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MEETING**

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**CONTENTS**

	<i>Page</i>
<i>Letter from the President of the General Assembly . . . . .</i>	<i>197</i>
<i>Agenda item 81:</i>	
<i>Personnel questions (continued):</i>	
<i>(a) Composition of the Secretariat: report of the Secretary-General (continued). . . . .</i>	<i>197</i>

**Chairman:** Mr. Vahap AŞIROĞLU (Turkey).

**LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT OF THE GENERAL  
ASSEMBLY**

1. The CHAIRMAN drew the Committee's attention to a letter from the President of the General Assembly requesting delegations to submit amendments to draft resolutions submitted by Main Committees to the Secretariat in writing before the discussion of such draft resolutions in plenary meetings, so that those amendments could be circulated in accordance with rule 80 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly.

**AGENDA ITEM 81**

**Personnel questions (continued):**

(a) **Composition of the Secretariat: report of the Secretary-General (continued)** (A/6487 and Corr.1, A/C.5/L.872, A/C.5/L.879)

2. Mr. STEHLIK (Czechoslovakia) said that his delegation had explained its basic position on the composition of the Secretariat during the general discussion (1129th meeting) but that some additional comments were called for. Since the adoption of General Assembly resolution 1852 (XVII) a measure of progress had been achieved with regard to the composition of the Secretariat and the quality of its work, but the resolution had still not been fully implemented and many problems remained to be solved.

3. The Secretariat continued to grow steadily, and although that growth was undoubtedly justified to some extent by the increase in the United Nations activities and the establishment of new organs, it was not certain that all the additional staff were necessary. Economy must be exercised, for salaries constituted one of the largest items in the budget and extra staff absorbed funds which could be more usefully devoted to operational activities. Similarly, temporary staff should be employed only on exceptional occasions.

4. He shared the Secretary-General's view, as expressed in his report (A/6487 and Corr.1, para. 7),

that the present system of desirable ranges of posts for each country and geographical region should be reviewed in 1967. In that connexion, efforts should be made to correct the situation resulting from the fact that some geographical regions had been discriminated against in the 1962 adjustment.

5. The number of professional posts not subject to geographical distribution seemed somewhat large in relation to total staff; the Secretary-General should be requested to provide details on such posts in all future reports to the General Assembly.

6. It was gratifying to note the growing percentage of fixed-term appointments, for his delegation had long maintained that the number of such appointments should be increased and permanent contracts reduced. Continuity was, of course, necessary in most administrative posts, but in others a continuous influx of new talents was needed in order to keep the United Nations abreast of contemporary developments. The duration of fixed-term appointments should be from four to five years, but there was nothing to prevent a person from being reappointed for a second fixed-term contract after working in his own country for a few years. Such a procedure would benefit both the United Nations and Member States.

7. The Secretary-General's report failed to define the exact position of special, regional and interregional advisers, who were relatively numerous but did not seem to be appointed in accordance with the principle of equitable geographical distribution. Their relation to the rest of the staff should be explained, and in order to avoid misunderstanding, regional and interregional advisers should be included in the regular staff.

8. The Secretary-General should also be requested to ensure that the principle of equitable geographical distribution was applied in connexion with certain posts in the field, such as UNDP resident representatives, and certain Secretariat departments, such as the Office of the Controller, which were almost monopolized by staff from Western countries.

9. Lastly, staff should not be allowed to evade the staff regulation on retirement by seeking appointment as advisers to various organs. That regulation should be adhered to, and the Secretary-General should authorize exceptions only in cases of the utmost urgency.

10. Mr. GANEM (France) observed that the statements by the representatives of Tunisia and Cameroon at the 1151st meeting had made him see that the composition of the Secretariat could be considered from a new angle, namely, the representation of different cultures. He fully endorsed the views on that subject

expressed in paragraph 3 of the Secretary-General's report (A/6487 and Corr.1) and appreciated the progress made; but further efforts were called for. In particular, the present under-representation of French-speaking countries should be corrected. For example, table II of the annex to the Secretary-General's report showed that although the French-speaking African countries were entitled to almost half the posts reserved for Africans they held only 47 of the 159 posts now occupied by African staff. Since French-speaking Africans were comparable to English-speaking Africans in all other respects, it seemed logical to assume that their working language was a handicap to recruitment. It was time for the Secretariat to modify its working methods and recruitment practices so as to reflect more accurately the present membership of the United Nations, which had changed considerably since 1960.

11. If the Committee agreed that the Secretariat's structure and working methods could be improved, it might recommend that the Secretary-General, together with the division heads concerned and a number of Member States representing various cultures, should undertake a joint study of the related problems, including the language aspect of recruitment. The recommendation would, of course, be subject to the agreement of the Secretary-General, who pursuant to Article 101 of the United Nations Charter was responsible for the appointment of staff under regulations established by the General Assembly. Such a study would make it possible to analyse the problems and find solutions that would simultaneously ensure the continued efficiency of the Secretariat, protect the rights of the staff and satisfy the legitimate desire of Member States for a more adequate representation.

12. Mr. CAHEN (Belgium) endorsed the views of the French representative and expressed sympathy with the position of the representatives of Tunisia and Cameroon regarding the under-representation of French-speaking African countries.

13. In the light of the views on personnel questions expressed by his delegation during the general discussion (1132nd meeting), he suggested that the Secretary-General might be requested to undertake a comprehensive study of personnel problems, including a study of the United Nations administrative structure, a survey of existing staff, a comparison of structure and staff with the activities to be undertaken, a study of recruitment problems and a projection of staff needs for coming years, based not only on an extrapolation of recent trends but also on a realistic evaluation of requirements. That study, which would be submitted first to the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions and then to the General Assembly at its twenty-second session, would not affect the Secretary-General's essential powers in personnel matters or curtail staff resources, but would provide a solid foundation for the formulation of a dynamic and realistic personnel policy.

14. Mr. SOLTYSIAK (Poland) recalled that, in his foreword to the budget for the financial year 1967 (A/6305), the Secretary-General had mentioned the importance of maintaining a high level of staff morale throughout the Secretariat and of a feeling of pride in

belonging to an international secretariat and the reaffirmation of the indispensability of the United Nations. The Fifth Committee should therefore discuss those questions.

15. In connexion with the tendency to create autonomous organizational units within the Secretariat, many delegations had commented in the general discussion on the need for financial and administrative control over UNCTAD, UNDP, UNITAR and other autonomous units. The Director of Personnel could perhaps tell the Committee what problems arose in that regard and how they could be solved.

16. According to the report of the Secretary-General on accommodation at Headquarters (A/C.5/1062 para. 16), between 1960 and 1966 the number of staff members had increased at the rate of 5 per cent a year. In 1966 alone, the Secretary-General had been authorized to engage almost 700 employees. The Polish delegation therefore wondered why the number of posts subject to geographical distribution, which in 1961 had been 1,659, had decreased to 1,647 in 1966. On the other hand, the annual report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization put the number of officials of the professional and higher category at 3,849 (A/6301 and Corr.1, para 174). His delegation would like to know whether posts in the professional category and above in UNITAR, UNCTAD, UNDP, the information centres and the Office of the United Nations Commissioner for Refugees were subject to geographical distribution. In its view, they should be.

17. Poland had always thought that there should be a much higher proportion of fixed-term contracts, as that would enable the United Nations to recruit staff of the highest quality. It did not share the views expressed by the Philippine delegation on that subject at the 1151st meeting. Only a staff member with a fixed-term appointment could be truly independent and fulfil his obligations towards the Organization. When a large proportion of posts at all levels were held by employees with permanent contracts, there was little possibility of new Member States and developing countries achieving an adequate representation, unless a harmful and expensive policy of creating posts especially for those countries was adopted. His delegation was therefore glad that the Secretary-General was not strictly adhering to the target of 25 per cent for the proportion of staff on fixed-term appointments.

18. Mr. YAMAZAKI (Japan) expressed appreciation of the efforts exerted to make the Secretariat more truly international in outlook, by reconciling the need to recruit staff on as wide a geographical basis as possible with the need to maintain the efficiency, competence and integrity of the Secretariat.

19. The level as well as the number of posts held by nationals of a particular country should be taken into account in determining the desirable ranges, and his delegation agreed with the representative of Pakistan (1151st meeting) that points should be allotted to each level. The post of Under-Secretary could, for example, be allotted twice as many points as a P-4 post.

20. According to the report of ICSAB on its fourteenth session,<sup>1/</sup> it had been suggested that a system of

<sup>1/</sup> Document ICSAB/XIV/1 (dated 15 July 1966), para. 46.

medium-length, fixed-term contracts might be considered to replace permanent contracts. It had been felt that a contract for, say, seven years might be sufficient to attract highly qualified personnel who would be unwilling or unable to devote full career to international organizations. The Secretary-General had conceded in his report (A/6487 and Corr.1, para. 14) that the target for staff on fixed-term appointments had been exceeded and that the proportion of such staff was actually 29.7 per cent. He had added (*ibid.*, para. 16) that there had been a progressive lengthening of the initial term of appointment and a greater acceptance of extensions for additional terms. Thus a system of medium-term contracts was in fact being applied. The Japanese delegation did not favour the outright replacement of permanent contracts by medium-term contracts, but thought that the latter could be introduced as an addition to the existing system, in order to infuse new blood into the Secretariat, particularly at the higher levels.

21. Mr. HOVEYDA (Iran) noted that the composition of the Secretariat was a question of sufficient importance to warrant mention in the Charter. The Secretariat had to be truly international and reflect the various cultures of the Member States. In paragraph 115 of its second report (A/6343), the Ad Hoc Committee of Experts to Examine the Finances of the United Nations and the Specialized Agencies had recommended that the Secretary-General should make every effort to improve the measures already undertaken in the matter of permanent and fixed-term contracts, in order to correct the imbalance in the composition of the Secretariat. Unfortunately the Ad Hoc Committee had not had time to study the matter in depth, but an urgent problem clearly existed which required action. The current situation could be ascribed to causes beyond the Secretariat's control. It was difficult to recruit competent staff at the international level, especially when the principle of equitable geographical distribution had to be taken into account. In addition, the membership of the United Nations had changed considerably over the years. The Secretary-General was therefore not to be blamed for not having achieved the perfect geographical distribution of posts in the Secretariat; on the contrary, he had done much to achieve that goal.

22. The very term "geographical distribution" was ambiguous and embraced many concepts; the Fifth Committee should try to clarify its meaning. In what might be called "horizontal" distribution, all professional posts in the Secretariat were lumped together, regardless of their importance. That type of distribution was being achieved, as could be seen from the Secretary-General's report. The situation was not so satisfactory, however, with regard to "vertical" distribution and the distribution of the higher, influential posts must be improved. There was yet another type of distribution, based on language. His delegation was in sympathy with the views on that subject just expressed by the French and Belgian representatives.

23. If the Secretariat was to be productive, its members had to have security of tenure and there should therefore be a fair proportion of permanent contracts. However, as his delegation had stated at the 1134th meeting, during the discussion of the report of the Ad Hoc Committee of Experts, in order to ensure

equitable geographical distribution that proportion would have to be reduced. The Japanese representative's suggestion that some medium-term contracts should be awarded was very valuable. The developing countries were faced with a considerable problem in that respect, because they found it difficult to release their nationals to serve in the Secretariat for indefinite periods. It would be regrettable if there was to be a "brain drain" from the developing countries to the United Nations.

24. The time had come to seek a solution to the long-standing question of the composition of the Secretariat and his delegation, together with the delegations of Cameroon and Hungary, had therefore submitted a draft resolution on the subject (A/C.5/L.879). The text was moderate in tone; its sponsors would welcome any constructive suggestions from other members.

25. Mr. WEI (China) said that his delegation was pleased to note from the Secretary-General's report (A/6487 and Corr.1) that he had made progress in recruiting the staff of the Secretariat on as wide a geographical basis as possible. Regionally speaking, the largest increase in staff over the past year had been from Africa. At the same time, the African delegations had pointed to the slow progress so far made towards eliminating imbalances in the geographical distribution of posts.

26. The elimination of such imbalances could easily be achieved during the current staff expansion. Many vacancies would be filled in 1967, and the Secretary-General should seize that opportunity to make the Secretariat more representative. That was the best way of redressing justified grievances and strengthening the international civil service.

27. In 1948 the Secretary-General had announced<sup>2/</sup> that thenceforth no appointments were to be made from countries which were over-represented in the Secretariat; yet the Office of Personnel kept on appointing staff members from grossly over-represented countries. A continuation of that trend could only aggravate the situation. There must surely be qualified persons in under-represented countries who might be recruited for service with the United Nations.

28. As his delegation had stated in the Fifth Committee at the twentieth session (1091st meeting), many Chinese staff members who had joined the United Nations at its inception were now approaching retirement, and a second generation of Chinese staff ought to be recruited to replace them. But not a single Chinese had been appointed during the past year. Difficulties in finding suitable replacements might have been experienced, but the problem must be faced.

29. His delegation was also concerned about the situation in the newly created organs, such as UNCTAD. The UNCTAD programmes mainly concerned the developing countries, and it was therefore essential that the staff responsible for the programmes should have an intimate knowledge of those countries' needs. As a developing country, China had some experience in the field of co-operation for development, and

<sup>2/</sup> See Official Records of the General Assembly, Third Session, Supplement No. 1, p. 128.

had had technical missions working abroad for the past decade. He therefore failed to understand why not a single Chinese had been recruited for the professional staff of UNCTAD. His delegation believed that the recruitment policies of UNCTAD should be governed by the "desirable range" formula. It was to be hoped that the anomaly would be rectified in 1967. His delegation hoped that the new Executive Director of UNIDO, too, would give due attention to the principle of equitable geographical distribution.

30. In his book on the United Nations,<sup>3/</sup> Mr. Tavares de Sá, formerly Under-Secretary for Public Information, stated that there had been an organized attempt to give most of the new UNCTAD posts to outsiders, who could always gain admission if they were backed by one of the powerful cliques in the Secretariat. The delegation of China hoped that the Secretary-General would make an effort to defeat the "powerful cliques", and that he would transfer, demote or separate staff where appropriate so that the Secretariat might become a model administration true to its international objectives.

31. Mr. MTINGWA (United Republic of Tanzania) said that while appreciating the efforts of the Secretary-General, his delegation was still concerned about the under-representation of Africa. While the number of Africans employed in the Secretariat had increased, there had been no appreciable upward change in the level of the posts they occupied. Africa would not be satisfied with lower-level posts. His delegation would welcome information on the methods used to fill the posts subject to geographical distribution. It would also like to know which posts had been filled from the African quota, and to which countries they had been allotted.

32. The 14 posts filled by nationals of South Africa could not, of course, be regarded as belonging to the African quota. Moreover, by employing so many South African nationals in the Secretariat the United Nations appeared to be giving moral support to South Africa. His delegation would appreciate a statement of the racial composition of the South Africans in the Secretariat. It would also welcome clarification concerning the appointment of a number of Southern Rhodesians of United Kingdom nationality, included in the figures given for that country in tables II and III of the annex to the Secretary-General's report (A/6487 and Corr.1).

33. More could be done to redress the imbalance in the Secretariat within a short period. The argument used in the past with respect to the ability of Africa to provide qualified personnel was not valid. Thus, 8 out of 10 candidates interviewed in Tunisia by a recruiting mission had been found qualified for United Nations posts, but they had not so far been recruited.

34. A new element had been introduced into the discussion—the question of language. But it should be remembered that English and French were alike foreign to Africa, where they were no more than a heritage of the colonial past. In many African countries they had already been largely supplanted by African languages, and he would remind the Committee that Arabic and Swahili had both been used in the United

Nations. He appealed to delegations not to raise a new subject which might distract the Secretariat from the task of redressing imbalances in the geographical distribution of posts.

35. Mr. MORARU (Romania) said that the Fifth Committee was responsible for seeing that the recruitment policies laid down by Article 101 of the Charter and the pertinent resolutions of the General Assembly were properly applied. At a time when the Organization's activities were growing constantly more complex, the Committee had two principal concerns: to improve the Secretariat's work and to ensure that its composition reflected the socio-economic and cultural diversity of the membership.

36. The main staff problem claiming the Committee's attention was the equitable representation of Member States in the Secretariat. While his delegation appreciated the efforts of the Secretary-General to comply with the principles governing the geographical distribution of posts, and agreed with the observations in paragraph 2 of his report (A/6487 and Corr.1), it noted with regret that the imbalance in the representation of certain States persisted in regard to both the number and the level of posts held.

37. One of the main obstacles to structural improvement was the small proportion of fixed-term staff. Where the number of Secretariat posts subject to geographical distribution was small in relation to the total number of posts, a low proportion of fixed-term staff made it very difficult to eliminate imbalances, especially as certain countries which were already over-represented held a very large proportion of the permanent posts. Yet new appointments continued to be made from those countries.

38. His delegation did not share the Secretary-General's satisfaction in regard to the proportion of fixed-term staff. The figure of 29.7 per cent was an average, and concealed certain contradictions. For example, the figures for staff from North America and Western Europe were only 11.5 per cent and 17.2 per cent, respectively, whereas they reached 89.1 per cent for Eastern Europe and 48.4 per cent for Africa.

39. His delegation was, moreover, surprised that the principle of geographical distribution was not respected in the UNCTAD secretariat.

40. In order to satisfy the legitimate desire of Member States to be equitably represented in the Secretariat, he recommended the following measures: first, increase the proportion of fixed-term staff; secondly, apply a certain minimum proportion of fixed-term posts to each geographical region and possibly each country; thirdly, extend the principle of geographical distribution to the upper levels of the General Service category, and to the staff of UNCTAD and UNDP and other programmes; fourthly, special attention should be paid to the appointment of staff from under-represented countries and regions, having in mind the qualitative representation of each country, not the regional average; and fifthly, in the appointment of staff from under-represented countries the criterion of age should be applied not automatically, but in the light of the specific conditions.

41. Mr. BYKOV (Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic) stated that in order to perform its important political

<sup>3/</sup> Hernane Tavares de Sá, *The play within the play; the inside story of the UN* (New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1966), pp. 173 and 175.

and economic tasks, the Secretariat must be a genuinely international organ in whose work all Member States were able to participate on an equal footing. A proper geographical distribution of posts in the Secretariat was a prerequisite for effective work.

42. Unfortunately, the Secretary-General's report showed that the situation in that regard was far from satisfactory. Recruitment from under-represented regions continued to be extremely slow. As in previous years, roughly the same number of appointments had been made from each region, with the result that some countries had exceeded the upper limits of their quotas while others had yet to reach the lower limit of theirs. As in the past, the structure of the Secretariat continued to correspond to the interests of the Western countries, whose nationals held 75 per cent of the highest posts and over 70 per cent of all other posts.

43. Despite the abnormality of that state of affairs and repeated calls by the General Assembly for corrective action, the Secretariat had failed to take steps to solve the problem of geographical distribution. It was incomprehensible that there should still be 26 Member States under-represented in the Secretariat. A total of 77 posts would be sufficient to bring those States up to the lower levels of their desirable ranges. Since there were now 150 vacant posts in the Secretariat, there should be no difficulty in correcting that most obvious anomaly within a year. That was a short period, but the 26 States concerned—and particularly the developed countries among them—would surely have no difficulty in providing the necessary number of qualified candidates. Perhaps the representative of the Secretary-General would say whether steps to that effect could be taken before the twenty-second session.

44. His delegation welcomed the draft resolution before the Committee (A/C.5/L.879), but agreed with the representative of Iran that it was very moderate. More decisive steps were needed, and he hoped the sponsors would strengthen their draft along the lines suggested by the representatives of Pakistan and Japan.

45. In paragraph 7 of his report (A/6487 and Corr.1), the Secretary-General stated his intention of reviewing the base total of 1,500 posts subject to geographical

distribution. His delegation believed that the total should be increased.

46. In conclusion, he expressed regret that the Western countries did not take a more positive attitude to the question of geographical distribution, instead of simply trying to maintain their dominant position in the Secretariat. Such an attitude could not but weaken the Secretariat, for the Western countries were now a minority in the United Nations. He hoped that the inequitable distribution of posts would shortly be remedied, so that the Secretariat might serve the interests of the United Nations as a whole.

47. Mr. CISS (Senegal), reverting to the question of language, said that the principal objective was of course the equitable geographical distribution of posts among all countries and regions. But facts had to be faced. One of the obstacles to genuine universality in the Secretariat was the discrimination practiced against non-English-speaking candidates. Indeed, for many posts English was stated to be an essential qualification. His delegation had raised the subject because it felt that the recruitment policies of the United Nations should take proper account of all the official languages.

48. Mr. MAJOLI (Italy) welcomed the suggestions put forward by the representatives of Japan and Iran. Speaking as Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee of Experts, however, he pointed out that the recommendation in paragraph 115 of that Committee's second report (A/6343), which the representative of Iran had quoted, ended by saying that the Secretary-General should keep fully in mind the principles of Articles 100 and 101 of the Charter. Article 101, paragraph 3, stated that:

"The paramount consideration in the employment of staff... shall be the necessity of securing the highest standards of efficiency, competence and integrity. Due regard shall be paid to the importance of recruiting the staff on as wide a geographical basis as possible".

There was a difference between "paramount consideration" and "due regard".

*The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.*