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Chairman: Mr. Vahap AŞIROĞLU (Turkey).

*In the absence of the Chairman, Mr. Todorov  
(Bulgaria), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.*

AGENDA ITEM 81

Personnel questions:

(a) Composition of the Secretariat: report of the  
Secretary-General (A/6487 and Corr.1, A/C.5/  
L.872)

1. Mr. BEN AISSA (Tunisia) said that the quality of the work of the United Nations depended largely on the ability and industry of its Secretariat. The Secretary-General was to be commended for his continual efforts to make the Secretariat a true international civil service, reflecting the various cultures and the technical competence of all Member States and showing an equitable geographical and linguistic balance. It was the duty of Member States to help the Secretary-General in that difficult enterprise. The Tunisian Government had tried to do so by giving every possible assistance to a recruitment mission sent to Tunisia in 1965; but, regrettably, without result.

2. Out of 2,178 posts subject to geographical distribution or involving special language requirements, only 161, or 7.4 per cent, were held by Africans; the figure was reduced to 102, or 4.7 per cent, by deducting the posts held by South African nationals, which should not be included in the African quota, and those held by two older African States—Ethiopia and the United Arab Republic—which were founder Members of the United Nations. The figures were even more striking for the higher levels of P-4 to Under-Secretary. Of a total of 1,031 posts in those grades, only 51 posts, or 4.9 per cent, were held by Africans and 10 of those were occupied by South African nationals. Before the principle of equitable geographical distribution was fully observed, several more recruitment missions, perhaps different from the 1965 mission, would be needed. The African countries would be most willing to release qualified staff to serve in the United Nations but they were opposed to the recruitment of Africans studying at European universities at the P-1 level through

newspaper advertisements. The higher posts should be weighted, to ensure fair treatment for all States.

3. A balance should be maintained in the Secretariat between the different language groups as well as the different geographical regions. Yet out of 2,178 staff members, only 344, or 15.8 per cent, were French-speaking, while only 48 staff members, or 2.2 per cent, were from French-speaking African countries. Out of a total of 1,031 posts in the grades from P-4 to Under-Secretary, only 141 posts were allocated to French-speaking countries and only 8 posts to the French-speaking African Members of the United Nations. Over a quarter of the Members of the Organization used French as their working language and the unsatisfactory situation with regard to the recruitment and promotion of French-speaking staff was therefore a matter of serious concern. French-speaking candidates for posts were often rejected on the grounds that they did not have a sufficient knowledge of English; but a knowledge of French was not a requirement for English-speaking candidates. French university diplomas were not appraised at their true value, and French-speaking Africans were recruited at lower grades than their university degrees warranted. Although French was an official and a working language of the Organization, French-speaking staff members were judged on the quality of their work in another language. The form for periodic reports for the professional category and above existed only in English. Palliatives such as accelerated English courses and English drafting seminars merely illustrated the discrimination against the French within the Secretariat. His delegation felt that more French-speaking staff should be recruited at high grades in all departments and particularly in the Office of Personnel, so that the Secretariat would have responsible officials able to judge the true value of the diplomas awarded by French universities.

4. Mr. DIOSO (Philippines) noted with appreciation the progress achieved in recruiting Secretariat staff from the two most under-represented regions, Africa and eastern Europe, showing that the Secretary-General had made a serious effort to achieve the desirable ranges of representation for those regions and to correct existing imbalances. However, an almost equal number of staff had been recruited from western Europe, Latin America and North America, which were already over-represented, as were several countries in Asia and the Far East.

5. In that connexion, he commended the Secretary-General for his continuing efforts to ensure the equitable distribution of posts—especially senior posts—among Member States of each region, as requested in General Assembly resolution 1928 (XVIII).

The appointment of 4 principal officers from Asia and the Far East during the year under review had helped to maintain the balanced regional composition of the staff. However, high-level posts held by that region seemed to be concentrated in the hands of one country, whose nationals occupied 11 of the 26 senior posts and 52 professional posts. Of the remaining high-level posts held by the region 15 were distributed among 6 other countries, while 11 other States were unrepresented in the professional and principal officer categories.

6. He hoped that the Secretary-General would study the feasibility of equating the relative weights of senior posts and professional posts. Senior officials performed important executive, administrative and supervisory functions and formulated policy; consequently, such posts should count as the equivalent of three or more professional posts. The results of the study could be used to achieve a more rational and equitable distribution of posts among Member States and could be taken into account by the Secretary-General when reapportioning new posts in excess of the 1,500 established posts on which the geographical distribution system had been based since 1963.

7. He agreed with the Secretary-General that "the formula developed for gauging progress in the geographical distribution of the staff" was "not a substitute for good administration and the exercise of discretion under the authority conferred upon him by the Charter of the United Nations" (A/6487 and Corr.1, para. 3).

8. Several of his own compatriots in the Secretariat were performing tasks normally assigned to officers of higher rank, and in the interest of equity and staff morale he hoped they would be promoted to a rank commensurate with their duties.

9. He agreed with the Secretary-General's view that there was no reason to change the provisional target of 25 per cent suggested as a desirable proportion of staff on fixed-term appointments (*ibid.*, para. 14). Experience had shown that a recruit took from six months to two years to acquire the desired proficiency: the resulting reduction in output, combined with the training costs, travel expenses and additional administrative work involved, were a strong deterrent to an increase in the proportion of fixed-term staff.

10. Mr. ZAITSEV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that, although some attempt had been made since the adoption of General Assembly resolution 1928 (XVIII) to increase the number of staff members from the developing and socialist countries, there had been no basic improvement where the USSR was concerned. The principle of equitable geographical distribution was being disregarded in the case of eastern Europe in general and the USSR in particular. The applications of many USSR nationals were rejected on the pretext that there were no vacancies, but at the same time posts were being filled with nationals of States which had long ago exceeded the maximum of the desirable ranges fixed for them. In 1965-1966, 46 staff members had been appointed from western Europe and the number of staff from that region had been over 17 per cent higher than the maximum fixed, while that from eastern Europe had attained only 87 per cent of

the desirable minimum for that region. The number of staff from the United Kingdom, which had far exceeded its desirable range, had increased at the same rate as the number of staff from the USSR, which in 1965 had been less than 60 per cent of the desirable minimum. From their position of command in the Secretariat, the nationals of Western countries were continuing to pursue a policy of discrimination with regard to the recruitment of USSR nationals, in violation of the principle of the Charter concerning recruitment on as wide a geographical basis as possible. Of the seven geographical regions, only one—the region comprising the socialist countries—was under-represented in the Secretariat. Nations of Western countries occupied almost half the posts subject to geographical distribution, while the citizens of socialist countries held only 12 per cent of those posts.

11. Similarly, the nationals of Western countries held 82 out of 168 higher posts in the Secretariat. Although the desirable range of the United Kingdom was 3.9 to 5.6 per cent of the total staff, United Kingdom nationals held 12.4 per cent of all the higher posts in the Secretariat. Thus, the nationals of Western countries occupied the key posts, which gave them real power to influence the activities of the Secretariat. They headed such important branches of the Secretariat as the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the Office of Personnel, the Office of the Controller and the Office of Legal Affairs. In the Office of Public Information and the Office of the Controller, Western nationals occupied half the posts subject to geographical distribution. They also held half the posts of interregional and regional consultants and special technical consultants.

12. One of the main obstacles to an equitable geographical distribution of posts was the system of permanent contracts. That system enabled staff to pursue a life-long career in the United Nations, prevented under-represented countries from gaining access to the Secretariat and cut off the flow of fresh talent experience and knowledge. A periodic renewal of staff was essential to ensure its conscientiousness and competence, since security of tenure could only weaken a staff member's desire to perform his duties to the best of his ability.

13. The practice of awarding mostly permanent contracts should be abandoned, for it was contrary to the true interests of the United Nations. The first step should be to implement General Assembly resolution 13 (I), which laid down that permanent contracts concluded with staff members should be subject to review every five years and that Directors and other higher officers should be appointed under contracts not to exceed five years, subject to the possibility of renewal. The Staff Regulations also contained a provision to the effect that the Secretary-General could terminate an appointment, if that would be in the interest of the United Nations.

14. Acting in pursuance of the Charter and the resolutions of the General Assembly, the Committee should require the Secretariat to ensure the application of the principle of equitable geographical distribution of posts so that the Secretariat might be truly international in character.

15. Mr. YUNUS (Pakistan) said that in the early days of the United Nations the main difficulty encountered by the Secretary-General in recruiting staff on as wide a geographical basis as possible had been a shortage of qualified personnel in the developing countries. The Secretariat had therefore been set up without the full implementation of Article 101 of the Charter, and its composition had continued to be a problem ever since. It had long been obvious that, despite the Charter provision prohibiting staff members from seeking or receiving instructions from any Government, those delegations whose compatriots enjoyed influential positions in the Secretariat functioned more effectively than those not so happily placed. Moreover, the situation was self-perpetuating.

16. While staff members undoubtedly did their utmost not to allow their national prejudices to influence their work, they were human beings and hence imperfect. The importance of the composition of the Secretariat by nationality must therefore be constantly borne in mind.

17. The staffing of the Secretariat ought not to be influenced by the conflicting claims of Member States; but that was impossible in the present circumstances. The original difficulty, the non-availability of qualified personnel in some countries, had been compounded by the admission of new Members. At the same time, some Member States, including a few developing countries, were over-represented in their region; that could have been avoided by recruiting suitable personnel from other countries of the same region.

18. In his annual report on the work of the Organization, the Secretary-General indicated (A/6301 and Corr.1 p. 172) the number of staff members from different countries and regions but not their grade, as if for purposes of representation all grades were equivalent. The resulting picture was clearly misleading. Under the present system, the desirable ranges of representation were worked out on the basis of contributions and population. A more logical system would be to allot points to each grade, starting with 1 point at the P-1 level and rising to 6 or 7 points for an Under-Secretary. Such a system would yield a more accurate picture of both national and regional representation. It would also reflect the effects of promotion on representation, showing whether too much power was concentrated in the hands of too few nationalities.

19. His delegation was concerned at the situation in its own region. If the desirable range of a certain Member State in that region was between 20 and 25 posts, but the actual number of its nationals serving in the Secretariat was as high as 65, there was indeed ground for concern. Moreover, 51 of those posts, or over 78 per cent, were at the P-4 level or above, the remaining 14 posts were at the P-2 and P-3 level, and no national of that State held a P-1 post. He asked what justification there could be for those figures. It was not non-availability of qualified personnel from other countries of the region, or lack of interest on their part. It was rather an illustration of the fact that over-representation tended to perpetuate or even extend itself.

20. In seeking to correct the situation, it must be remembered that many staff members had embarked

on permanent careers with the Secretariat, no matter how far their country of origin might have come to be over-represented. There were staff members who, because of their qualifications, were indispensable in particular fields of work. Thus, many factors would seem to forbid too drastic a change.

21. Nevertheless, there were areas where change and preventive action were possible. A number of principles seemed to be emerging which might with advantage be applied to recruitment policy: first, the Secretary-General's report on the composition of the Secretariat should be based on a points system such as he had described; secondly, greater use should be made of fixed-term appointments, to ensure more equitable geographical distribution; thirdly, no further appointments should be made from over-represented States; fourthly, if an appointment had to be made from such a State under the principle of regional representation, it should go to a candidate from the least over-represented State in the region; fifthly and finally, posts held by nationals of over-represented States under temporary contracts should be advertised in the region concerned, and the temporary contracts terminated when suitable persons from under-represented States were found.

22. Those principles might usefully be embodied in a resolution. The discretion of the Secretary-General would, of course, remain the major factor in administrative decisions; but a clear indication of the Fifth Committee's mind at the present stage would undoubtedly accelerate the moves that were beginning to be made in the right direction.

23. Mr. S. K. SINGH (India), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that the previous speaker's statement was the latest in a series of attacks by Pakistan against staff members of Indian nationality. Anyway, it was strange logic indeed that those Member States who, like Pakistan, were already over-represented wished to be somewhat more over-represented. Also, it was curious but significant that when a Pakistani was an Under-Secretary in the Secretariat, the delegation of Pakistan had not thought of all those arguments. Under Article 101 of the Charter, the Secretary-General was authorized to administer the manning tables as he deemed fit, and the factors which had brought certain senior members of the staff to their present positions were for him alone to judge. The tone of the debate was not improved by attacks based on bilateral relations between Member States, and the Secretary-General's task was not facilitated by Pakistan's persistence in extending its policy of confrontation with India to every issue.

24. Mr. YUNUS (Pakistan), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that it was not his intention to engage in bilateral polemics. His delegation was concerned with principles which it wished to see applied to the nationals of all countries without exception, Pakistan included.

25. Mr. DINGLI (Malta) said that while appreciating the difficulties encountered by the Secretary-General in achieving an equitable distribution of posts among the different regions, his delegation was concerned about the continued recruitment from grossly over-represented countries. Western Europe, the region

to which Malta belonged, was over-represented as a whole, but Malta itself was under-represented. Urgent consideration should be given to the recruitment of nationals from countries rather than regions. That could be made possible by increasing the number of regions and reducing their size.

26. To ease the frustration of the permanent staff at the slowness of promotion, the Secretary-General might consider placing a ten-year limit on service at the level of D-1 and above. Staff members exceeding the limit could be offered posts with some other United Nations body, such as UNDP.

27. The grading system as applied in certain parts of the Secretariat needed to be reviewed. In the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, for instance, there were several sections with as many staff at the P-5 level as at the P-2 and P-3 levels combined.

28. His delegation believed that the work of the United Nations information centres could be adequately performed without large numbers of internationally recruited staff, and that the high cost of the centres could thus be reduced.

29. Mr. BAKOTO (Cameroon) recalled his delegation's earlier strictures (1127th meeting) on the shortcomings of the Secretariat's recruitment policies, and expressed the view that there need be no conflict between the Charter requirements of competence and integrity on the one hand and equitable geographical distribution on the other. But the criteria used since 1962 to determine the "desirable range" worked to the obvious disadvantage of the African countries, as did the reluctance to give nationals of those countries positions of responsibility in the Secretariat. Steps must be taken to correct the situation. One such step might be a review of the geographical regions used for the purposes of recruitment policy. The present system, the result of the original "gentleman's agreement" as modified at the eighteenth session of the General Assembly, was very different from the geographical division of the world today recognized by the majority of Member States.

30. In the recruitment of career officials, the Secretary-General should give priority to the nationals of under-represented countries. The under-representation of Africa was particularly marked in the matter of career appointments. It was true that the African countries hesitated to make their experts available for long periods, but that should not be regarded as more than a temporary situation. It certainly could not justify the recruitment of more career officials from countries already over-represented in the Secretariat. Meanwhile, the Secretary-General should strive as far as possible to recruit staff on a fixed-term basis, which would leave the door open to a better distribution in the future and avoid perpetuating the present imbalance. His delegation would in due course co-sponsor a draft resolution to that effect.

31. One step that should be taken immediately was to clarify the requirements for employment with the Secretariat. At present it often happened that a candidate's academic or professional qualifications were judged inadequate, and his delegation would like to know what criteria were used by the Office of Personnel in arriving at such decisions.

32. Mr. KILLION (United States of America) observed that it should not be inferred, from the statements made, that his country was over-represented in the Secretariat, for the number of United States staff was not only well within the desirable range but even below the median. It was true that eastern Europe was below its desirable range, but it had made a net gain of thirty-four staff members in the year under review. Furthermore, the real cause of that under-representation was the recruitment restrictions imposed by the eastern European countries themselves.

33. During the year under review, no United States national had been appointed above the P-5 level, and the percentage of United States nationals to total professional staff had declined from 20 per cent to 19.4 per cent. Of the 321 United States professionals, nearly 50 per cent were at the P-3 level or below, while approximately 25 per cent occupied P-4 posts. Of the United States professionals 75 were employed in either the Office of the Controller or the Office of General Services, and another 75—about half of whom were at the P-3 level or lower—in the Department of Economic and Social Affairs. In contrast, there were only 3 United States professionals in the Executive Office of the Secretary-General, the senior being at the P-4 level; only 5 in the Department of Political and Security Council Affairs, the senior being at the P-5 level; and only 6 in the Division of Human Rights. Only 7 United States professionals were employed in UNCTAD and only 22 in the four regional economic commissions and the Economic and Social Office in Beirut. It was thus clear that the United States was not seeking to dominate the Secretariat.

34. Table F in document A/6487 and Corr.1 showed that the Secretary-General had made an earnest effort to distribute D-level posts among the various regions. The North American and Caribbean region was the only one to show a decline; the number of United States nationals occupying D-1 posts had decreased by 4 in the year under review, while the figures for the other senior categories had remained unchanged. The percentage of United States nationals in D-level posts had been below the median of its desirable range even before that reduction; a further diminution would be intolerable. In fact, the trend must now be reversed. Table G showed that nationals of the North American and Caribbean region occupied only 20.1 per cent of UNDP posts and 28.3 per cent of UNICEF posts, although the United States contribution to those two bodies represented 40 per cent of the total.

35. The figures he had quoted amply demonstrated the inaccuracy of certain careless allegations, which did nothing to help the Committee in its efforts to assist the Secretary-General to achieve equitable geographical distribution. Such statements were intended only to divert the Committee from its real task and to serve as an excuse for failure to co-operate fully with the Secretariat.

36. Mr. ANGUDI (Libya) thanked the Secretary-General for his valuable report and endorsed the view that "the policies and administrative methods of the Secretariat should reflect, and profit to the highest degree from, assets of the various cultures and the technical competence of all Member nations" (A/6487 and Corr.1, para. 3). While the number of staff

from Africa and eastern Europe occupying posts subject to geographical distribution had risen by 28 and 20 per cent, respectively, in the year under review, those regions were still far from being adequately represented. The Secretary-General had pointed out (*ibid.*, para. 5) that of the Member States admitted before 1960, only Libya and Albania were not represented on the Secretariat staff. The time had come to remedy that situation and his country would like to see its Secretariat posts filled. His Government had proposed some of its nationals for Secretariat posts,

particularly in the professional trainee programme, and he hoped that they would be given serious consideration.

37. In conclusion, he fully endorsed the recommendation set forth by the Ad Hoc Committee of Experts to Examine the Finances of the United Nations and the Specialized Agencies in paragraph 115 of its second report (A/6343).

*The meeting rose at 12.25 p.m.*