of Member States, and the well-being of the largest segment of world population. Thus a higher proportion of the positions of

/...

(Mr. Artan, Somalia)

responsibility should be filled by candidates from the developing countries, since such persons would be particularly sensitive to the needs of development.

51. It was ironic that, although the General Assembly had adopted many resolutions aimed at enhancing the status of women long before the growth of the women's movement in a number of countries, the United Nations Secretariat was lagging behind in the employment of women, and in particular in according women positions of responsibility. His delegation supported the recommendation of the Joint Inspection Unit (A/33/105) that a person should be designated in each organization who would be responsible for the concerns and interests of women, including recruitment missions and publicity. However, the main responsibility for increasing the number of female candidates for United Nations service lay with Member States, which did not always encourage or support the efforts of women nationals to obtain senior positions either at home or in international bodies. His Government was actively engaged in a policy of including women in the national administration at all levels, and believed that that would lead to a wider involvement of women in the international field. However, the Secretariat still had a clear responsibility to step up the recruitment of women and secure a sharp increase in the proportion of women in senior positions.

52. His delegation shared the concern of other delegations about the absence of comparatively young people in senior positions in the Secretariat. New ideas and fresh viewpoints were as valuable to the work of the Organization as long experience. His delegation supported the Secretary-General's intention to apply the statutory age of retirement strictly and confine the limited extension of retirement age to certain exceptional cases.

53. Mr. AYENI (Nigeria) said it was clear that, owing to the complexity of the role and functions of the United Nations Secretariat, it was sometimes difficult to prescribe adequate means for remedying its institutional and administrative short-comings.

54. His delegation accepted the principles listed in paragraph 3 of the report of the Secretary-General (A/33/176) for the recruitment of staff of the United Nations Secretariat, but felt, as the report of the Joint Inspection Unit (A/33/228) confirmed, that those principles were being applied either subjectively or, at best, selectively. Furthermore, the need to maintain the highest standards of efficiency, competence and integrity was too often given undue prominence, at the expense of the other three principles; it could not be adduced to justify the unrepresentation and under-representation of some Member States and the slow pace of improving opportunities for the recruitment of women and younger persons.

55. On the question of the over-representation of developed countries, and especially those with the largest assessed contributions, his delegation believed that while those countries could claim to have comparatively large numbers of available qualified personnel, they were not necessarily of the highest comparable quality in their respective countries. As far as possible, the personnel of the United Nations system should reflect the true international composition of the

/...

(Mr. Ayeni, Nigeria)

Organization. The developing countries were clearly at a disadvantage because most of the major offices of the United Nations system were located at great distances from them and the developed countries had a stranglehold on the administrative and executive machinery.

56. The data provided in the report of the Secretary-General (A/33/176) clearly indicated that the principle of equitable geographical distribution was being applied rather formalistically, in view of the concentration of staff from the developing countries in the General Service category and the preponderance of staff from developed countries in policy-making positions. His delegation therefore proposed that positions in the highest grades should be tenable for five years at a time, so that such positions would not be restricted to any particular country or geographical area, and so as to encourage greater representation of the developing countries at the policy-implementation levels.

57. A comprehensive review must be made of the personnel situation in all the agencies of the United Nations system in order to discourage the preponderance of the nationals of developed, especially European, countries in those agencies and to correct regional imbalances. There was a clear imbalance in the African region, for example, where a few well-placed countries tended to dominate the few staff positions earmarked for Africa in the specialized agencies.

58. The application of the "desirable-range principle" should be further reviewed, as there was no reason why the desirable range in respect of positions in the Director grades and above should apply only to positions outside Headquarters and the major agencies where the developing countries were concerned. "Job inheritance" must be discouraged and too little participation by developing countries in policy making must be rectified.

59. In that context, it was intolerable that South Africa should have greater representation among the staff of the Organization than the majority of Member States in the African region, when it had amply demonstrated its aversion to the purposes and principles of the Charter and consistently disregarded numerous decisions of the United Nations.

60. The computerized roster approach to the recruitment of women had not been particularly helpful, and had proved very unfair to African women. A large number of women on the roster came from developed countries, especially countries which already controlled vital sections of the Secretariat. His delegation welcomed the efforts of the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs to recruit more African women, but was not convinced that the African regional preparatory meeting for the 1980 World Conference of the United Nations Decade for Women had been an important means of achieving the desired goal. The few African women currently employed in the Secretariat had not been sufficiently encouraged to assume the full responsibilities attached to their posts, and it was to be hoped that immediate action would be taken so as not to discourage other qualified women from seeking positions in the United Nations system.

/...

(Mr. Ayeni, Nigeria)

61. His delegation agreed with JIU regarding the problems involved in promoting General Service staff to the Professional category largely as a reward for long service. If the goal of engaging academically qualified young persons was to be achieved, more emphasis must be placed on career development within the Professional and policy-making grades. His delegation supported the JIU recommendations on competitive examinations and considered that there should be a time-table for the implementation of the JIU recommendations on personnel policy reform.

62. While his delegation accepted that a considerable degree of freedom of administrative action should be accorded to the Secretary-General, it believed that it was necessary to determine what degree of political judgement should be brought to bear on personnel decisions. No level of the administrative hierarchy should be the exclusive preserve of a chosen few.

63. Mrs. SANDIFER (Portugal) emphasized that a proper composition of the Secretariat which would ensure fair geographical distribution, higher standards of competence and increased representation of women depended essentially on the universal implementation of the personnel policy reforms approved by the General Assembly and, in particular, of the JIU recommendations. Her delegation attributed special importance to a uniform system of job classification for the Secretariat as a whole which would reconcile the systems developed by the United Nations, ICSC and CCAQ, increased use of recruitment missions and competitive examinations for lower-level Professional posts. Noting the unusually high average age of personnel in P-1 to P-3 posts, she deplored the practice of filling entry-level Professional posts with General Service staff having long years of service; promotions from the General Service to Professional posts should be made in a very limited number of cases and exclusively on the basis of competitive examinations. Furthermore, use of the computerized roster of candidates in making appointments should be made compulsory for all departments and, in order to ensure the recruitment of more women, vacancy notices should continue to be checked against the roster of women. To emphasize the need for greater consistency and accuracy in checking against the roster of candidates, she cited a case where a highly qualified Portuguese woman had been placed on the roster but never contacted by the United Nations.

64. The principle of equitable geographical representation could not be implemented unless the United Nations abandoned the unjustified practice of recruiting nationals from over-represented States. What was required was the political will to seek out qualified men and women from States which were under-represented or just within their desirable range. In specific cases where nationals from over-represented States had been hired, she would like to know in what respects and to what degree their qualifications differed from those of other candidates.

65. While her delegation attributed great importance to a strong international career civil service, it held that there should be a proper ratio of permanent to

(Mrs. Sandifer, Portugal)

fixed-term posts and a periodic rotation of personnel to ensure greater appreciation of the work of the Organization and better prospects for professional development.

66. Mr. POPAL (Afghanistan) commended the Secretary-General's continuing efforts to improve the geographical distribution of posts in the Secretariat and to progress towards the personnel objectives enunciated in General Assembly resolutions. However, it was disappointing to note that there were still 20 under-represented and 23 unrepresented countries as of 30 June and that only 39 nationals of such countries had been recruited during the reporting year as against 215 appointments of nationals from over-represented States. He appealed to the latter to co-operate with the Secretariat in realizing the goal of a balanced representation of all Member States, and agreed with the view expressed by several speakers that a country could not be regarded as well represented simply because the region in which it was located was well represented. For example, there were relatively far fewer Afghans employed in the United Nations system than nationals from some other Member States of the region of the Middle East. In order to achieve an equitable geographical distribution of posts, the Secretariat should recruit a larger percentage of fixed-term staff from under-represented Member States, thus enabling nationals from developing countries to acquire the necessary experience in the work of international organizations during their service in the Secretariat. The developing countries should also be increasingly represented at the senior and policy-making levels.

67. His delegation further supported strict observance of the staff regulation stipulating retirement at 60 years of age and proposals to increase the proportion of women in the Secretariat, particularly in the Professional category, with due regard for the principle of equitable geographical distribution of posts. Observing that the number of women on the computerized roster had risen from 532 to 758 during the reporting year, he wished to know how many of those candidates had been appointed thus far and what their nationalities were. In that connexion, his delegation supported the JIU recommendations for the use of recruitment missions - which should be sent exclusively to under-represented or unrepresented countries - and for compulsory use of the roster of candidates by all departments of the Secretariat. It also favoured the use of competitive examinations in promoting staff to Professional posts.

68. Mr. CONTEH (Sierra Leone) expressed gratification for the efforts to increase the number of women in the Secretariat and appealed to the Secretary-General to ensure that, in filling posts subject to geographical distribution, emphasis would be placed on qualified women from under-represented and unrepresented countries. He urged, in particular, that the posts to be vacated by women Professional staff through retirement over the next five years should be filled in such a way as to ensure that there would not be fewer women employed in the Secretariat as a whole. In view of the fact that an increasing number of women were being recommended by Member States for Professional posts and that at present, only 13 of 352 staff members at the D-1 level and above were women, it was disheartening to hear from the Assistant Secretary-General for Personnel Services that there was a world-wide shortage of suitably qualified women, especially from the third world. The built-in bias against women from the third world should be fought by intensifying recruitment efforts to bring in more women, particularly from the under-represented and unrepresented Member States.

/...

(Mr. Conteh, Sierra Leone)

69. He noted that the General Service staff continued to be disproportionately weighted in favour of a small number of countries and urged that more positive steps be taken to publicize and disseminate information about General Service vacancies to all third-world countries. Recruitment of qualified staff from those countries and travel arrangements to Headquarters would have to be worked out in such a way as not to overburden the regular budget of the United Nations. Appointments to the posts to be vacated through retirement over the next few years should have effect of increasing the representation of third-world countries and of women at the senior level, with due regard to the equitable geographical distribution of posts throughout the Secretariat.

70. He concluded by urging the Secretariat to resist pressures and lobbying for certain senior posts by applying the principle of rotation of the highest posts in the Secretariat.

71. Mr. WILSKI (Poland) pointed out that since the Secretariat was one of the principal organs of the United Nations and a crucial instrument for the implementation of its decisions, its nature and composition were of paramount importance for the effective functioning of the Organization.

72. Poland had consistently been critical of United Nations personnel policies and practices and its position remained unchanged owing to the persistence of serious shortcomings in those practices, including a drastic reduction in the number of Polish nationals in the Secretariat. United Nations personnel policies were primarily a complex political problem, not merely an administrative undertaking, and methods of staff management and organization had changed fundamentally since the Organization's inception. The Secretariat had become an intricate civil service which could only be managed effectively through wise guidance, fair geographical representation of Member States and sound financial practices.

73. The Polish delegation shared the view expressed by the Assistant Secretary-General for Personnel Services that the two paramount considerations in the appointment of staff, namely the need to secure the highest standards of efficiency, competence and integrity and the need to ensure equitable geographical representation, were wholly compatible. He would have welcomed a more helpful account of how those two prerequisites were to be implemented. Indeed, if the comparative data contained in the Secretary-General's report (A/33/176) were used as a measure of how the composition of the Secretariat conformed to those requirements and to the General Assembly's directives, it became clear that disregard had been shown for the provisions of Article 101, paragraph 3, of the Charter and for a number of Assembly resolutions.

74. It was impertinent to be asked to believe that suitable candidates from 20 under-represented and 23 unrepresented Member States could not be found, so that more than one third of the new appointments made during the reporting year had had to be made from among nationals of Member States already above their desirable range. The socialist States of Eastern Europe represented one fifth of the



(Mr. Wilski, Poland)

under-represented Member States and they were in a worse situation now, so far as equitable representation was concerned, than they had been 10 years previously. Personnel practices had become increasingly one-sided and did not, as the General Assembly had recommended, reflect the assets of various cultures and the technical competence of all Member States. Poland was a case in point: with a desirable range of 25 to 34 posts, it had 23 Polish nationals in posts subject to geographical distribution in June 1978 as compared with 24 in June 1977 and 31 in June 1976. Over the same period, Poland's assessed contribution to the regular budget had been increased from 1.26 to 1.39 per cent. His delegation had experienced difficulties in securing employment for Polish candidates even at the lower Professional level owing to the strange practices of some personnel officers, practices which distinctly reflected bias.

75. With regard to the ratio of permanent to fixed-term contracts, he pointed out that the 69.2 per cent representing permanent contracts on 30 June 1978 - 1.2 per cent higher than in 1976 - was an unreasonably high proportion and urgent steps should be taken to reduce it. The argument that a high proportion of permanent contracts was an indispensable element of an efficient international civil service was merely a smoke-screen designed to perpetuate undesirable practices.

76. It had been said that political pressure by Member States was virtually destroying the Secretariat. If such pressure was coming from over-represented States, they should be identified. If, however, it was coming from under-represented or unrepresented States, it should be seen as the exercise of their legitimate right to achieve adequate representation in the Secretariat with a view to building a balanced international civil service. Moreover, the majority of Member States regarded secondment of their nationals to the Secretariat as an important obligation of membership in the United Nations and a source of long-term national advantage. ✓

77. Mr. THWAITES (Australia), referring to the employment of women in the United Nations system, recalled that his delegation had consistently supported moves to increase the proportion and improve the prospects of women employed in the United Nations and the specialized agencies, always provided that such moves were within the terms of Article 101 of the Charter. It sympathized therefore with the views expressed by the representatives of Belgium and Austria. There was no need to reiterate the broad principles and objectives governing the employment of women in the United Nations. What was now needed, and should be forthcoming from the deliberations of the Committee, were detailed short-term and medium-term targets which were realistic and would enable the Committee and the ACABQ to assess in exact terms the progress made towards their achievement.

78. His delegation therefore appreciated the JIU report contained in document A/33/105. The report's recommendations generally warranted support and his delegation believed that two of them in particular should be implemented immediately. Recommendation 5, which set targets for the number of women to be employed in the various United Nations organizations and units by 1980 and 1985, not only had a practical value but also ensured that the United Nations would work together with Governments of Member States, which had themselves been asked to set national

/...

(Mr. Thwaites, Australia)

targets for 1980 and 1985 in implementing the World Plan of Action. It was also essential that the targets set within the United Nations should encompass the promotion as well as the recruitment of women. The second recommendation which deserved particular support was recommendation 6, especially (c) and (d) thereof dealing with the role of Governments in nominating women candidates and otherwise facilitating the recruitment of women, especially at senior levels. It had already been pointed out that the major responsibility for increasing the participation of women at Professional and senior levels in the United Nations rested with Governments. Until there was a significant change in the action of Governments in training and nominating women for high-level posts, the Secretariat's efforts could have only a marginal impact. Accordingly, general recognition of the decisive role of Member States was essential if there was to be any significant improvement in the position of women in the United Nations.

79. His delegation agreed with the representatives of Japan and the Federal Republic of Germany that it would take time and patience to place women on an equal footing with men in the professional ranks of the United Nations. However, patience must be combined with a sense of priority and, indeed, urgency in achieving such practical short-term targets as might be decided upon. It was clear from paragraph 57 of document A/33/105 that there were no grounds for complacency. Given the ten-month period which had elapsed since the estimates given in that paragraph had been made, it could be safely assumed that the recruitment rate of women would need to be at least one in three to meet the target of 25 per cent female employment in the United Nations by 1980. Given that the current rate of nomination of women was approximately one in five and that there would be an unusually high rate of retirement of women over the next year or two, most vigorous action would be required on the part of the Secretariat and of Governments not only to meet the agreed targets but also to avoid a deterioration in the situation. His delegation believed that such action was well within the capabilities of all concerned, given the necessary political will.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.