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at 11.30 a.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 55th MEETING

Chairman:

Mr. AL-MASRI

(Syrian Arab Republic)

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

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The meeting was called to order at 11.50 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 130: PERSONNEL QUESTIONS (continued)

(a) COMPOSITION OF THE SECRETARIAT (continued)

(c) OTHER PERSONNEL QUESTIONS (continued) (A/C.5/44/L.10)

1. Mr. DANKWA (Ghana), presenting the draft resolutions contained in document A/C.5/44/L.10 in his capacity as co-ordinator of the informal consultations on agenda items 130 (a) and (c), said that he wished first of all to place on record his appreciation for the efforts of all the delegations which had taken part in the long, arduous and delicate informal consultations that had been conducted in order to reach agreement on the text now before the Committee. He also wished to thank the Secretariat staff for their assistance in those efforts.

2. The text of the preambular portion of draft resolution A, concerning the composition of the Secretariat, did not depart significantly from previous resolutions. The operative part, on the other hand, addressed specific issues which had arisen during the reporting period. For the sake of clarity, the first four lines of paragraph 3 should be amended to read: "Requests the Secretary-General to take every available measure to ensure, at the senior and policy-formulating levels, the equitable representation of Member States, in particular of developing countries and other Member States with inadequate representation at those levels ...". Also, at the end of that paragraph, the words "in conformity with" should be replaced by the words "with due regard to".

3. Draft resolution B reflected the conventional wording and authorized the Secretary-General to implement his proposals concerning the administration of justice in the Secretariat, as approved by the Committee.

4. Draft resolution C likewise followed the normal pattern, but noted also that the goal of increasing the number of women in Secretariat posts subject to geographical distribution to 30 per cent of the total by 1990 had not been achieved. The Secretary-General was urged to strengthen his efforts in that regard, taking into account the need to secure the highest possible standards of efficiency, competence and integrity and with full respect for the principle of equitable geographical distribution. In paragraph 3, the words "and policy-formulating" should be inserted between the words "senior" and "levels", in keeping with the agreement reached among delegations as to the nature of the posts concerned. The Secretary-General was also being requested to report in the future on all aspects of the status of women in the Secretariat in one single document. The list in paragraph 7 of the areas to be covered in that report should not be regarded as exhaustive.

5. Draft resolution D reflected the decisions taken earlier by the Committee on the United Nations pension system. Operative paragraph 1 provided that the mandatory age of separation for staff members appointed on or after 1 January 1990

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should be age 62, on the understanding that age 60 would continue to apply as the mandatory age of separation for those staff members who were currently in active service. The purpose of paragraph 2 was to correct a shortcoming which had been observed in the proposals on that subject. Specifically, an assessment would have to be made of the impact of raising the mandatory age of separation on staff recruitment, mobility, career development and promotion, staffing structure, representation of Member States and long-term staff cost expenditures. The annex to document A/C.5/44/L.10 gave the Secretary-General the legal authority to amend regulation 9.5 of the Staff Regulations in accordance with the provision concerning the mandatory age of separation.

6. Lastly, by the draft decision reproduced at the end of the document, the General Assembly would note the need periodically to review the Staff Rules and would take note of the report of the Secretary-General on amendments thereto (A/C.5/44/2).

7. He wished to emphasize that the draft resolutions represented a delicate compromise which did not fully reflect the position of any one delegation. He commended them to the Committee in the hope that it would be able to adopt them without a vote in the same spirit of understanding and co-operation as had prevailed in the informal consultations.

8. Mr. NASSER (Egypt), Mr. ABDULLAH (Iraq) and Mr. AL-ROMAIHI (Bahrain) said that they were not in favour of retaining paragraph 10 of draft resolution A. They and many other delegations believed that the method used by the Secretary-General for presenting tables in his reports on the composition of the Secretariat by groupings of Member States had adequately served its purpose for the past ten years or more and that there was no need to cast doubt on its merits.

9. Ms. ZHANG Xian (China), referring to the same draft resolution, said that the text of paragraph 4, as discussed in the informal consultations, had ended with the words "main departments and offices". She wondered at what point it had been decided to add a further clause. In her view, the Committee should adopt the text originally agreed upon.

10. Mr. ETUKET (Uganda) associated himself with the view expressed by the representative of China. In addition, his delegation had reservations about draft resolution D, which, as currently worded, was clearly discriminatory. While setting the mandatory age of separation for new staff members at age 62, it denied staff members already in active service the option of separation at the same age. His delegation would not block a consensus in that regard but hoped that the General Assembly, at some future point, would review the matter in a more realistic perspective.

11. Ms. GOICOCHEA ESTENOZ (Cuba), supported by Mr. LOPEZ (Venezuela), responding to the comments made by the representative of Egypt and other speakers, said that paragraph 10 of draft resolution A had been included because of the ill-defined nature of the criteria employed for the presentation of tables in the

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Secretary-General's annual reports on the composition of the Secretariat. The text contained no binding provision but merely called for alternative proposals as a basis for discussing whether more appropriate, uniform criteria could be applied.

12. Ms. AHLUWALIA (Canada) and Ms. ALMAO (New Zealand) said that the representative of China had been correct in stating that the final clause of paragraph 4 in draft resolution A had been added only after informal consultations. The addition had been made on the basis of a recognition among delegations of the need to ensure a balance with the wording in paragraph 2 of draft resolution C.

13. Mr. LADJOUZI (Algeria) confirmed that point. With reference to operative paragraph 3 of the same draft resolution, he recalled that during the informal consultations his delegation had argued in favour of having two separate paragraphs, one reaffirming the principle of equitable geographical distribution and a second dealing with the question of inadequate representation of Member States at the senior and policy-formulating levels. His delegation would not oppose a consensus but wished to enter a reservation concerning what it felt was a confusion of those two aspects of the problem.

14. Mr. SLEPENKOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that his delegation had, not without difficulty, joined in the consensus reached in the course of informal consultations. It therefore viewed any attempts to introduce further amendments to the draft resolutions with serious concern.

15. Mr. DANKWA (Ghana) said that the text of paragraph 10 of draft resolution A represented a compromise between the positions adopted by different delegations. Rather than requesting the Secretary-General, with immediate effect, to change the way in which Member States were grouped, it would allow the General Assembly time to consider the relative merits of both the current method and alternative proposals. With regard to paragraph 4 of the same resolution, the representative of China was correct to note that an element had been added. The intention was, however, to ensure a balance between the wording of paragraph 2 of draft resolution C and that of draft resolution A, in order to avoid the impression of any discrimination between men and women with respect to the criteria for recruitment.

16. The valid concerns expressed by the representative of Uganda had been raised in the course of informal consultations. It should, however, be noted that the principal intention of draft resolution D was to address the issue of the actuarial imbalance of the Joint Staff Pension Fund and that a report on the impact of the resolution was to be submitted to the General Assembly at its forty-fifth session.

17. One further issue relating to the agenda item under consideration was that of the respective responsibilities of the Third and Fifth Committees in connection with the improvement of the status of women. It had been agreed in the course of informal consultations that the Chairman of the Fifth Committee should be requested to raise the subject with the General Assembly, with a view to ensuring a clear

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decision on that subject by the Assembly at its next session. It had been the feeling of delegations that the Fifth Committee should enjoy exclusive jurisdiction in that area.

18. Mr. TALAVERA (Peru) said that consensus might perhaps be facilitated if the word "alternative" were to be deleted from paragraph 10 of draft resolution A.
19. Mr. ZAHID (Morocco) suggested that the final part of paragraph 3 of draft resolution A should be amended to read "bearing in mind the principle of equitable geographical distribution and in conformity with the criterion whereby no part should be considered the exclusive preserve of any Member State or group of States".
20. Mr. DUHALT (Mexico) said, with reference to paragraph 10 of draft resolution A, that his delegation was unhappy with the current method of grouping Member States and therefore believed that the paragraph should be maintained intact.
21. Mr. LADJOUZI (Algeria) said that, if it was indeed the intention of the Committee to introduce amendments to the draft resolutions, he would endorse the amendment suggested by the representative of Morocco and further suggest that paragraph 3 be divided into two separate paragraphs.
22. Mr. ETUKET (Uganda) said that it was inappropriate, after exhaustive informal consultations, to introduce new proposals which had not formed part of the understanding reached at those consultations. His delegation shared the concerns raised by the representative of China with respect to the addition to paragraph 4 of draft resolution A and felt there was no reason to believe that, in its absence, the Secretary-General would fail to bear in mind the necessity of securing the highest standards of efficiency, competence and integrity.
23. With regard to paragraph 1 of draft resolution D, he fully understood the explanation provided by the representative of Ghana but felt that, if the Secretary-General was to submit further proposals to the Assembly at its forty-fifth session, there might be a case for deferring any amendment of the Staff Regulations. In the light of the clarifications provided, his delegation could join in a consensus decision, on the understanding that any further proposals on that issue should be subject to informal consultations.
24. Mr. UPTON (United Kingdom), supported by Mr. GUPTA (India) and Ms. AHLUWALIA (Canada) expressed the hope that the Committee would adhere to its customary procedure, whereby no proposals other than those already submitted in the course of informal consultations should be made once agreement had been reached on the text of a draft resolution.
25. Ms. AHLUWALIA (Canada), supported by Ms. BRQINOWSKI (Australia), said that the wording of paragraph 4 of draft resolution A was intended to strike a balance with that of paragraph 2 of draft resolution C. Any amendment of the one paragraph would necessarily entail amendment of the other.

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26. Mr. OSELLA (Argentina) said that the draft resolutions struck a delicate balance and his delegation favoured adopting them as they stood.
27. Ms. BROINOWSKI (Australia) said that, if there was any question of deleting the last phrase of paragraph 4 of draft resolution A, her delegation would press for amendment of paragraph 2 of draft resolution C.
28. Mr. LADJOUZI (Algeria) said that his delegation had participated in the informal discussions and was ready to accept the draft resolutions as they stood. However, if there were still difficulties with the draft resolutions further informal consultations should be held.
29. The CHAIRMAN said that any delegation which had not participated in the informal consultations could comment on the draft resolutions before the Committee. It was immaterial whether the last phrase of paragraph 4 of draft resolution A was retained; obviously, in making appointments, the Secretary-General would be mindful of the necessity of securing the highest standards of efficiency, competence and integrity. He asked whether the Committee was prepared to delete that phrase as had been proposed by the representative of China.
30. Ms. BROINOWSKI (Australia), supported by Ms. AHLUWALIA (Canada), said that, if the Chinese proposal was adopted, the corresponding phrase must be removed from paragraph 2 of draft resolution C.
31. Mr. UPTON (United Kingdom), supported by Mr. NASSER (Egypt) and Mr. ABDULLAH (Iraq), said that, if the Chairman was not prepared to take account of the views of the representatives of Australia and Canada, discussion on the draft resolution should be suspended.
32. Ms. SHITAKHA (Kenya) supported by Mr. DE CLERCK (Belgium), appealed to delegates to adopt the draft resolutions as they stood.
33. Mr. LAJDOUZI (Algeria) said that if various delegations pressed their proposals to amend several paragraphs, the Committee would have no alternative but to defer consideration of the draft resolutions, as suggested by the representatives of the United Kingdom, Egypt and Iraq.
34. Mr. LOPEZ (Venezuela) said that although his delegation objected to certain paragraphs, it was prepared to go along with the consensus embodied in the draft resolutions.
35. Mr. UPTON (United Kingdom) said that his delegation was prepared to accept paragraph 10 of draft resolution A as revised by the Vice-Chairman during his introduction. Other amendments had been submitted subsequently; some were interlinked. In such a situation the only course was to apply rule 118 of the rules of procedure. The Committee could not proceed on the basis of rule 120.

36. The CHAIRMAN announced that he was prepared, exceptionally, to suspend consideration of the draft resolutions. He expressed the hope that consideration of other draft resolutions would have to be deferred once a consensus had been reached in informal consultations.

37. Ms. GOICOCHEA ESTENOZ (Cuba) said that the choice before the Committee was either to adopt the draft resolutions as they stood or to hold further informal consultations.

38. Ms. BROINOWSKI (Australia) said that, if further informal consultations were to be held her delegation would like the Chairman to confirm that all the draft resolutions in their entirety would be subject to discussion. Alternatively, the draft resolutions should be adopted as they stood.

39. The CHAIRMAN expressed the view that the Committee could take action on the draft resolutions if the word "alternative" in paragraph 10 of draft resolution A was eliminated.

40. Mr. ABDULLAH (Iraq) said that his delegation had reservations with regard to draft resolution A but would accept the draft resolutions if the word "alternative" was deleted.

41. Mr. FONTAINE ORTIZ (Cuba) said that his delegation had serious reservations with regard to several paragraphs. However, no delegation was completely satisfied with the draft resolutions and he therefore supported the view that the draft resolutions should be adopted without any change.

42. The CHAIRMAN said that there would be no further informal consultations and that, if there were no objections, he would take it that the Committee wished to postpone action on the draft resolution until the next meeting.

43. It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 1.40 p.m.